

30.05.2024
12:30 - 18:00
ETH ONA DiD

LUS

DOCTORAL CRITS

Guest Reviewers: Prof. Dr. Catalina Ortiz, Prof. Dr. Philippe Koch

Reviewers: Prof. Dr. Tom Avermaete, Prof. Maria Conen,
Prof. Teresa Gali-Izard, Michiel van Iersel, Prof. Hubert Klumpner,
Prof. Dr. Elli Mosayebi, Prof. Freek Persyn, Dr. Tino Schlinzig,
Prof. Milica Topalovic, Prof. Martina Voser, Dr. Nitin Bathla

Programme

12:30 - 12:45	Introduction (Freek Persyn, Teresa Gali-Izard, and Nitin Bathla)
12:45 - 13:30	Luke Harris
13:30 - 14:15	Carina Sacher
14:15 - 15:00	Robin Hueppe
15:00 - 15:15	Break
15:15 - 16:00	Jacopo Zani
16:00 - 16:45	Juan Villalon
16:45 - 17:00	Break
17:00 - 17:45	Santiago del Hierro
18:00 - 18:45	Book launch
18:45 onwards	LUS Apero

Please help us document and archive the LUS Doctoral Crits by participating in the live drawing session. Please jot down your reflections, and takeaways from the presentations in the form of notes, drawings, and sketches on the roll of paper in front of you. The drawing will become a part of the archive of the LUS Institute.

Making performative grounds: infrastructuring soil in New York's East River Park

Luke Harris

No longer merely a stable substrate supporting the city's surface, today an optimal urban soil is one that performs valuable ecosystem services. It is a sponge—or maybe a sink—metabolizing waste, absorbing stormwater, and supporting vegetation. Such performances rely on a lively and dynamic below-ground ecology without which these infrastructures would falter. Yet, the livelier the ground becomes, the less predictable the results. The regulation of soil life thus emerges as a modality of urban governance. To explore how this unfolds, I will present initial research into the ongoing transformation of East River Park in New York City. As part of a larger flood protection project, the existing park is to be buried beneath 2-3 meters of imported fill, which will act as a barrier against future storm surges. The plan has been subject to resistance from neighborhood groups, who contest the loss of space for recreation, the felling of mature trees, and the likelihood of gentrification following the expensive redevelopment. The park's soil is at the center of this debate. On the one hand is the existing ground, itself artificial, which contains the roots of trees and socio-ecological relationships built over decades. On the other is the improved infrastructural ground, optimized to mitigate climate change impacts and emblematic of debates around contemporary forms of green development.

Luke Harris is a landscape architect and doctoral candidate in the Institute for Landscape and Urban Studies at the ETH Zurich. His current research investigates the metabolism of designed urban substrates. He holds a Master of Landscape Architecture from the University of Virginia and is a founding member of the landscape research collective Office of Living Things. He lectures as part of the Chair of Being Alive at the ETH Zurich and previously practiced at Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates.



Figure 1 East River Park protest graffiti, 2021. Credit Candace Pedraza, City & State New York.

Family housing in transformation

Housing and child well-being in home dissolution

Carina Sacher

Family in its diverse forms of existence in Western societies is permeated by dynamic transformation processes that directly affect and constitute housing. The dissolution of parental bonds as one of these transformative trigger mechanisms probably entails one of the most abrupt reorganisation measures in family housing. In the separation and transition phase, the question of space turns into the pivotal point of family negotiation processes and housing practices which determine the post-separation housing arrangement as well as custody model. Children, who are increasingly born outside of marriages, are living more and more multi-locally and in different family constellations of parental ties due to the general trend of more frequent relationship changes. However, the spatial dimension in the transition phase – its relevance, implication and impact as well as the spatial demands and needs of families in home dissolution – is a blind spot in research and thus an unknown factor in understanding the resulting housing situation after separation.

