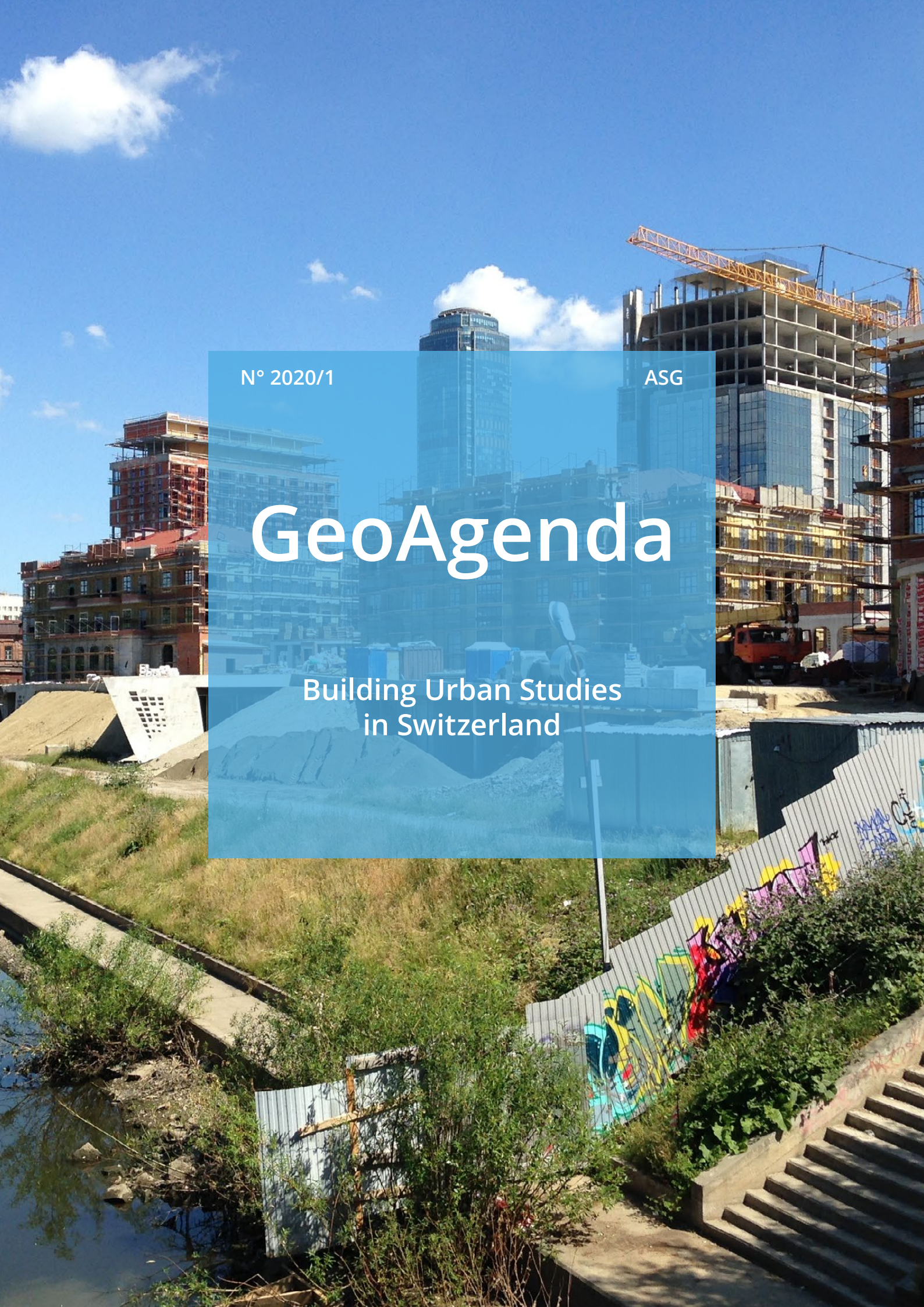


N° 2020/1

ASG

# GeoAgenda

Building Urban Studies  
in Switzerland





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Association Suisse de Géographie  
Associazione Svizzera di Geografia

sc | nat 

Swiss Academy of Sciences  
Akademie der Naturwissenschaften  
Accademia di scienze naturali  
Académie des sciences naturelles

Chère lectrice, cher lecteur,

Le premier GeoAgenda de 2020 est dédié aux études urbaines en Suisse. Le Focus est coordonné par Sven Daniel Wolfe et Julio Paulos, leaders du groupe « Études urbaines », l'un des dix groupes thématiques de l'ASG. Ces auteurs cosignent l'introduction du numéro, dont l'objectif est de présenter la diversité de la recherche urbaine réalisée dans les départements de géographie des universités suisses ainsi que dans les écoles polytechniques fédérales. L'ambition de cet inventaire en 2020 est aussi d'encourager la mise en réseau des chercheuses et chercheurs qui partagent un intérêt pour les problématiques urbaines en Suisse. Neuf articles sont consacrés aux départements de géographie dans les Universités de Berne, Zurich, Neuchâtel, Bâle, puis de l'Université de la Suisse italienne, de Genève et Lausanne. Finalement le laboratoire de sociologie urbaine de EPFL et les études urbaines à l'EPFZ sont présentés.

