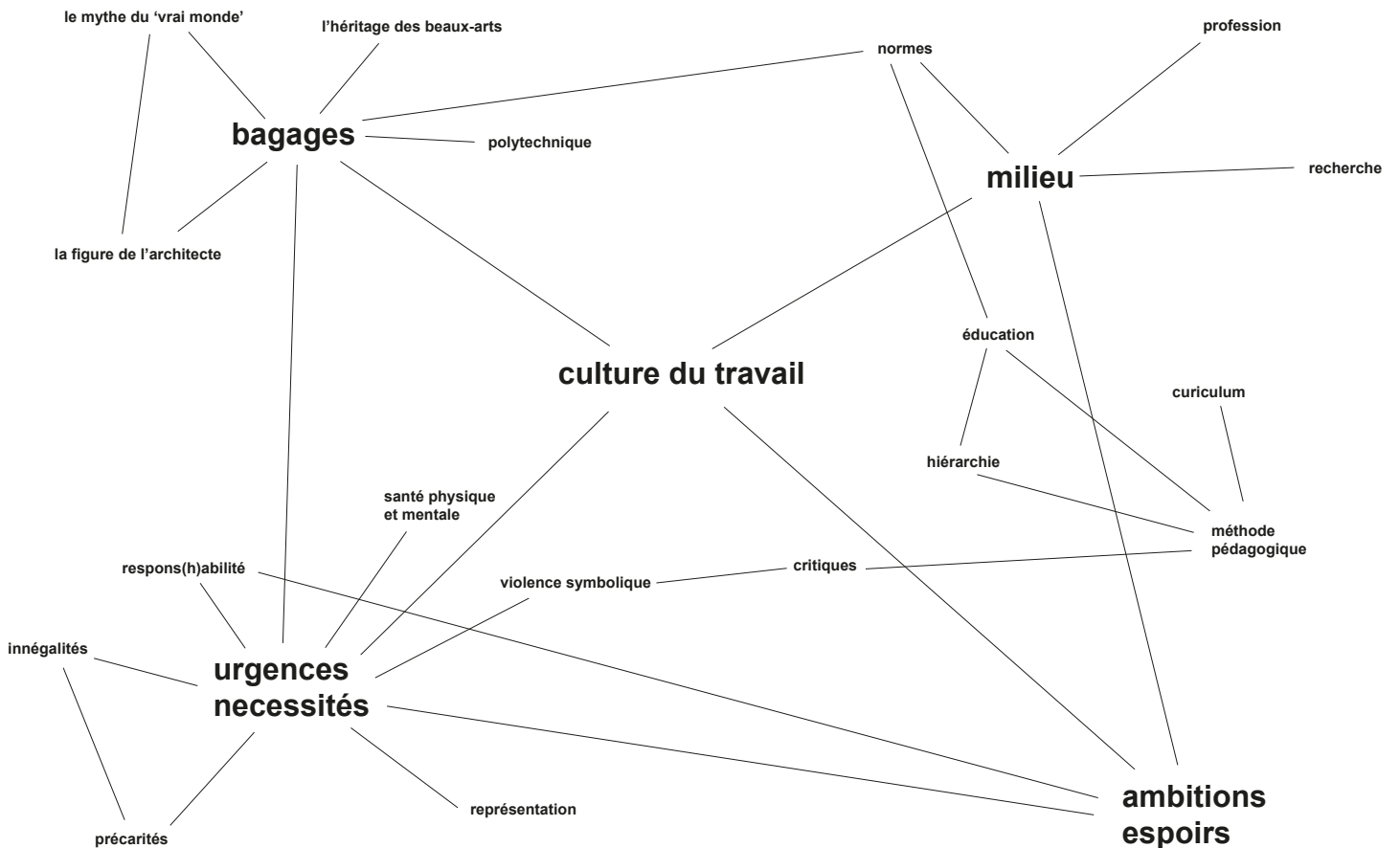


# x.y.z.

# culture du travail



# LE MYTHE DU "VRAI MONDE"

At D-ARCH there is no overview or coordination regarding the overall workload of students. The endless workload kills time for critical thinking and reflection, to the point that some participants recently stated that working 18 hours a day is D-ARCH's method to produce uncritical and self-exploitative architects.

This training is based on the harmful **myth of the 'real world'**. We are hard on you because **'the real world will be hard on you too!'** We are hard on you because one seems to forget that education is not a preparation for the real world but a world in itself, consisting of social interactions that are not set by unchangeable laws but products of a culture. We create values, norms, practices and attitudes, and are therefore creators of 'real worlds'.

