



HOUSE EUROPE! THE TRANSFORMATION ISSUE

HouseEurope!: The Transformation Issue

A citizens' initiative for an EU-legislation that boosts the renovation of existing buildings and stops their demolition driven by speculation.

Every building is up for demolition, you just don't know yet! Today, buildings are treated as investments rather than spaces for people to live. Due to financial speculation, millions of square meters sit empty and ruin, are being demolished and replaced: from abandoned industrial and office spaces to functioning family homes. This practice creates social and environmental problems.

From this semester on, the design studios at station+ will be dedicated to a political initiative with the goal of implementing a legislation on a European level. HouseEurope! addresses the challenges of the existing building stock, which currently contributes to financial speculation and neglects its potential to support the social-ecological transformation. The goal of the initiative is to achieve a cultural and legislative shift of the building sector by promoting the adaptive reuse and renovation of existing buildings.

Studio Brief & Goal

We believe that by now preservation is no longer a retroactive activity but becomes a prefigurative act. We have to preserve the normal, the worthless, the ugly, just as we preserve listed buildings. Research studies, like "Obsolete Stadt" have identified various typologies that are likely to fall out of use due to social, economic or ecological changes and cultural shifts. These typologies include amongst others: offices, shopping malls, store fronts, banks, parking garages. We will build on these obsolete typologies to create design prototypes and legal precedents, how to adapt and transform an existing

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structure in order to reuse it for living. Therefore, every group of students will focus on one building (typology), look into local legislation as well as European legislation, to then compare these standards and norms. We will explore the national differences of legislative texts that incentivize speculation-driven demolition and new construction (Ersatzneubau). By doing so, we are trying to find the legal levers that, at present, are not recognized as opportunities to reuse and renovate these buildings.

Semester Structure

The goal is to produce a design concept to adapt and reuse future ruins, focusing on European legislation and standards, resulting in a trailer (series) that compresses the arguments, visualizes the project and narrates a story of change.

Phase 1 (Week 1 – 5) Speculation: Design the Brief

Architects often come too late in the process of a design project. If they want to maintain a political agency, they have to enter the process earlier, they have to write their own brief. The information that each building and its context hold within themselves can reveal a solution for its eventual saving. Therefore students will create a knowledge base that proves the building's social and environmental value. They will research legislations and regulations that currently prevent the building from being reused so that they can later challenge these regulations and argue for a change in the law.

The result of this research is a brief for a conversion of the chosen building (typology) into living space (housing and all additional social functions that are part of living). The brief is the basis for the design project.

with Giacomo Ardesio, Severin Bärenbold, Arno Brandlhuber, Olaf Grawert, Pan Hu, Jolene Lee, Bing Liu and Meghan Rolvien

Input: Alina Galimshina
(Dep. of Civil, Env. and Geomatic Eng. ETH Zürich)

Phase 2 (Week 6 – 10) Transformation: Follow the Brief

Students will adapt the existing structure into a living space under the premise that our existing building stock is the foundation for a social-ecological transformation, as it holds plenty of value: both social (culture) and ecological (energy). Students will develop a new narrative for the building based on the collective research: on their own and their colleague's findings. This includes adapting the existing structure for a new use, renovating the existing and updating the building's (infra)structure. These building measures must be future-proof, which means they should already think of their potential reuse in the future.

Inputs: Oana Bogdan (Architect and Former Politician), Ludwig Engel (Futurologist)

Phase 3 (Week 11 – 14) Storytelling: Compress the Argument

How can we challenge the idea that the new is always better and change people's perception that something overlooked, that fell out of use or will fall out of use, can become something else? Storytelling is an essential part of the design project. Based on the knowledge of Phase 1 and 2, students are asked to compress the main argument and to communicate the proposal to the public. Along all phases, students will start outlining the story to produce a trailer (series) for the project, bringing together research and storytelling.

Inputs: Carsten Berg (Expert for Direct Democracy and Campaigner), Severin Bärenbold (Technical Seminar on time-based media)

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