

From 2017–2019, The New Normal think-tank at Strelka Institute for Media, Architecture and Design in Moscow investigated the impact of planetary-scale computation on the future of cities in Russia and globally. This book is a comprehensive record of the questions posed and the designs created in response to what the New Normal is, and what it should be.



# THE NEW NORMAL

Benjamin H. Bratton,  
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Nick Axel,  
Editors

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## ESSAYS

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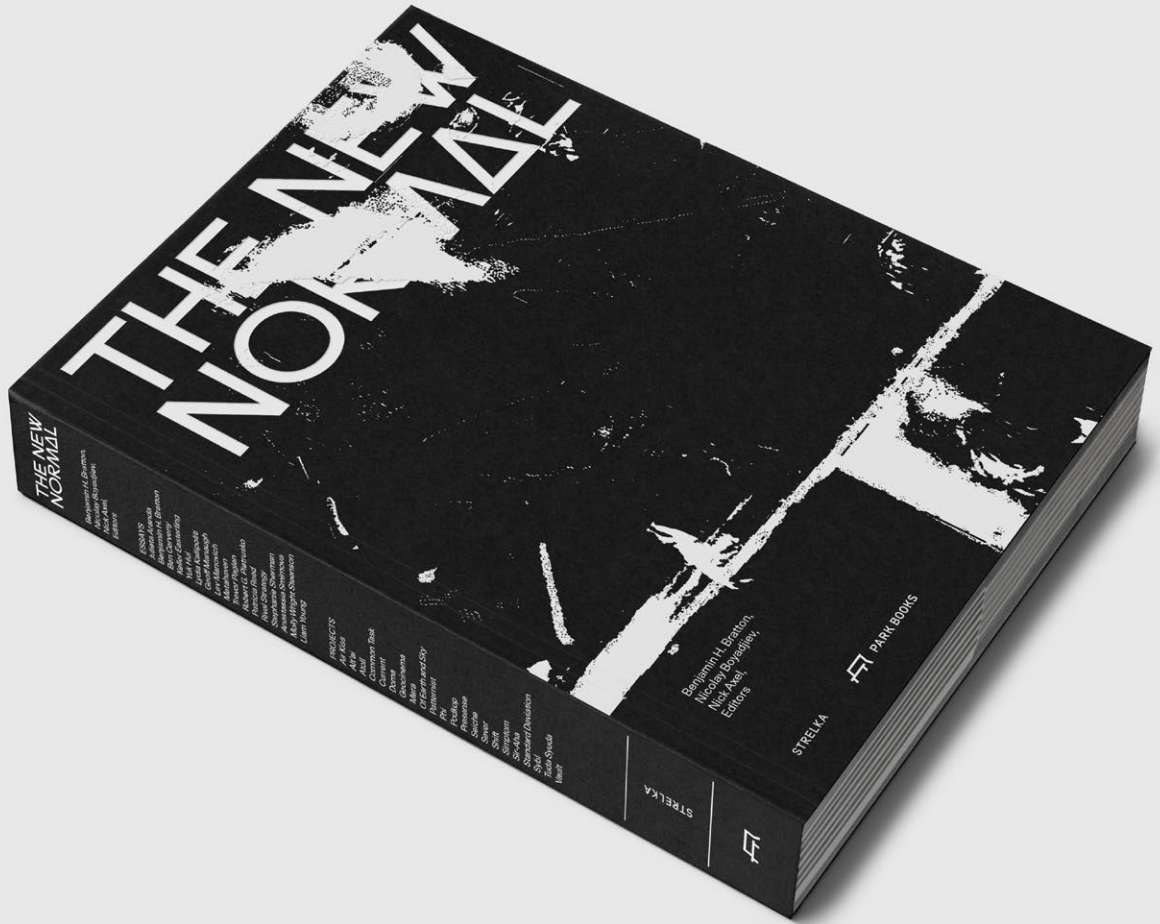
## PROJECTS

Air Kiss  
Alt'ai  
Atoll  
Common Task  
Current  
Doma  
Geocinema  
Mera  
Of Earth and Sky  
Patternist  
Phi  
Podkop  
Presence  
Seiche  
Sever  
Shift  
Simptom  
Sir-Aha  
Standard Deviation  
Sybl  
Tuda Syuda  
Vault

From 2017–2019, The New Normal think-tank at Strelka Institute for Media, Architecture and Design in Moscow investigated the impact of planetary-scale computation on the future of cities in Russia, and globally.

