

ARCHITECTURE OF
TERRITORY
Designing Agriurbanisms for
Metro Zurich (HS 2020)



SOIL WATER LABOUR

NEW ECOLOGIES

INTRO: 15 September 2020
Tuesday, 10 am, ONA Entrance
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INTEGRATED DISCIPLINE Planning
PLACES 24 students

INTEGRATED SEMINAR WEEK
17–25 October 2020 (cost frame A)

What is the future of the manifold landscapes and territories across the world which support contemporary cities, such as Zurich, with water, food, human labour and other resources? How is human and non-human life in these environments affected by cities and by urbanisation? In our discipline, discussions on sustainability have remained focused on buildings and on cities, while these extended territories are equally exposed to rapid and far-reaching transformations with massive social and environmental implications. How can architects respond to these urgent changes? Can architecture become ecological, to go beyond-the-human and beyond-the-built, in order to engage with the environment as a whole?

NEW ECOLOGIES is a new studio series at the Architecture of Territory, dedicated to the practice of architecture for the post-anthropocentric era. Throughout the twentieth century, the anthropocentric and city-centric paradigms have locked architecture into binary thinking, which separated Man from Nature, Building from Landscape, and City and Countryside. Through the perspective of ecology, such unproductive divisions can be rethought to allow architectural discipline to broaden its agenda and take on new themes and approaches.

A crucial theme that has remained in the “blind field” of architecture is agriculture. With nearly half of the total land area on the planet currently dedicated to some form of agricultural production, agricultural landscapes might be the most urgent field of action to address the problematic of “sustainability”. Many types of agricultural practices have been linked to increasing risks for climate change, exhaustion of water and natural resources, depletion of soil fertility, as well as disadvantaging local population, and affecting quality of life. An awareness of the consequences of industrialisation of agriculture, including its addiction to fertilisers, pesticides and fossil fuels, has been growing. These issues stand at the core of the climate and biodiversity crises, and they call for new approaches in architecture too.

In this semester we will look at Zurich and its region beyond-the-built, concentrating on agriculture. The

largest in Switzerland, the Metro Zurich is composed of the relatively compact city of Zurich and the densely built-up valleys extending along the Glattal and the Limmattal. The urban fabric extends further into vulnerable agricultural areas or the “quiet zones” of the Swiss Plateau and the Prealps, and further into “alpine fallow lands.” Despite its high metropolitan density, agricultural lands still dominate the region of Zurich: in the Canton of Zurich 41.9% of the total surface is dedicated to agriculture. Whereas in the vicinity of the City of Zurich the land is under extreme urban pressure and at risk of being built up, other more peripheral landscapes, such as the Zürcher Oberland, are confronted with a decrease in population and the loss of social and economic resources.

Architecture and agriculture in the region of Zurich will be thought together through three highly interconnected ecologies: *soil*, *water* and *labour*. A close look at these ecologies in the territory will take us from agriculture research facilities and experimental permaculture farms, to food distribution networks and spaces, sites of industrial animal farming, constructed water landscapes and facilities, and all the way to the seasonal migrant worker groups that support agriculture of Zurich. Above these issues hovers the urgent need for a radical overhaul of agricultural practices. Recently, across the public landscape of Zurich, environmental movements—Fridays for Future, Climate Strike, Extinction Rebellion, and other solidary pioneer groups and cooperatives—have gained momentum. These movements have helped raise awareness and promote pioneering practices and projects such as mixed farming, agroforestry or “bee highways”, that will change the landscape of Zurich in the future. During the semester we will engage with Zurich’s land pioneer culture. Through intensive field explorations we will get to know the protagonists and learn from them. The result will be an online collection of investigative reportages, meant to inform the ecological design practices in architecture, and the public of Zurich.

PROCESS AND RESULTS

The semester consists of investigative journeys in the field and studio sessions. Architecture of Territory values intellectual curiosity, commitment and team spirit. We are looking for avid travellers and team workers, motivated to make strong and independent contributions. Our approach enables students to work with a range of methods and sources pertaining to territory, including ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, reading exercises, large-scale drawing techniques, photography, video, model making, and publishing work in print and online.

Several sessions will be dedicated to the tools: drawing software, GIS, photography, video editing, online CMS, and more. We will welcome guest experts and craft common agendas through debates. Students work in groups of two to three.

COLLABORATION

The studio series NEW ECOLOGIES is affiliated with *Agriurbanisms* research program at the Future Cities Laboratory in Zurich, due to commence in the fall of 2020. Cantonal and academic partners, experts, citizens and fellow designers will work with us in the process.

TRAVEL

Investigative journeys constitute the core of the project. On the first studio day, we will start our explorations by symbolically turning our backs to the city and venturing into agrarian landscape, which starts in the backyard of the ONA. Investigations will continue during the seminar week dedicated to experimental and pioneering agriculture. We will explore the field—by foot, by bike, by bus or by train—followed by individual days of investigation on the research topics and sites in the respective student teams. The seminar week will take place in the interval October 17–25,

and it is integrated and mandatory. The cost frame is A.

CREDITS

The semester project offers the total of 19 credit points: The Design Studio with Integrated Discipline (Planning) 14+3 KP and the Seminar Week 2 KP.

IMAGE

1. Arnold Odermatt, Eine Strassenunterführung fürs Vieh, 1964.
2. Irrigation of fields by the fire brigade in Regensdorf, Zurich, Comet AG, 1976
3. Andri Pol, From the series Grüezi, 2007.