

DC-Lab  
epfl architecture  
autumn 2024/  
spring 2025

the house  
as  
a city

the city  
as  
a house

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domestic  
city lab

studio  
delhay

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The Domestic City Lab is part of EPFL's Habitat-Housing orientation.

The studio explores the habitat as the starting point for an intimately collective and solidary life, and explores territories from their domestic dimension.

Comprising almost 80% of the city's grain, the habitat is a decisive lever for encouraging social relations and care, while reducing our need for resources and energy, in order to bring together the city and housing in a single movement. Working on housing means finding ways to make a socially and spatially fairer world possible, within an ecology of human relationships.

The two semesters explore how we can live together and alone, through food and through uses and climates, declined into 3 themes:

#### Spaces and Uses:

The habitat puts forward spatial, environmental and social dimensions. Its spatial dimensions are properly linked to the architectural discipline (plan composition, constructive, material and atmospheric qualities), its social dimensions are linked to lifestyles and uses, and its environmental dimensions are linked to the need to save space, resources, materials and energy.

That's why we see housing as an emancipatory principle capable – in the light of the social and climatic crises we're facing – of revolutionizing our cities as close as possible to their inhabitants. For this reason, it is a powerful tool for designing the city of tomorrow in a way that is more reasoned, more desirable, fairer and more sustainable.

#### Intimate Territories:

The studio situates habitat in a broader spectrum than just housing. Rather, habitat is seen as spaces and uses stretched between small and large scale: between furniture and territory, domestic and urban scale, body and city, the short time of daily gestures and the long time of successive lives.

The habitat is also the place where ordinary and extraordinary moments, functional and poetic aspects, habits and surprises intermingle.

Habitat is therefore both rational and poetic, concrete and abstract, immanent and ontological, founded on our ability to project ourselves – to dream of tomorrow – and to be grounded by our memory – our past history.

In short, the habitat, above all, establishes relationships, articulations, and puts opposites into perspective, notions that are a priori contradictory or usually dissociated.

The habitat is the place of social links.

A theme:  
the habitat

A pretext:  
the kitchen

The kitchen is the starting point for both semesters.

As architecture, the kitchen is at once a space (a room), a use (the meal), a time (a ritual), but also a vital need (where sustenance is provided) and a cultural fact (gastronomy, a vernacular and exploratory discipline – local and global – between traditional and nouvelle cuisine).

It's also:

- the primary reason for sedentary living (Abel and Cain)
- a link to the land (farming and agriculture)
- a place where the animal and the vegetable kingdoms enter the dwelling
- a place for storage
- a place for assembly, transformation and disappearance of matter
- a place where food is prepared before being destroyed
- a historically gendered space
- a place of pleasure
- a place of conviviality (copain: those with whom we share bread)
- a place for health (a balanced diet)
- a technical place (water supply, cooking, ventilation, etc.)

For all these reasons, the kitchen interests us in that it questions the very essence of architecture, and more specifically that of the habitat. The studio speculates on the ability of the kitchen to stimulate a more virtuous way of living in the world today at all scales.

one method :

2 semesters  
2 investigations

We invite you to explore two scenarios in which the distinctions between interior and exterior, small and large dimensions, usually assigned to housing on the one hand, and to the city on the other, are recomposed differently.

It speaks of one subject: the habitat.

In this spirit, we would live the house as a city and the city as a house.

# the house as a city



Barbara Probst, Exposure #70: Munich studio, 05.10.09, 3:03 p.m., 2009

A household for 100 people  
organized around  
meals and climates

study trip: Basel  
28 september - 1<sup>er</sup> october

fall 2024

# the city as a house



Inhabiting the campus by transforming the SG hall:  
A dining room for 1000 people,  
open and flexible.

study trip: Madrid

spring 2025

The autumn semester explores the collective, shared and mutualized qualities of housing, the intrinsically urban character of domestic space.

#### Kitchens

The semester begins with an analysis of kitchen references from different horizons and eras. Studied individually, each reference will be questioned on its specificity in terms of uses and climates.

#### Household

In groups of three, students design a house for 100 people, where the ties forged between residents revolve around the kitchen program(s) and the way in which energy and climate resources are collectively managed and shared. The project is a non-situated, as a manifesto project.

#### Shares – Physical & Social Climates

In french, the word « partager » designates both that which separates and that which brings together. The habitat responds to this ambivalent need that constitutes a society. Each student spatially defines the terms and conditions of neighborhoods and defines the commonality of the inhabitants.

An ecology of human relations is established not only by sharing spaces, but also by pooling and circulating material, climatic and energy resources. The habitat must offer residents the possibility of controlling resources and the seasonality of the climate.

The different social and physical climates are pretexts for the development of energy strategies that inform the architecture of the household.

#### Alone & Together

The household offers a shared space in which to be alone and together freely. The idea is to imagine a prototype architecture, to explore the way in which typologies can be destandardized and/or renewed in the light of contemporary uses and spatialities, new relationships – here through the kitchen(s). By nature, the exercise is exploratory, questioning the possible urban character of domestic space, and imagining other possible forms of habitat that can adapt to contemporary lifestyles and issues.

#### Patterns

Interweaving intimate and communal spaces, the exercise will result in the design of a large motif, the object of abstract compositional research. As a non-located project, the pattern pushes us to produce a building from within, rather than through its context.

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#### Research

#### Project

#### Research through the project

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spring 2025

#### Research

#### Project

#### Research through the project

The spring semester explores the EPFLs territory in an immersive way from its small scale, between the campus and the SG hall.

#### Public Interiors

The semester begins with the analysis of a corpus of public interiors. Analyses are carried out individually, looking for the domestic scale of such space. How does their public scale is closely related to the smaller scale of the furniture and what domestic choreographies are at play in such urban conditions?

#### Flexible SG

In groups of three, with the collective knowledge acquired during the research phase, develops a proposal for transforming the public interior space of the SG hall. This collection of proposals forms a collective project that aims to transform the SG into a more appropriable, convivial and domestic space.

Using a large-scale model of the SG hall and its surroundings, a collective study puts in light hypotheses that are then studied in small groups.

#### Ordinary and Extraordinary

The ordinary daily ritual of the meal is taken as a domestic pretext in the campus' life. A dining room symbolically for «1000» people, open and flexible, can participate in the transformation of the space.

Extraordinary events, such as projections, exhibitions, lectures, taking place in the SG hall are to be studied and are pretext to the conceptual fabrication of elements appropriable and free of use both by students and the head of school. The university is shared both by students and staff, for both private and public purposes. Through the development of construction, maintenance and use protocols, all proposals must be capable of introducing a convivial aspect to the SG hall without disrupting existing uses.

#### Interpretations

All imagined interventions should be freely interpretable, allowing not only their own function, but also participation in other uses.

#### Atmosphere

The domestic aspect of the intervention will also have to answer to atmospheric conditions, following acoustic comfort, material and language conditions.

#### Fragments

Through reuse of the campus' waste, each group will focus on the construction of a fragment of its proposal, not only to test the feasibility of the proposal, but also to offer a part of its project to the building for future uses.

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