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Plant ethics or an environment for the birth of a new human? An exploration in radical ethics for sustainable architecture.

Andrea S. Wheeler

Iowa State University, andrea1@iastate.edu

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Plant ethics or an environment for the birth of a new human? An exploration in radical ethics for sustainable architecture.

Abstract

This paper critically examines literature concerned with an ethics in the multiplicity of different approaches to the design of sustainable architecture. Sustainable design theorists commonly argue for the need to perceive the world differently, to find new ways to live, to create new values to replace old: questions of ethics are implicit in such explorations.

Disciplines

Architectural History and Criticism | Architecture | Cultural Resource Management and Policy Analysis | Environmental Design | Sustainability

Comments

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Plant ethics or an environment for the birth of a new human? An exploration in radical ethics for sustainable architecture.

Andrea Wheeler, Iowa State University

This paper critically examines literature concerned with an ethics in the multiplicity of different approaches to the design of sustainable architecture. Sustainable design theorists commonly argue for the need to perceive the world differently, to find new ways to live, to create new values to replace old: questions of ethics are implicit in such explorations. If sustainable architecture is to go beyond limiting models upholding inherently exploitative relationships to the environment and other living beings, however, sustainable architecture must open its cultural horizon to new ways of thinking and being. While an ecological ethic may be argued to be inclusive, ethical in its concern for the inter-relationship of all organisms to their environments, what is at risk is the need for a social ethic in the human worlds of sustainable design. Architecture needs radically new ethical philosophies to help it reach beyond its existing discourse and in this paper, I explore some of those radical thinkers of environmental and social ethics, their critics and the implication for approaches to sustainable architecture.

Teaching Almost Natural Things

Faysal Tabbarah, American University of Sharjah

The essay problematizes the teaching about nature in undergraduate architecture education at a time of an increasing environmental crisis. Looking outside of contemporary academia and the discipline's response to this crisis through the lens of ecological ethics, the essay describes a teaching pedagogy that challenges how most contemporary undergraduate architecture education teaches about nature in a way that reinforces the hegemony of the nature/culture binary that seems implausible and irrelevant with the advent of the Anthropocene. The essay describes a teaching pedagogy that is deployed in various curricular forms (Studio, seminar, independent research) that asks students to think about architecture as an Almost Natural condition that rejects traditional geometric hierarchies, linear part-to-whole relationships, pattern making, and precision, in favor of tactical organizations a blurring of part and whole, deep textures, and the painterly or gestural.

The Eye of the Bricoleur

Gray Read, Florida International University

Who is the architect any more? In the face of environmental crisis, the cries of utopian masters of the universe ring hollow. To engage the larger ecological mission, the architect's ethical responsibility has shifted and broadened, turning focus to larger systemic issues that do not necessarily have people at the center. In this new reality, what models or myths can be cobbled together out of our tradition to construct a new stance for the future? This paper looks at the figure of the bricoleur as constructed by anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, the handyman/inventor who can improvise to remake old things to serve new purposes. In Levi-Strauss' telling, the bricoleur stands opposed to the engineer, who imagines an ideal solution to a problem. The bricoleur first studies the