The doctoral thesis is interested in how housing is experienced by children through the family reorganisation with regard to spatial aspects and how these affect their well-being. It investigates the “design process” of the family transformation between decision and realisation of the spatial separation in relation to spatial and housing questions. The specific focus of the qualitative research is on the interaction between housing practices and housing conditions through the lens of practice theory and social constructivism. Finally, the systemic influencing factors at work here are expanded through the analysis of quantitatively collected data to allow social contextualisation. The doctoral thesis, which is oriented towards housing and architectural sociology, aims to gain insights into the challenges and needs of “families in transformation” in relation to living space and architecture, housing environment and social infrastructures, housing market and segment.

The PhD is part of the Sinergia Research Project “Family custody arrangements and child well-being in Switzerland” (2023-2027).

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Elli Mosayebi, Start: Sept 2023

Carina Sacher is a doctoral student at ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE since September 2023. As a trained architect (TU Wien), she gained experience in architectural firms in Vienna and Paris. From 2017 to 2020, she worked as a research assistant in the studio of Prof. Anne Lacaton at ETH Zurich. Carina has also worked as a lecturer at various Austrian universities. The focus of her previous research has been on housing conditions of marginalised groups and structural processes of exclusion.



Figure 2 Scenes from a marriage, series by Ingmar Bergman, 1973

POWER THROUGH THE LAND

Enmeshing two Rubble Mounds in East and West Berlin's Mass Housing Estates

Robin Hueppe

In former East and West Berlin, the towers of two mass housing estates meet their equivalent towering forms in the terrain. Each neighborhood has a mound, rising distinctively from the loamy glacial plateau. Since reunification, both estates have become places of arrival for refugees and newcomers amidst the city's growth and densification. New and long-term residents value these mounds as recreational sites and meeting places that offer panoramic views, clean air, and lush greenery.

Beneath the surface, the mounds conceal the material history of wartime devastation, territorial conflict, and erasure of place. Before the estates' construction in the 1960s and 70s, the land was home to post-war agrarian households in self-built sheds, where internal migrants from seized territories and erased apartment buildings began rebuilding their lives. However, East and West Germany razed the existing structures and implemented mass housing projects to address the dire housing crisis. The rubble was heaped up nearby into hills, mixed with household waste, and covered with a layer of topsoil. In both instances, they transformed into local parks for the new inhabitants.

Since then, the mounds have undergone significant change, continuous reappropriation, and negotiation. Assuming a central role as green spaces in these neighborhoods, both governments consistently attempted to control the territories through management and restrictions. Still, despite their governance, the rubble (Latin: rudus) grew into rich ruderal ecologies on the soft soil and gentle slopes, attracting poplars, trees of heaven, badgers, foxes, and, of course, humans.

Narratives like these can illustrate a land-first access to the architectural history of mass housing. Looking at the underexplored landscapes of East and West Berlin's housing estates through the two mounds might reveal how land becomes a medium to exploit and exclude while empowering plural alliances

to resist that governing control. Ultimately, these landscapes might hold the power to mediate the interrelated complexity of Berlin's growth, (im)migration, and to answer local symptoms of global warming through resilient, ruderal ecologies.

Robin is a doctoral fellow at the ETH Zürich Institute of Landscape and Urban Studies. His dissertation focuses on mass housing landscapes as sites of power and resistance. He published in journals such as Pidgin, OASE, PLAT, Room One Thousand, City, Culture & Society, and Paprika! Having previously worked as a designer, educator, and writer, he holds graduate degrees in architecture and urban design from Rice University and TU Berlin. He was also a Fulbright fellow at UC Berkeley and a DAAD fellow at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro.



Figure 3 View from Lübarser Höhe on Märkisches Viertel, photo by Robin Hueppe.

The builders of Centro Cattolico Italiano. 'Foreign miners' in Church and State driven post-war development of Limburg, Belgium.

