



ALICE

RESONANCE ROOMS

EPFL SECTION D'ARCHITECTURE PREMIERE ANNEE 2024/2025 SEMESTRES 1+2

ALICE ONLINE
http://alice.epfl.ch

ALICE TEAM	Y1
Roman Alonso G	RA
Nikhil Calas	NC
Laurent Chassot	LC
Rosa Climent	RC
Dieter Dietz	DD
Ophélie Dozat	OD
Capucine Fouquin	CF
Arianna Frascoli	AF
Carla Frick-Cloupet	CF
Matthieu Friedli	MF
Nessim Kaufmann	NK
Bastian Marzoli	BM
Manuel Potterat	MP
Laila Seewang	LS
Yann Salzmann	YS
Annabelle Thüring	AT

Román Alonso Gómez, Raffael Baur, Nikhil Calas, Laurent Chassot, Rosa Climent, Dieter Dietz, Ophélie Dozat, Capucine Fouquin, Arianna Frascoli, Carla Frick-Cloupet, Matthieu Friedli, Antonio Giraldez Loperz, Patricia Guaita, Lucia Jalon Oyarzun, Nessim Kaufmann, Claire Logoz, Nagy Makhlouf, Bastian Marzoli, Estefania Mompean Botias, Malcom Onifade, Manuel Potterat, Jaime Ruiz, Yann Salzmann, Laila Seewang, Fulya Selcuk, Annabelle Thuering, Eloise Vo

CONTACT
Jaime Ruiz
BP 4120, Station 16
CH-1015 Lausanne
T +41 21 693 3203

DESIGN & CONCEPT
Hubertus Design

EDITORIAL
Dieter Dietz
Laila Seewang
Laurent Chassot
Manuel Potterat

RESONANCE: TRANSFORMING DESIGN PRACTICES
EPFL-ENAC-ALICE: *RESONANCE: FOUNDATIONS—PLANES—ROOMS* (2022–26)

We live in a time when fundamental ecosystem disturbance announces its proximity through ecological precarity: abnormal climatic occurrences, pollution, and extinction (Tsing, 2018). It is essential that architecture adapts to this change and recognizes its complicity by questioning the foundational lessons inherited from our teachers, from history, and our practices as professionals. By questioning if these foundations are adequate. How should we learn from the incredibly rich and abundant environments built up by the many cultures of this planet, both human and nonhuman? We have a choice in how we listen to the world, understand it, re-read it. We have a choice as to which values we keep and which we are willing to replace.

The ALICE Year One (Y1) program approaches this challenge to architectural practice in two ways. The first is its processual nature. Architecture does not belong to an abstract world conceived as a series of coherent problems, a world where architecture would form objects to solve those pre-defined problems. Rather, architecture is always entangled in questions directly linked to how we understand our existence and therefore emergent in nature. As gestures and inventions, architecture has both cultural and technical meaning. These two aspects of architecture cannot be separated as they are of one and the same nature. The things that we invent and produce to act upon the space that we live in are extensions of our body. They are never static, but are in constant transformation, situated in relation to us as living individuals and societal beings, and in relation to the environment that is itself an evolving eco-system of other living organisms. Being alive, we—humans, plants, other species, our languages, our arts, our society—are intertwined in perpetually evolving relationships. Architecture is therefore both an expression and concretization of the relationships that we build with all life.

The second aspect that we stress in the ALICE Y1 is architecture's collective nature. Architecture is never made alone; it is a means of communicating in society and with the environment. The collective languages by which we discuss architecture play a fundamental role in how we conceive of architecture itself. Gestures – the making and the significations that emerge through making – form a cultural and technical language that we craft together. We think, speak, and make architecture together. ALICE Y1 emphasizes the collaborative nature of architecture by making projects as individuals, in pairs, as small groups, as collectives, and as one large group of people – collaborations within the ALICE team and with many public partnerships beyond the university. To emphasize the importance of the collective act, we have hypothesized, and succeeded, in thinking, designing, and building projects with 250 people, all authors and co-authors, as the culmination of the academic year.

The most important aspect in the ALICE series is however not the final form of the end-of-year construction, but rather the explorative processes of its contributors, and the capacity of an articulated *mise-en-espace* to support the search for new forms of living together: through architecture, we learn. As such, the ALICE series becomes a research agenda through which we not only build, but learn, architecture.