The work was conducted by ninety interdisciplinary researchers from thirty different countries and over forty faculty members, drawn not only from the field of architecture but also from the areas of computer science, philosophy, art, cinema, economics, and more. Projects ranged from short-form cinema and software design to proposals for new political systems and economic models. At stake for the work is not only what the urban future looks like, but also how it works; how it circulates ideas, value, and power. The twenty-two interlinked projects which were developed show how speculative urban design can move upstream in the decision-making processes.

This book includes all final research projects from the The New Normal program, a series of newly written essays by program director Benjamin H. Bratton which reflects on the questions posed and designs created by the think-tank, and a series of newly commissioned essays by faculty members.



Cover of THE NEW NORMAL

## EDITORS

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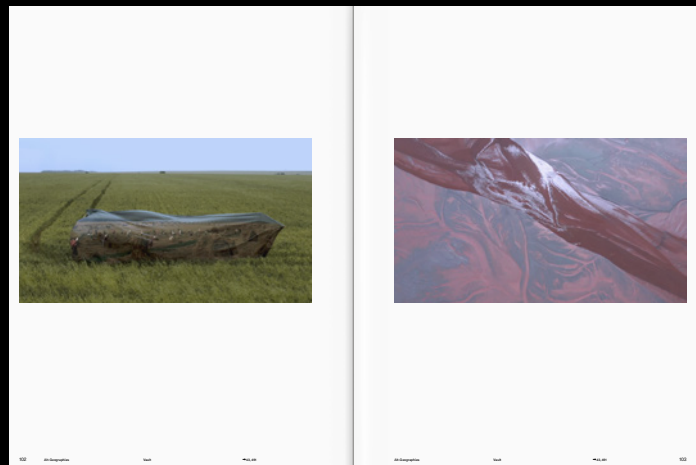
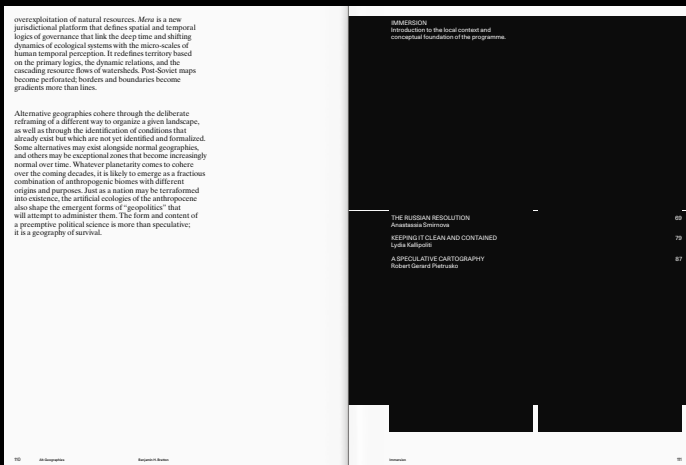
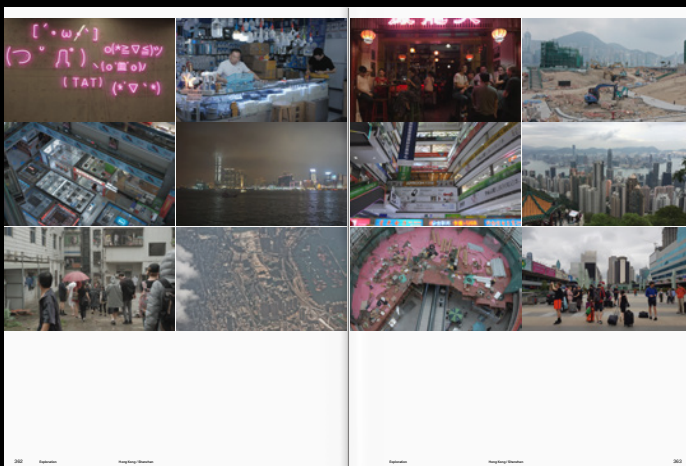
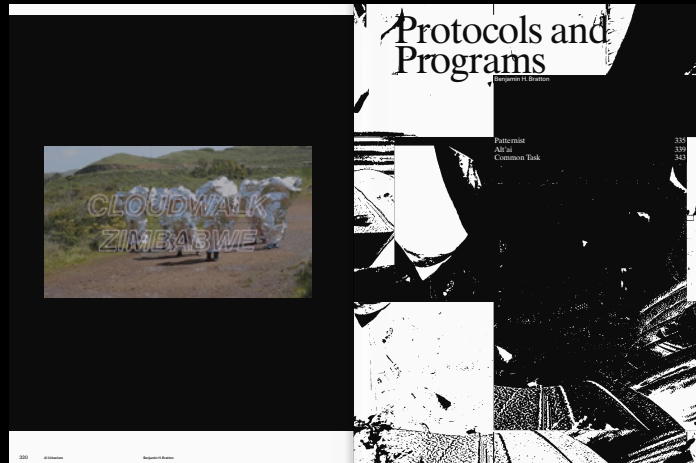
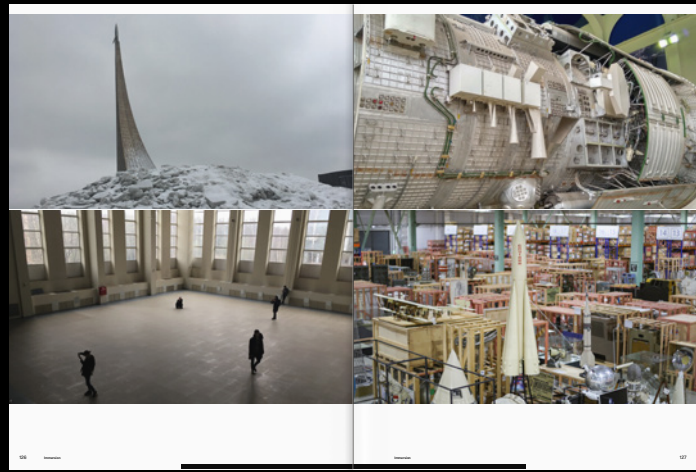
The “New Normal” we explored was in response to dramatic shifts in geopolitics, finance, media, and the parameters of truth. The moment we started was marked by societies breaking apart and exiting one another on a cultural level, while simultaneously further integrating on technical and ecological levels. The weird emerging patterns of this contradiction were our site conditions. From there we made sense of what the New Normal is, and what it should be.

