

# GRAD starter

**PROJECT TITLE:** Beyond Sharing: New Architectures and Economies

**PROJECT TAGLINE/CAPTION** (160 characters): An interdisciplinary lecture series and symposium that examines how today's sharing economies impact the built environment—within and beyond architecture.

**IMAGE:**



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Name of Group/Organization: PLAT Journal and Rice Architecture

## PROJECT DETAILS

Provide a description of the project.

The umbrella term “sharing economy” collects a wide range of online business exchanges and platforms, from AirBnB to Zillow. Its impact actively shapes how we live and do business. “Beyond Sharing: New Architectures and Economies” begins with this movement and will create discourse that imagines its future.

The proposed presentations begin with the research of the lecturers in their various realms of expertise and, through dialogue, will open new connections. Some of the invited speakers are active proponents of the sharing economy, while others critically examine how and where the paragons of tech-enabled sharing fall short. The goal is not necessarily to argue for or against these new economies, but rather to invite a range of expertise to create an interdisciplinary understanding of how they affect our lives.

Most of the built environment, it could be argued, are shared spaces. Historic typologies of physical public space include plazas, living rooms, libraries, waiting areas, museums, and cohousing schemes. These places often form the spaces in which myriad sociological, cultural, and technological forces exist and intersect. Today, digitally platforms, silently supported by vast physical infrastructures, facilitate new types of exchange. These contemporary platforms offer liberating possibilities to radically alter networks of food, shelter, transportation, and labor. Yet, for every emancipatory path, an equally shadowy one exists. Digitally-mediated sharing can mask ever more opaque forms of capital exchange, enabling black market transactions that traditionally operated outside of the flows of global capital.

“Beyond Sharing” will be organized in concerted effort with PLAT 7.0, the forthcoming issue of PLAT, an independent student-run journal from Rice Architecture. The lecture series explores the sharing economy at multiple scales. Correspondingly, PLAT has invited lecturers who each work at specific scales, facilitating an understanding of how sharing works across all sizes of its influence.

At the scale of the body and cognition, we are encouraged to share content, documents, and thoughts. We trail a massive wake of data to be sifted through by corporations and governments every time we surf the web, ask Alexa a question, or allow our phones and wearables to trace our steps. At this scale, Tom Slee and Nicolas John deftly outline how we increasingly share content generated online through massive corporations, and analyze the repercussions of such practices.

At the architectural scale, home and ride-sharing companies possess household name status, while various jurisdictions contest their legality. Coliving companies aspire to create global networks of buildings with flexible contracts, using sophisticated online tools and apps that allow residents to book rooms, plan events, and correspond with building operators-- thus increasingly

blurring physical and digital realms. For many new parks, public squares, and infrastructure projects, sharing becomes the operative word to describe our hybridized spectrum of public and private spaces. Such semantic confusion is matched by the equally complex funding strategies of public-private partnerships, where investment is “shared” among strategic partners. Within architecture, Jack Self and Jessica Reynolds are two of the leading theorists and practitioners today when it comes to new models for collective living. Both have completed numerous projects which critically question how and why we design our dwellings today, and what they could look like in the future.

And at the scale of the global economy, issues of labor and trade are paramount. No less than the future of work is at stake in understanding how sharing affects the way we live, and will live, together. Rafi Segal, an urbanist and architect who skillfully integrates thinking about the broader systems of cities, will speak to this scale.

There are many words to describe the collective spatial sphere: commons, public space, public realm, shared space. But there are even more terms describing today’s economic and labor zeitgeists: sharing economy, gig economy, on-demand economy, peer-to-peer exchange, collaborative consumption, extractive logics, platform capitalism, etc. PLAT believes this lecture series can be instrumental in helping students, faculty, visiting scholars, and the general public begin to answer such questions as: How do new economic paradigms and architecture interact and inform one another? What really makes up the sharing economy and what related practices and efforts might currently be overlooked? What constitutes disruption and what is simply the digitization of long-standing practices?

