

AR-301(k)

**Théorie et critique du projet BA5 (LDM)**Iweins Antoine, Ledermann Gianna Morgane, Michel Kyra Lea, Zurbruggen Noémie  
Line

Cursus	Sem.	Type
Architecture	BA5	Obl.
HES - AR	H	Obl.
Mob. AR	H	Opt.

Langue d'enseignement	français / anglais
Crédits	12
Retrait	Non autorisé
Session	Hiver
Semestre	Automne
Examen	Pendant le semestre
Charge	360h
Semaines	14
<b>Heures</b>	<b>6 hebdo</b>
Cours	2 hebdo
Projet	4 hebdo

**Nombre de places**

**Il n'est pas autorisé de se retirer de cette matière après le délai d'inscription.**

**Remarque**

Inscription faite par la section

**Résumé**

Le (un)studio questionne à la fois la condition matérielle d'un atelier de projet et son contenu. Il alterne entre enquête, design et dialogue, et s'engage avec sérieux et joie, ici et maintenant, dans la transformation du milieu complexe de l'EPFL.

**Contenu****(un)studio: "to bring about real change"**

"Structural and Cultural changes are needed to bring about real change"

Kasser Schlosser avocats, Social climate survey report, Internal report, EPFL, November 2023, 32.

Learning environments are not neutral. "[They] either reinforce the rules and values of colonial capitalist hegemony, or develop struggles and practices to dismantle it." [1]

**Situation (who/where we are)**

The prefix (un) at the beginning of the studio stands for (un)learning[2], (un)doing, (un)being.

(Un) means that to rearticulate our practice and our education, we must first unlearn the rules and values of the hegemonies in place. (Un) involves creating a space - the studio - where a critical and reflective process can emerge, aimed at deconstructing and transforming entrenched systems of knowledge, power and identity. (Un) is to learn with those that have struggled before us. (Un) is a productive and necessary act of love prefiguring that "another university is possible"[3]. (Un) is to engage collectively in producing other imaginaries and in producing those otherwise.

"No change for the good ever happens without being imagined first." [4]

The (un)studio is a parenthesis in LDM's trajectory. It is an experiment led by assistants lasting one semester, during Jeffrey Huang's sabbatical leave. This (un)usual situation calls for an (un)usual proposal. The (un)studio will have the luxury to hold time - oh so precious - and space for an unsolicited propositional platform working on the environment we inhabit. 'We', assistants and studio coordinators, are former architectural students and workers[5], educated in the Swiss Polytechnic domain. We are products of its structures. We are not professors and we don't consider ourselves as such. We hold intermediary positions: bodies in precarious working conditions. Yet this intermediarity is also a privilege, holding partial proximity to the student experience. Having graduated not so long ago, our closeness holds us responsible to echo the protests that have come before us.

"When we talk about protest, we equally talk about disruption, engagement and care." [6]

The proposal is built with our experiences working at EPFL Architecture with LDM, ASSEMBLE, RIOT, and DRAG(UE), with our engagement in associative efforts, with resources, discussions, references shared with others, with our

attachments and concerns. Troubled by the professional world our institution has 'trained' us towards, by the dissonance between the discourses of this institution and our lived realities, we feel an imperative urge for "real change"[7]. "This may mean asking more questions than providing answers, and leaving the space of recitation, of intellectual laziness, and of comfort provided by our own consensus. This means that not only do we learn with others, but we also only learn when we unlearn."[8]

We will act simultaneously on two sites: (1) the design studio (how we do it), (2) the institution in which it is embedded: EPFL (what we do). They are conjugated in the communal form 'we', the bodies inhabiting this environment. Behind this 'we' is 'us' studio coordinators inviting 'you' students, colleagues, guests and references to form an (un)studio network of agents.

#### **EPFL as site (what we do): acting within our institution**

Presentation of the results of the Social Climate Survey by Kasser Schlosser avocats / Exhibition of the results of the Coupole Esplanade MEP competition / Delivery of the petition to save the agricultural future of the Ferme de Bassenges / Occupation of the SG Hall by students, in solidarity with the Palestinian people

These events are specific moments within networks of actors (human or non-human) where power dynamics, social relations, and cultural practices are enacted within a space. They unfold over time and have histories and futures. They cause reconfigurations, disrupt existing networks and lead to the formation of new associations and structures. They reveal dissonances present within the institution, unmask positions, discourses and acts. They shed light on different realities and worlds that coexist. They echo local and global struggles for spatial, social and ecological justice, from which the school can't insulate itself.