Le Focus est enrichi par un article de Thomas Ingold dans la rubrique « Autre contributions ». Il propose une réflexion autour de l'utilisation des Systèmes d'informations géographiques (SIG) dans le cadre de l'enseignement de la géographie.

Bonne lecture,  
Isabelle Schoepfer

Liebe Leserinnen und Leser,

Die erste GeoAgenda des Jahres 2020 ist der Stadtforschung in der Schweiz gewidmet. Sven Daniel Wolfe und Julio Paulos, die Verantwortlichen der Gruppe «Urban Studies», einer der zehn Themengruppen der ASG, haben den Fokus zusammengestellt. Die Einleitung zur vorliegenden Ausgabe stammt von diesen beiden Autoren und bietet einen Überblick über die Vielfalt der Stadtforschung, die an den geographischen Instituten der Schweizer Universitäten sowie an den Eidgenössisch Technischen Hochschulen betrieben wird. Diese aktuelle Bestandsaufnahme soll auch die Vernetzung zwischen Forscherinnen und Forschern fördern, die sich für urbane Fragestellungen in der Schweiz interessieren. Neun Artikel sind den geographischen Instituten der Universitäten Bern, Zürich, Neuenburg, Basel, Genf und Lausanne sowie der Universität der italienischen Schweiz gewidmet. Zudem werden das Laboratorium für Stadtsoziologie der ETH Lausanne und die urbanen Studien der ETH Zürich vorgestellt.

In Ergänzung zum Fokus erscheint in der Rubrik «Andere Beiträge» ein Artikel von Thomas Ingold mit Überlegungen zum Einsatz Geographischer Informationssysteme (GIS) im Geographieunterricht.

Viel Vergnügen beim Lesen,  
Isabelle Schoepfer

# Locating urban research in Switzerland

Written by  
Sven Daniel Wolfe  
Julio Paulos

**"More than half of the world's population now lives in urban areas." This simple phrase has been employed around the globe in order to explain and justify the value of urban research. But what do we actually mean when we say "urban"? This equally simple question has spawned debates in countless publications, conferences, workshops, and art exhibits. The urban question spans disciplines and languages, and in many ways our attempts to engage with this question are as diverse and contradictory as the many cities we study around the globe.**

Here, we do not espouse any given theories or approaches to the urban, nor do we argue for or against any of the litany of epistemologies or ontologies in urban theory that have inspired change, established careers, or garnered praise or opprobrium. Instead, we favor open discussion and a recalibration of what we as academics and urbanists consider important. Ultimately, we espouse a collaborative approach to problem-solving, one that transcends boundaries – whether disciplinary, institutional, linguistic, professional, status-oriented, cultural, racial, gender, and beyond. This is not a call for pluralism, per se, but rather a plea for a flattened ontology, one that deemphasizes hierarchies and makes possible new ecologies of theories and practices.

In other words, we aim to increase the diversity of urban research. Moving towards that aim, we aspire to offer a platform through which we could – to whatever extent possible – render visible and begin to consolidate the diverse landscapes of urban studies in Switzerland. In so doing, our intention is to disrupt disciplinary boundaries, identify common theoretical approaches, and monitor new avenues of possible collaborations to tackle what we call, in reference to Ola Söderström, 'urban novelty'. This issue of GeoAgenda is a first step towards these goals.

We have two ambitions in putting together this issue. First, we both noticed a curious circumstance regarding urban studies in this country: strangely, we found ourselves knowing more about institutions in Russia, Germany, England, South Africa, and the United States, than we did about nearby universities in Switzerland. Having now had the good fortune to work on both sides of the Röstigrabbe, we can attest firsthand to the existence of a pervasive institutional silo-ing effect between researchers who might, we

maintain, benefit from increased domestic connection and collaboration.

*"What do we actually mean when we say 'urban'?"*

For this reason, the first ambition of this issue is to push against those institutional silos by providing an introductory directory of sorts. We present here contributions from nine institutions working on the urban, from all across Switzerland. Think of them as a collection of snapshots that – while necessarily partial and incomplete – nevertheless provides a convenient view of urban research going on in this country. And like any snapshots, we cannot pretend to be comprehensive. There is much that we have been unable to capture and convey, so we would like to offer apologies if there are individuals or trends that we have overlooked. We will make amendments in a future edition, and intend this issue of GeoAgenda not to be the final word, but rather only a starting point.

