18.05.2026
08:50 – 13:30
@L200 (Langstrasse 200, 8005)

LUS DOCTORAL CRITS

Guest Reviewers: Prof. Dr. Sonja Dümpelmann

Reviewers: Prof. Dr. Tom Avermaete, Prof. Maria Conen,
Dr. Jennifer Duyne Barenstein, Prof. Teresa Galí-Izard,
Prof. Aisling O'Carroll, Prof. Freek Persyn,
Dr. Tino Schlinzig, Prof. Milica Topalović,
Dr. Nazlı Tümerdem, Prof. Martina Voser

LUS Institute of Landscape and Urban Studies
Institut für Landschaft und Urbane Studien

PROGRAM

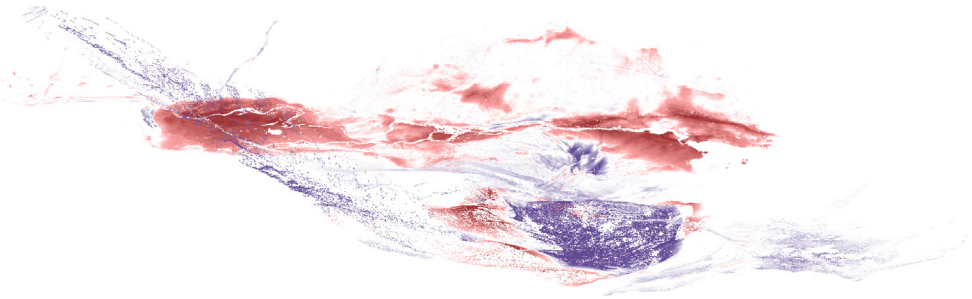
08:50 – 09:00	Introduction
09:00 – 09:45	Dennis Häusler
09:45 – 10:30	Robin Hueppe
10:30 – 10:45	*coffee*
10:45 – 11:30	Klearjos Papanicolaou
11:30 – 12:15	Chen Shen
12:15 – 12:40	*coffee & sandwiches*
12:40 – 13:00	**Sounding Extreme Environments: Plants, Acoustics, and Urban Space** Keynote Lecture by Sonja Dümpelmann
13:00 – 13:30	Final Discussion

Dynamic Landscapes
Towards a Design Methodology for Shifting Grounds

Dennis Häusler

The consequences of climate change are having an increasingly severe impact on the Swiss landscape and how we perceive it, interact with it, and shape it. Long-standing equilibria are thrown off balance, and consequently, established spatial conceptions in the Swiss landscape ought to be reconsidered. The research aims to explore new strategies for addressing this paradigm shift within the realm of landscape design. The objective is to establish tools and methods for analyzing, designing, and communicating landscapes that consider today's social and environmental challenges – balancing human needs with non-human actors, controlled environments with loosely guided landscapes. The focus thereby lies on the combination of digital design tools and physical site-specific methodologies to achieve a multi-sensory and numerically precise approach to landscape design. Broadly, the research contributes to a contemporary understanding of the Swiss landscape and offers refined ways to interact with it through design.

Particular attention is given to the role of hybrid modelling environments in which digital simulation and embodied site experience inform one another. Rather than treating digital tools as abstract instruments of control, the research investigates how they can register temporal change, uncertainty, and situated perception. Methods such as photogrammetric recording, spatial simulation, and model-based analysis are understood not only as techniques of representation, but as active means of producing knowledge about landscape processes and atmospheres. In this context, physical engagement with the site – through walking, observation, and sensory notation – remains essential, allowing qualitative impressions to enter into dialogue with computational models. This interplay between empirical measurement and experiential understanding enables a design approach that is both analytically rigorous and responsive to lived conditions. By linking digital and physical modes of inquiry, the research seeks to develop landscape design methods capable of addressing dynamic environments not as fixed objects, but as relational and evolving systems.