The (un)studio chooses these events as entry points to trouble[9] the site of EPFL, to act within its complexities from lived situations. To do so, the (un)studio proposes a framework for an engaged form of praxis[10], opening up to methodologies and tools beyond the disciplinary borders of architecture to inquire, to design and to disseminate otherwise.[11]

"Seule la nécessité urgente d'agir semble réunir ces différentes figures."[12]

These attitudes give structure to the semester, enacting phases of different intensity. Each tries to transform / compose our environments / shared realities at various scales - from the everyday (experienced), to the structural (institutional), and the narrative (values). This transformation starts reflexively - in becoming conscious of the material and social realities that compose our milieu, and in exploring our ability to act collectively upon those.

"[E]ducation would establish itself as a method of transforming action. As political praxis in the service of the permanent liberation of human beings, which does not happen, we repeat, in their consciences only, but in the radical modification of the structures in whose processes consciences are transformed."[13]

#### **Studio as site (how we do it): organizing for collective (un)learning**

"Design, by itself, [...] won't hack Capitalism.

If we understand that we can be political agents outside of design, we can then learn about how politics work beyond it, how a major social structure constrains us [...] and ponder upon whether collective forms of actions could benefit us."[14] How we compose and act on our site is determined by the material conditions that render this work possible. It thus calls for another way to engage politically with our environment, specifically as academic and student workers. Along the semester, we engage with seriousness and joy with 'the design studio' and its conditions as a site for collective organization and action. It is the site of this collective 'we': studio coordinators, students, guests, interlocutors, the references we work with.

"The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility."[15]

Together we will try to enact education as the practice of freedom and solidarity, to transgress the boundaries of our precarious, atomized, individualistic and competitive conditions.

We will hold time for various conversations. We will recurrently discuss issues of work ethics, teaching methods, physical and mental health, discrimination, precarity, privilege, harassment, power relations, representation, spaces. At times we will invite other actors from various spheres of the school to converse with us, allocating time for its community at large to thicken. At other times, we will invite other inspiring individuals and collectives from outside the academic bubble, engaging in spatial and social struggles, to share inputs, practices, experiences, stories.

"Ces savoirs-la ne s'enseignent pas, ils se racontent et s'expérimentent."[16]

Before, during and after all these conversations, we will organize towards what a transgressive design studio within an architecture school should or could entail. We will experiment with the settings of its spaces, proposing protocols for collectivizing its resources, redacting charts for better practices, exploring formats of discussion, defining rotating roles to carry logistical work such as mediation, recording, archival, timekeeping, etc.

In the process we won't be inventing much. This administrative, creative and logistical work will be built with the many attempts that have come before us. We will put in place practices to recognize, reference, celebrate and share these efforts, producing a "culture of precedents" that can be reengaged by others.

"L'écologie politique ne doit pas attendre mais apprendre à enrichir le sol des 'micro-événements', à produire une 'culture des précédents' qui permette à ceux qui 'commencent' de ne pas avoir à tout reinventer."[17]

[1] Leopold Lambert and Sonia Vaz Borges, "Schools of the Revolution: Radical Education Around the World," The Funambulist Magazine 49 (October 2023).