We began by looking at the territory itself. We mapped automated landscapes, near and far, that have been designed to exclude humans, and considered how that principle might scale, in relation to both automation and ecological remediation. In mapping cities beyond their borders, we considered the global expanse of discontinuous megastructures: supply chains, communication networks, agriculture, housing, manufacturing, energy flows, and more. By modeling the modularity of these systems, we ventured to prototype their radical rearrangements better suited for the years to come.

The role of software as an urban medium was treated not as a solution but as a substance, another material from which cities are made and experienced. “Artificial intelligence” lives in the world, not just the lab, and how we interact with it depends on what we think it is. Bringing together leaders in AI, from product design to philosophy, we approached AI at urban scale; less as a centralized disembodied mind but as distributed and embedded augmentation of objects, surfaces, machines, and processes that could sense, evolve, and adapt at the granular scale.

Cities have been designed according to models for millennia, but today computational model simulations of cities don’t just represent them; they also recursively act back upon them. Because simulations are tools of administration, they are also a leverage point to consider alternative forms of representation, governance, and planning. As cities are organized around software protocols as much as legislation, it is clear that the platform economics we have are not the ones we need. Viable alternatives are essential for urban design.





Selection of spreads of THE NEW NORMAL





# Credits & Practical Information

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Benjamin H. Bratton, Nicolay Boyadjiev, Nick Axel

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Strelka Press is the publishing program of Strelka Institute. Launched in 2012, Strelka Press publishes books and digital essays on modern issues of architecture, design, and emerging technologies in English and Russian.

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