Newsletter

22

Image: Edward Burtynsky- https://www.edwardburtynsky.com/projects/photographs/water

Planet Starship

The work of ASF International has been since its inception; to improve the conditions of human living. With this in mind, the global pandemic and its probable animal-world origin urges us to consider enlarging our perspective towards questions of cohabitation with the with not only ourselves, but all the components of our living environment.

Buckminster Fuller famously stated that us humans are 'living on a starship without an operating manual' and that it is humanity's duty is to define how to establish this manual. In line with this concept, the French philosopher Bruno Latour promoted the creation of a 'parliament of animals'; with the intent of pointing out that it is time for humans to stop managing the planet alone without the dialogue of other animals in regards to the destiny of our planet.

Can these suggestions challenge us to adapt our actions and way of thinking as architects and as world citizen ?

How to create a solidarity housing taking care of the relations between humans, animals and environment, conducive to inventing new alliances beneficial to all stakeholders ?

How to move from an environmentalism favoring the preservation of nature and the human comfort in it to an holistic enlarge approach integrating the reciprocity of relationships between all the inhabitants, human as well as non-human?

Here are possibly the conditions of the next future of our and the terms to compose our ecology.

At the same time, we are facing immediate challenges of survival in the face of the various forms of social lock-down, logistic restrictions and nationally determined precautions that are grossly exaggerated across local and global lines of social inequality.

For this issue we asked contributors to engage with this ideas and possibly suggest or challenge us to adapt our actions and way of thinking.

architecture sans frontières INTERNATIONAL

www.asfint.org

247, rue St. Jacques
F-75005-Paris

Need for the preservation of the Black Village – Gatlang, ASF Nepal

Gatlang's black roofs - a part of its heritage for over hundreds of years are constructed with traditional Tamang architecture, the roofs made of wooden shingles (panglen) sourced from nearby forests which turned black when weathered by time and regular smoke from the kitchen. The houses have thick dry stone wall masonry walls framed into place by intricately carved wooden pillars—engraved with traditional symbols and prayers, are two storied houses with low scale height. The ground floor is opened for cattle and fuel storage, a living area on the first floor, and a seed storage area in attic above. Locally available materials are widely used.

However, 2015 earthquake damaged almost all the houses forcing most of the people to follow standard prototype building construction technology which is non contextual and against local building culture due to government approval issues (there are no standards or guidelines for their traditional building technology in Nepal Building Code - NBC) and to meet the government deadline of receiving financial assistance for reconstruction.

With the introduction of CGI, RCC and brick, the village is in the grave danger of losing its vital connection to its heritage and traditions. It once used to be "the gem" of the Tamang Heritage Trail but without its black roofs and its originality and uniformity, it might not be a choice of destination for travelers anymore. This would not only result in the loss of livelihoods for the people of Gatlang but also a huge loss to the architectural heritage of the country.

As such ASF Nepal has started an initiation with CRAterre focusing on providing technical assistance to the community for retrofit and repair in reconstruction purposes utilizing local manpower, materials, and their requirement. Initial assessment has already been done based on visual observation of the buildings and checklists of the seismic vulnerability based on FEMA 310 with some modification.

Gatlang before earthquake

Preservation of the Black Village- Gatlang

Vulnerable 'Us', thought peice from ASF Nepal

A striking contradiction of modern, urban style, construction against the traditional and local architecture. (Photo courtesy – DFID)

"Save our planet". We hear this a lot these days, more often now as climate change has turned into a climate crisis. But does earth - our planet really need saving? by us? from us definitely but not by us! Someone rightly said - "this planet was there before us and will continue to be there even after us".

True, we have devastated this planet, caused the extinction of many other species, mined the natural substances to the point of depletion but still nature remains as powerful as ever and has the potential to wipe us out from this planet to start anew whenever it wants. This has been proven time and again but we still think this planet needs saving!

