

The Promises and Problems of Lowering Architectural Standards

Cheaper housing, cheaper materials, less space, less energy, less investment, less climate control, fewer codes, less durability. Less planning and more self-organization. Less concern with beauty and more concern with the basics ...

— In times of crisis, the lowering of architectural standards seems like a sensible thing to do, a healthy diet to eliminate the purported decadence of academia and rehabilitate the discipline's moral credibility and social relevance. Moreover, it promises something that both alternative grass-root community builders and capitalist investors often agree on: deregulation of bureaucratic control and oversight in the name of freedom and diversity.

This seminar investigates the areas of architecture, building, and urbanism in which lowering standards might make sense today. Where could deregulation be socially and ecologically responsible as well as enriching? Conversely, we will also seek to identify cases in which lower standards could be detrimental, leading to an enduring loss of quality in the built environment, to spatial incongruities and social hardships, to a loss of technical skills and artistry, or to a destabilization of democracy itself.

— Taking the 2016 La Biennale exhibition Reporting from the Front as a starting point, the seminar closely examines recent calls to reform the architectural profession.

The seminar will meet for three days in the form of an open, one-hour discussion.

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