

Letter from the Editors

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Dear SPECTRA Readers,

In recent years, the discourse around resilience has generated controversy among activists and scholars. Construed as adaptability and capacity to resist external pressures, resilience has often been rendered an admirable feature of indigenous populations, readily appropriable to neoliberal narratives and practices. In this context, Julian Reid has advanced a critical intervention in the discourse, challenging the pervasive assumption that resilience is an unequivocally desirable quality and, ultimately, questioning whether it remains a useful concept today. SPECTRA decided to dedicate issue 6.2 to the topic of resilience, not so much to resolve the question, but rather to present resilience as a multilayered term interfacing with global struggles, precarious subjectivities, and aesthetic representations.

First is an interview with Julian Reid who discusses his influences, milestones, and latest projects with the SPECTRA team.

Ben Taylor, in response to Reid's work, offers a philosophical account of resilience as a dialectic, thus rehabilitating the concept. For Taylor, "the creative subject requires a subject capable of first resisting that which threatens to overwhelm it so that it can move onto more vibrant modes of being: it requires the resilient subject."

Francois Debrix reflects on Reid's critique by reviewing two recent exhibits at the International Center of Photography Museum in New York City to place the concept of resilience in the contemporary context of human insecurity and violence. Debrix shows how the notion of resilient life is uncritically espoused by some contemporary artists and photographers.

Timothy Luke investigates the potentially neo-Orientalist narratives at work in the geopolitics of the Anthropocene, specifically as a continued "Occidental cartography for mapping embedded cultural, economic and political inequalities with technological, racial or ethnonational coordinates." As the analysis of the Anthropocene considers machine technology, European culture, and capitalist modernity nearly without exception, Luke challenges the notion that the Anthropocene unfolds purely based on scientific evidence, showing that its narrative fits along the assumptions of ethnic, racial, and technological lines.

Ashleigh Breske discusses practices of biopiracy as part of a global regime in which patents and intellectual property function as a technologically-mediated continuation of colonialism. In her article, Breske shows how “the western legal system and international intellectual property law have commodified indigenous knowledge and traditional resources.” Moreover, Breske suggests that “theories on biocolonialism allows us to see how biopiracy has commodified traditional resources and indigenous knowledge by transnational corporations under neoliberal economic practices.”

And finally, Leigh McKagen casts a critical light on heroism in the Anthropocene, while advancing her own reading of Donna Haraway’s notion of “making kin.” Following Haraway’s suggestion that “it matters what stories tell stories,” McKagen acknowledges the potential in more multispecies collaborative stories in regards to a feminist narrative of the Anthropocene. However, McKagen also situates the limitations of Haraway’s position by considering the continued legacies of imperialism and coloniality within Western ideas of modernity, which, largely, get left out of Haraway’s own reading.

In other news, SPECTRA is pleased to announce that Shelby Ward and Mario Khreiche have successfully completed their tenures as co-editors, an experience they consider to be as instructive as it was rewarding. Going forward, Caroline Alphin will direct the journal’s affairs as the new editor. She will be assisted by incoming editors elect Emma Stamm and Robert Flahive. SPECTRA readers may look forward to the team’s future efforts.

Lastly, SPECTRA would like to thank all authors, reviewers, advisory board members, ASPECT faculty, the Virginia Tech Library, and VT Publishing for making this issue possible. We would also like to thank the Global Forum on Urban and Regional Resilience for facilitating the interview with Julian Reid.