

Out of the Crooked Timber of Humanity, No Straight Thing Was Ever Made: A feminist critique of sustainable construction technology

*Kyle Vansice, Andrea Wheeler*

In a dialogue on sustainable architecture those engaged with architectural engineering and construction technology are conspicuous. The problem designers have however is with the human condition: irascible, unpredictable, uncontrollable, acting against all their best architectural intentions. The 'crooked timber of humanity' refers to the work of Immanuel Kant and to Isaiah Berlin who adopted the quotation to suggest that the world, being run by humans, will always be imperfect but the feminist approach suggested in this paper is a recognition that climate change demands deeper transformations of economy, cultural and political life. This paper is in two parts, a philosophical discussion of the human condition and a dialogue with an engineer exploring the design of tall wooden buildings. This paper is an appeal to architects and engineers to engage with profound questions of living and in this way examine how practices of design thinking will need to change.

Biographies:

Andrea Wheeler is an Assistant Professor of Architecture at Iowa State University where she contributes to the technical lecture series and is a studio instructor. Kyle Vansice is a graduate engineer and Masters level student of Architecture at Iowa State University.