

Care.

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## ■ WHO CARES?

Space is not neutral and has been extensively used to empower normative bodies excluding wilder ways of being and other diverse realities. Ableism, based on binary ideas of ability and disability, has perpetuated social asymmetries through architecture, likewise racism or sexism. Our discipline has played a pivotal role in shaping social norms and behaviors, constructing under the umbrella of an alleged “normality,” a spatial regime that is deeply unequal.

In a moment of systemic change, this studio will address how society defines and regulates bodies and their interdependencies through the built environment. It will envision alternative scenarios for Zürich in which disruptive relationalities, crip behaviors, new care practices, and formulations of kinship are built.

■ Official data shows that nowadays, in Switzerland, around 1 in 7 people has some sort of disability accredited. However, this needs to be questioned, as institutional classifications are always partial. We also need to consider that disability prevalence increases strongly with age; people between 50–64 years of age have more than twice the probability of reporting a chronic health problem or disability than the total working-age population. Thus, if we take into consideration that Swiss society is aging alongside the fact that current data is biased, this initial 1/7 proportion might not be representative and will exponentially grow in the coming decades. When adding the child population as a dependent social body, the expected dependency growth is alarming as it is presumed to increase to levels never seen before. Not only can the common binary able/disable classification be problematic and patronizing, but its consequent care system is also not sustainable. In this context, what can the role of architecture be?

Moreover, it is intriguing to see how over the past two decades, there has been a shift in Switzerland from the care provided in institutional spaces toward home-based care. This comes as no surprise, considering that domestic space has traditionally been the place in which reproductive labor is performed. However, part of home-based care tasks such as cooking, cleaning, or taking medication (“instruments of daily living”) are not considered as such and therefore are not covered by health insurance, thus producing other forms of dependency. This invisibility of certain practices within the house, which remain mostly unregulated and undervalued, has reinforced social asymmetries that come to light when analyzing care labor.

Beyond grounding ourselves in histories of exploitation and oppression, present raising of social reality is already using and understanding the city and

architecture differently. Thanks to the atomization of devices and the increasing demand for services and spaces, different uses and functions have begun to emerge on both urban and domestic scales. The house is no longer just a space for care; instead, it is a transient, productive, and networked space that answers to an ambiguous reality. The former classification between productive and reproductive labor, the spaces it takes place within, and the bodies that carry it out are once again being reshaped. Today, care acts through different bodies (human and non-human), technologies, and strategies at multiple scales. This realignment can contribute to generating new forms of balance, but we also have to be aware that capitalism has always been able to engulf any kind of opposition or difference, and the fact that caring has become a central topic in our consumerist lifestyle is a symptom of the actual extractive logic and its commodification of effects.

Responding to these social changes, this design studio will question the space of ableism in order to design new architecture, allowing new relations and ways of caring to emerge. We will understand dependency as positive kin and disability as a political condition. We will look to the body – from its spaces, contexts and rituals – as a starting point for an architectural and aesthetic proposal that embraces different scales. Recalling the famous Audre Lorde lecture title, *Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House*, the students will be asked to come up with ways of designing the city that do not reproduce previous processes of categorization and normativization, but instead explore the paths of otherness, wildness, diversity, complexity, and the impractical.

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