

Architecture Otherwise: Building Civic Infrastructure for Collective Futures

Cities - and the ways people live within them - have transformed fundamentally in the last few decades. The hard margins and borders that once defined and codified urban spaces have blurred, extending into realms once unimagined. Urban boundaries now stretch across cultures and communities, surpassing national borders and the concerns of the nation-state, and reaching into digital and virtual realms. These shifts introduce new catalysts of urbanization and ways of recognizing the urban: not only through physical infrastructure, but also through mobile devices, digital consumption and the associated social patterns they engender.

Today, urbanisation shapes nearly every facet of experience; few parts of the world remain untouched by its influence. Social, economic, political, technological and ecological forces now collide within a vast, tangled fabric of connectivity that structures how we move, work and communicate. Every shift reverberates across this global web, unsettling established ways of belonging. In a world characterised by constant movement – of people, goods, ideas and beings - urban territories stand at the forefront of the urgent effort to rebuild the human collective and to stabilise and improve our fragile shared futures.

What role does architecture play in this dynamic, where populations are tenuously connected by mega-infrastructure networks that are emerging in some places, and crumbling or inadequate in others? When absolute definitions and certainties no longer serve us, how can architecture foster new forms of connection?

Traditional architecture practice is limited by its professionalization and standardization, often focusing on spectacle and iconic structures, or offering context-free "solutions" to problems that demand localized responses. Our unsettled world calls for a different approach – one that reimagines the urban through values of interdependence, hospitality and care; that creates spaces for shared life, mutual recognition and collective possibility; and that facilitates processes for living and prospering together, rather than merely imposing form.

To meet these challenges, the third edition of the Sharjah Architecture Triennial adopts a multi-disciplinary approach, exploring architecture through the lens of anthropology: a practice grounded in the importance of human relationships, everyday life and cultural contexts. This approach opens up architecture to deeper forms of connection, rooted in local realities yet attentive to global conditions. To shape meaningful futures, we must work collectively, drawing from regional histories, and remain open to difference. Instead of applying 'architecture as-usual', we must practice ***Architecture Otherwise***.

Architecture Otherwise will embed the Triennial into the city and the Emirate of Sharjah, to challenge everyone who encounters it - expanding the view of those who feel empowered, while inviting those on the margins to speak, share and shape. This edition

will contribute directly to SAT's ongoing research and experimentation, bringing design and social thinking into closer dialogue. Collaborations with cultural institutions, built environment practitioners and communities across the Gulf and Global South will examine how urbanization is unfolding and being contested across diverse contexts.

As we map these changes, we will also reflect on the changing roles of art, design and architecture themselves. Working with local and international practitioners, we will host residencies, installations, performances, exhibitions, demonstration and story-telling events. Through drawing, building, voicing, sounding, listening and gathering, we will open up new spaces for action, exploring architecture's place – and potential – in a hyper-urbanized world.