In this lecture series and in its paired issue 7.0, PLAT seeks reflections on the spaces, designed or not, where contemporary sharing practices take place and asks for careful critique. By understanding the materiality, form, and processes of sharing, designers might assert agency in new economies and power relations. Sharing asks us to challenge long-standing dichotomies and see new techno-spatial practices as mechanisms which may, intentionally or not, replace old ones. To this end, the “Beyond Sharing” lecture series is focused on a contemporary group of academics and practitioners who are confronting new realities of architectural practice and production. We believe such a group will have broad appeal to the Rice community. It is certainly a unique endeavor, as graduate architecture students have not organized a lecture series in recent memory. And, more importantly, PLAT will address our wider realm of academic discourse at Rice. This is essential to the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary issues. To that end, we will work to promote these events within other departments and to encourage response and engagement by scholars of these related disciplines, all in the service of creating a deep level of engagement.

**Timeline:** If the project will take place at a specific time and place, please give details. Is it a one-time event or a series?

“Beyond Sharing” is a lecture series. Our tentative schedule follows; all dates are for the Fall 2018 semester.

August 24 – Jack Self – Roundtable Discussion, Lecture, Response

August 31 – Carlo Bailey and Claire Flurin – Roundtable Discussion, Lecture, Response

September 7 – Tom Slee – Roundtable Discussion, Lecture, Response

September 28 – Rafi Segal – Roundtable Discussion, Lecture, Response

October 18, 19, 20 – Nicolas A. John, Jessica Reynolds, and Rice Architecture Dean Sarah Whiting – Finale, with Roundtable Discussion, Lecture, Responses as a group

We would like to host these lectures on Rice University’s Campus, possibly within Anderson Hall but preferably within the Moody Center, as it can accommodate a larger audience and exists as a space to foster cross-disciplinary collaborative work.

**Audience:** Who is your target audience? (e.g. program-specific, interdisciplinary, or university-wide? Will undergraduates, faculty, staff, or postdocs be involved? Any off campus participants?)

We understand that, content-wise, this lecture series will likely garner majority participation from students and faculty within Rice Architecture. However, we would like this specific series to be a university-wide event, distinguishing the series from the more typical Rice Architecture lectures. We plan to reach out to various academic schools, departments, and programs within Rice to foster a multidisciplinary audience including Anthropology, Economics, Art History, the Humanities Research Center, the Jesse H. Jones Graduate School of Business, the Kinder Center, and others. As is typical with lectures offered through Rice Architecture, we anticipate attendance from both undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and members of the Houston community, which includes the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design at the University of Houston, members of Houston’s design community, and general citizens. Each lecture will be prefaced or concluded with a casual roundtable discussion between students (both graduate and undergraduate) and the speaker. These discussions will also be open to students from all departments and schools across the university and advertised as an integral part of the series.

**How many people do you anticipate will participate?**

Typically Rice Architecture lectures have about 100 people (students, faculty, the general public) in attendance and the school has an established culture of supporting visiting lecturers through supplementary cultural events, engagement with students, and discussion with the faculty. We anticipate that by planning this event well in advance and having a robust university-wide marketing strategy (both digital and print), 150-200 people will attend each lecture and 15-20 will participate in each roundtable discussion.

**Marketing Plan:** How do you plan to publicize the project?

Our main means of publicizing the event will be through departmental and school-wide emails as well as professionally printed 24 x 36 inch posters that can advertise the series as a whole. We will also work with Rice Architecture to create a page on the department's website for the event as well as advertise the series on PLAT Journal's website (<http://platjournal.com/>). We will provide a packet of social media materials for various Rice departments to share on their respective accounts. This strategy has been successful in advertising the PLAT printed journal and announcing the Call for Submissions for the upcoming 7.0 issue.

(Please see the image at the end of the document as an example of potential advertising material).