Perspective view of the Blatten landslide, seen from the glacier; only parts of the topography that were shifted significantly are shown. (blue: errosion, red: deposition) – Case Study Blatten 2026

***Dennis Häusler** is an architect and doctoral candidate at the Chair of Landscape Architecture at the Institute of Landscape and Urban Studies and lecturer in the MScLA program at ETH Zurich. He holds a master's in Architecture from ETH Zurich and was granted a JASSO scholarship to study at Tōdai University of Tokyo. After in-depth research and teaching on digital modeling in landscape architecture and multi-medial landscape perception at the Chair of Christophe Girot, he started his doctorate on design methodology for dynamic landscapes in 2024 under the supervision of Prof. Martina Voser.*

Terra Abstracta: Hydromodernity and the Waters of Forgetfulness in Berlin's Mass Housing Estates

Robin Hueppe

Two of former East and West Berlin's mass housing estates (Marzahn and Märkisches Viertel) are built upon a relentless, centuries-long project of hydraulic conquest. With a specifically developed methodology I call AGE (Assembling, Governing, Enmeshing), I trace the deep history of water management in Berlin, moving far beyond 19th-century sanitary reforms to illuminate the transformation of water from an ontological medium, critical to early settlement and ritual, to H2O, a manageable technical burden. The process of "taming the water" in Berlin (berl = swamp in Polabian) began not with industrialization, as urban historians often argue, but with medieval feudalism. German margraves of the Holy Roman Empire conquered and subjugated the Slavic tribal marshlands along with their multispecies inhabitants, cemented by the import of Dutch drainage expertise in the twelfth century. This legacy of hydraulic colonialism was later codified and expanded by Prussian absolutism. Frederick the Great's militarized drainage of vast marsh regions in the seventeenth century, including Berlin's periphery, established the template for techno-state control and large-scale geo-bureaucracy, fusing scientific legibility through instruments such as mapping and statistics with coercive expansion. I will further emphasize how Frederician land abstraction translated to the late nineteenth century through the Hobrecht-Virchow system of sewage farms (Rieselgüter), providing the material and administrative substratum for modernist abstraction on the future sites of post-war mass housing estates. In the mid-twentieth century, housing estates internalized this logic and construed complex land histories into an ill and deterioiating landscape awaiting healing and renewal. This misconception enabled the transformation of water into an entirely invisible utility, thereby contributing to the forgetting of memory through landscape imagination. Two spatial case studies of artificially engineered lakes, Wuhle Pond and Seggeluch Basin, serve as aesthetic containers that conceal their design genesis as necessary drainage or former wastewater infrastructure. The subsequent reclamation of these ponds by ruderal collectives, following administrative failure, demonstrates the persistence of the swamp's ancient environmental agency against the modernist promise of permanent control. In other words, how deep run the still waters of hydromodernity?

Jacob, Julius. "Märkischer Dorfanger," Berlin: Stadtmuseum, 1890/95, Oil Painting.

***Robin Hueppe** is a Doctoral Fellow at the Institute of Landscape and Urban Studies (LUS) at ETH Zürich. Before joining ETH, he taught as an adjunct professor at the University of Houston and holds degrees in architecture, urban design, and city planning from Rice University and TU Berlin. He has been supported by fellowships from the Fulbright Program at UC Berkeley and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Additional residencies and grants supported studies at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal (CCA), Tongji University in Shanghai, the University of Lisbon, and the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi. His design experience spans architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design firms in Houston, Berlin, and Lisbon, and he has published in various peer-reviewed academic journals and architecture magazines.*

Živjeli! An Audiovisual Archaeology of Memory in Sarajevo

Klearjos Papanicolaou

Variations of the word 'Živjeli!' are common across many languages of the post-Yugoslav region. Literally meaning 'Let's live!', it is used as a salutation roughly equivalent to 'Cheers!' in English. Like many linguistic, cultural, social, political, architectural, and urban forms, the word points to what Sarah Green calls an 'excess of relations': connections that exceed modern forms of societal delineation such as the nation-state. This is the inversion of processes commonly described as 'balkanization', which frame the region through narratives of fragmentation (2005). My doctoral research uses sensory ethnographic film methods to 'excavate' such forms of 'excess of relations' and latent shared memories sedimented in the urban landscape of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina and one of the epicenters of the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s. It asks how sensory ethnographic film articulates modes of collective remembering grounded in the multi-layeredness and polyrhythms (Lefebvre 1992) of urban environments, as a means of advancing epistemological horizons in landscape and urban studies through practice-based research, while providing a basis for alternative forms of solidarity and kinship that they might enable in Sarajevo and cities like it.

