



*An architect shows his design to a young couple, AI digitally colourised photograph originally by Hans Krebs, 1978.*

# The Good Life

Spring is coming. Trim the hedge. Prune the tree. Mow the lawn. Put the skis back in the basement and the car in the garage. The sun will shine, maybe too much for comfort. Irrigation is ready. Build a conservatory. Convert the spare bedroom. WFH. Open plan kitchen. Peloton. The house remains home, safe and sound. For now...

More than half of residential buildings in Switzerland - by number - are single-family houses. The single-family house is the least environmentally efficient settlement yet remains the aspiration of many. Excessive energy-use per capita from the house and the private transport that sustains it are just part of the widening gap between societal objectives and individual emancipation, and freedom.

To many, the single private house represents the good life. To liberal urbanites, it represents the banality and wastefulness of the suburbs, which perhaps explains the lack of critical attention in architectural discourse. In fact, architects have condescended the suburb for decades, ever since 1933, when CIAM declared that it was “a kind of scum churning against the walls of the city”. And it is in part due to this deep-rooted

snobbery that the single-family house developed its own design codes mixing a cocktail of real estate value and aspirational taste away from the gaze of academic architecture. Yet, beyond the superficial cliches of dull conformity, the suburban single-family house has and continues to represent a great opportunity to radically reappraise the architectural, economic and ecological contracts embedded in society and nature.

This semester, we shall stay near Zurich and redesign a normal single-family house. We shall search for the typical, not the exception, as this is where we can make a new reality. We shall explore how architectural reinvention can turn the house into a regenerative social and environmental type. The aims are social, spatial and natural. The means will be modest, circular, non-extractive and confined to what we find around us which of course includes the climate, the economy, the law and all the non-human species oblivious to property boundaries, but sensitive to appropriate habitat. The single-family house cannot be understood without the garden, which like the architecture it hosts, will be reimagined for new climates and ecologies.