The myth of the 'real world' is harmful. It has real world consequences for the mental health of students and assistants, not to mention the mental health of professors being impacted by and reproducing this myth. It is also harmful in the way it is exclusive-by-design: 'the real world' **myth excludes all 'diverse' people who do not believe and want to work in education and self-exploitation**. It is more often than not also implies the exploitation of others through outsourcing the burden of care and reproductive labour. Several participants were wondering out loud who is doing the cleaning, cooking, shopping, listening to significant others, consulting friends, and taking care of the children and elderly in the lives of these other male, white star-architects?

The myth of the 'real world' is also harmful in its consequences: it reproduces a specific architect personality that we typify as follows: his gratification lays in the struggle of **achievement and recognition**. He achieves well under conditions of strong competition and overt jealousy. He reacts to students, assistants or employees is sadistic (you should suffer, because I suffered); he is result and success-driven and pays at best, lip service to the social or ecological context of architecture. He is emotional and social intelligence are poorly developed, often he has no friends (beyond architecture) and he proudly says "my work is my life", ignoring how the **passion-relief** he passes on to others the reproductive, emotional and care labour necessary to sustain his life.

Les étudiants, en quête de lumière, suivent une routine mécanique du faire pour savoir.

# L'HÉRITAGE BEAUX-ARTS

Suivent cette même logique de production, la pédagogie architecturale reste profondément influencée par ses racines et pratiques originelles, celles de l'école des Beaux-Arts. La figure de l'artisan telle qu'évoquée par Richard Sennett dans *The Craftsman* fait encore office de canon. Les étudiants, en quête de lumière, suivent une routine mécanique du faire pour savoir. Jour après jour, sous la supervision de leurs maîtres, ils affinent leur savoir-faire par la répétition de modèles et d'habitudes. Le principe de studio semestriel ou annuel est conçu pour s'inscrire de l'univers d'un maître à penser, celui-ci étant le plus souvent sélectionné pour la qualité de sa pratique professionnelle plutôt que pour ses aptitudes pédagogiques. Cette méthode pratique est de manière générale peu mise en dialogue avec les réflexions apportées par les cours théoriques.

la culture de la chaire, elle aussi héritée des Beaux-Arts, est encore fortement présente et intégrée dans la culture de l'enseignement.



# POLYTECHNIQUE

Dans la conscience collective française et l'imaginaire international commun, l'école polytechnique est une institution qui trouve une niche quelque part entre l'Académie Française, le vin de Bordeaux, le salon de Descartes et la tour Eiffel. La démonstration se fait par l'absence: dans Le Roi se meurt, Sennett ne fait-il pas comprendre le malheur des temps par cette simple annonce: « Et l'école polytechnique vient de disparaître dans un tou... » ? Autrement dit, cette institution aux élèves bicornes incarne des valeurs françaises, d'autant plus que son histoire couvre les deux derniers siècles et dès les origines le drap de la République républicaine révolutionnaire.

Difficile alors d'échapper à un certain ton quand on entend décrire cette École et écrire son histoire, car en outre l'école est **marquée par des événements**. En tant que telle, elle participe aux conflits armés qui précèdent les temps et engendrent les Héros: guerre franco-prussienne, Grande Guerre, et dernière guerre par résistance juive.

Symbole d'une conception scientifique, **polytechnique est à l'abandon** de la culture de la République depuis deux siècles, au profit de la mode de la direction. Cette École est donc ainsi à l'abandon, courants renoués par la mode de la République républicaine révolutionnaire.

# BAGAGES

rich white male  
Ideal Architect: Designing beautiful buildings for the rich

# LA FIGURE DE L'ARCHITECTE

Most student participants were uninvolved about the ideal architect propagated by D-ARCH: **gender, race, class, sexuality, body, colour, and body pleasure, disability, beautiful buildings for the rich?** To some, this ideal architect was still what they suspected their peers to adhere to, yet for others it had become a running joke, revealing the ironic distance they established between this ideal and their own practice, values and goals. This critical distance proves that there is a certain degree of diversity in the architecture profiles and role models provided at D-ARCH.

