

Care.



Unfamiliar Ageing IV

■ MASTER THESIS

Chair of Architecture and Care in collaboration with BUK

Care.
Office HIL E 70.5

■ TEACHING TEAM

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■ The intersection of ageing and a life that does not conform to traditional heteronormative structures requires forms of care beyond our existing provisions. At present, most caring facilities, spaces, services, and legal frameworks are structured around a highly limited understanding of “next of kin”. LGBTQIA+ collectives have long sought alternative communities and spaces of care that respond to other social realities. To give a response to the later life stages of homosexual co-living nuclei, single persons, transgender individuals, and other variations of non-conforming coexistence, self-initiated architectural projects have emerged in different countries.

Switzerland is no exception, and local associations have been promoting buildings that look at care relationalities from a different perspective, transgressing traditional understandings of family, dismantling binary understandings of care taking and care receiving, and fostering interdependencies and mutual care.

Expanding on the work of these self-organised projects, this Master’s thesis programme will explore alternative caring spaces while understanding bodily dependencies as means to create positive kinships and ageing as a political condition. Ageing tends to be oversimplified, reducing the individual to a non-productive member of society. Often, elderly people are segregated within constricted spaces of heavily regulated care that impede self-determination on multiple planes. In the design process, we will look to the ageing body with all its potentialities, addressing its spaces, contexts, and rituals. The LGBTQIA+ community will be taken as an entry point to defy assumptions and biases around models of care and collective living. Given these premises, we will seek architectural and aesthetic proposals that embrace non-normative relationalities and distributed forms of care at different scales, from the body to the city.

■ PROGRAMME

The students will work on housing facilities with care infrastructures, both able to host members of LGBTQIA+ ageing communities and simultaneously respond to wider neighbourhood needs. There should be critical reflection on how LGBTQIA+ ageing experiences may differ from heteronormative ones, and what the spatial implications of these kinds of otherness might be.

The project and its placement in the context should mirror, amplify, and reflect on existing provisions of care – or their absence, if this were the case –, in order to offer alternative scenarios from an understanding of the urban context as an indispensable medium for care, beyond the confinement of the home. Recognising the current conflicted relationship between domesticity and care, or the also conflicted isolation of care or retirement homes, the projects need to be able to dismantle biased constructs, ‘unworlding’ or, unmaking spatial dispositions of inequality and predefined architectures of seclusion. This process of redefinition and reorganisation needs to consider the present context in order to propose a construction that, while implemented at the scale of the building, operates at the same time in a transscalar manner, linking the body to the city.

In collaboration with the department of Bautechnologie und Konstruktion (BUK), the diploma programme will take construction as an entry point to approach the issue of ageing in architecture. Modern construction often resembles a permanent Sisyphean endeavour – an anti-ageing process that is sterilised, ideal, exclusive, and calculable, leading to endless layers of our building enclosure. This approach results in structures that resist change and decay. In this studio, we will rethink our construction and material paradigms to embrace, rather than resist, decay and unforeseen changes, radically imagining construction within a framework of non-linear time, thereby mediating entanglements of incredibly diverse actors.

■ METHODOLOGY

→ Preparation Phase

We will spend our first weeks building up a discourse around ageing bodies and architectures of care through readings and lectures. In parallel, an analysis of the site and its context will take place collectively. We will set a place to share knowledge, experiences, and thoughts. We will pay close attention to how we communicate ideas, caring for the words we use and their architectural correlation. We will have input and lectures by experts and members of the communities concerned.

During this phase we expect students to formulate clear and precise questions, use abstract ideas to interpret information, consider diverse points of view, reach well-reasoned conclusions, and test alternative outcomes. Perform qualitative and quantitative architectural research and translate it into architectural language. Gather, assess, record, and comparatively evaluate relevant information and performance data in order to support conclusions. Design an initial strategy in response to territories of care and their characteristics, including the urban context and historical fabrics, soils, topography, ecologies, climate, economies, etc.

→ Elaboration Phase

After the preparation phase, we will start designing projects individually. We will work on the proposals so that they are sufficiently and adequately resolved. Discussions around form, materiality, construction, and structural systems, as well as environmental control and impact, will be part of our weekly conversations. Experts from different fields will provide input to support the development of the project.

During this phase we expect students to use formal, organisational, social, and environmental principles informing two- and three-dimensional design. Understand construction and structural systems and their coherent formalisation. Consider the environmental impact and reuse of the design. Make clear architectural drawings and (moving) images at different scales to illustrate and communicate an architectural design both technically and experientially.

■ RATIO OF GRADING

→ Preparation phase

Chair of Architecture and Care: 70%
BUK: 30%

→ Elaboration phase

Chair of Architecture and Care: 70%
BUK: 30%

■ SITE

The project will transform an existing structure in Zürich. The site is not to be seen as a limited building lot, but rather as the starting point through which to conceptualise an urban territory of care, ranging from the scale of the body to the city. This way, we will rethink the boundaries of care, transgressing the domestic and the institutional domains in which they are conventionally located.

■ FEEDBACK

Students will work in constant conversation with the teachers as well as with external voices who will be invited to participate, not only in formal crits and reviews, but also during the project development process. Three major interim crits will be organised during the semester.