Lessons of collective practice require regular periods of reflection: what have we learned—about architecture, about community needs, and the local environment—as we produce architectural projects collectively? How do we integrate this knowledge—for pedagogy, for students and teachers alike—into the next cycle to constantly improve our ways of practicing? After the single-year cycles of the 'BECOMING' program, we have adjusted the program to allow for a more attentive, continuous, acquisition of knowledge. RESONANCE is, for the first time, a multi-year pedagogical cycle based on the annual stages of FOUNDATIONS (2022-23), PLANES (2023-24), and ROOMS (2024-26). In May 2023, FOUNDATIONS were constructed that responded to the site and territory; in May 2024, PLANES will respond to these foundations taking into consideration how these FOUNDATIONS have weathered and been used. We will repair, maintain, or unbuild these FOUNDATIONS in the process. In Fall 2024, ALICE will begin a two-year collaboration with the *Service de l'urbanisme* at the *Ville de Lausanne* to investigate the significance of the Place de la Riponne. Over the next two years, we will adopt our lessons from FOUNDATIONS and PLANES to create ROOMS RIPONNE. This partnership will form a further conversation with sites in the region: learning with the people, animals, and plants that have already begun to adapt to those places, and with the resources in the region that were used to make these architectures.

The term RESONANCE therefore articulates a search for a more respectful relationship with our natural world, including a more thoughtful use of natural materials, of knowing where they come from and who and what was implicated in their production. It strives for a generous, and more mutually-beneficial, connection with the places where we build, more consideration for how our structures are always temporary and must return to the planet at the end of their lives. It assumes that the environment is not a neutral context that we act upon, but a living world that can also teach us about its needs if we listen carefully enough to it (Robin Wall-Kimmerer, 2021). While, pedagogically, the emphasis is on the process of designing and constructing, the resulting projects also take on a life of their own after they are complete. The projects become places inhabited, changed, and adapted by the people who gather there. After the students and teachers leave, they become spaces re-built and un-built by many.

The terms that we have introduced to structure our first-year program are crafted around a simple idea: they are intended to help constitute a conception of the world, to engage with it, and to situate ourselves in it, both as an individual and as collectives. The first phase, MEASURES, is an examination of how scalar correlation and infinite proportion relate our bodies simultaneously to environments and to drawings, how we situate ourselves in a place with the living. In ELEMENTS, we begin our first collective constructions by designing and building 1:1 fragments on site that translate our gestures into built form. With ROOMS, students work individually to synthesise the findings of prior findings into an architectural proposal for a 'room' around the Riponne. We end the semester with a workshop, AFFORDANCES, whereby we search for overlapping themes emerging from 300 individual ROOMS.

In CONSTELLATIONS, collectives of students propose a constellation of group projects from the individual rooms proposed at the end of the first semester. Affinities between individual projects become the catalyst from which collective projects emerge. In ROOMS (IN THE CITY), students will work with engineers and craftspeople to develop their collective rooms and to negotiate amongst one another to create a common project for the Riponne. The final phase, RIPONNE ROOMS, emerges as a continuation of this process through collective building on site with our institutional and community partners.

To scaffold these ways of designing, we lean on several concepts that have been developed in collaboration with ALICE's Research and Design Research teams. The first that has emerged is that of *protostructure*, simultaneously concretized as a physically proportionate coordinate system that relates the site to the paper as well as a conceptual support that organizes the ideas of the larger collective. For architecture students, it makes explicit the notion of having to scale from the world to the drawing studio. *Protostructure* is at times made explicit through matrices and at times manifests itself graphically—projecting the site(s) of exploration onto the tables and walls of the ateliers. A second concept to have emerged over the years is that of *protofigure*. If *protostructure* implicitly recognizes sites as the physical, political, and economic realities in which we situate architectures, *protofigure* becomes a conceptual support as we search for the affordances uncovered through acting within our environment. It recognizes that by acting, by architect-*ing*, we discover and co-create places that hold significance. Materiality is emerging as another concept for the ALICE investigations, understanding our constructions as temporary manifestations of earthly materials that have been moved from, and have required labour in, places beyond the sites upon which we build.

Through this pedagogical approach, we hope and believe that such an architecture can shift values. Architects are not only problem-solvers. They have the potential to relocate values – from economic profit to an ecology of space and of contribution. We continue to learn how to relate architecture to the ground; how to situate ideas and spatial constructs, not only in society, but also in relation to life in general, to our resources on this planet; how to root architecture, how we let it live, how we let it relate. It is in the spirit of ecological and social urgency that we propose to work on values other than efficiency, profitability, typology, or expertise. We initiate architecture as a process – architect-*ing* – and not a thing. Architecting would be the thinking and making of space according to intrinsic principles of contributing and caring. These acts imply values that change, that are based on both the individual and collective desire of experts and non-experts alike.