Our second ambition is somewhat less tangible but no less important. We state an intention to establish, nourish, and grow what we conceive as caring infrastructures for urban researchers across Switzerland. In a time of widespread political, economic, and environmental upheaval, we think it is vital to increase solidarity within the academic circuits that sustain us and our work. This is particularly true for younger scholars and early career researchers who might be facing more precarity and uncertainty than their more established peers, but in truth we think this applies to everyone, at every stage, and in every capacity.

Again, we can attest to this in our personal stories: it is no exaggeration that we, as early career researchers, are only able to work here (and attempt to establish sustainable careers) because we have benefited from the care shown us by many others. It is, we think, incumbent on us to continue and increase that caring tradition and, in so doing, attempt to destabilize the processes that might pit us against one another for ever scarcer research funding and job prospects. As before, we maintain that collaboration is a more viable, more beneficial, and more ethical plan.

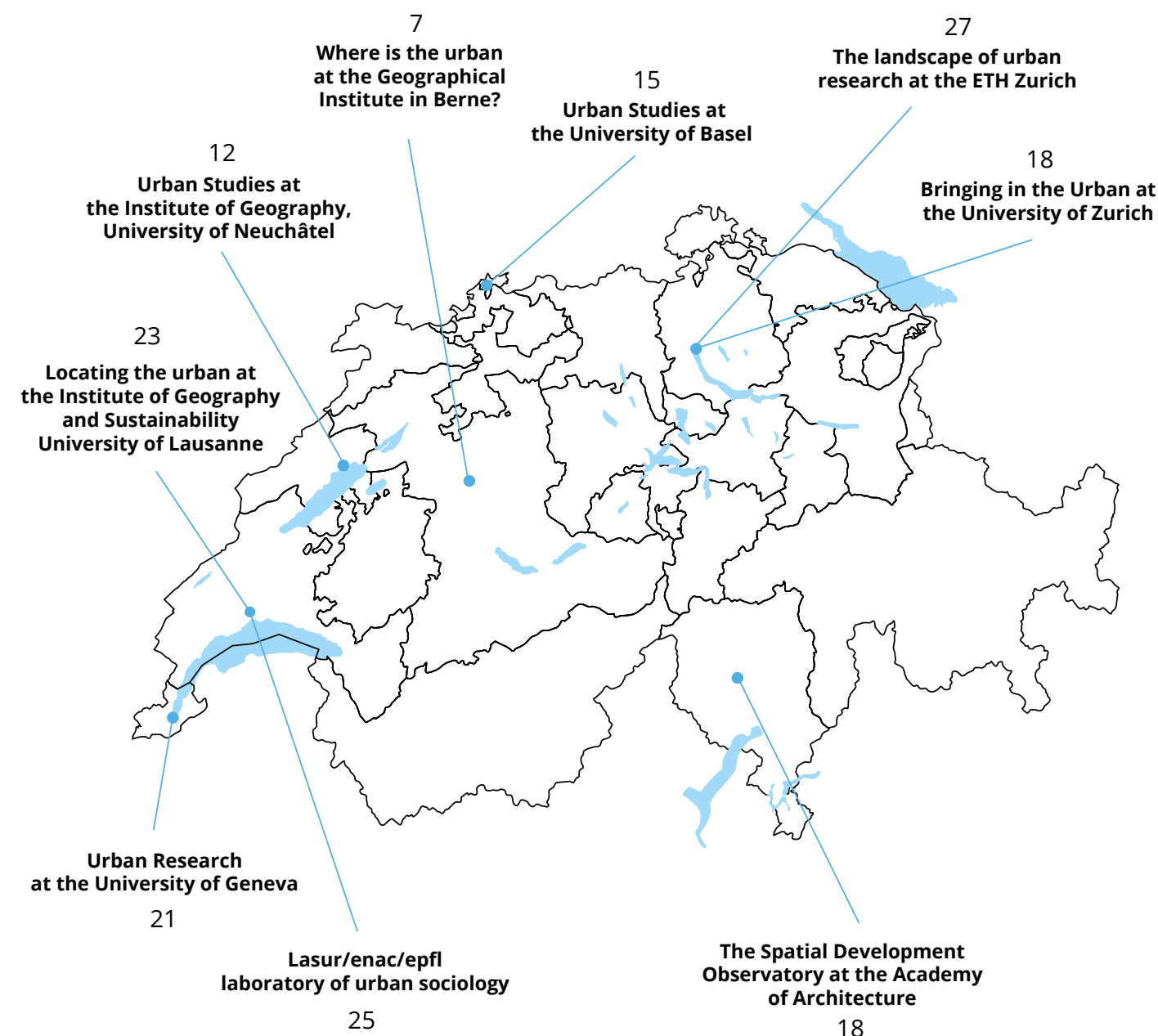
To that end, as chairs of the newly-established Urban Studies thematic group in the Swiss Association of Geography, we have launched the Contemporary Cities Collaboratory. This is a multifaceted project and research platform intended to put into practice the principles we have elaborated here. For a start,

we are planning an annual workshop that will, we hope, bring together urban researchers from across Switzerland. Targeted specifically at PhD students and early career researchers, we aim to connect them with more senior scholars from different institutions, and thereby put into practice our hopes for trans-institutional mixing. Through this annual workshop, we want to advance and solidify our common goals, while simultaneously offering guidance on analytical urban research tools, as well as collaboratively rethinking the urban scholar in the interdisciplinary academic landscape of urban studies.

