

26.05.2023  
09:30 - 18:15  
Langstrasse 200

LUS

# DOCTORAL CRITS

Guest Reviewers: Prof. Dr. Sonja Dümpelmann,  
Prof. Dr. Álvaro Sevilla-Buitrago

Reviewers: Prof. Tom Avermaete, Prof. Teresa Gali-Izard,  
Prof. Hubert Klumpner, Prof. Freek Persyn,  
Michiel van Iersel, Prof. Christian Schmid,  
Prof. Milica Topalovic, Prof. Maria Conen,  
Dr. Jennifer Duyne Barenstein, Dr. Nitin Bathla



## Programme

- 09:30 - 09:45 Coffee and arrival of participants
- 09:45 - 10:00 Welcome Remarks – Nitin Bathla & Freek Persyn  
10:00 - 11:00 Keynote lecture by Prof. Dr. Sonja Dümpelmann
- 11:00 - 11:45 Tatiana G. Carbonell  
11:45 - 12:30 Johanna Just
- 12:30 - 13:15 Lunch
- 13:15 - 14:00 Luke Harris  
14:00 - 14:45 Klearjos E. Papanicolaou
- 14:45 - 15:00 Break
- 15:00 - 15:45 Ina Valkanova  
15:45 - 16:30 Jacopo Zani
- 16:30 - 16:45 Break
- 16:45 - 17:30 Stefan E. Laxness  
17:30 - 18:15 Roundtable on publishing, career prospects, new research directions  
moderated by Sarem Sunderland
- 18:15 - LUS Aperó



## Climate Historiographies for a Pastoral Rhône Valley

Tatiana G. Carbonell

The earliest mention of the Rhône River in a Valaisian Decree was in December 1818, following a catastrophic flood that had devastated the Val de Bagnes six months earlier. Although the primary objective of the decree was to protect the Grande Route, a crucial passageway between Italy and France and a significant source of income for Valais, it also resulted in an institutional interest on the river regulation, determining its legal status. This paper explores how catastrophes have played a role in consolidating the physiocratic settler logic that was imposed on Valais by the French and Swiss authorities, by creating a common adversary to unite communities against the Rhône's perceived threats. This shift in focus facilitated the entry of French engineers and troops, who promised to assist in improving the Grand Route and Simplon Pass. The 1818 Decree serves as a key precedent for the Rhône River Correction Project, which transformed the alpine valley into a site of experimentation for proto-climate theories and technical infrastructures. Driven by a political reform that transitioned from a local to a national government, rather than seeking to expand its territory beyond its borders, Switzerland expanded into itself by gaining ground along its rivers, using pastoral landscapes as engines for territorial transformation.

*Tatiana Carbonell (she/her/hers) is a historian of architecture and landscape whose work studies climate theory and its historic development through different infrastructure-building projects in early nineteenth-century Alpine Switzerland. She is currently a doctoral candidate at ETH Zurich, jointly appointed between the Institute for History and Theory of Architecture (gta) and the Institute for Landscape and Urban Studies (LUS).*

*Tatiana holds a Master of Landscape Architecture and a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the Universidad Católica de Chile (UC). She has been an assistant professor in the Master and Bachelor programs at the same institution where she taught courses in the History and Theory of Architecture and Landscape. Among her recent publications is the edited volume *From Rock to Park* (Ediciones arq, 2020), the chapter “San Cristóbal is Thirsty” (*The History of Science in Chile*, 2023), and the article “Flores, an Ecology of Disaster” (*Revista Rita*, 2022). She has directed the exhibition *Flying Panels at Arkdes, Stockholm* (2019) curated by Pedro Alonso and Hugo Palmarola; and *Les Bords des Mondes at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris* (2015) designed by Stéphane Maupin. Currently she is a peer reviewer of *ARQ* journal and member of the Editorial Committee of *Revista Rita*.*

