

Editorial

Hiatus

More than two years have passed since the arrival and rapid proliferation of an unexpected, constantly mutating virus, yet a definitive end to the pandemic still seems far from imminent. A return to previous patterns of labor and social interaction has only just begun to take place in some countries, while in many others, a state of exception remains. Technology, whether applied to medical research, to the monitoring of data, or to the facilitation of digital connectivity, has seemingly come to our rescue. But this rescue has been highly uneven, delineating vast disparities in access to digital and material resources once more. Pointing to differences of national wealth as a root cause would be reductive, since, quite often, these inequalities occur within the boundaries of a single country, a single city, a single neighborhood, at times even a single building. Yet even for those who have enjoyed relative access to the tools of connectivity that have allowed society to carry on through the pandemic, this period of forced retreat and prolonged, collective seclusion has taken its toll. For good or bad, rather than recognizing the fleeting suspension of the global status quo as an opportunity for collective reflection and genuine reform, governments instead set the resumption of the existing, environmentally disastrous model of extractive, globalized capitalism as the priority of highest order, overcoming the diminished impetus of a curtailed economy. That this defibrillation has apparently succeeded, and at such great cost, is owed in large part to human malleability and adaptability, as well as a broad and previously unthinkable acceptance of governmental restrictions on mobility and social interaction. The consequences, whether medical, political, economic, or psychological, will doubtless affect us all in myriad ways that remain, for the time being, unclear, not least the way in which

we perceive *space* in its expanded definition—that is, in both the tectonic and, increasingly, non-tectonic configurations in which architects' expertise will be needed.

The pandemic has only further emphasized a darker face of globalization that was already plain to see. Indeed, the fact that we are concatenating crisis after crisis in the first quarter of the twenty-first century should come as no surprise. Perhaps the limits of the global system are being tested, as the amalgam of national and international governments, supranational institutions, and omnipresent corporations that manage market economies prove to be less effective and articulated than they appeared to be at the turn of the century. And yet, it is abundantly clear that we need these institutions of governance. If globalization has become less legible—that is, if global spheres of production and reproduction have fallen *out of sync* with international networks of government and power—then perhaps the rampant inflation, energy crises, and intermittent disruptions to chains of distribution must be recognized as expressions of the inherent vulnerabilities and fragilities that have been thrown into stark relief by this desynchronization. Perhaps the sequential collapses that have defined our young century—beginning with the war on global terrorism, followed by the economic fallout of the subprime mortgage crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and now the growing threat of yet another economic recession stemming from the war in Ukraine—are merely different scenarios illustrating the limitations and stresses that global capitalism, in the accelerated, depredatory form it has taken in the second half of twentieth century, will inevitably face. In short, as geographer David Harvey has tirelessly underscored, there can be no neocapitalism without crisis.

Although the COVID-19 crisis brought about a temporary moment of doubt and hesitation with regard to the original mission of *Faktur*, we now find ourselves more convinced

than ever that a platform to voice and respond spatially to these concerns through documentary and journalistic methods is even more necessary than it was when we published our inaugural issue in 2018. Furthermore, if the forces of reactionary conservatism presently attempting to undermine previously established civil rights throughout the world must be understood as a product of fear—fears of uncertainty, change, and otherness that translate in ideological trends (predictably, exasperatingly, terrifyingly) toward a return to ideas of order and homogeneity exerting social control—we feel it is our obligation to insist upon the social and cultural capacity of architecture and architectural discourse to provide solid counterarguments.

An environmental master narrative to address these issues seems increasingly compulsory when we consider how these artificially disseminated fears act as a *trompe l'oeil* facilitating economic inequalities on a global scale. It is equally clear that to myopically attempt to construct such a framework through an exclusively Western cultural and political lens would prove to be disastrous, as such an approach will inevitably fail to register that the problems faced in Western nations are inextricable from the perennial crises that silenced and marginalized communities—indigenous peoples, refugees of war and environmental catastrophe, et al.—continue to endure around the planet. Competition between nations to secure resources and energy is beginning to escalate, as the planetary peak of extraction of oil and other commodities has been reached in many locations, and as the West's international biopolitical grip is questioned and challenged, heaping extra stress upon already retreating democracies. Continuing to milk the planet's resources—that is, to continue to implement geopolitical acts of violence as a strategy of neo-colonialism and soft colonialism without international, accredited arbiters in charge of equal distribution from a position of global governance—is simply not an option. Fortunately, the growing clarity and mediatic visibility of the

existential threat to the environment may be achieving the necessary consensus around a new, renewed fight to protect the planet. Although reforms aimed at combatting inequalities will remain crucial in urban and social policies from a local perspective, the overarching umbrella of ecological thinking affecting all peoples, and indeed all species, is irrefutable, and must become more central.

Even if the rhetoric of the Anthropocene popularized by Paul Crutzen has proven useful by linking facts and narrative in such a way that the idea has become crucial to understanding current political tensions, the limitations of this definition with regard to the historical agency (and benefits) of different nations, cultures, races, genders, and social classes renders the concept toothless in the face of the environmental challenges ahead. We need historically accurate new definitions and theoretical frameworks if we are to diagnose the harmful dynamics affecting the environment and its uneven effects. As illustrated by the gratuitous Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is increasingly difficult to deny that the geopolitical cartography of the late twentieth century is already on the precipice of further transformation. It is in this slow process of adaptation to the new rules of the game that we may locate an opportunity for the redefinition of the role that architecture can play: developing new social empathies, cultural interactions, and critical responses that welcome people in a participatory collective. And yet, as this reality is understood with ever-greater clarity, architects have increasingly located a renewed agency, even optimism, in their pursuit of strategies to confront and respond to the challenges ahead.

Albeit delayed by disruptions to our chain of production brought about by the pandemic, *Faktur* now carries on with renewed conviction in the urgent necessity of our project: to offer a platform for rethinking the present conditions of space, and spatial practice, amid our constantly shifting cultural, political, and economic landscape. The essays included in this issue

indicate possible territories in which architectural thought, in tandem with documentary processes of analysis, synthesis, and reportage, might produce new discourses and models of material and social production. These are areas for possible architectural and spatial agency, whether acting symbolically in the reconstruction and reparation of past grievances, or the encouragement of new environmental and cultural dynamics of inclusion and cooperation. The present issue presents a panoramic view of both global topics and local perspectives that deserve architectural interpretation: an analysis of the culture of house mortgages through social, economic, and material lenses; an elaboration on the theoretical underpinnings of a monument to enslaved people on the grounds of an institution whose construction was predicated on their exploitation; an exploration of the history and future of domestic cooking via the process of fermentation; and a critique of the relationship between spectacle and labor in the contemporary music festival. Throughout, our various contributing authors and practices have resorted to a variety of media—architecture, photography, exhibits, video, and art installations—as appropriate forms with which to respond to the urgent questions affecting contemporary culture.