Finally, regarding this issue of GeoAgenda, there are several omissions that we must address. Due to time and resource constraints, we were unable to provide a complete tally of every institution that conducts urban research. For instance, we did not involve the Fachhochschulen at all, although most of them in

Basel, Bern, Geneva, Lucerne and Zurich do considerable work on urban-related issues. There are simply too many institutions to do justice here, although we aspire to resolving this issue in a subsequent project. Instead, we limited our search to the ten cantonal universities and two federal institutions. Of these twelve, only three are not represented here: Fribourg, Luzern, and St. Gallen. We were unable to locate sufficient urban research occurring at those institutions, but are happy to be educated on the matter.

*"In the pages that follow, you will get a glimpse of the diversities and commonalities of urban research across Switzerland"*





The other nine institutions are represented here, however. We found authors by approaching them either in person or over email, explaining our desire to provide a snapshot of urban research at their institution, and then haranguing them into writing within our short timeframes. We engaged as wide a range of authors as possible, from PhD students to seasoned academic veterans, and although we grounded ourselves in geography, we did not restrict ourselves only to this discipline.

In the pages that follow, you will get a glimpse of the diversities and commonalities of urban research across Switzerland. In Bern, for example, Miriam Hug details how urban research may not be as prioritized as in other institutions, but the work that does occur there focuses on land use planning, housing policy, and the political dimensions of producing urban space. Similarly, Tanuja Thurairajah and Konchok Gelek explain how urban geography at the University of Zurich is relatively underemphasized, though this is expected to change with the appointment of a new professor with a focus on planning and urban geography.



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In contrast, Ola Söderström and Francisco Klausner share Neuchâtel's longstanding, theoretically rich, and empirically diverse history with urban research. Similarly, Basel hosts a wide range of research interests, both international and interdisciplinary, collaborative, engaged, and sensitive to context – as illustrated by Kenny Cupers, Sophie Oldfield, Manuel Herz, Laura Nkula-Wenz, and Emilio Distretti. And in Lugano, Gian Paolo Torricelli describes how GIS is used for urban development and planning with an array of innovative tools and applications.

Jörg Balsiger, Armelle Choplin, Bernard Debarbieux, Frédéric Giraut, and Laurent Matthey portray urban research in Geneva along two axes: modes of producing the city and the modes of living in the city, with work grounded across the Global South and North. And Nadja Imhof and Sven Daniel Wolfe explain the heterogeneity of urban research in Lausanne, ranging from everyday mobilities to mega-events, from more-than-human cities to the undertheorized Global East.

And finally, the federal institutions. Guillaume Drevon, Vincent Kaufmann, and Yves Pedrazzini discuss the Laboratory of Urban Research at EPFL, predicated on interdisciplinarity and advocating for innovative methodologies at the intersections of engineering, architecture, and the social sciences. And ETH is represented by Lindsay Blair Howe and Matthew Skjonsberg, who explain the close links between research, design, and practice, aiming towards equity and sustainability with approaches that take stock of global processes and local specificities.

These authors all performed under pressure, with some of them toiling over the holidays, in order to produce these texts. We thank them earnestly for participating in this project, and we hope that this is the first step in inspiring a new wave of trans-Swiss collaboration. We'd also like to thank Isabelle Schöpfer and Francisco Klausner for their support at the Swiss Association of Geography, and for giving us this opportunity with GeoAgenda's first issue of the new decade. And of course we thank you for reading, and we invite you warmly into these collaborations as well.

## Where is the urban at the Geographical Institute in Berne?

At the Geographical Institute in Berne, the urban is less present than let us say in Lausanne or Basel, where megacities and theorizing of urban issues are highly popular. In Berne, the research unit Political Urbanism and Sustainable Spatial Development (Politische Stadtforschung und nachhaltige Raumentwicklung, Urbanisme politique et développement spatial durable) focuses on the political dimension of producing urban spaces, while the Economic Geography unit, with its research projects on small and medium-sized towns, researches the urban economy.

The first research group, led by Professor Jean-David Gerber, is one out of four human Geography research units, and certainly the one that primarily deals with urban issues. J.-D. Gerber's research unit is interested in actor-centered analyses of planning processes, whereby planning is conceptualized as a political negotiation process among various actors where power relations play a crucial role.

