An Ethics of Persistence versus an Attitude of Resistance

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Based on attitudes that emerged in discussions in a graduate course on leadership in architecture, this paper considers learned positions of resistance and the ethics of persistence in architectural practice as a response and venue for change, transformation, and innovation. The malaise expressed, revealed or betrayed by students often sets architectural practice and the circumstance within which it operates as something to work against rather than a framework to flourish within.

The graduate course taught by the author, Leadership In Architecture’s objectives will be outlined, leading into an exploration of resistance versus applied persistence as attitudes in the field. Implementing ideas shifts the scale and timeframe of the ambitions. The creative and expanded practice in its varying forms is considered as a critical tool for imagining futures and building towards them. Rebecca Solnit’s outlooks on alternative attitudes of change will frame the discussion on the ethical role of teaching persistence as a responsive tool in architectural practice at the scale of its applied implementation. Persistence demands a shift to look at the repercussions of an act rather than concentrate on a defensive reaction to an existing system. As an
alternative to confrontational opposition that seeks obliteration, a power resides in alterations. Alterations towards productive consequence within the layered and complex sequence of production.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Catherine Hamel is an associate professor of architecture in the Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary, Canada. Her interests lie in the active principles of architecture as an instrument of conversion. Born in Beirut, Lebanon, Hamel’s themes investigated to date include identity and estrangement in the context of post-war reconstruction and exile; memory in the scarred body and the voicing of political experiences in public space. Her current research explores restorative development and the ability to activate space and its inhabitants towards a more just society. What agitates her is not the sides people take, but the lines they draw in order to be able to take them.