

Denkraum #14

Courage – Unbuilding

Often treated as failure or loss, subtraction when accepted as part of an exchange can be growth.

Keller Easterling, Subtraction, 2014

Courage We feel that courage is exactly what we need. Defined as *the strength of mind to carry on in spite of danger or difficulty* and etymologically linked to the heart (coeur) as a source of feelings and confidence, this posture will offer us the opportunity to act as critical human beings, while bringing the knowledge of the architect to the table.

ETH After setting up the ETH Competence Center for Spatial Politics ETH-SP last semester, our collaboration with ETH Real Estate will continue. The current challenges and urgencies are multiple: student numbers are growing, but budgets are not; buildings need to be transformed for new ways of teaching, research and knowledge transfer, while the relationship between work, study and home is being redefined constantly. We have selected 6 ETH buildings that are high on the list of necessary change. Located in the centre of Zurich, we will spend time in and around these buildings and their users, to engage with their historical, architectural and current conditions. We will reflect on their relationship with the city and the citizens and focus on designing public interiors and exteriors, while creating incentives for a much-needed institutional change.

Unbuilding Let's be clear. As architects, as clients, as urban thinkers, we quickly believe that we can solve many challenges by building more. We love designing, we love building and we love seeing our own designs realised. However, the main questions that keep coming back at the ETH Competence Center for Spatial Politics are whether the growth scenario really is the optimal scenario for ETH and if adding is always necessary, offering the best answer? This semester, we will work with you to find the courage to start removing. We will remove clutter, we will remove additions that don't work, we will remove layers that get in the way of interaction and exchange. We will cut and might split. Sometimes gently like a surgeon, sometimes brusquely and directly without too much caution. And by doing this, we will add. We will add spatial possibilities, architectural quality and even space. We will add surprise and comfort. All at the same time. To grow, we will de-grow. To build, we will unbuild.

Futures Together with Digital Building Technologies, the Chair of Benjamin Dillenburger, we will critically explore the role of AI to speculate on affective futures beyond our imagination, by exploring a constant interaction between visual essays and written fictions.

When Form Follows Fiction An integrated seminarweek to Belgium will allow us to experience architectural references in person. We will spend plenty of time in institutional buildings that were the result of re-use and transformation. Through fieldwork, we will develop a lexicon of architectural elements to enrich our own proposals for the institution we wish to contribute to: ETH Zurich.

Introduction 20 February 2024, 9:30am, ONA
An Fonteyne, Ties Linders, Edoardo Signori, Els Silvrants-Barclay
in collaboration with ETH Real Estate and Digital Building Technologies
When Form Follows Fiction is an integrated seminar week to Belgium

ETH-SP

In our quest to contribute productively to much-needed change, the Chair of Affective Architectures has established a four-semester collaboration with ETH Real Estate. Since HS23 we have established the ETH Competence Center for Spatial Politics (ETH-SP), to explore the dynamics, drivers and processes behind our university's real estate policies. The HS23 research output consisted of a comprehensive ETH-SP Research Report and an extensive Building Catalogue. Based on the Research Report, 15 case-studies have concretely tested out selected key findings and concerns. The main ETH-SP collective conclusions and recommendations were centred around the question of growth, re/deregulating, an expanded understanding of sustainability, who we design for and with and how we can be the Ministry for the Future.

Equipped with deep knowledge and a healthy mix of ambition and idealism, we now want to validate how new design methods and unexpected attitudes can formulate answers to these pressing issues including densification, energy consumption and a greater engagement of ETH with the public realm.

THE MINISTRY FOR THE FUTURE

In his 2020 science fiction parable The Ministry for The Future, Kim Stanley Robinson brings the consequences of climate change to the very near future. Set in Zurich, the book casts the ETH as a key agent of change. From HS23 to FS25, we will use this story as an invitation to answer this difficult question: are we actually working for the sake of future generations?

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