College of Architecture / Georgia Institute of Technology
ARCH 6312 / 4843 Ecological Practices / Spring 2017 / TTh 3:00 - 4:30pm
Stuart Romm, LEED AP BD+C, Professor of the Practice / stuart.romm@design.gatech.edu
Ameet Doshi, LEED AP, Georgia Tech Library / ameet.doshi@library.gatech.edu

interact or die!

Arjen Mulder, Joke Brouwer, v2 title, 2007

*"De Certeau drew a distinction between two modes of operation: **strategies**, based on place, and **tactics**, based on time. Strategies represent the practices of those in power, postulating 'a place that can be delimited as its own and serves as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats can be managed. ... In contrast, a tactic is a way of operating without a proper place, and so depends on time. As a result, tactics lack the borders necessary for designation as visible totalities: 'The place of a tactic belongs to the other.'"*

Margaret Crawford, Introduction, Everyday Urbanism, 2008

The issues posed by Margaret Crawford above, and the instructors' '3-ecologies' diagrams to the left, seemingly pivot on long-entrenched binary oppositions between the individual|collective; strategic|tactical; natural|social; physical|virtual. But as the accelerating pace of globalization has taught us, so-called natural ecologies and social ecologies are not reductive oppositions, but an intricately networked, interdependent continuity. In our digital era, can this increasingly complex web of design's ethical, ecological responsibilities and practices be re-mapped in ways more relevant to our times?

Some initial responses may lie in asking further questions related to the priority of empathy and design, and require an understanding of how to approach collective action problems. What lies at the heart of functional collective action in the context of our current era? Has unfettered technological change ushered in an era of 'unfeelingness' or even antipathy for the plight of the planet as popular culture suggests? Participants will explore social-emotional skills, such as empathy and compassion, in order to functionally and productively mediate the frictions inherent between dueling systems as we attempt to improve the existing order.

This interdisciplinary, experimental seminar/workshop will investigate what techniques in design thinking could harness the efficiencies of fundamentally uniform systems while still optimizing the latitude for individual variation and adaptability. Current policy practices to be interrogated in this course will span from affordable housing programs to 'green' rating systems such as EarthCraft, Green Globe, and LEED. One learning outcome will be to gain some practical insight into the social, cultural and logistical requirements for participatory design and how to engage productively with communities negatively impacted, environmentally and otherwise, by a decaying social contract.

Course procedure & organization:
Part 1: Unpack readings that examine interactions between natural and built environments and design practice's role within these, and present them to the seminar for discussion.
Part 2: Formulate your own ecological design research topic and methodology, and present them for constructive feedback from the seminar.
Part 3: Engage ecological design case-studies of your own choosing for their embedded lessons as the next step in the research process, and present them for discussion.
Part 4: Develop your lines of design research with proposals for new ecological design principles and applications, and present them for feedback from the seminar and community stakeholders. Course deliverables may include using new multimedia modes for communicating ideas, such as podcasts, short film, social media, data visualization, infographics, even street art or other modes of interacting inspired by tactical urbanism.

Course requirements: Grades are weighted as follows: Reading presentation + class participation (25% of course grade); midterm exam (25% of course grade); formulation of eco-design research topic/methodology + case study presentation (25% of course grade); final eco-design proposal + graphic or media presentation (25% of course grade).