

NEW GEOGRAPHIES



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EDITORIAL

NEYRAN TURAN

New Geographies started with discussions among the editors of the journal around our research topics in contemporary urbanism. The journal idea emerged as we noticed the need to create a platform for repositioning the agency of design within new scales of context that appear in our contemporary culture.

For more than a decade, architecture and urbanism have been seen as the spatial manifestation of the widespread effects of globalization. As cities became denser, they intensified in their horizontal and vertical thickness with large-scale urban development projects, yet they also became dispersed with urban sprawl. Within the design disciplines, key words such as rapid urbanization, mapping, networks, and flows affected the analyses and interpretation of emergent mutations on the spatial and urban dimension; and design attitudes toward this expanding scale tended to oscillate between research/mapping on emergent urban/global networks and the extra-large (iconic) landmark. On one hand, the production and popularity of design in contemporary culture has increased immensely, and on the other, designers are being compelled to address questions—related to infrastructural, ecological, regional, and cultural issues—that previously were confined to the domains of other disciplines. By encouraging designers to reexamine their tools and develop strategies to link attributes that had been understood to be either separate from each other or external to the design disciplines, those questions opened up a range of technical, formal, and social repertoires for architecture.

In our discussions for *New Geographies*, the idea of scale has had at least three dimensions: first, as design relates to *wider scales*; second as the potential set of issues implied by relations among *multiple scales* (architecture, landscape, ecology, planning); and third, as an *act of scaling* and re-positioning as it informs capacities to rethink new design tools and strategies (models, techniques and practices). In that context, the urgency to reconsider the expanded agency of the designer has been significant—agency both as a form of capacity in relation to new techniques and strategies, and as a faculty of acting, power, and positioning. Rather than being merely fascinated by larger contexts and their exaggerated depictions, the *New Geographies* project aims to open up discussions on how the design disciplines can reposition themselves and also reevaluate their techniques so that their *projecting* ability can have a more active and transformative impact on the forces that shape emergent urban conditions. The ambition of *New Geographies* has been to question possible frameworks that are less about mere extravagance and seduction and more about attitudes and projects.

For instance, in the last decade or so, different discussions on urban landscape, infrastructure, and networks—with their clear and necessary replacement of postwar contextualisms and their intricate emphasis on scale—saw design and infrastructure in a symbiotic relationship, resulting in vertical/sectional dispositions or topographical/operative urban surfaces. With current urban aspirations within rapidly urbanizing coordinates, however, design decisions sometimes have to come before infrastructure, where infrastructure might result from the extension of the design intervention. This condition not only marks the shifting role of infrastructure in design but also puts the pressure on the agency of the designer within a much wider contextual scale, where ecological, regional, social, and political questions come up front and where design decisions cannot simply be an innocent extension of externalities. Thus rather than reacting to a predefined context, designers are bound to redefine and shape their contexts.

As we are interested in various positionings regarding the inside and outside of our domain—of our capabilities and agencies as designers—this condition we call “the geographic” points to more than a shift in scale. If the synthesizing role that geography aspired to play among the physical, the economic, and the sociopolitical is now being increasingly shared by design, *New Geographies* is interested in the associations or linkages between the social and the physical, the form and the context, the very large and the very small.

This is issue number 0, where we wanted to set the terms and lay out the general themes of the journal—the changing scale, role of design, synthesizing aspect of geography—and bring together various formats of work, which approach the problem from different angles. For the following issues, we will explore subthemes related to our premise. We are interested in scholarly and design work (essay, project, research) that tries to take a position within possible reconfigurations of design and shares the same concerns as well as the excitements with us about the urgency to project new models, techniques, and strategies for the social and formal repertoire of architecture, landscape, and urbanism.

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