We think we are the most Supreme Being in this universe but every now and then nature comes back to us to remind us of our folly. We often pretend we have ways to overcome nature and we try to disrupt natural cycles, control the natural environment, exploit natural resources, create artificial ways to prove our supremacy but try as much as we may, we can never defeat the forces of nature. This is becoming clearer by the day as we head towards our extreme selfish ways with complete disregard to other beings, destroying precious natural heritage and life on earth. Starting with the climate refugees and disappearing wild lives, nature is starting to fight back (enough is enough). fast disappearing icebergs, increasing sea level and temperature, ozo-ne damage, pandemics, severe change in weather patterns, unnatural growth of some invasive species are some very serious issues that threaten our very existence. This clearly shows that we are the ones who need saving, we are the vulnerable ones.

There will always be a blue planet with or without us.

References:

https://kathmandupost.com/miscellaneous/2016/07/09/the-black-roofs-of-gatlang
Gatlang & Haku - Rasuwa trip - Reconstruction issues - Feb 2018 -DFID
Tamang Heritage Trail: A Study of Gatlang Village in Rasuwa District of Nepal: Ramesh Raj Kunwar & Chadani Pandey

Asivikalne Campaign, 1to1 - Agency of Engagement

In support of the massive cross sectoral efforts working through the lockdown, 1to1 has recently joined the Asivikalane Campaign, the initiative. The Asivikalne Campign is an initiative of IBP South Africa, Planact, the SASDI Alliance, Afesis-corplan, DAG, SJC and Grassroot with funding provided by the European Union, Open Society Foundation, Luminate and Raith Foundation. By responding to three questions weekly about their access to water, clean toilets and waste removal, residents offer us a window into their daily experiences. Our project partner at the Development Action Group describes this :

Firstly, access to water, decent sanitation and basic services is a constitutional right.

Secondly, this campaign is not just about services, but fundamentally about agency and voice. In our current paradigm, these are largely being determined by the patronage of local politicians and/or local government officials. Taps and toilets are frequently installed with no consultation or in areas that are either completely over serviced, or where they cater to the needs of a few.

Thirdly, basic services are not simply a resourcing issue, but about prioritisation. The servicing of informal settlements and backyarders haven't been given the priority they deserve. Each year, millions are underspent on grants to local government that are precisely there to service these areas. Where money is spent, substandard services are often installed because "these are for informal settlements".

Fourth, the campaign isn't just about demonstrating the gaps in service delivery, but sharing positive responses too. In many instances, the municipalities and metros are using this data to ensure that they respond urgently to the needs. Water tanks have been delivered in many metros, countless taps and toilets repaired and protective gear and sanitisers distributed to communities to clean communal toilets.

Finally, the campaign is under no illusion that basic services will alleviate the root causes of poverty and inequality. But it definitely is a step towards restoring dignity to the millions living in extreme poverty. This effort needs to translate, with the support of civil society, into completely rethinking our ability to release well-located land, tenure security for the poor and an economic future that they can determine."

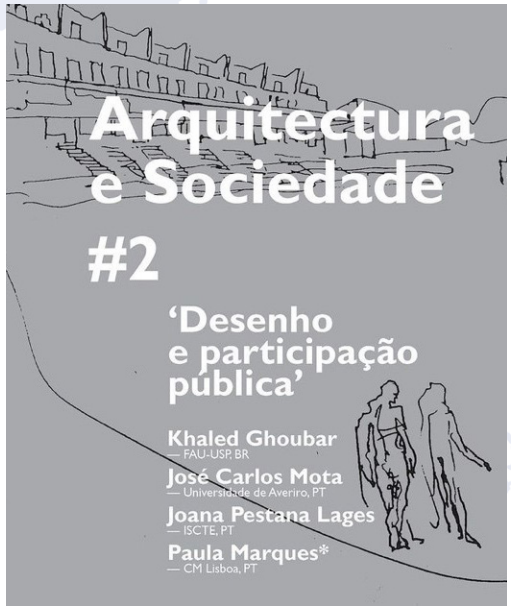
ASIVIKELANE
LET'S PROTECT ONE ANOTHER

Architecture & Society Program,h ASF Portugal

Architecture & Society Program» consists of a set of actions (conferences, workshops, course unit and action research laboratory) that seeks proximity intervention in a real context, using reading global and local dynamics to produce knowledge and regenerate the urban fabric. This is a joint initia-tive of the ASFPortugal, the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto, the Aga Khan Portugal Foundation of the Aga Khan Network for Development and Domus Social E.M. from Oporto Municipality.

