

New Rules for A Generous School of Architecture by Charlotte Malterre-Barthes and Zosia Dzierżawska

Edited by Alice Ranzini

In the face of the widespread failure of architecture and design disciplines to pursue objectives of environmental sustainability and social justice, it has become increasingly urgent to interrogate the role of the university in cultivating new sensibilities toward the care of territory and the knowledge of local communities. This is not merely a matter of updating contents or tools, but of profoundly rethinking the postures, responsibilities, and alliances that shape processes of learning and knowledge production.

It is within this perspective that *New Rules for a Generous School of Architecture* by Charlotte Malterre-Barthes and Zosia Dzierżawska can be situated: a visual manifesto that calls on both students and educators of architecture to critically position themselves in relation to the role of the discipline in the production of inequalities and in the depletion of ecosystems. The proposal of a 'generous school' evokes a form of conscious and responsible positioning in a world that is *exhausted, drained, depleted, damaged, and broken* (Fitz and Kasny, 2019: 10).

Generosity thus becomes a structural disposition of a different approach to architectural education: an invitation to conceive the university as a generative learning community, grounded in practices of collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and care. From this perspective, educating architects – and, more broadly, actors capable of intervening in local contexts – means, first and foremost, fostering the ability to recognize interdependencies and to build alliances with diverse forms of knowledge. The care of territory is no longer a technical objective to be achieved, but an ethical and political horizon that permeates educational processes.

The 'new rules' proposed by the manifesto radically challenge the normative and extractive character of the discipline, advancing a pedagogy oriented toward repair, the responsible management of existing resources, and reciprocity. Teaching and learning become situated practices that entail shared

responsibilities: educators and students alike are called upon to share time, attention, and knowledge, while recognizing the value of non-canonical, community-based, and often marginalized forms of knowing. In this sense, the decolonization of education is a necessary condition for cultivating new sensibilities capable of reading and inhabiting the complexity of contemporary territories. The school thus ceases to be a closed and self-referential institution. Instead, it becomes a relational infrastructure, capable of engaging with the outside and of recognizing the transformative value of alliances.

Rethinking power relations within the university is an integral part of this process. Generosity, understood as a daily practice, becomes a means to unsettle the traditional asymmetry between those who teach and those who learn, and opens up spaces of trust, listening, and cooperation.

Within this vision, the university itself takes the form of an unstable yet vital architecture, one that is permanently under construction. Not a static building, but a living process that is continually redefined through practices of care, responsibility, and situated engagement. It is precisely within this fragile and open movement that the possibility emerges of cultivating new sensibilities toward the care of territory and marginalized communities – not as a competence to be applied, but as a way of being in the world and of collectively contributing to its transformation.

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NEW RULES FOR A GENEROUS SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

In our current time, when decarbonising the construction industry is such an urgent task, architecture – from education to building protocols – must embrace this moment of tension to re-emerge as a re-invented discipline,



pushing against both the destructive nature of the construction industry and the nefarious rising narrative of the green-washing patriarchy.

A PAGE MUST BE TURNED,
AND NEW RULES CRAFTED
TOWARDS

NON-EXTRACTIVE
FUTURES.

ARCHITECTURE, AT THIS POINT IN TIME, HAS FAILED TO ADDRESS AND PIVOT THE IMPENDING ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CATASTROPHE

As a profession, architecture remains largely at the service of an industry that holds responsibility for 40% of global carbon emissions. The profession is yet to reach the necessary reflective consciousness needed to reform itself, as the bankruptcy of the modern project has been exposed in plain sight.

DESPISE CLAIMS TO EMBRACE "TRANSDISCIPLINARY" APPROACHES, ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING HOLD ONTO EXCLUSIONARY EXPERTISE ON HOW TO CONSTRUCT AND WHAT TO BUILD, ENTIRELY DISMISSIVE OF "OTHER" KNOWLEDGES.

The office is paradigmatic of these limitations, as apart from the odd landscape architect and structural engineer, the bulk of design decisions remains with the architect.

IT IS HIGH TIME FOR THE MODEL OF A DESIGN OFFICE BASED ON THE MODERNIST MALE GENIUS TO BE REVISED AS IT STANDS IN THE WAY OF THE INTERDISCIPLINARY, COLLABORATIVE, AND COLLECTIVE ENDEAVOURS NECESSARY TO TACKLE THE CLIMATE AND SOCIAL EMERGENCY.



UNDER THE RISING PRESSURE OF STUDENTS AND YOUNGER GENERATIONS, THE AWARENESS OF THESE PERTINENT ISSUES IN ARCHITECTURAL PEDAGOGY HAS BECOME EVER-INCREASINGLY ACUTE.

WE NEED A GENEROUS SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

THE RISE OF PRACTICES PUSHING FOR SOCIAL AGENDAS IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT POINTS AT THE NEED TO ELIMINATE THE THEORY-PRACTICE SPLIT, AND THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN THOSE WHO BUILD AND THOSE WHO DON'T, AS IT QUESTIONS THE VERY ESSENCE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN ARCHITECT—AND HOW TO EDUCATE ONE.



If there is any hope of designing ourselves out of the climate crisis towards a truly sustainable future, deep-rooted in gender equality, social and spatial justice, architecture education needs to challenge itself through taking risks and borrowing actively from all other disciplines – and not just the noble and neighboring ones, but from those of the most pragmatic, modest, radical, political and hands-on spatial practices – from biology to care work in the built environment.



IF IT IS TRUE THERE IS NO UNTINTED LOCALITY TO REINHABIT, IT IS TIME TO LET GO OF MASTERY TO ALLOW FOR AN ALTERNATIVE PROFESSION OF ARCHITECTURE, ONE THAT BUILDS CAPACITY BY AGGREGATING KNOWLEDGES TOWARD CONSTRUCTING NON-DESTRUCTIVE AND VIABLE SPACES FOR LIFE.

Charlotte Malterre-Barthes is an architect, urban designer, and Assistant Professor of Architectural and Urban Design at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne. She launched in 2021 the initiative “*A Global Moratorium on New Construction*,” interrogating current protocols of development and urging for a profound reform of planning disciplines to face the climate and social emergency, resulting in the eponymous book with Sternberg Press. Her research examines the political economy of space production, the challenges of urgent urbanization, material extraction, and how marginalized communities can access resources, governance, and ecological/social justice. Charlotte maintains an active feminist practice; she co-founded the Parity Group, a militant grassroots collective laboring toward equity in architecture, which received the prestigious Meret Oppenheim Prize 2023. acmalterre@yahoo.com

Zosia Dzierżawska is a Warsaw-based illustrator and comics author with a passion for storytelling, history, and architecture. She is a member of the Milan-based creative workspace Studio Armadillo. She studied comparative literature at the University of Warsaw, Poland, and illustration at MiMaster, a postgraduate illustration course in Milan, Italy.

Her works have been recognised twice at the Bologna Children’s Book Fair Illustrators Exhibition and the Society of Illustrators in New York. She has published with Oxford University Press, Rizzoli, Candlewick Press, and other notable publishers, including her work on the graphic novel *Eileen Gray. A House Under the Sun* (Nobrow, 2019) marked the beginning of a collaboration with the architect Charlotte Malterre-Barthes, which now continues as an ongoing series of illustrated essays on the current and future practice of architecture.

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