

Affirming Forces: Race, Ethnicity, and Power

Right to Heal: Architecture in the Age of Reparations

Esra Akcan

This talk identifies our time as an era awaiting for transitional justice and energy transition. It explores architecture's role in healing societies after conflicts and disasters by discussing buildings and spaces in relation to these transitions-to-come. To insist on imagining a better future may be the most meaningful resistance against destructive powers in times of crisis. How reversible is the damage due to internal social conflicts? How does a post-disaster society accomplish justice through architecture? There is considerable literature on repairs and reconstructions after international wars, but the topic of transitions after internal racial, social, state or business-led aggressions is underexplored.

This talk is part of the author's book-in-progress, which critically examines opportunistic responses to crises that foreclose the right-to-heal and identifies practices that move toward a more meaningful reconstitution. It shows the role of the designed environment in the much-needed debates of accountability, reckoning with the past and reparations, by demonstrating how present scars and wounds have deep roots in history. The study locates spaces of political and ecological harm and makes a call to repurpose them as healing spaces. It defines healing spaces as programs and places where violence and violations are confronted, and accountability and reparations are instituted.