The first session was dedicated to the theme "Joint construction of knowledge", with Caio Santo Amore (Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at USP + Peabiru, Brazil), Lara Ferreira (LabLage, Brazil/Portugal), António Brito Guterres (Aga Khan Portugal Foundation and ISCTE, Portugal) and Aitor Varea Oro (Habitat Porto + CEAU/FAUP, Portugal). The discussion focused on the intervention in an environment built through a broad view in constant debate with the Society and with all those who can contribute to a conscious solution to the various impacts of the action of each of the stakeholders.

The second session was dedicated to the theme "Design and public participation", with Khaled Ghoubar (FAU-USP, BR), José Carlos Mota (UA, PT) and Joana Pestana Lages (ISCTE-IUL, PT) The third session will be dedicated to the "Views and visions for a strategic plan for downtown Rio de Janeiro" an initiative shared between FRJ, ASFInt and UNESCO in connection with UIA Congress that will be held this year in July in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



architecture
sans frontières
INTERNATIONAL

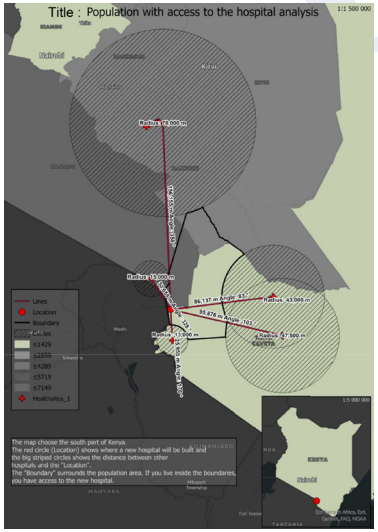
St Joseph Njukini Health Centre Project, ASF Sweden

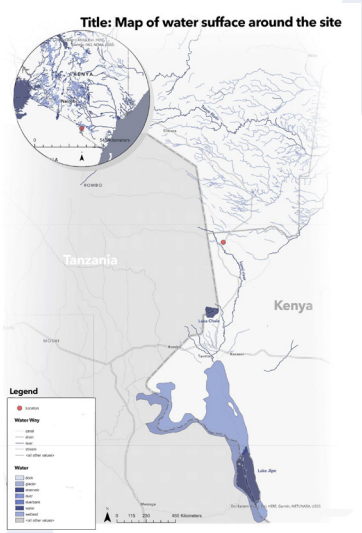
In early 2020 ASF Sweden and EWB Kenya started the design of a masterplan for a health clinic in Njukini, a rural village close to the Tanzanian border. The pandemic has challenged the usual design process and encouraged new ways of using digital tools for workshops and designing – remotely. Together with students at our partners at School of Engineering, Jönköping University we have explored Geographical Information Systems (GIS) as a tool for site analysis, when traveling is re-stricted.

Students at the first-year architectural engineering program have been looking for geodata, reports and other relevant information to conduct the pre-study for a location that could not be physically accessed. ArcGISPro software was used as data repository and for data visualization during the analysis process. The students have investigated a number of questions in order to examine the local conditions as well as how the development of the health clinic is related to UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

The pre-study includes estimations about population growth and type of care needed in the clinic's catchment area as well as analysing the primary infrastructure, transportation of material and locally available resources. GIS has also provided us with opportunity to analyse future challenges, such as climate changes, and how the project can contribute to minimize the environmental impact using renewable and local materials and clean energy. The engagement of the students resulted in the creation of a geodatabase that will be used for further investigations and site planning.

This project shows the potential of the great amount of free and open data available as a complement to pre-covid way of working.





Two maps created by Hugo Kälström and Sophie Billerault for the course Geographic Information System, Architectural Engineering Program, School of Engineering, Jönköping University. The maps have been created using free and open data using the ESRI software ArcGIS Pro.