

Deep Adaptation - The Spatial Dimension

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The future, which we thought we had maybe another decade to prepare for, is now suddenly here. In all likelihood, we can expect further crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic or of similar severity, especially in the context of climate change. They will render the 21st century radically different from the 20th: conventions, techniques, and social practices we are familiar with will disappear. Our responsibilities and roles as architects and urban planners will also change fundamentally in this process. We will work in increasingly volatile and vulnerable contexts and constellations.

Until now, many actors in politics, but also in academia and research, have played down or denied the vulnerability of our urban structures to the risks that are the direct effects of our current way of life. In the search for alternative and, in a sense, more realistic perspectives, Jem Bendell's concept of "Deep Adaptation", which has been widely and controversially discussed since its first publication in 2018, calls for a shift: he urges us to prepare for the collapse of certain systems that currently govern our lives – and to see this as an opportunity for positive change.

This change and the resulting challenges we are facing are primarily not technological, but above all social, economic, and organisational in nature. Moreover, they are highly interdependent and all-encompassing; they require systemic change, profound transformations, and adaptations of action. It is therefore not a question of developing technical solutions in isolation, but rather of fundamentally rethinking the way we live, operate, work, travel, and interact.

This issue of SPOOL seeks to explore the spatial dimension of the Deep Adaptation concept and how it can be put to use in the spatial disciplines such as urban planning, landscape planning, urban design, and architecture.

We have selected and compiled seven contributions that approach this topic from different angles and certainly also in different dimensions, scales, and impact.

Mathilda Rosengren, Franziska Polleter, Josefine Sarkez-Knudsen, and Flavia Alice Mameli approach Bendell's concept through everyday urban practices in contemporary Northern Europe. They propose rethinking the commons, co-living, and activism towards an engagement with urban environments that is conceptualized beyond solely human dimensions.

Ana Jayone Yarza Pérez explores the conjunction of Bendell's 4-pronged strategy with the Cultural Resilience Approach, and how this conjunction could lead to adaptive reuse processes that act as catalysts for peace-building and development processes in the cities of Acre and Jaffa, Israel.

Marie Ulber, Mona Mahall, and Asli Serbest address the limitations of purely technological approaches to adaptation. They propose a new understanding of architectural adaptation as an inclusive praxis for fostering new nature-culture-technology relationships.

Daniel Zwangslleitner, Elettra Carnelli, Elif-Simge Fettahoglu-Özgen, and Benedikt Boucsein explore how the Deep Adaptation Agenda can serve as a wake-up call and a framework for teaching in the spatial disciplines.

James Miller and Eric Nay propose an ontological upgrade and provide insights into Indigenous epistemologies and knowledge systems, specifically in Oceania, to rethink design and pedagogy of design through Indigenous perspectives and methods.

Uroš Pajović explores the way experiences of self-management, such as those in the former Yugoslavia, connected to spatial determinants can be a means and a goal of the reorganization of societies today.

Finally, Junichi Satoh and Taylor Stahle explore a reconfiguration of human life and settlements after a possible upheaval through short fiction. They argue that a societal collapse might be necessary for humanity and the earth to start anew and recover.

The contributions showcase the various ways this issue's topic can be profitably applied to the spatial disciplines. They also show how open to interpretation the concept of Deep Adaptation still is. It is up to future contributions to sharpen the concept's application to the organization and design of the built environment. Yet, we are hopeful that this issue is a first step, and that in the future the concept of Deep Adaptation will be further explored and operationalized in the spatial disciplines.

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