

Denkraum #10

Doubt – Building Values

Doubt. Doubt has, one could say, a dubious reputation. It prevents action, postpones decisions, puts everything off. Doubt never leads demonstrations, never challenges the status quo. Doubt is not motivating, firm, exhilarating. Doubt goes nowhere and stands for nothing. And, is anybody actually willing to pay for doubt? Yet, we believe doubt can be a fruitful strategy. After exploring trust last semester in Regensdorf, trust in who and what is there, we will now choose to doubt and become aware of our own prejudices; by looking at topics from multiple perspectives; by being prepared to change our opinion; by not thinking in certainties. We will learn things we are unused to, and which at times might feel uncomfortable – hesitating, changing our mind, looking outside our architecture bubble – but it will enrich us. At least, we think.

Building values. We will continue our reflection on values, testing the ones we outlined in Denkraum #9 – multiplicity, character, the overlooked, generosity, ongoingness – doubting them and questioning them to see if they hold when confronted to a new context. What is a value? A value is a number, and yet everything but a number. A value is in itself a contradictory concept, expressing what we deem important, worthy, or useful. However, this varies for different people, in different contexts and moments. Values are all but static concepts, let alone universal ones. Values are positioning exercises. They make us take up a position, or re-evaluate the positions we took up before.

Oerlikon. After having erased most of its industrial past to replace it by efficient apartment buildings with underground parking garages, a last remnant of industrial architecture is still standing. The factory halls of the former Maschinenfabrik Oerlikon – MFO, founded in 1876 and known for the early development of electric locomotives, still occupy a large site just outside Oerlikon station. Looking at it and at proposals for its future, we will ask ourselves: how much is enough? Is adding more housing the only option to keep the city affordable and accessible? Is the new residential identity of Oerlikon something to doubt about, or is it the way people love to live? But also, do we need to lovingly preserve the last charming traces of industrial presence in Oerlikon after erasing them consistently until now?

Liegenschaften Stadt Zürich. After working with a private developer last semester, this time around we will collaborate closely with Liegenschaften Stadt Zürich, the public authority in charge of real estate owned by the city. We will explore what their values might be, and the role a public authority could take in this redevelopment, critically investigating their intention to install a 'Städtische Wohnsiedlung' on the site – a type with a specific urban and architectural history in Zurich. And we will wonder: what could be alternative, mixed futures for this area? And how could it become relevant to a larger community?

The world is full of uncertainty. Let's embrace it. Let's dare to doubt.

Denkraum

Making architecture demands a constant and dynamic reading of given contexts under the angle of specific briefs and questions, allowing to unveil explicit and implicit relationships stemming from past actions and present dynamics. We will investigate different ways to read, and from there we will proceed to place findings in a framework, to structure them and create our own hierarchies, to situate ourselves in relationship to it. Within the studio, the multiplicity of individual tracks will be united under the common theme, in a common space of thinking: a Denkraum.

The Denkraum is a space of presence. A place where the work is on constant display and grows organically in time, concentrating questions, tensions and proposed solutions, developing a common design endeavour and discourse, a joined output based on associative thinking and reflection by analogy. A place where reading and writing reality happens all at once. A place to discuss together and with guests coming from different backgrounds, regions and disciplines, guests who will talk to us and think along.

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in collaboration with Liegenschaften Stadt Zürich

Additional costs: max. CHF100.

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