Jacopo Zani

In May 1962 a new church and civic centre, named *Centro Cattolico Italiano* (Italian Catholic Centre) was inaugurated at the edge of the mining town of Waterschei, in the Belgian region of Limburg. The building was born out of the initiative of a catholic mission to consolidate the ideological influence of Church and State, over the so-called 'foreign miners' of the region. Throughout the 1950s the Italian government supported the mass migration of its workers in exchange for Belgian coal, in the context of the so-called 'Men for Coal agreement' (1946). Thus, after decline of the coal industry in 1959, projects such as the Centro Cattolico catalysed state attempts to discipline the miners and their integration process. The construction of these buildings, on the other hand, also relied extensively on the voluntary actions of the miners themselves, whose 'voice' only finds a fragmented presence in most official archives. Most literature on these mining landscapes, has traditionally approached them within the framework of unidirectional state-led developments. Rather, in this contribution I build on a theoretical framework that combines migration studies with environmental humanities, to explore how these landscapes were also shaped by the miners' autonomous initiative as a response to the complicity of Church and State. More specifically, I shift the attention to the perspective offered by oral histories and the inhabitants' personal archives to explore the quest formulated by the builders of the Centro Cattolico. This group of so-called 'foreign miners', I argue, reacted to the forms of dependency entailed by authorities' developments projects, by mobilizing forms of collaboration and sharing practical knowledge. Looking at these miners' quest allows to understand how struggles for accessing resources (i.e. land) also articulated socio-ecological relations that equally shaped these mining landscapes.

Jacopo graduated in 2021 from TU Delft with an MSc (honours) degree in Architecture, where his master thesis was awarded with the Best Graduate of the faculty of architecture (2022) and the Dutch National Archiprix (2023). 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 Ghent and Brussels (Belgium), he joined ETH Zurich as a PhD fellow at the Institute of Landscape and Urban Studies (LUS). His research at LUS is currently exploring the mining landscapes of Limburg in Belgium from the perspective of human and nonhuman migrations.



Figure 4 Construction site of the Centro Cattolico Italiano, in the coal mining town of Winerslag, 1961.
Source: KADOC

40°N - 30°N

designed Mediterranean oases:

regenerative practices between agriculture and landscape architecture on olive tree cultivation in Beirut and Valencia metropolitan territories

Juan Villalon Hernando

This doctoral research project explores the cultural significance and contemporary ecological relevance of olive tree cultivation in Transcontinental Mediterranean territories. Particularly, it focuses on the practices and technologies between agriculture and landscape architecture in the Beirut and Valencia metropolitan regions. These areas share a hot summer Mediterranean climate and are experiencing a process of desertification with cyclical droughts and flooding events. The olive tree, a species native and resilient to this changing climate, has been transported for millennia through the Mediterranean Sea, from the Eastern coasts of the Levant or Middle East to the Western mountains of the Iberian Peninsula and the Maghreb. This tree is entangled in complex human-led land transformation processes through agricultural and design technologies, reshaping human, and other living beings' habitats. For instance, the expansion of olive tree cultivation in the Valencian region in the 20th century fueled the rapid urbanization of former traditional hortas, which partially erased part of the former complex systems of séquias established during the Roman and Islamic periods. In 2024, Valencia was proclaimed European Green Capital, in the mists of a dramatic drought season and in a region heavily threatened by multiple ecologic and social crises. Meanwhile, the Beirut region is known as the origin of olive tree cultivation and is believed to have the oldest living olive trees in the world. Over the last decades, super-intensive olive tree cultivation techniques have been implemented, partially funded by European and International cooperation schemes. This is allowing Lebanon to follow the path of Spanish high efficiency and quality in the production and exportation of olive oil and derived products. However, these new practices are imposing radical monoculture cultivation, causing a dramatic erosion of soil and the depletion of crucial aquifers for the metropolitan territory, which upon critical habitats, species and human communities depend on.

