Two PhD positions, Academy of Architecture, Mendrisio

Application deadline: Jun 28, 2015

Sascha Roesler

Two PhD positions (48 months, full time), as part of the research project "A Cross-cultural Theory of the Urban Passive House"

Academy of Architecture, Università della Svizzera italiana, Mendrisio (Switzerland)

Subject

The weak point of today's theory of passive climate control is its focus on individual buildings and self-sufficiency which should be overcome by focusing on interdependence and synergy effects on an urban scale. In this research project, the "passive house" is to be rethought as an "urban passive house" and conceptualized as part of the "political ecology" of the city. The project's investigation is at the intersection of architecture, ethnography, and science and technology studies. It examines the complex relationship between the climate and the city. The future conception of the urban passive house relies on coordinated "combinations" between the different "agents" of passive climate control. Therefore at the very centre of this project is the investigation of meaningful "associations" (Bruno Latour) of spatial structures, sociocultural practices, and political regulations. The control of climate is conceived as a practice fundamentally influenced by culture and politics.

PhD Projects

The two PhD projects will provide important empirical insights for theorizing the urban passive house. Doctoral students will be investigating the thermal conditions of an urban neighborhood in the global South and exploring modernization strategies that foster passive climate control in the district. With the underlying rationale of the city as a political ecology, the projects shall combine bioclimatic urban research with microscale investigations on the use of "common-pool resources" (Elinor Ostrom), on local thermal practices, and on the political regulations of climate control. For this, project proposals that consider a methodological framework combining ethnography with design research are sought. The following problems could be addressed by means of this framework:

(1) Extensive fieldwork examines the "city climate" and the existing forms of climate control in the selected urban quarter and analyzes how climatic conditions, density, air pollution, poverty, building structures, everyday activities and social norms interact. The ethnography aims to create an understanding of how different social groups deal with the climatic conditions over the course of the year, what kind of thermal strategies have been implemented and according to which histori-

cal contexts a prevailing form of climate control should be understood.
(2) Design research examines the potentials for an increased usage of passive climate control strategies in the neigborhood. It would uncover continuities and compatibilities between traditional and contemporary forms of climate control and would elaborate passive scenarios for urban and architectural development. Ultimately, new urban and architectural rules that improve the fine adjustment between the urban climate and the climate controls of the city shall be sought.

Requirements

Interested persons are invited to apply with a project proposal on the subject of passive climate control as connected to the political ecology of a city. The proposal should include a brief description of the city to be investigated and the reasons why it is particularly relevant for the research topic. The area of investigation has to be appropriate both for ethnographic and design research. Successful applicants will have excellent analytical and conceptual skills, a strong visual sensibility and the willingness to spend about a year in a city of the global South. Architects with a particular interest in social science and transdisciplinary problems are strongly encouraged to apply. Further requirements are as follows:

- Master's degree in architecture, urban design (or a related area such as anthropology, cultural studies, science studies)
- Excellent knowledge of English (a knowledge of Italian and German is an advantage)

Important informations

The annual salary will amount to 47'040–50'040 Swiss Francs for a maximum of four years.

- Deadline for application: June 28, 2015
- Interviews: according to requirements
- Starting date of position: October 1, 2015 (negotiable)

Application submission

Applications must be sent electronically (one pdf-file) to Sascha Roesler (project leader and Swiss National Science Foundation Professor): roesler@arch.ethz.ch

- Project proposal (2-3 pages)
- CV (including publications)
- Two writing samples (8 pages max.)
- Portfolio (8 pages max.)
- Copies of documents regarding to academic titles
- Name and email addresses of two referees

Reference:
JOB: Two PhD positions, Academy of Architecture, Mendrisio. In: ArtHist.net, May 7, 2015 (accessed Nov 19, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/10226>.