## **ADVANCEMENT**

What are the goals of the project?

The "Beyond Sharing" lecture series places graduate students in close dialogue with scholars who are experts in this sharing economy. The goal is for attendees to learn from and contribute to interdisciplinary discourse and academic discussion. These discussions and their implications extend well beyond Rice's borders—indeed, they are global concerns—and will have implications for almost every discipline or profession. The topic addresses concerns foundational economic and cultural issues, and as such stands to impact the lived experience of all those who attend—graduate students, faculty, staff, or the general public.

Briefly explain the need for the project and how it will promote excellence in scholarship, training, and/or development?

By structuring the lectures to have ample before and after time for questions with the lecturers, we hope to encourage attendees to take ownership of public conversations and debates. We will have graduate students introduce each lecturer and moderate the question and answer sessions. Additionally, we will work with the Rice Digital Media Center in Fondren to ensure all lectures are recorded to the highest quality and able to be published on YouTube for further dissemination. Doing this will ensure that the large investment that will go into this student-led lecture series and symposium will not be wasted, and that the immediate audience in the room is not the only audience. The material and conversations could also be used to formulate the next release of PLAT, issue 7.5, which traditionally has commented on the prior major issue.

Currently, two architecture journals (one of which is PLAT) are exploring the topic of the sharing economy and architecture. Additionally, just this year a Rice Blockchain society started to explore a technology that many think is representative of network and distributive thinking. Therefore, we think this lecture series is happening at the perfect time to capture the interests of not only our discipline, but also that of other disciplines and the wider public. We feel we have the opportunity to place Rice and Rice community members at the center of this global conversation. Since we believe this conversation is an international one, we have allocated much of our funding to bring people to Houston from other parts of the world.

If this is an existing project/event or a similar one exists, describe how the project/event is being expanded or enhanced.

This event is coordinated with the 7.0 issue of PLAT, Rice Architecture’s independent, student-led journal, which explores similar themes until the organizing title of “Sharing.” Combining the two endeavors gives us more leverage to bring in relevant experts. Already in securing pieces for the PLAT issue, we have been able to reach out to many people about potentially lecturing at Rice.

If your proposal is for a pilot project, suggest how it might develop over a three-year period. The video recordings and archiving on Rice Architecture’s YouTube channel is the main way in which we intend this event to have continued impact. As mentioned above, the material and conversations could also be used to formulate the next release of PLAT, issue 7.5, which traditionally has commented on the prior major issue. This will also further the reach of the conversations that will take place at Rice.

Describe how you will measure the success and impact of this project. Please, provide quantitative targets, if possible.

Our success will be based on the active participation of a wide array of graduate students from across the university. Therefore, we will measure how many graduate students attend the event and their fields of study. We will have sign in sheets at each event to track these numbers. We also feel that having graduate students taking on a proactive role in providing an interesting event for the broader Rice community is a huge asset, and therefore we will also track our success by keeping track of how many faculty, undergraduates, and non-Rice members are at each event. Our metric for attendance will be based on typical numbers for Rice Architecture lectures described above.

## **BUDGET**

### ***Itemized Budget***

Please, provide an itemized budget. List each item, a description, and the anticipated cost.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Airfare for speakers	Combination of international and domestic tickets for some of the speakers. Using other funds to pay for the rest of the airfare so as to minimize the amount from Grad Starter that is allocated to guests travel.	\$3,250

Hotels	Two nights in hotel for each of the 7 speakers in order to allow them to come in the day before, rest and prepare for lectures and round-tables, and then stay the night of their lecture and fly back the next day. We are looking at Hotel Zaza as it is the closest and will allow the speakers and participants to walk, but we will also look into more economical options	\$2800
Lecture posters	To advertise across the Rice community and in Houston	\$200
Coffee and Snacks for discussions	Each lecture will have a casual roundtable conversation before or after where we will provide light refreshments for anyone in attendance	\$500
Honoraria	Small honoraria to be provided to each of the participants	\$3,950
Total Expenses		\$10,700

***Funds from other sources***

Please, provide any information on funds from other sources that you have secured or potential funds that you plan to apply for.