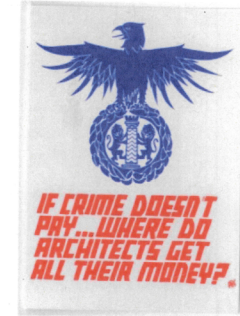
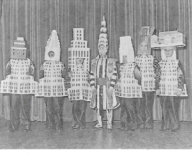
**Gender parity** is still not achieved at D-ARCH, no matter the efforts for improvement. Although intentions and informal actions regarding recruitment procedures were mentioned to us, we did not hear about a specific action plan, timeline or clear hiring targets to redress this imbalance. It is unclear to us how the call-to-action as stated in the Final Report by the Review Panel Based on the Site Visit of 30 September-03 October 2019 will be addressed and who is in charge, responsible and accountable for it.

The same report also mentioned the **lack of racial or ethnic diversity** at D-ARCH, and the way it un-prepares future architects to work in an international context of

# NORMES

"There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the **'practice of freedom'**, the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."

Mayo, Peter. Gramsci, Freire, and Adult Education: Possibilities for Transformative Action, 1999, 9.



Vous savez, et que faites-vous de ce savoir, et en quoi cela change-t-il vos sujets de préoccupation ?  
Isabelle Stengers

# SANTÉ MENTALE ET PHYSIQUE

there is no wrong in encouraging a certain **work ethos**, the recent survey on mental health #WiegETHs (2019) has shown that the current reality has a severe impact on **Substances that were repeatedly mentioned were alcohol (to relax), high amounts of coffee (to stay awake), sleeping pills (to sleep)**. Substances that were mentioned less were microdoses of lsd, amphetamine, ritalin and cocaine.

- Mental health issues mentioned by participants:
- stress
  - sleep problems
  - depression
  - burn out
  - mental breakdown
  - psychosomatic symptoms

**EPFL**

Notre ADN

Dans un environnement compétitif, nous offrons aux étudiants et assistants un enseignement, des infrastructures de haut niveau et un accompagnement personnalisé. Nous sommes une communauté qui s'engage dans la recherche.

Nous accueillons les étudiants et étudiants de toutes bases politiques et sociales. Nous sommes une communauté qui s'engage dans la recherche.

# TRANS-FORMATION CULTURE DU

Partly & diversity has been explicitly and repeatedly mentioned as an urgent issue to tackle at EPFL in the #WiegETHs survey (2019) given many reasons: the health and wellbeing of students. To mitigate these issues, action groups about parity, diversity and staff representation of concrete actions and how to improve:

- curriculum
- pedagogical working methods
- evaluation methods
- social relations and norms
- code of conduct and complaint procedure
- academic calendar & dissemination
- diversity of staff and recruitment procedure
- diversity of students and belonging and well-being

# RESPONS(H)ABILITÉ

'lacking in concern with urgent global challenges'

# INNÉGALITÉS

'elite design by the elite for the elite'  
described as focusing on 'traditional' Western European architecture and white Western European male icons of the 20th century. Both in theory and in the studio practice, there was hardly any **reference to women, LGBTIQ+ people, non-Western/European/Swiss architecture** (e.g. from Africa, Asia, South-America), BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and Other People of Colour), people with working class background, and interdisciplinary and collective projects. Similar remarks were

# URGENTES NECESSITÉS

this is clearly an unsustainable model.  
the impact is particularly harmful.

Overall students miss guidance in how to practically and technically tackle this **complex global issue**. Students are aware that professors are also struggling with these issues too. They would however, prefer this to be openly addressed in a constructive and collaborative way. Now ecological concerns are often addressed in an ironic, nihilistic or hypocritical manner, as students deduce from professors' silly remarks or from the gap between the concerns they express in the studio and the work they do in their office. Students

# REPRESENTATION

very aware that **representation matters**; and that it is not only about numbers, but also about who we value, see, hear, and serve as architects. It has an impact on the kind of questions we ask, whose needs we notice, and what values we honour.

Break The Canon and the referential expectations  
one's day to day confidence. There is a strong wish for a **more diverse range of architects and paradigms**, that would moreover go beyond the antipodal binary 'big office architects' vs 'critical architects'.

In **different perspectives and role models**. Be aware (professors) about and self-question the implicit values and role models communicated through remarks, references, network, assignments...

mentioning **critical theory, feminist and decolonial theory** were brought to the foreground. There is also a desire for the 'darker sides' of architectural history and

Therefore D-ARCH should reassess the language, values and tools of architecture so that these students and assistants can also belong and feel at home in architecture, and confidently and successfully pursue their ambitions.

# PRÉCARITÉS

This outcome is to be avoided as **working alongside** studying is said to be a nearly **'impossible combination'** with some students working part time (e.g. 20 to 40%) during semesters, and full time during breaks. Due to the daily workload at D-

# feared the crits.

External jury members see crits as an invitation to perform and showcase their experience, **knowledge and status**; this might be well-intended and inspired by a desire to satisfy the great expectations of the host institution.

