

35 Meridians of Radical Rituals



On revolutionising the ways
we manage and envision
our communal space

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In March 2020 the world went into an unprecedented lockdown. COVID-19 had us facing the terrifying challenge of losing touch with the joys of community, productivity and the natural world. The resulting and continuing dramatic developments have exposed the fragility of a lifestyle resulting from decades of neoliberal policies prioritising profit over people. The evident obsolescence of public services, the mismanagements of migration and, last but not perhaps most urgent, the failure in addressing the climate crisis in a coordinated manner, have demonstrated the need to revolutionise the ways in which we manage and envision our communal space.

35 Meridians of Radical Rituals is an attempt to imagine how architecture can reinvent itself to support this venture. It is an itinerant survey along the 45°N parallel that aspires to elevate an arbitrary line into a symbolic space, a path that crosses climates, geographies and borders marked by socio-economic and geo-political struggles, where movements of people, knowledge and goods formed the hybrid place we call Europe. The 45°N parallel separates the “south” we come from and the “north” where we currently live and work, shifting notions of centre and periphery and speculating on a different understanding of borders as threshold spaces, where the friction of diversity and its generative power can invent new modes of coexistence.

Along this line, we are in search of individual and collective practices that create a new understanding of the commons, where glimpses of radical innovation point to possible alternative futures. Actions that intend to produce effects rather than objects and mainly survive through maintenance and care. In fact, everyday responses to the unprecedented crisis of our times, show the power of community in inventing new modes of thinking and making.

45°

45° is an architecture and urban design practice dedicated to the critical making of collective space. After graduating together from the MAS in Urban Design at ETH Zurich in 2012, Alkistis Athanasia Thomidou and Gian Maria Socci worked in different countries on cutting-edge projects and have been awarded in many competitions such as Rethink Athens, AAA architetticercasi, European 12, and more. Between them, they have taught at ETH Zurich, TU Braunschweig, INDA Bangkok and CanActions School in Ukraine.

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Map showing the cities that lie on the 45° north meridian line. Image: 45°

1 “The Architecture of Degrowth”, Phineas Harper, *Dezeen*, September 25, 2019. [dezeen.com/2019/09/25/oslo-architecture-triennale-architecture-degrowth-phineas-harper/](https://www.dezeen.com/2019/09/25/oslo-architecture-triennale-architecture-degrowth-phineas-harper/) (accessed April 22, 2020).

Our feed is full of these actions, although we often overlook or miss them. At a time when “relationships have been converted to services and commons to commodities”, these spontaneous practices show great potential to meet contemporary ecological, economic and societal challenges. We consider these examples as rituals, because of their power to create ties of kinship, foster inclusion and spatial identity.¹

Archifutures

Rituals strengthen the capacity of collective action to reach ambitious goals. Their emergence gives hope for an unexpected resurgence of the commons, that encourages new forms of citizenship and new types of care for life forms. When supported by accessible technologies and social media that offer space for subcultures, situations, gestures and habits, they keep people productive and more connected than ever before. We believe that architects should embrace their modes of operation to reimagine the future of living together across physical and digital space. What collective actions will nurture common space? How will technologies shape new understandings of the commons? What pioneering spatial configurations are generated by cultural crossing and climate change?

Our research outlines a hybrid urban culture where new traditions, memories and technologies shape radical practices of commoning grounded on spatial justice and environmental awareness while questioning the outdated notions of public vs. private, top-down vs. bottom-up, culture vs. nature that still define our communal life. ■