## An Earthly Writing of Space – Exploring a more-than-human Perspective on the Upper Rhine Plain

Johanna Just

From the beginning of the 19th century, humans have heavily transformed the Upper Rhine Plain: In 1809, the engineer J. G. Tulla initiated straightening the Rhine's meander zone that stretches along the French-German border. The extensive changes reflected the scientific spirit of the time and paved the way for continuing extractive practices. Today, the region epitomizes complex multispecies relations with highly modified ecologies of the Anthropocene: Flooded gravel pits, polders, and fields substitute former wilderness. This transformation was both represented and enabled by numerous 19th-century maps and drawings of the area. In contrast to earlier depictions of a vital landscape, they helped create a disconnect from the land and encouraged spatial interventions by abstracting and objectifying the unpredictable river. Following Bruno Latour's call for earthly sciences, the research explores an earthly approach to spatial practice. It probes how humans live with and against non-human others and tests ways of bringing complexity and vitality into spatial representations. The research follows three animals that are indivisibly linked with the area – Atlantic salmon (Rheinsalm), floodwater mosquito (Rheinschnake) and sand martin (Rheinschwalbe) – through close observation and support by local guides to gain a more-than-human lens on spatial, ecological, and social conditions. The notion of a vital milieu serves as a starting point to describe and visualize an inhabited, living terrain. Recent writings by ecofeminists and scholars from multispecies studies help develop a situated practice; work by pre-Enlightenment naturalists helps show complexity. Foregrounding a multiplicity of vital relations and exploring new ways of representing the region through writing and drawing, the study hopes to foster more sustainable and inclusive spatial practices.

*Johanna Just is an architect and doctoral fellow at the Institute for Landscape and Urban Studies at ETH Zürich. In her work, she traces relationships between more-than-humans and the environment in the Upper Rhine Plain and explores new modes of spatial representation. Currently, she is guest editor of the 2024 special issue of the gta papers on Amazônia together with Ciro Miguel and Santiago del Hierro Kennedy and founding editor of DELUS, the journal of the LUS institute, together with Sara Frikech. Johanna studied Architecture at the University of Hanover and IUAV Venice and holds a MArch Architecture degree with distinction and Bartlett School of Architecture Medal from the Bartlett School of Architecture. Johanna has worked in architecture and art practices in the UK and Germany and taught at the Bartlett and Oxford School of Architecture on architecture and landscape architecture programs.*

# Making Uneven Grounds: Living Soil and the Formation of Urban Landscapes in New York City

Luke Harris

Although there is increasing recognition of the range of functions performed by urban soil, this awareness is constrained by a narrow and reductive framing embodied in ecosystem services discourse, which elides the social and political formation of the ground as well as its contribution to the aesthetic and affective qualities of urban space. This proposed dissertation investigates how the development of living soil is entangled in the making of urban landscapes through a series of case studies of design projects which share a geologic condition, the terminal moraine of the last Ice Age in New York City. For each case study, I analyze representations of soil in the design process to understand how the complexity of soil life becomes a designable object, and how the designers' specific conceptions of soil life, along with its attendant geographies and practices, underpin the making of landscapes. The material properties of urban soil challenge a narrow understanding of the design process focused solely on the designer or the moment of construction, instead requiring an expanded conception of design agency, as the web of relations we call soil is necessarily produced over time by a diversity of actors. Accordingly, the dissertation ethnographically investigates the soils' ongoing development as it is shaped by interactions between biophysical dynamics and human practices of management, care and neglect. It describes how the creation of a living soil, and the concomitant characterization of other grounds as nonliving, is intimately linked to ongoing processes of uneven development. This analysis reveals how narrow and reductive models of soil legitimate and replicate capitalist logics of displacement and improvement. By articulating the connections between the design and maintenance of living soil and broader struggles over urban space, this project can reveal alternative strategies for working with the social and ecological potential of the existing ground to create more equitable and vibrant landscapes.

*Luke Harris is a first-year Doctoral candidate at the Chair of Being Alive in the Institute for Landscape and Urban Studies at the ETH Zurich. He received a Masters of Landscape Architecture from the University of Virginia and a Bachelors in International Studies from Macalester College. He is a founding member of the landscape research collective Office of Living Things, which is active in New York and Switzerland. Previously, he worked as a researcher and educator at the Chair of Being Alive at the ETH and practiced at Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates in New York City.*

## Hidden in Plain Sight: Audiovisual Research Tools for 'Post'-Conflict Urban Studies in Bosnia and Colombia

*Klearjos Eduardo Papanicolaou*

This presentation will examine cinematic and 'sensory' ethnographic research methods as tools for urban studies, specifically exploring their potential for articulating the intangible elements of complex urban environments, as a starting point for my doctoral research. What are cinematic and 'sensory' ethnographic methods? How do they differ from other forms of ethnography? In what ways can they help to make substantial inquiries within urban studies? Such preliminary questions will be addressed within the frame of field sites drawn from a body of projects I have been involved with for a number of years at the Chair of Architecture and Urban Design, as a basis to think about the doctoral research plan as a whole.

