# Methods of Assembly EPFL

# 2025—6

# Summary


## English

This course explores how we might imagine, design, and demonstrate new models of affordable, low-impact living on agroecological farm sites in the South of England. Our work will draw on locally available materials and resources, combining vernacular techniques with contemporary technologies to improve the conditions in which a new generation of skilled ecological farm workers are able to live and work.

## French

Ce cours explore des manières d'imaginer et concevoir de nouveaux modèles de vie, abordables et à faible impact environnemental sur des sites agroécologiques dans le sud de l'Angleterre. Notre travail s'appuiera sur les matériaux et ressources disponibles localement, en combinant des techniques vernaculaires avec des technologies contemporaines afin d'améliorer les conditions de vie et de travail d'une nouvelle génération de travailleureuses agricoles.

# Course Description

Small agroecological farms offer a rich and rewarding way of life but rarely generate enough income to enable those who work on them to compete in the open housing market. Where affordable housing exists, it is often low quality or far from small farm sites. Housing supply in rural areas is constrained by planning restrictions and competition from recent arrivals, holiday lets, and second-home ownership.

Many small farm stewards are forced to live long-term in caravans and mobile homes designed for temporary use. These are often cold, damp, poorly insulated, and expensive to heat. Their construction makes them difficult to maintain or adapt, and they typically lack essential spaces such as storage, drying areas for active outdoor lives, and warm, dry offices. For those with caring responsibilities or plans to start families, such housing is particularly inadequate. This situation is incompatible with the regenerative values at the heart of agroecological farming, which aims to care for land and ecosystems while cycling and stewarding resources responsibly.

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The course is structured around three briefs across the year:
Winter Semester: Brief 1 & 2
Spring Semester: Brief 3

# Fall Semester

## Brief 1: Learning from Examples

Students begin by researching historical and contemporary rural housing projects. Through
archival work and the production of drawings and models, we will explore and
examine the potential that these projects have to inform contemporary approaches
to living on the land and supporting ways of living as part of a system of agroecological production.

## Brief 2: Good Translations

Students will investigate how materials and simple energy principles shape territories, economies, and ecologies. Through an understanding of locally available resources, historic vernacular building practices, and the application of a series of different energy principles, students will translate their precedent projects into characterful, low energy housing proposals that investigate the relationship between how we inhabit and use buildings and the performance of fabric.

# Spring Semester

## Brief 3: Home Landing

This brief focuses on situating and adapting all the translated design proposals into robust, adaptable housing proposals for rural workers that can be applied across small agroecological farm sites. Emphasis is placed on using local resources, simple construction techniques, and low-energy strategies that explore the relationship between inhabitation, building use, and fabric performance. Students will consolidate their previous work into architectural frameworks that articulate clear spatial, material, and environmental principles, while remaining responsive to different contexts. The refined housing proposals from the previous brief will be located on selected UK agroecological farms and adapted to the realities of a particular site. The aim is to develop and demonstrate how these housing proposals function as both an architectural and territorial system, responsive to land, resources, energy, regulations, and community, while communicating its potential for adaptation and implementation by others.

# Content

## Teaching Team

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## Teaching Method

The studio places an emphasis on group work and collaborative practice. Students have the opportunity to develop their individual design skills as well as work in a variety of group sizes, throughout the year in response to the different phases of each Semester. The course is organised into a series of briefs that guide students from detailed precedent research, environmental, material and structural design, the design of a rural worker house and finally the detailed construction design. design development. Each semester is punctuated by workshops focusing on material exploration, construction techniques and investigative methods, as well as a study trip that support situated research and collective inquiry.

## Site

We will work in the South of the United Kingdom in a rural context, specifically agroecological small farm sites.

## Study Trip

There will be one/two study trips including the opportunity to travel to the UK and/or in Switzerland.

## Material & Travel Costs

A provisional budget ranging from 250 CHF to 450 CHF is to be considered for each study trip depending on destination. There will be some additional costs for workshops and materials, including the production of models that we are trying to reduce by mutualising expenses across the studio.

## Teaching language

This class is taught in English but French is supported where necessary.

## Assessment methods

The grades will be distributed over the briefs as follows:

- Brief 1: 20%
- Brief 2: 20%
- Brief 3: 50%
- Workshops & Overall Participation: 10%

The grading will be based on the following evaluation criteria:

• Enquiry: Engagement in practice informed by comprehensive analysis and evaluation of diverse complex practices, concepts and theories.

• Knowledge: Critical analysis and synthesis of a range of practical, conceptual and technical knowledge(s).

• Process: Experiment and critically evaluate methods, results and their implications in a range of complex and emergent situations.

• Communication: Articulation of criticality, clarity and depth. Communicating a diverse range of intentions, contexts, sources and arguments appropriate to your audiences.

• Realisation: Advancing the personal, professional and academic standards of production.