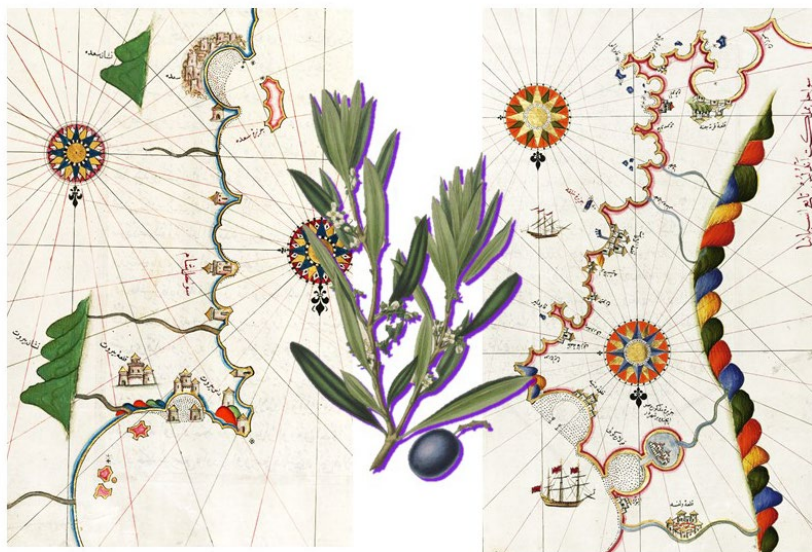


Figure 5 Collage composed of two maps of Lebanon and Valencian coasts by Piri Reis, 1556 and a botanic drawing of *Olea Europea* in *Medical Botanical* by John Stephenson, 1834.

Beyond Reservations

Towards an expanded representation of Inga Territory in the northern Andean Amazon

Santiago del Hierro

In recent years, a growing body of research has highlighted the importance of Indigenous territories in safeguarding the Andean Amazonian ecosystems of Colombia and contributing to climate change mitigation. However, questions arise regarding the circumstances surrounding these territories' definition: when and how were they conceived? Who determined their current boundaries and dimensions? More significantly, what is the status of land still considered ancestral by Indigenous communities but located outside a formally acknowledged "Indigenous Territory"? Are there other means of formally engaging the cultural heritage of these areas without depending on 'legal ownership' and the territorial conflicts that often ensue?

The doctoral project "Beyond Reservations" argues that by challenging the prevailing notion of Indigenous territories as land enclaves or reservations (known as 'resguardos' in Colombia) and by developing critical ways of representing these cultural landscapes beyond official property recognition, Indigenous peoples in the Andean Amazon could gain more effective tools for negotiating with national planning instruments and international cooperation initiatives.

Based on Participatory Action Research as a primary methodological approach, the project has become a platform for intercultural collaboration that explores means to reshape the conventional perception of Inga territory in the southeast of Colombia and potentially influence policies that currently restrict these communities' actions solely to lands officially recognised as Indigenous by the State.

Santiago del Hierro is an architect and researcher focused on the geopolitics of the northern Andean Amazon. As a doctoral fellow at ETH Zurich, he is researching new ways of understanding and representing Indigenous territories in Colombia. Santiago holds an MArch from Yale University, which

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he attended as a Fulbright scholar. In 2009, he was a design researcher at the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht and taught at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador between 2011 and 2017.



Figure 6 Ayahuasca Alpa_Woven Territory. Viviana Jacanamejoy setting up the territorial maquette of Inga territory in Mocoa, Colombia.

Reviewer Bios

Dr Catalina Ortiz is a Colombian urbanist. She uses critical pedagogies and decolonial methodologies to study the politics of space production in global south cities to forge spatial justice. She works as an Associate Professor and recently appointed as the UCL Urban Lab Director at University College London.

Phillipe Koch is a Professor in Urban Studies in the Department of Architecture at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW). He studies and teaches the many ways in which urbanization and democracy are intertwined. His most recent co-authored book is *How Cities Can Transform Democracy*. He is one of the co-founders of Urban Publics Zurich.

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.