These field sites include Sarajevo, BiH and various cities in Colombia, often considered to be 'post'-conflict zones. Problematizing this characterization, the presentation will contemplate the idea that various forms of urban conflict persist intangibly long after a conflict is considered to have ended, leaving traces that have spatial consequences. How can cinematic and 'sensory' ethnographic methods be employed to more profoundly understand conflict in such areas, and how can such understandings inform broader urban development frameworks, such as the development of the Sarajevo General Urban Plan 2040, or the ongoing Colombian Peace Processes?

In the course of this doctoral work, the research will also interrogate concepts like 'urban imaginaries' as proposed by thinkers like Armando Silva and Lucius Burkhardt, who seek to understand cities as collections of lived and imagined relations that can be re-territorialized, rather than as monolithic entities. Could applying these concepts to cinematic and 'sensory' ethnography steer such methodologies towards informing urban development discourses in so-called 'post'-conflict cities?

*Klearjos Eduardo Papanicolaou is a filmmaker and doctoral researcher with a background in urban sociology. He has directed several films with his collaborators, most recently winning the Society of Architectural Historians Film and Video Award 2022 with Nitin Bathla for 'Not Just Roads'. His doctoral studies come after several years of working at the Chair of Architecture and Urban Design at the D-ARCH, teaching ethnographic filmmaking as a spatial research tool. Between 2022 to 2023, he undertook pre-doctoral studies in artistic research at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK).*



## **Bodies, Labour, Technology: A nuanced portrait of a global production labour**

*Ina Valkanova*

The research investigates how the case of the Trakia economic zone (TEZ) in Plovdiv developed from hosting one cherry processing factory into the most significant investment project in the country with numerous global manufacturing companies. In doing so, it aims to question our understanding of capital-led developments by examining the underlying processes and practices that produce socio-economic space. To do so, the dissertation adopts an engaged approach grounded in the various social and spatial practices that shape Kuklen Industrial Park - one of the three industrial developments of TEZ. Examining concrete actors' constellations, moments, and relations between universal and grounded processes can build new knowledge about the meaning, effects, and opportunities of global production spaces. In the presentation, I will discuss the thesis structure as a dialogue between pre-existing universal concepts and local realities, cultures, and environments, both human and non-human. I will present this dialogue based on one thesis chapter - Labour/People. The Chapter relates global labor restricting and local everyday experiences on the factory floors of Kuklen and enables us to think about capital-labour relations from a situated perspective.

*Ina Valkanova is a doctoral fellow at Institute for Landscape and Urban Studies, ETH Zürich and Newrope, Chair of Urban Transformation at ETH. Her research explores the relationship between production and place and the paths for transformation in the case of Trakia Economic Zone in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. She was a coordinator for investment and innovation of the long-term development strategy of the city of Sofia – Vision for Sofia 2050, which aims to improve the mechanism of urban planning of the City of Sofia. Prior to this, she served as the director of the international architecture festival “One Architecture Week” in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. She has taught in the University of Architecture in Sofia and ETH Zürich and has lectured in various European locations, such as KU Leuven, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, TU Berlin, Copenhagen Architecture Festival and Belgrade International Architecture Week.*

## Landscapes of Migration. Displacement and the ruderal spaces of former mining settlements. The case of Limburg, Belgium.

Jacopo Zani

Following the social and economic struggles related to the phasing out of the coal industry in the 1960s, former mining towns across Europe have been often stigmatized as ‘decaying’ worker’s suburbs. Narratives on these settlements in fact, frequently rely on the distinction between abandoned or disrupted presents against a perceived ‘glorious’ industrial past. In the context of the Belgian Limburg, scholars have typically investigated such mining settlements (also called *Cités* – singular *Cité*) from the perspective of large-scale political and ideological constructs. However, they have never been observed from the standpoint of their spatial and material reality in relation to wider social and environmental concerns. Therefore, by integrating recent stands in post-colonial architectural histories and environmental humanities, this dissertation shifts the focus to ‘marginal’ land in relation to phenomena of migration. Specifically, I assert that the displacement of workers, matter, and cultures, creates a specific *Landscape of Migration*, that sustain access to important shared resources with a strong inventive capacity. Furthermore, the research posits that such inventive capacity – i.e. the capacity of intertwine people, matter and other living beings in cosmopolitan, yet specific, material and cultural entanglements – underpins a semantic shift from detractive vocabularies such as ‘wastelands’, ‘fringe land’, and ‘residual land’. Thus, this research tracks migrations in the industrial ‘ruins’ of mining settlements – i.e. mining wastes in slag heaps, temporary housing for workers etc. – to situate the ecologies of ‘marginal’ land within wider geographies. Stressing how such urban spaces offer the possibility to rethink post-industrial decay beyond the tragic idea of inhospitality, or the utilitarian idea of socio-environmental productivity. The aim of the research is that of understanding how phenomena of extraction, exclusion and racism are spatialized within the ‘rubbles’ of industrial settlements while, at the same time, stressing how these settlements also supports forms of resistance to industrial and capitalist extractions.