The unit works with an approach combining new institutionalism, which analyses the rules of the game (*North 1994, p. 361*) governing the use of natural and man-made resources, and political ecology. In a nutshell, political ecology is about critically examining mainstream environment-society narratives (e.g. Robbins 2012, p.6-7). It focuses on power relations and negotiation processes implied in the claim for natural resources. New institutionalism (also neo-institutionalism) "...explores how institutional structures, rules, norms, and cultures constrain the choices and actions of individuals..." (*Breuning & Ishiyama 2015*). Or in other words: institutions, actors and resources with their intra- and interrelations are central categories of analysis (*Figure 1, next page*).

From this perspective, land-use planning is one of the main mechanisms through which land and related resources are regulated. Land-use planning is therefore the object of constant negotiations among actors and has a direct impact on resource sustainability. This is exemplified by current political debates relating to more or less coercive ways to promote building densification, to the role of the state in supporting affordable housing, to forms of spatial developments that reduce fossil energy consumption, or to the allowed amount of building activity in agricultural zones. The neo-institutionalist approach invites us to go a step further and to examine which other norms influence the use of land and related resources. Among these norms, property rights and ownership play a crucial role and are perhaps even more important than land-use planning. Ownership theories systematically ex-

amine the emergence and justification of ownership as a social institution (Waldron 2016, Wikipedia 2019). A central question explored by the research group of J.-D. Gerber concerns the effects of varying forms of ownership on spatial development and on the more or less sustainable use of land and related resources.

Hence the main research topics of the group: land policy, large-scale land acquisition and housing policy (*Universität Bern 2019*). Case study areas are not only located in Switzerland, but also in the Netherlands, in Denmark and in the Global South (*i.e. Ghana and Malawi*). In her research on the social acceptance of densification in the residential segment, Gabriela Debrunner (*PhD student*) draws on Swiss examples (*Debrunner & Gerber forthcoming*). Andreas Hengstermann (*postdoc*) also focused on Switzerland in his analysis of policy instruments for preventing urban sprawl (Hengster-

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Geography department at the University of Berne. Photo: Miriam Hug.



Political ecology (framework)

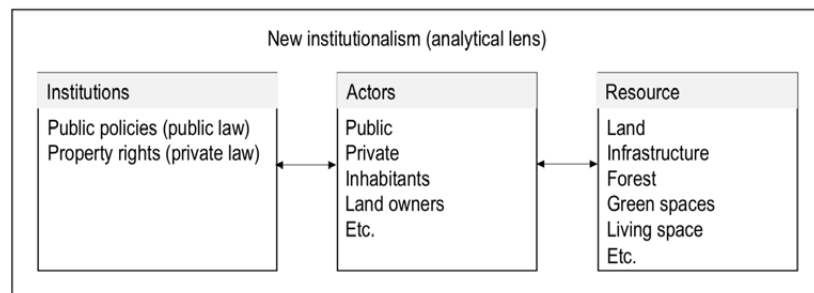


Figure 1: An illustration of the theoretical framework of the research unit Political Urbanism and Sustainable Spatial Development (illustration by Miriam Hug, based on Gerber et al. 2009).

mann 2019). Timothy Adams, also a postdoc researcher, explored the gendered impacts of large-scale land acquisitions for sugar-cane production in Malawi (*Adams et al. 2019*), and James Natia Adam (PhD student) is studying land degradation through illegal mining in Ghana (*Universität Bern 2020c*). Finally, Christoph Oberlack (*postdoc*) examines the institutions regulating the telecoupled relations between a special economic zone in Myanmar and other areas in the world (*Vijge et al. 2019*). The most recent research project, called Governing densification – The impact of performance-based planning and qualitative urban densification, is about to start in March 2020. It investigates

the conditions under which spatial planning can lead more effectively to increased densification while retaining urban quality for all, including more vulnerable socio-economic groups (*Universität Bern 2020a*). With this research project, which compares case studies from Switzerland and the Netherlands, three new PhD students and one postdoc researcher are going to join the group.

Turning back to the initial question, where is the urban at the geographical institute in Berne?, it has to be said that one can also find some research on topics touching the urban in the Economic Geography unit. While the main study areas are currently peripheral and mountain regions, the latter are never conceived as isolated, but as related to and interconnected with urban areas and their economy. This urban economy is also the research focus of a recent investigation on the economic role and development of small and medium-sized towns in Switzerland. Moreover, the group's research on entrepreneurship and innovation as well as on regional policy (*Universität Bern 2020b*) intersects with issues discussed in urban studies.

Acknowledgement: I would like to thank Professor Jean-David Gerber and Gabriella Debrunner for introducing their work to me and sharing their time and knowledge.