Source	Status	Cost
Humanities Research Center	Secured	\$3,000
Sharespace Houston	Potential Partner	\$500
The Cowork Lab Houston	Potential Partner	\$500

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Total Amount	\$4,000
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If the project/event has been offered in the past, how was it supported?  
This will be the first time for PLAT to host an interdisciplinary lecture series, so there is not yet a history of support for this project. PLAT works with Rice Architecture



**Beyond Sharing:  
New Architectures and Economies**

a lecture series in coordination with PLAT 7.0 and Rice Architecture

**Jack Self**

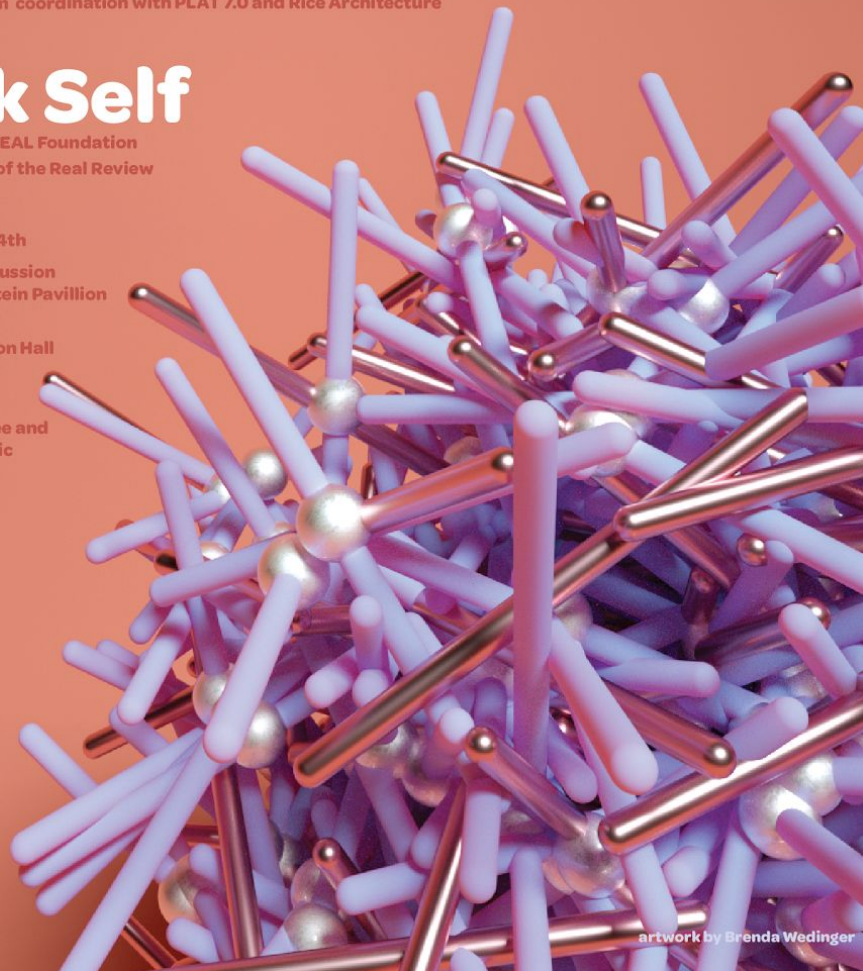
Director of the REAL Foundation  
Editor-in-Chief of the Real Review

Friday, August 24th

Roundtable Discussion  
4:30 PM, Brochstein Pavillion

Lecture  
5:30 PM, Anderson Hall

all events are free and  
open to the public



artwork by Brenda Wedinger

Initial template for "Beyond Sharing" lecture series poster