The research enters this terrain at the Sarajevo Film Center, where I observe the restoration of historical and archival films damaged during the Siege of Sarajevo (1992–1995). In framing urban landscapes as a collection of multi-scalar 'living archives' (Wall and Hale 2020), I consider not only the films' content but also the materiality of the damaged celluloid, the rebuilt spaces that host them, and the places they depict. Through the making of a sensory ethnographic film, I seek locations shown in the damaged films and juxtapose their historical appearances with contemporary conditions, revealing how different and often fragmented forms of memorialization complement each other in unforeseen ways. Piecing these juxtapositions together casts Foucault's 'archaeology of knowledge' as a mode of editing. Rather than filling gaps in linear historiography, this approach foregrounds the non-linear, partial (Haraway 1988), affective (Pallasmaa 1996), and often contradictory dimensions of the past manifested in the physical environment, resulting in an audiovisual mosaic that catalogues techniques for accessing these 'living archives' embedded in urban landscapes, while enabling the recognition of 'relationality' over 'fragmentation' in the process.

Restoration process of the damaged celluloid of the film ‘Soko’ (1980), about a young boy who sells roses in Sarajevo to help support his family. Credit: Klearjos Eduardo Papanicolaou, at the Sarajevo Film Center (2025)

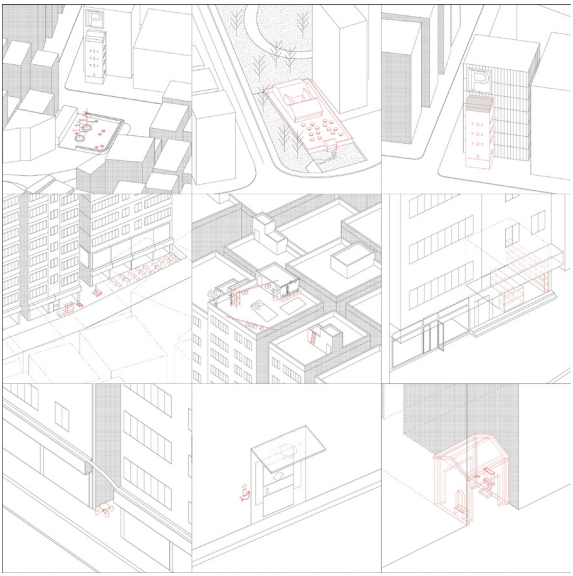
***Klearjos Eduardo Papanicolaou** is a doctoral candidate at the Chair of Architecture and Urban Design, as well as a filmmaker and urban sociologist (LSE, 2014). He specializes in sensory ethnographic filmmaking at the urban scale, which he has written about in book chapters like ‘Mirror Images: Sensory Ethnographic Film for Landscape and Urban Studies’ in ‘Researching Otherwise’ (2024), and ‘Atmosphere, Rhythm, and Scale’, in the second edition of the ‘Routledge International Handbook for Ethnographic Film and Video’ (2025). With colleagues, he has edited books such as ‘Cinema and the City in the Age of Planetary Urbanization’ (2026) and directed films like ‘The Seven Sisters Indoor Market’ (2016), The ‘Disappearance of Robin Hood’ (2018), ‘Not Just Roads’ (2021, winner of the Society of Architectural Historians’ Film and Video Award 2022), and ‘Hot Cold Wet Dry’ (2026), which premiered at the 28th Thessaloniki International Documentary Film Festival.*

De-constructing Urban Village: Temporary Ruralization in Urbanized Shenzhen

Chen Shen

Urban villages are commonly framed within the dominant narratives of China's rapid urbanization as informal settlements, typically associated with inadequate infrastructure, weak regulation, and socio-spatial disorder. This research challenges this interpretive framework by arguing that urban villages should not be understood merely as residual settlements awaiting incorporation into the formal city. Focusing on Shenzhen, the study reconsiders urban villages not as exceptions to urban modernity, but as sites where rural logics continue to persist, adapt, and re-emerge within highly urbanized conditions.