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# Bringing in the Urban at the University of Zurich

Research on the urban at the Geography Department of the University of Zürich (GIUZ) is underrepresented, with currently no unit dedicated to urban studies. This will soon change with the arrival of Hanna Hilbrandt from the department of International Planning Studies at TU Dortmund. With her research interests on urban planning and urban geography, among others, she will lead the Social and Cultural Geography Unit as Assistant Professor from March 2020, and bring a stronger urban focus into GIUZ. Some of her recent publications highlight themes such as urbanism and the state, real estate and the neoliberal imagination in India as well as on critical urban academic practice (Hilbrandt 2019, 2016; Haid and Hilbrandt 2019; Fraeser, Hilbrandt et al. 2018).

Currently, GIUZ is divided broadly into Physical Geography, Human Geography and GIScience / Remote Sensing, conducting research on diverse topics on the environment, borders, migration, resource extraction, and more. But within this institutional framework at GIUZ, there is very little that is explicitly urban. Still, academic inquiry involving the urban does take place, though it is relatively diffuse.

For example, in the Political Geography unit, Konchok Gelek is conducting a doctoral study supported by the University Research Priority Programme &

Global Change and Diversity – a package of interdisciplinary projects in seven statistically important areas for global change and biodiversity. This project looks at how urban administrative promotion, urban space expansion, and rural to urban migration takes place under the contemporary wave of urbanization across China in one of these important areas, the Tibetan Plateau. This research analyzes China's rural and urban transformation in its Tibetan periphery as a process of frontier expansion, raising questions of how urbanization on the Tibetan plateau affects the political economy of agricultural land in the urban fringes. This question not only frames the research, but also helps investigate the formation of urban administration, the mechanisms of urban expansion, and rural-urban migration.

Tanuja Thurairajah, along with senior researchers Pia Hollenbach and Rina Alluri, were part of a SNSF funded project (2017 – 2019) that looked at the Tamil diaspora in Switzerland and their post-war engagement in their homeland of Sri Lanka. Specifically, it looked at post-war engagement and agency taking on the issue of the urban in the context of return migration (Thurairajah, Hollenbach, Alluri, 2019). The end of the violent conflict in 2009 and subsequent political changes in Sri Lanka post-2015 opened a window

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Mushrooming condominiums overshadow old neighbourhoods in Wellawatte, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Photo by Tanuja Thurairajah.





Daytime panorama of Yushu City, Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, China. Photo by Konchok Gelek.

for the possible return of the Tamil diaspora. The research traced the journey that set Tamils on the move from conflict-ridden Northern Sri Lanka to the urban space of Colombo, particularly to the town of Wellawatte. Subsequently, many Tamils continued this journey, fleeing from the island while others stayed back, so Wellawatte became simultaneously a place of arrival, transition and resettlement. The research looked at how these returning Tamil diaspora become embedded in the urban spaces of Wellawatte by investing in condominium units and thereby invested in transforming neighbourhoods. Here the diaspora becomes an agent influencing and challenging the process of city-and-place making carrying dynamics of transnational urbanism back to the homeland while contributing to emerging trends around transnational urbanisation.

*"With the arrival of new staff and a dedicated research unit, a renewed and more explicit focus on the urban will result."*

Despite the relative lack of institutional support for urban research, both of these projects draw on urban literatures and contribute to debates in urban studies. They reveal different dimensions of the processes of urbanization and socio-spatial transitions, from the urban expansion in the Tibetan plateau that seizes space previously occupied by either farmland or residential housing, to the 'vertical living' in apartments inhabited, owned, or managed by the Tamil diaspora in Wellawatte. In the Tibetan plateau, urbanization expands uniform governance over a large territory and population, swallowing up agricultural land in the urban periphery for spatial expansion projects and inevitably clashing with farmers' interests in land property rights and land ownership. And in Wellawatte, neighbourhood interactions reveal a place of contested co-living – different expectations, visions, and aspirations – as life within the condominium apartments has been affected by the emergence of 'private space', mimicking hostland lifestyles imported back to the homeland, and lending insight into the social challenges and transitions that are part of the return migration process into dynamic urban spaces.

In the near future, research at the University of Zurich will elaborate on these and other topics, and it is hoped that with the arrival of new staff and a dedicated research unit, a renewed and more explicit focus on the urban will result.

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# Urban Studies at the Institute of Geography, University of Neuchâtel

Written by  
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Francisco Klauser

The University of Neuchâtel has a more than 20-year long tradition of research in urban studies. Early research in the late 1990s dealt with sustainable urban development, regimes of urbanization and urban sprawl. In the early 2000's the Institute worked on the first overall study of gentrification in Swiss cities. This project led to collective work on emerging forms of gentrification, such as new-build gentrification.