- [2] The notion of (un)learning is dear to us. It refers to feminist and post-colonial writings, including those by Ariella Azoulay, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Donna Haraway, Chandra Talpade Mohanty. It also refers to the inspiring EXISTENZMAXIMUM Palace of Un/Learning studio proposed by Bernadette Krejs and Max Utech at the Faculty of Architecture and Planning of TU Wien in the autumn semester of 2023. It is also a nod to the '(un)learning center', a student initiative set up in March 2022 in the architecture section of EPFL to share ideas about the conditions under which students learn and their power to act.
- [3] The 'Another University is Possible' campaign is launched by the University of Sheffield's Students' Union Sabbatical Officers in 2019 and relaunched in 2023. "It is a call for profound change - a call for the institutions within the higher education sector to reckon with their historical foundations and present operations and to embrace a future grounded in social justice, sustainability, and equity." See 'Another University Is Possible', Wonkhe (blog), accessed 29 July 2024, <https://wonkhe.com/blogs-sus/another-university-is-possible/>.
- [4] Martin Espada, "Imagine the Angels of Bread," in *Alabanza: New & Selected Poems, 1982-2002* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003).
- [5] For the notion of 'architectural worker', see Marisa Cortright, 'Can This Be? Surely This Cannot Be?': Architectural Workers Organizing in Europe, First edition (Prague: VI PER Gallery, 2021) and Peggy Deamer, *Architecture and Labor* (New York: Routledge, 2020). Peggy Deamer also notably published *The Organizer's Guide to Architecture Education*, which "serves as a timely call-to-action for transforming architecture education to meet the monumental environmental and social challenges of our time."
- [6] Poster for Protest or Not to Protest / Exhibition, Erica Overmeer, October 2020-February 2021, ETH Zurich / HILF, Stefano-Francini-Platz 5, 8093 Zurich.
- [7] Veronique Perroud and Sandeep Pai, Social climate survey report, Internal report, EPFL, November 2023, 32.
- [8] Sonia Vaz Borges and Leopold Lambert, "Schools of the Revolution: Radical Education and Pedagogies Around the World," *The Funambulist* 49 (October 2023): 27.
- [9] The notion of trouble comes from the reading of Judith Butler and Donna Haraway. To trouble our milieu is to disrupt and to transform our spatial and social conditions and hopefully bring about cultural and structural change.
- [10] How do we situate the studio in the conventional schism between practice and theory? In marxism, praxis is human action geared towards change (wiki). It seems to be understood as concrete, embodied, practical - not opposed to theory but rather a necessary way of proving or improving theory's proposals. We could therefore understand the institutional activism of (un)studio as architectural praxis, instead of architectural practice in the conventional sense. Or we could understand praxis as practicing one's agency. The notion of praxis (action/reflection) is also central in Paulo Freire vision. "It is not enough for people to come together in dialogue in order to gain knowledge of their social reality. They must act together upon their environment in order critically to reflect upon their reality and so transform it through further action and critical reflection." Freire Institute, 'Concepts Used by Paulo Freire', Freire Institute, accessed 29 July 2024, <https://freire.org/concepts-used-by-paulo-freire>.
- [11] Nitin Bathla, ed., *Researching Otherwise: Pluriversal Methodologies for Landscape and Urban Studies* (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.54872/gta/4692>.
- [12] The ecologist movement 'Les soulèvements de la terre' speaking about the various heterogeneous and in appearance antagonist attitudes activism can take in *Les soulèvements de la Terre* (France), ed., *Premières Secousses* (Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2024), 72.
- [13] Paulo Freire, *Ação Cultural: Para a Liberdade e Outros Escritos* (Sao Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2014), cited in Lucia Leao, "Thinking about Method and the Knowledge Production," *VIRUS* 10 (May 2021): 24, translated from Portuguese by Marjorie Yuri Enya.
- [14] Alphonso Matos, "Politics Beyond Design," in *Who Can Afford to Be Critical?* (2022).
- [15] bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
- [16] *Les soulèvements de la Terre* (France), ed., *Premières Secousses* (Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2024), 70.
- [17] Isabelle Stengers, "Un engagement pour le possible," in *Cosmopolitiques* no. 1 (June 2002), 36.

## Acquis de formation

A la fin de ce cours l'étudiant doit être capable de:

- Conduire sérieusement sur un événement, produire des documents capables d'en décrire la complexité, et déceler d'éventuelles prises permettant d'agir.
- Concevoir de manière pertinente une proposition qui s'appuie sur le répertoire des outils architecturaux et au-delà de ceux-ci.
- Choisir ou sélectionner attentivement des médiums et des registres de discours pour communiquer une proposition et toucher différentes audiences.
- Situer de manière critique les connaissances et les pratiques produites par notre institution et leur relation avec les luttes locales et globales pour une justice spatiale, sociale et écologique.
- Explorer avec joie sa capacité à agir individuellement et collectivement sur les réalités sociales et matérielles qui

façonnent notre milieu.

### Méthode d'enseignement

The (un)studio operates within two sites simultaneously: EPFL and the 'design studio'.

We will work on both all along the semester. Our engagement with EPFL will be paced by our will to act: inquiring, designing, disseminating. The semester will be split in two main parts corresponding to an initial half of inquiries in groups of up to three students, and the second of design. Both will end with moments for dissemination where we will come together to make things public.

Our engagement with the design studio will be diffused. We will continuously work on collective forms of organizing and acting, in various group formats: tackling organisation of events, holding group discussions, engaging in readings, taking part in studio logistics, as means to achieve (un)learning.

**studio expenses: none to foresee beyond usual printing costs.**

### Travail attendu

Disrupt, engage and care.

### Méthode d'évaluation

Assessment is deeply embedded in our education practices. As part of this institutional system, we cannot ignore this process. To avoid a meritocratic and performance-based vision, we will think about who grades, who is graded, what is graded and how. The assessment will particularly value participation, reflection, and dialogue, continuously for the different phases - alternating between group and individual evaluation and supported by student self-assessment.

### Encadrement

Office hours	Oui
Assistants	Oui
Forum électronique	Non

### Ressources

#### Service de cours virtuels (VDI)

Non

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