Life is work.  
Work is life.

# PROFESSION

COMPETITION  
PRODUCTION  
PROGRÈS  
INNOVATION

culture of competition and pressure.

extreme competence and knowledge.

qui forme qui ?

# RECHERCHE

# MILIEU

# ÉDUCATION

# BOLOGNE

"emphasis of production against and over the emphasis of erudition"

assigned credit points. They feel some credit points are disproportionate to the expected commitment of the students. This leads to demotivation, students not

# CURICULUM

cours « pratiques » et techniques  
education as merely technocratic and have issues with the strong focus on design and aesthetics as being the greatest values in architecture. Or as one participant

The strong work ethic at D-ARCH is central to its educational reputation. Students observe that success is directly linked to the amount of hours one dedicates to the program and one's willingness to make sacrifices in one's private life. One culture of overworking.

One student concluded that the curriculum is still mainly aiming at honing students to become an uncritical and well-disciplined workforce for the big offices.

# MÉTHODE PÉDAGOGIQUE

There is a great need for architect professors and teaching assistants who set the example and are skilled in non-hierarchical, non-toxic and productive teaching and working methods.

grading is a limited frame for evaluation

speak of teaching methods that enable an educational culture of 'teacher pleasing' and uncritically following the aesthetics and conceptual logic of the Chair. They feel that there is little place for their subjective experiences

# AMBITIONS ESPOIRS

inclusive and diverse: absence of discrimination of age, religion, culture, ethnicity, color, mental and physical different- or disabilities, gender, orientation, color, class and the guarantee of gender parity and the substantial representation of all social minorities

Safe: unsafety is not to be confused with situations of discomfort, often experienced by overrepresented groups during processes of transition and positive actions in favor of underrepresented groups. Safety refers to the absence of micro-aggressions, silencing, moral and sexual harassment, bullying, tokenism, underrepresentation. A productive work and study environment is conditional upon a safe working environment. It guarantees mental and physical health, belonging, autonomy and support to develop one's potential in work and study.

1. A multi-year **research project** that involves and clarifies targets in terms of gender parity, diversity and revision of the leading myth of the ideal architect.
2. A pedagogical **action plan** that offers professors and teaching assistants opportunities for pedagogical training. Focus on the integration of critical theory in studio and horizontal, collaborative and peer-to-peer working methods (with acknowledgment of the reality of power relations).
3. Extensive support and lobbying for **academic tenure/contracts**.
4. **Organize and maintain change** and working of myths. The real world is changing and the impact of the myth and the ideal architect is fading down in all institutions. Discussing mental health issues and the harm of ruthless competition, stress and overworking is to target status. A healthy work and study culture facilitates speaking up, active bystanders, and accountability. Those with decision power or in positions of (implicit) leadership should embody professional integrity in words and deeds, and explicitly and without delay address misbehaviour or transgressions.
5. The change of culture should be supported by a clear and transparent **evaluation procedure**, confidence-persons and a code of conduct. A bottom-up designed code of conduct functions as a tool to raise awareness and create opinion ground and vocabulary.
6. **Regularly evaluate and reflect**. Clear criteria and written feedback, particularly conversational and peer-to-peer evaluation methodologies that ensure productive learning environments instead of monological performances of psychological terror and abuse; create meetings to set common ground and values.
7. **Cognitive and social sustainability**: There is an urgent need for more ecological and socially engaged architects in the studio. Regarding the forthcoming ecological challenges and diseases, students call for greener masters (Dr. Randone) who acknowledge their ignorance, precarity and insecurities and want to learn and develop new tools, methods and practices together with their students.
8. To facilitate this multi-level transition, D-ARCH probably needs a **transition action plan** with clear timeline and targets. Ideally, this person is familiar with the field of architecture and higher education and experienced in Diversity & Inclusion transition management. Preferably, this person is part of the D-ARCH Executive Board.

has improved.  
the work is not yet done.

# raised awareness

It takes years for students to acquire insight in the political ins and outs of the institution; and for them to understand where and how to voice their concerns and lobby for their interests. By the time they come to get a clear sight on institutional politics, they are already on their way out.

- Who do we design for? Is our education critical towards the people we design for?
- Are we merely 'a privileged group designing for the privileged'?
- Under which conditions was this architecture produced? Is architecture 'neutral'?
- What is the embodied and subjective experience of design?
- How can we design with minimal resources?