More recently, our work has been organized within three axes:

## 1 Relational urban development in the Global South

The central argument in this research axis is that the analysis of urban development cannot be enclosed within easily definable spatial units, but must today be approached as a relational process. We have studied this urban relationality mainly in terms of translocal processes and mainly (but not only) in the Global South, i.e. how changes in the built environment, in urban policies and everyday lives are constituted by connections, flows and exchanges between cities. One of the main research foci here is the study of mobile urban policies which is an important dimension of policymaking in a global urban age. Studies in smart urbanism – one such mobile urban policy – is another strand of research in this axis (also related to the third axis below). In a first step, we explored a few years ago the discursive logics and rationalities at work in the emergence of smart city policies as well as alternatives to dominant smart city narratives. More recently, in a project together with Ayona Datta at University College London, we started analyzing the 'provincialisation' of this urban policy in India and South Africa. In other words, we study both how this global narrative 'lands' in those contexts and how it takes quite original and specific forms, such as right to the city claims by civil society empowered by the use of digital platforms.

## Researchers

Ola Söderström, Prof  
Jennifer Barella, PhD student  
Evan Blake, PhD student

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## 2 Urban precarities

Since 2014, the Institute of Geography has developed studies in the field of urban precarities, and more specifically on the forms of urban living experienced by precarious social groups. Urban mental health and the still largely unknown mechanisms accounting for the higher prevalence of psychosis in dense urban areas has been the focus of a large recently completed interdisciplinary research, involving geographers, psychiatrists and linguists, based on mixed methods – from video-recorded go-alongs to a survey. This research has recently led to the formulation of a therapeutic strategy in urban mental healthcare and will be pursued by a forthcoming collaborative research proposal including an urban living lab project. It has also led to more general reflections on contemporary forms of precarious urban lives developed with Hester Parr and Chris Philo at the University of Glasgow. A forthcoming applied project in and with the Canton of Neuchâtel will expand this research strand to an analysis of elderly people's social resources and access to public space.

## Researchers

Ola Söderström, Prof  
Zoé Codeluppi, Dr.  
Marc Winz, PhD student

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## 3 Urban public space and power

A third research axis to highlight revolves around issues of power and control, related to urban public space. On the one hand, this theme is being approached from a specific security, policing and surveillance viewpoint. The aim here is to study and question the influence of contemporary policing and securitization strategies with regard to the transformation (regeneration, splintering, commercialization, privatization, etc.) of urban public space and life. This research not only examines how specific techniques of policing and surveillance are being set up, transferred, negotiated and put into practice by relevant stakeholders, but also focusses on the individual and societal experiences and perceptions of the techniques of power deployed and of the spaces concerned.

On the other hand, and connecting with the aforementioned research focus on smart urbanism, current research conducted at the Institute of Geography at Neuchâtel explores the role of (smart) digital technologies in the management and regulation of everyday urban life more broadly. Think of the use of RFID chips in tickets and goods, of location- and user-aware smartphone applications, differing tracking and profiling devices, drones and CCTV cameras, or of the development of increasingly "smart" urban infrastructures, from transport systems to electricity grids. The point here is to investigate critically the power issues surrounding the software-mediated, digital city, in terms of social inclusion-exclusion, privacy, security, civil rights and social justice for example.

## Researchers:

Francisco Klauser, Prof  
Dennis Pauschinger, Post-Doc SNF  
Sunčana Laketa, Post-Doc Ambizione  
Silvana Pedrozo, PhD student

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The neo-French 'Manor Villas' development in Hanoi. Photo by Ola Söderström, 2011.





Smart City Centre, Rio de Janeiro. Photo by Dennis Pauschinger, 2014.



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## Conclusion

Beyond these three axes of research, the urban studies group at Neuchâtel, which includes the above-mentioned 10 persons, but also former members of the Institute now active elsewhere, is interested and engaged in the development of an urban studies network in Switzerland. The importance of the urban phenomenon as a scientific question and as a political issue is, as yet, not matched by the existence of an organized research community in urban studies. There is no Swiss Centre for Cities and no National Centre of Competence in Research on cities in Switzerland. Swiss urban studies scholars should collectively try to change that in the years to come.

# Urban Studies at the University of Basel

Urban Studies at the University of Basel was established in 2016, built from approaches rooted in geography, architecture, and history, and with perspectives from critical heritage, postcolonial studies, political science, and anthropology. Speaking from a regional focus on Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, our research and teaching explore the contradictory ways of knowing that shape cities, territories and built spaces.

Our research has developed through individual intellectual trajectories, outlined below, as well as through collaborative interdisciplinary research. Our Masters of Arts in Critical Urbanisms, launched in 2017, has engendered an exploratory space for pedagogy that traverses disciplinary purviews on the city, linking the University of Basel with the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town. Working together on the curriculum design and teaching has shaped our intellectual agenda and a strategic approach to interdisciplinary urban studies.

