



Public Interest Design, Pragmatism, and Potentials in a Postdiluvian City

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In this paper, we explore the roles and responsibilities of the architect and architectural education in addressing complex water issues. The scholarship highlights the importance of collaborative design efforts and small-scale interventions to address values, understanding, and function in the face of urban complexity and the effects of climate change in New Orleans. Design-build projects of the Albert and Tina Small Center for Collaborative Design, the community design center of the Tulane School of Architecture, serve as a vehicle to reflect on both the evolution of public interest design practice and definitions of pragmatism. Our intent is to underscore

and one-quarter of Louisiana's wetlands.³ Satellite images of the "shrinking" boot of Louisiana, shifts in population nodes, and household decisions to relocate all reflect the confluent realities of a sediment-starved ecosystem and rising sea levels.⁴ New Orleans sits on a complex panarchy of nature, extractive economies, and layers of humanmade interventions working to control a constantly mutable system.⁵

New Orleans rests on a land that is young and infirm (delta muck really), and the city increasingly lies below sea level.⁶ Seemingly distant, the levees block the sight of much of the water surrounding the city, yet the humid air is ubiquitously present. At the same