*Jacopo Zani graduated in 2021 from TU Delft with an MSc (honours) degree in Architecture. His master thesis, titled ‘Gardens of Dialectics: A story of decay and reconstructions’ was nominated for the Dutch National Archiprix and won a price for Best Graduate at the faculty of architecture (BK). He holds a B.Sc. in Architecture from Politecnico di Milano and has also spend time studying at ETH Zurich. After practicing in architecture offices in Gent and Brussels (Belgium), he joined the Institute of Landscape and Urban Studies (LUS) as a fellow. In his research at LUS, he is currently exploring histories of displacement, and ecologies of marginal land in former mining settlements of Limburg, Belgium.*

## Territories of Community: Commoning through landscape transformation in Europe

*Stefan Laxness*

As climate change, sustainability and biodiversity concerns have been integrated into mainstream consciousness and public policy, grass-roots movements with environmental and social justice agendas have moved from the fringes to the forefront of public debates. Local collectives in Europe are increasingly seeking to obtain long-term rights to access, manage and use their immediate landscape for the benefit of the community in response to external environmental and economic pressures such as forest fires, land abandonment or the weakening of local economies. New 'green' policy directives have created an opportunity for community projects to frame themselves in line with these goals and access funding pools and political support. The presentation will present two case studies in Spain and the UK of community led landscape transformation project. First it will explore how they enact a defence and a creation of place. Second, it will present how the encounter between top heavy directives and grass-roots movements has created an ambiguous space of shifting subjectivities and power relations. Finally, the presentation will propose research questions and methods for the dissertation.

*Stefan Laxness is a Doctoral Fellow at the Landscape and Urban Studies Institute (LUS) at ETH Zurich where he is researching community led landscape transformation initiatives in Europe. Stefan is the Programme Head of AA Visiting School Iceland and the co-founder of Pantopia.xyz an online educational platform for spatial thinkers. Previously, he was a project leader at Forensic Architecture (FA) where he led numerous projects, including the Ayotzinapa Case, developed methodologies for analysing airstrikes in the Middle East and modelling sites of human rights abuse from witness testimony. Stefan has taught architecture at the Architectural Association in London where he was the Unit Master of AA Diploma 9. His work has been exhibited internationally (Werkleitz, 2021; Ars Electronica, 2020; LABoral, 2020; Antarctic Pavilion, 2017). Stefan has worked in architectural practices in London and Paris and hold an AA Diploma from the AA School.*

## Reviewer Bios

**Sonja Dümpelmann** is Professor at the University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design. Her research and writing sit squarely within the environmental and urban humanities. She is the author and editor of several books, most recently the edited volume *Landscapes for Sport: Histories of Physical Exercise, Sport, and Health* (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2022) and the award-winning *Seeing Trees: A History of Street Trees in New York City and Berlin* (YUP, 2019). She lectures internationally and has served as President of the Landscape History Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians and as Senior Fellow in Garden and Landscape Studies at the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington DC.

**Álvaro Sevilla-Buitrago** is Associate Professor of Urban Planning at the School of Architecture (ETSAM), Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. His work sits at the intersection of urban studies, critical theory, and social history, with a focus on how urbanization, design practices, and planning policies shape social change. He has devoted special attention to exploring the spatial dimension of struggles over the commons and social reproduction, which constitute the focus of his most recent book, *Against the Commons: A Radical History of Urban Planning* (University of Minnesota Press, 2022). He has an extensive record of over fifty publications in edited books and journals such as *Antipode*, *The Architectural Review*, *Cities, Society and Space*, *Social and Cultural Geography*, and *Planning Perspectives*, among others. Before becoming a full-time academic, he worked as an urban planner for over a decade.

## Some guidelines for constructive feedback

- It is all too easy and tempting to project our own research into the work of other researchers. Observe, Don't Interpret! Please engage with the specific topic of the researcher in a constructive and helpful way.
- Be specific and please try and frame your response in the form of one or two clear comments or questions.
- Don't make it personal.
- Be timely. Please try to make room for others to enter the discussion and be mindful about not completely dominating the discussion.
- Establish Trust and balance the positive and the negative. Researchers share their work with a lot of vulnerability during reviews, it is nice to be mindful of this and provide balanced feedback.







**NSL** Netzwerk Stadt und Landschaft  
Network City and Landscape