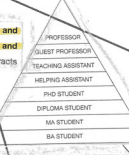
# HIÉRARCHIE

Abuse-of-power is specifically experienced in relation to hiring procedures and employment contracts. Several staff members mentioned favouritism and exploitation; for instance, consecutive short-term contracts, employment contracts

'old-fashioned' and 'top-down'

To some degree a hierarchical model can be productive, but when it lacks transparency about how it operates, it poses problems in terms of power abuse, or as a participant wrote in terms of 'holding space'

The presence of power relations and what this implies regarding behavioural attitudes and teaching methods is low at D-ARCH. Professors seem to presume that students can talk and exchange freely with them, as if they are equals and not occupying radically different power positions. They also seem to forget that horizontal working methods between unequals require transparent procedures and checks and balances that precisely account for the existing power imbalance. When the conditions of horizontality are unilaterally imposed by the party in power, the resulting collaboration only reproduces more of the same, to the detriment of the weaker party.



# CRITIQUES

inappropriate and belittling comments

- being intimidating
- giving harsh comments
- shouting
- threatening
- making people cry
- storming out of meetings when disagreeing
- silencing of ideas that do not conform
- ignoring, not responding to questions
- bullying weaker students as a method of selection
- signposting other backgrounds or former education
- overstepping personal boundaries
- insulting and analysing someone's personality
- creating fear by increasing pressure

In a state of exhaustion and questions the pedagogical value of the mental challenges and confusion students are facing. Especially as the evaluation is mostly based on the subjective criteria of the individual members of the jury, that are never addressed or made explicit, critique can easily become, as one participant wrote, 'too personal and harsh'. Students share that not all feedback is constructive and that some (external) jury members' contributions have rather a performative than an educational purpose. Or as one teaching assistant put it: 'It is not because you are a great architect that you are a good critic.' A couple of participants added that they felt that implicit biases on the jury's side was certainly influencing the way they were being evaluated.

# INFORMATION DU TRAVAIL

The aim of ENGAGE D-ARCH was to initiate dialogue regarding the current work environment. The aim was to create a safe space for students to share their experiences and concerns. By favouring community-based, peer-to-peer and horizontal working methods, ENGAGE D-ARCH gave voice to the D-ARCH community, especially to those individuals who might have encountered one or more of the issues mentioned above or who have organised to address these issues. Through the method of 'collective mapping', the project led to a series of peer-to-peer conversations for individual experiences. In their respective disciplines between already existing addresses, insights, relations and ways of working at D-ARCH.

ique et technique, française. Révisé simulation d'un diplôme, à donner bourgeoisie de la France. Il est dans les travaux de origine de bien des courants qui attirent liens de camaraderie au fil de carrières sage des années de jeunesse.

plus de 15 000  
étudiants et collaborateurs font de l'EPFL, une petite ville trilingue et dynamique

Le D-ARCH a été initié en 2018 par une coalition de membres de la communauté D-ARCH. L'objectif est de créer un espace sûr pour les étudiants et les enseignants afin de discuter des problèmes de la communauté D-ARCH et de trouver des solutions.

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« Dessiner veut dire prendre une décision, se fixer et affirmer. Dessiner = décider. Le Dessin me permet de décider et dessiner c'est insister sur ce qui compte pour moi, le Dessin n'est pas une technique. Dessiner est un geste simple, un geste qui m'engage vers une forme en devenir. Pour être engagé envers cette forme, dessiner m'aide à rester fidèle à cette volonté de 'forme', parce qu'une fois esquissée, la forme n'est plus aléatoire ni arbitraire, mais la forme est fixée. Je dessine pour me fixer et pour fixer les choses et je dessine parce que je veux inscrire les choses, les rendre incontournable. Dessiner est une manière directe et efficace de s'exprimer, de partager avec l'autre, ma mère, l'historien de l'art ou avec celui qui pourrait me poser une question sur mon travail et sur ma position d'artiste. Je dessine parce que je veux clarifier – d'abord pour moi-même – la forme. Je dessine parce que l'art est affirmation de la forme, et faire un dessin m'aide à renforcer cette affirmation. Dessiner est – donc – l'affirmation d'une forme à venir. Dessiner c'est se propulser, se projeter, dessiner n'est pas une explication ou seulement une communication. Avec le dessin je veux et je peux insister avec ce qui est essentiel pour moi, dessiner m'aide à approfondir et à creuser ce qui compte vraiment. Dessiner c'est se décider pour quelque chose, c'est être 'pour', dessiner est un acte d'affirmation et d'émancipation. »