Nikolaus Hirsch, Julieta Aranda,
Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle

Editorial — "Architecture as Intangible Infrastructure," Issue Two

More than ever, architects today are called upon to build gestural landmarks and grandiose signature buildings. But architecture was never only about building. It is also about the flows of people, information, and resources that shape space. Today, the practice of architecture often confronts situations where these flows cannot be reduced to modernist managerial approaches to systematizing, structuring, and mastering the potentials of space.

In a two-part "Architecture as Intangible Infrastructure" issue of *e-flux journal* edited together with Nikolaus Hirsch, the intangible and immaterial flows that today appear to exceed the language of building proper are shown by a number of architects to be made not only of space, but also of information. The first issue of "Architecture as Intangible Infrastructure" last April featured essays by Justin McGuirk on the smart home as the site where companies are jockeying for control over the protocols that will data-mine domestic life; Eyal Weizman on the negative spaces created (or used) by warfare that become primary material witnesses after the destruction of buildings and societies; and Keller Easterling on the information carried in space and in the architect's mindfulness, and how they already supersede the promises of technology's universal transcendentalism to make architecture dance to immaterial instructions.

Crucially, these flows of information cannot be reduced to a technological apparatus or a simple update of modern architecture's formalism to include new technologies, as architecture's craze for parametric modeling in the 1980s and '90s promised to do. The new computational tools and calculating power of this period seemed to provide the means of designing outrageous buildings at incredible speed, but which would actually stand up in real space as well. The new technologies of today, however, seem to reveal the opposite: a new impossibility of building, either due to the ethical transgressions of clients (or architects themselves) or to the sheer scale of humanitarian need, both of which the traditional field of architecture proper seems unprepared to address. It is actually through ethical, historical, economic, and social apparatuses that today's information flows are placing the greatest stresses on the formal language that architects have been trained in. The question then becomes whether this language can remain relevant in designing spectacular parametric signposts for concentrations of heritage, capital, and tourism.

In this issue, Andrew Herscher asks how architects can approach the question of emergency housing when flows of refugees are fed into housing markets faster than provisional shelters can be built. Sold under the auspices of

what Herscher terms "digital shelter," the replacement of housing solutions with credit takes for granted that a network of market demand can stretch to provide even emergency relief to the most disenfranchised. For Jorge Otero-Pailos, "monumentaries" architecturally combine the performativity of fiction with the fidelity of documentary. When faced with the anachronistic and often contradictory task of narrating a historical monument or heritage site, preservation design can only create entirely new theaters for staging memory.

WBYA? (Who Builds Your Architecture?) maps the convergence of human rights issues with processes of architectural design and construction logistics by tracing the drafting and fabrication of a steel truss as it approaches a construction site to meet the migrant workers who also travel from abroad to install it. Artist Taryn Simon's image essay documents objects taken or removed by workers from the construction site of Frank Gehry's building for the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris. And Beatriz Colomina looks at the influence of Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen's X-ray technology and the unwritten story of its influence over an era of early modernist avant-gardes captivated by the spatial promises of a shadowy screen that could peer through matter. If technological advances often transform the function and perception of space much in the way that X-ray technology's heretical transparency created the prospect of a world of pure visibility – through walls, people, and materials – then it also rearranges spaces formerly considered to be inside or outside. Suddenly everything and everyone is included, and everything and everyone is excluded. The distinction becomes impossible to manage.