

A MULTISPECIES URBANISM MANIFESTO

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Multispecies urbanism is a just urban development and spatial practice generated by creating reciprocal relations between humans and more-than-humans. Through this spatial-ecological practice it extends the right to the city and the right to the urban metabolism to an alliance of more-than-humans.

Multispecies urbanism puts forward a just urban development, a policy and a practice driven by giving primacy to reciprocal relations between humans and more-than-humans. In its twelve tenets it reorients urbanisation processes towards the strategies of more-than-humans as a means of surviving societies' crises of democracy, planetary climate catastrophe, and uneven resource distribution. Describing methods, values and domains in which the natural world's inhabitants acquire agency, and in which humans become participants in these multispecies communities, this new urban planning and design paradigm has yet to take place.

01 (Multispecies urbanism's problem statement and societal relevance)

Multispecies urbanism forges human – more-than-human reciprocal relations within the context of ecological care, nesting 'urban growth' within imaginaries of ecological exchange.

Urbanization driven by continual growth is at the root of our current social and environmental crises. This growth-imperative exacerbates unequal access to urban resources and leaves imaginaries of care and repair unconsidered. Plant and soil ecosystems give examples of non-extractive interspecies spatial practice, from which the regeneration of (urban) soils and plant ecosystems emerges through care and repair. Multispecies urbanism wrests us from the whorl and suction of obsessive resource extraction by resituating urban growth from a financial to an ecological imaginary. By repositioning human agency in a facilitating role, multispecies urbanism generates new imaginaries, relationships and tools to achieve economic resilience.

02 (What and who is multispecies)

Our relational selves and bodies ARE the urban ecosystems, and our urban ecosystems ARE our embodied selves.

Multispecies urbanism considers humans to be multispecies entities, thus recognising their health and well-being as connected with the natural world. Our urban ecosystems literally are our bodies with which we must remain in continuous exchange if we are to survive. This means that the flora of our urban guts is in relation with the flora of our urban woodlands in relation with the flora of our urban meadows. That we are related and integral to urban natures simply means that urban natures are related and integral to themselves. Climate crises, plummeting biodiversity and global pandemics all demand that multispecies urban practices enhance

ecological and social resilience – through repositioning our role as an empowered urban nature within what it means to be more-than-human.

03 (On the methods of multispecies urbanism)

By engaging new knowledges and pedagogies, multispecies urbanism's interspecies collaboration propagates a grassroots praxis across disciplinary silos.

The methods of multispecies urbanism tease out emergent ecological patterns in which problem solving requires negotiating diverse material domains through interspecies material collaboration. Multispecies urbanism's ecological emulation and facilitation surpasses often applied 'nature inclusive' strategies which effectively gentrify landscapes and perpetuate a non-democratic approach to ecosystem management. This ambitious level of inclusion engages new knowledges and pedagogies, propagating a grassroots praxis across disciplinary silos.

04 (How multispecies urbanism works and with whom)

By forging more-than-human alliances, multispecies urbanism stewards (urban) ecosystems as a recourse to our crises of democracy, biodiversity loss and catastrophic climate change.

Environmentally just and democratic urban natures can only be produced through the cultivation of a more-than-human alliance and an organized social practice. Recognising our own bodies as multispecies and part of a microbiome not only rejects a nature-society binary, it predicates forging such alliances within a multispecies whole. Addressing our current crises of democracy, catastrophic climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental justice requires that civil society collaborate with urban soils, woodlands, public space landscaping and their requisite plant, animal and microbial communities in ecosystem regeneration efforts.

05 (On multispecies urbanism's foundational values)

Multispecies urbanism demands decoupling the production of basic resources from capital accumulation and speculation.

Perceiving food, water, health, and public space as commons is the first step towards implementing climate, environmental, and food justice. The commodification of basic resources and the effects of global urbanisation – planetary climate crisis compounded by crises of democracy – are recognised to affect urban inhabitants unevenly. Leveraging natural world examples of use value provides a template with which to decouple basic resources and production costs from capital accumulation and speculation. Multispecies urbanism guides consumption towards sustainable levels through spatial practices that follow natural world examples manifest in interspecies relationalities of resource use and sharing.

06 (On the role of knowledge production, methodologies, learning and dissemination)

Multispecies urbanism valorises learning through practicing reciprocal relationships with the natural world.

Curricula rooted in agroecology and regenerative agriculture critically address extractive relationships and propose multispecies alliances that can solve pressing socioecological problems. Observational acumen honed through awareness of processes occurring over time structure perceptions towards natural world stewardship. An example includes monitoring e.g., ecological succession through seasons; plant communities wandering through locations; and habitats accommodating more diverse plant and animal life as part of a more than human alliance. Intergenerational learning, dissemination and collective practice, uncompromising in their attitude towards care, define multispecies urbanism's educational values. Multispecies urbanism valorises learning through practicing reciprocal relationships with the natural world.

07 (On the role of urban natures and landscape architecture)

The design and care of urban natures characterised by multispecies urbanism support multispecies ecosystems and extend the imaginary of landscape architecture beyond the culture of monocultures.

