EPFL

AR-514 | **Transformation, from theory to practice of change**

Declerck Joachim Walter I

Cursus	Sem.	Type
Architecture	MA1, MA3	Opt.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	3
Session	Winter
Semester	Fall
Exam	Oral
Workload	90h
Weeks	12
Hours	**2 weekly**
Courses	2 weekly
Number of positions	

Summary

The course looks at how the disciplines of architecture, urban design and planning could reposition themselves to accelerate implementation of the broader transitions we are facing in terms of health and inclusivity, climate and biodiversity, economy and mobility.

Content

By presenting and confronting "frameworks" (theoretical and societal analysis and vision), "practices"## (eight types of transformative practices), and "programs" (of strategic projects with transformative capacity), the course invites the participants to document and formulate a hypothesis, working principles and pathways forward for "transformation as a practice of societal change".

Together with other societal players, from policy-makers, to climate scientists, economists, entrepreneurs or citizen initiatives, also the design discipline is facing a lock-in. While global and local strategies and political accords show a clear direction, while science underpins the need to change our behaviour and adapt our ways of living, working, moving and producing, we are faced with a gridlock situation: the louder the plea for fundamental and fast changes, the stronger the resistance "up till outright denial" from growing parts of our societies and elites (see political directions). Clearly, the idea that science and knowledge on the one hand, and clear goals and agreements (points on the horizon) on the other hand, lead to action are wrong assumptions. These "theories of change" do not sufficiently work: the "landing" of these goals and changes in our streets, neighbourhoods, or landscapes is not happening, while each of the major transition goals require their fundamental adaptation and transformation. Can we reverse the logic: in stead of continuing to work from the major and often abstract objectives to the facts on the ground, can we explore the mobilizing capacity of the transformation and improvement of local environments and multiply those projects so that together they effectively realize ambitious, supra-local goals? This is the hypothesis for a "practice of change" that will be documented and sharpened in this course. Three complementary fields of knowledge will constitute the building blocks: (1) societal and theoretical "frameworks" (2) new types of "practices", and (3) the design of new "programs" of strategic projects. In parallel to the course material and conversation, the group of participants will collectively build a virtual exhibition of those "programs" of transformation projects in Europe (documenting several concrete cases and projects, formulating their joint ambitions and principles as a transformation program).

Keywords

Transformation, Designing the Future, Government, Climate, Social movement, Innovation, Moonshot, Typologies, Investment program, Theory of Change, Practice of Change.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

- Contextualise diverse types of practices and new types of projects in relation to the societal challenges and gridlock we face;
- Integrate the hypothesis and formulate the linkages between the "frameworks", "practices" and "programs" (through examples);

    • Formulate her/his own position and the position of the design practice with regards to the broader society and to the hypothesis "transformation as practice of change".

Assessment methods

Oral exam focusing on the content of the courses (35%), on the contribution to the virtual exhibition (submitted prior to oral exam, 35%), and the personal position with regards to the hypothesis (30%).