Conceptually, the project develops the notion of "temporary ruralization" to explain how rural relations are not simply preserved as historical remnants, but are repeatedly reactivated, translated, and reorganized under urban pressure. Kinship structures, collective land governance, migrant spatial practices, and everyday forms of sociality do not disappear in the process of urbanization. Rather, they are reworked into new urban arrangements, generating hybrid yet durable socio-spatial formations. In this sense, ruralization is treated not as the opposite of urbanization, but as one of its internal mechanisms. The research further introduces "macro-housing" as a spatial framework for understanding the dense residential assemblages of Shenzhen's urban villages. These clusters should not be reduced to the category of low-cost housing or informal rental stock. They operate instead as spatial infrastructures through which rental economies, localized governance, architectural adaptation, and differentiated forms of social capital are organized and reproduced.



“Rural Space” in Urban Villages, diagram produced by Chen Shen, 2026

***Chen Shen** is an architect and urban researcher focused on high-density urban communities. He started his doctorate study in the Chair of Architecture and Urban Design at ETH Zurich since March of 2024. His current research investigates urban villages in Shenzhen. He holds a Master of Science degree in Advanced Architectural Design from Cornell University and worked as an architect and urban researcher in Michael Sorkin’s studio and his non-profit urban research studio Terreform in New York, focusing on the research of South Chicago urban residential communities.*

Guest Reviewer

Sonja Dümpelmann is a historian of landscapes and the built environment. She is professor and chair of Environmental Humanities at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich where she co-directs the Rachel Carson Center.

Her research and writing focus on nineteenth- and twentieth-century urban environments, especially in Europe and the United States. Of special importance to her work are the relationships between the inside and the outside, i.e. the relationships between architecture and landscape, center and periphery, theory and practice; those in power and those subjected to that power; intent and contingency; and the relationships between social and political processes and landscape transformation.

Dümpelmann is the author of Seeing Trees: A History of Street Trees in New York City and Berlin (Yale University Press, 2019; 2022 Elisabeth Blair MacDougall Book Award; 2019 John Brinckerhoff Jackson Book Prize), Flights of Imagination: Aviation, Landscape, Design (University of Virginia Press, 2014; 2015 John Brinkerhoff Jackson Book Prize), and of a book on the Italian landscape architect Maria Teresa Parpagliolo Shephard (VDG Weimar, 2004). Her edited volumes include Landscapes for Sport: Histories of Physical Exercise and Health (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2022; 2023 North American Society Sport History Anthologies Book Award), Airport Landscape: Urban Ecologies in the Aerial Age (together with Charles Waldheim; Harvard GSD, 2016), Women, Modernity, and Landscape Architecture (together with John Beardsley; Routledge, 2015), A Cultural History of Gardens in the Age of Empire (Bloomsbury, 2013), Greening the City: Urban Landscapes in the Twentieth Century (together with Dorothee Brantz; University of Virginia Press, 2011), and Pückler and America (German Historical Institute Washington DC, 2007).

Before joining LMU Munich she was a tenured full professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania Weitzman School of Design where she also served as Acting Department Chair for two semesters. She has also held associate and assistant professorships at Harvard University (2012-2019), the University of Maryland (2007-2012), and Auburn University (2005-2007). Dümpelmann holds a doctorate in landscape history from the University of the Arts, Berlin, and a MLA from Leibniz Universität Hannover. She has curated exhibitions on landscape-related topics in Germany and the U.S., and has worked as a landscape designer in Studio Paolo Bürgi, Switzerland.

Notes

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NSL Netzwerk Stadt und Landschaft
Network City and Landscape

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