

## **EXTENDED UNIT BRIEF**

### **DEEP ADAPTATION**

Diploma Six 2019/20

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“It is already too late to escape the worst consequences of global warming.

To avoid widespread societal collapse, our relationship with the natural world must be rethought from first principles. A deep adaptation must occur, and this process demands a reflection on new forms of life and coexistence, new material cultures, forms of growth and, ultimately, new ways of thinking about habitat and architecture.

Today’s development industry, housing markets, economic models, and systems of resource management will not survive the coming decades. A new deal must be struck between humanity and our planet; a negotiation between the poles of desperate techno-optimism and an impossible return to primitivism. For architects, this means rapidly developing radical alternatives: new categories of design, ownership, construction, economics, planning and infrastructure.

Over the last two years, there has been a great public awakening around humanity’s impact on the environment. This sudden shift has led to a rising popularity of ‘sustainable’ design amongst architects. But sustainability is entirely the wrong term. Sustainability aims to avoid resource depletion and achieve ecological balance. However, by focussing on maintenance, sustainability is not able to move beyond the status quo in meaningful ways. All sustainability can hope for is mitigation and management. Instead, we argue for the concept of ‘deep adaptation’.

But, what does it mean to adapt? Adaptation is a responsive change in state. It is often rapid, necessary and urgent. Adaptation is the violent undercurrent to macro evolution. Adaptation has no preconditions and makes no assumptions. It is purely pragmatic and focussed on survival. The analysis of the home – which is the focus of Diploma 6 – invites us to reflect on urgent issues, and to rethink the notion of habitat and its global impact from first principles. The very definition of home implies a dualism: our homes, are at the same time an object and a hyperobject. An object, since they are a discrete archetype of domesticity and bound up with the house as a technical materialisation. And a hyperobject, since a home is not only a cultural construction, but also a set of relationships that cannot be thought of as detached from the environment, energy, resources, waste, economy, politics, as well as affections and other forms of representation.

Deep adaptation is not about a speculative future, but the extreme present. Diploma Six will focus on preparing architects for radically different conditions. Our aim is to understand how the social figure of the architect might react and, ultimately, how deep adaptation will impact domestic space and contemporary forms of life.”

## **ANNUAL OVERVIEW**

### **Term 1**

This term is split into two halves, separated by the “unit trip”. The first half will begin with a word-association game to draw out both our deepest anxieties about global warming and our most wild fantasies about a utopian future. From this, we will split into 6 pairs to execute a programme of accelerated research. Each team will take responsibility for one of the following fields, and will be charged with communicating their findings to the rest of the unit:

- **Environment: Scarcity and Abundance**
  - This field will examine energy, resource availability and management (including land use and food production), infrastructure and housing node–network autonomy. To what extent is the environment an invention?
- **Actors: Economic and Political**
  - This field will investigate business and corporate models, especially those with social purposes (B-companies, foundations, charities, institutional frameworks). It will also examine connections between global warming and political extremism.
- **Markets: Demographics and Desires**
  - This field will study global political and demographic trends, including migration push-pull factors, aging and other population trends. It will also consider the future of housing and property markets.
- **Materials: Usage and Abuse**
  - This field looks at materials, their lifecycles, ideas of waste, use, adaptive reuse, misuses and abuse. It will cover the circular economy in the built environment, Cradle-to-Cradle design and a survey of contemporary material innovation.
- **Money: Finance and Ownership**
  - What are the current models of development and residential financing? Are there historical precedents we can draw on, and how does finance affect ownership and forms of occupancy? Are there alternative, unexpected models to adopt?
- **Being: Systems and Objects**
  - This is a more philosophical research field, which requires substantial reading and finding accessible ways to discuss contemporary concepts of objecthood, ontology and systems.

At this stage we will be focussing on global and large-scale research. Each group overlaps with another to promote collective discovery. This process will feed into the “unit trip”: a 7-day workshop at a property close to London. Invited guests will join us for seminars, panels, film screenings and presentations. The purpose of the “unit trip” is to provide the unit with a common knowledge base. We want to front-load skills and ideas.

At the end of the first stage, we will move into individual research. Each unit member should develop a personal brief by combining conditions of geographic location, social programme, material response, urban strategy and financial model, etc. This will involve a practical application of the initial research. The second half of Term 1 will focus on developing individual briefs, communications and the role of identity and graphic design, and the production of a collective publication.

## **Term 2**

This term is also split into two stages, split by a “unit retreat”. The first stage of Term 2 will focus on design development and material experimentation (to tie in with Environmental and Technical Studies). Our objective will be to site each project in a specific context, and to bring the full force of economic, political and environmental models to bear on a singular “model” home. The scale of the home will be defined by the student’s concept of the “family” being examined.

The “unit retreat”, which might also take place over the Easter Break, subject to unit agreement, will allow for an intensive period of design development. The second stage of Term 2 will focus on finalising the design brief, and developing communication and identity briefs. We will also finalise the publication during the second stage.

## **Easter**

We will conduct 2 tutorial “check-in” sessions over the 4 weeks.  
During this time, the unit publication will go to print

## **Term 3**

There are only effectively five weeks in Term 3, because of the various Preview and Tables deadlines. This stage will be used for final presentation and representation development, public speaking and “portfolio” completion.

## **READING LIST**

*Ballard, J. G. Hello America: A Novel. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013.*

*Ballard, J. G. The Drowned World. London: HarperCollins UK, 2010.*

*Baudrillard, Jean. America. Brooklyn: Verso, 1989.*

*Becker, Michael, Anarcho-Primitivism: The Green Scare in Green Political Theory (April 1, 2010). Western Political Science Association 2010 Annual Meeting Paper Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1580329>*

*Bendell, Jem, Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy, IFLAS Occasional Paper 2, July 27th 2018.*

*Bogost, Ian. Alien Phenomenology, Or, What It's Like to be a Thing. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.*

*Brand, Stewart. The Essential whole earth catalog: access to tools and ideas. Main Street Books, 1986.*

*Brenner, Neil. Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization. 2014.*

*Coccia, Emanuele, and Dylan J. Montanari. The Life of Plants: a Metaphysics of Mixture. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2019.*

*Diamond, Jared M. Guns, Germs, and Steel: the Fates of Human Societies. New York: Norton, 2017.*

*Graeber, David. Debt: The First 5000 Years. London: Penguin UK, 2012.*

*Harman, Graham. Object-Oriented Ontology: a New Theory of Everything. London: Pelican Books, 2018.*

*Latour, Bruno, and Catherine Porter. We Have Never Been Modern. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.*

*Lazzarato, Maurizio, and Joshua D. Jordan. Governing by Debt. Mit / Bradford, 2014.*

*Lefebvre, Henri. The Production of Space. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992.*

*Morton, Timothy. Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.*

*Morton, Timothy. Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.*

*Pollin, Robert. De-Growth vs a Green New Deal, New Left Review 112, July/Aug. 2018 pp. 5-25.*

*Rovelli, Carlo. The Order of Time. London: Penguin UK, 2018.*

*Selcer, Perrin. The Postwar Origins of the Global Environment: How the United Nations Built Spaceship Earth. Columbia Studies in International and Global History, 2018.*

*Sessions, George. Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century. Boston: Shambhala, 1995.*

*Simondon, Gilbert. On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects. Univocal Publishing, 2016.*

*Vogel, Steven. Thinking Like a Mall: Environmental Philosophy After the End of Nature. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015.*

*Warde, Paul, Libby Robin, and Sverker Sörlin. The Environment: A History of the Idea. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018.*