Preparing for the great greening, multispecies urbanism requires public landscapes to combat urban heat islands; sequester water and carbon in urban soils; defragment biotopes of key insect, microbial and animal species; and provide habitat and food resources such as nectar for pollinators and high value nutrition for humans. Traditional spatial planning entangles urban natures in design legacies that impede how species thrive. Following examples from perennial landscapes (e.g. living soils and woodland ecosystems), multispecies urbanism designs with the ensemble of relations in mind, incorporating meaningful contributions from the socio-ecological community at large. The design and care of urban natures characterised by multispecies urbanism support multispecies ecosystems and extend the imaginary of landscape architecture beyond the culture of monocultures.

08 (On the role of agricultural production)

Multispecies urbanism decommodifies food production. Its agriculture defragments ecosystems and is driven by carbon and water sequestration in living soils.

Industrial agriculture neither provides the staples of a healthy diet nor distributes food fairly. It is the main source of climate emissions, land-take, the destruction of living soils and forest ecosystems, and associated social problems. Recognising agriculture's role in urbanization, multispecies urbanism calls for the decommodification of

food production, the establishment of urban food commons in urban greens and peri-urban farming that produces healthy food for nearby communities. Regenerative urban agriculture based on nutritious perennial and tree crops is rooted in a long-term spatial planning with roles for peri-urban and urban agriculture. Multispecies urbanism decommodifies food production. Its agriculture defragments ecosystems and is driven by carbon and water sequestration in living soils.

09 (On the role of architecture)

Architectures characterised by multispecies urbanism articulate a spatialization and materialization that give primacy to multispecies relations, resource use and critical spatial practice.

Going beyond stylistic biomimicry, multispecies architectures are ambitious in amplifying the natural world's ongoing demand for resources. A characteristic of these architectures is their ability to defragment landscapes for urban more-than-humans by intentionally maximising the surface and subsurface as habitat and food. Surfaces so designed and constructed for multispecies interaction enable multispecies spatial practices through their materiality and layered production of space. Additionally, when urban woodlands and landscaping are understood as integral to the urban infrastructure, planners and engineers efficiently design subsoil spaces, leaving ample room for the living. By stacking functions, planners, architects and designers engage in intentional habitat, food and spatial production.

10 (On the role of technology)

The technologies of multispecies urbanism produce relational understandings that focus on fostering the needs of a more-than-human alliance and that emerge from the experiential domain of care.

Technologies stemming from the culture of extraction propagate impoverished imaginaries that see the natural realm as an exchange resource bound to an efficiency myth. Such technologies pose an existential threat to urban ecosystems and natural realm well-being. Some examples of technologies that serve multispecies cities give insight into; the quality and volume of local nectar resources, the rate of urban woodland carbon and water sequestration, presence or reduction of urban heat island, habitat availability for different species, the health effects of foraging commons on humans and more-than-humans. Focussed on the needs of a more-than-human alliance and emerging from the experiential domain of care, these multispecies indigenized technologies provide insights beyond voyeurism.

11 (On the role of governance)

Multispecies governance tunes itself to the temporalities of the natural realm and networks of more-than-

human alliances that are embedded in practice.

Focussed on facilitating processes between municipal and more-than-human stakeholders, multispecies governance tunes itself to natural world temporalities and networks. In this way, the rhythms of the seasons guide civic infrastructures and projects, and essential urban resources reach the more-than-human stakeholders that depend on them. As in the natural world, redundancy of functions is perceived as a quality. Setting our sights on governance structures on equal footing with citizens and as members of a more-than-human alliance, civic institutions work from the understanding that in a multispecies approach, cultivating dependencies with the natural world is a precious resource.

12 (On transitioning to multispecies urbanism)

Transitioning to multispecies urbanism requires applying a praxis of reciprocal interspecies and interdisciplinary relations to generate and drive just urban processes.

Cities are a logical place to initiate a multispecies approach despite their smaller footprint. In comparison to rural areas, cities are rich resources of material flows and socio-infrastructure dynamism. This contrasts with current thinking, which foists climate mitigation tasks upon less-resourced rural stakeholders and individual urban inhabitants, both human and more-than-human. The socioecological granularity of cities and requisite spatial practices of human-to-more-than-human communities affords opportunities for experimentation with ecological and institutional infrastructures at different scales and with diverse approaches. Instead of addressing the symptoms of resource extraction and redistribution as problematic afterthoughts, climate crisis mitigation, habitat defragmentation, environmental and food justice can generate and drive urban processes.

Conclusion

Multispecies urbanism is a spatial and socioecological practice of extending the right to the city and the right to the urban metabolism to more-than-humans.

This manifesto articulates how humans joining more-than-humans, i.e., the natural realm, can emulate deliberate acts of resource provision and intentional acts of care. This process involves the more-than-human as an ever-present, ever-labouring urban inhabitant – and as a citizen. Human survival depends on the regenerative power and inclusion of urban natures – a more-than-human alliance which includes ourselves. Recognising our entanglement in these interspecies relationships, multispecies urbanism aims at the radical inclusion of more-than-humans as citizens with an equal right to the city, which logically then contains a right to its spaces and resources. This particular right demands a moral right to the entire urban metabolism.

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