A key anchor of our research is a focus on Southern urbanisms, inspired by the complex and rapidly changing realities of Southern cities worldwide. In this context, Sophie Oldfield's research engages empirical and epistemological questions central to urban theory. Her work reflects on political practice and everyday urban geographies, analysing the ways in which citizens and organized movements craft agency to engage and contest the state. Anna Selmeczi's work builds on social and political theory and participatory research to substantiate the connections between orders of knowledge production and urban space, and how practices of popular politics contest and change these orders. Laura Nkula-Wenz works on the nexus of cultural production and urban change in Southern African cities, focusing on the transformation of urban governance and the construction of local political agency through international accolades, urban experimentation and interurban knowledge networks. In "Cities of Integrity", a Dfid-funded research project together with planning theorist Vanessa Watson (University of Cape Town), she also works on rethinking common anti-corruption measures in the context of Africa's rapid urban expansion, exploring ways in which the professional integrity of local planners can be activated and promoted.

Our work on the relationship between housing and the state stretches across Southern and Northern cities, foregrounding how the materiality of home making and the multiple forms of housing expertise shapes inhabitant contestation as well as state transformation. Focusing on the banlieue, Kenny Cupers explores how dwelling serves an object of modernization, an everyday site of contestation, and a domain of expertise. His work on French and other geographies examines the role of housing and architecture

in neoliberal transformation. Sophie Oldfield and Anna Selmeczi's adopt a collaborative research approach, built with partners engaged in a mix of Cape Town-based debates, struggles and practices around housing and land access. Projects – regularly involving our Masters students as active participants in the research process – track state-funded housing initiatives and how they produce uncertainty for ordinary residents that aspire to, and become, homeowners. In analysing the contingent and often surprising encounters evident in housing projects, and by examining the struggles and afterlives of ordinary urban dwellers in these contexts, this work challenges reductionist assumptions that formality leads to security of tenure, reworking instrumental and technical understandings of the relationship between (in)security and (in) formality in practice.

*"A key anchor of our research is a focus on Southern urbanisms."*

Another cluster of research focuses on (post)colonial infrastructure and how built heritage shapes political and urban geographies. Manuel Herz analyses and documents how architecture is witness to, and provides evidence for, the complexities and contradictions of decolonization and nation building in Sub-Saharan Africa. He is currently preparing a sec-



Sahrawi Refugee Camp El Aiun, Algeria. Photo © Iwan Baan, 2016.

Written by

Kenny Cupers  
Sophie Oldfield  
Manuel Herz  
Laura Nkula-Wenz  
Emilio Distretti





City Research Studio Collaborative Housing Research, Hazeldean, Cape Town, 2019.  
Photo by Alma Viviers.

ond volume of African Modernism, and an accompanying exhibition. Ernest Sewordor's dissertation studies the historical connections between imagined aspirations and colonial infrastructures in the production of mining landscapes in Ghana. Giulia Scotto's dissertation examines postcolonial questions of logistics, mapping how the infrastructural, architectural and propagandistic operations of the Italian national hydrocarbon agency ENI shaped postcolonial urbanization in Tanzania and Ghana. Focusing on the Addis Ababa-Nairobi Corridor, Thomas Betschart's dissertation asks how transportation infrastructure transforms volatile geo-political conditions in the context of rapid urbanization in Ethiopia. Together, these

projects comprise the SNF-funded project "How infrastructure shapes territory in Africa," led by Kenny Cupers. In this context, Cupers currently works together with Prita Meier (NYU) to explore how the Trans-African highway shapes statehood and selfhood. Saad Amira's dissertation employs the concept of 'slow violence' in Palestine to explore the role of nature as a fundamental dimension of Israeli settlers' colonial paradigm. Dr. Emilio Distretti's research projects take on interrelated avenues on architectural and infrastructural heritage, Italian fascist colonialism and its legacies, and overall on the question of a 'colonial continuities' in postcolonial politics in the Mediterranean world and East Africa. In collaboration with Alessandro Petti (Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm), Emilio Distretti started the project "The Afterlife of Fascist Colonial Architecture" which investigates and theorizes practices re-appropriation and re-use of fascist colonial architectural heritage in reparations processes for fascism's crimes in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Research on camps, borders, and the infrastructures of migration management also significantly shapes our programme. Manuel Herz' research and his collaborative practice with Sahrawi refugees explores how camps can be spaces of social emancipation and are used to prefigure the institutions of a nation by a refugee population living in exile. Marlen Larsen's dissertation explores the city-making, home-making, and world-making potentials of UN peacekeeping camps in Eastern Congo, as part of the SNF-funded project "Making the City: Agency, Urbanity, and Urbanisation in Ordinary Cities." A collaborative research project, led by Bilgin Ayata (Unibas,

Sociology) and co-coordinated by Kenny Cupers, explores the newly implemented EU hotspots. Funded by the Swiss Network for International Studies, the project explores how such migration infrastructure reshapes the Mediterranean border regime. Within this project, Alaa Dia's dissertation explores the design of the hotspots as a new type of bordering device and humanitarian space. Emilio Distretti, together with documentary-photographer Mimi Mollica developed a research project across Sicily and Tunisia that reads contemporary migrants' deaths at the Mediterranean Sea borders as part of the longue durée of Europe's colonial history.

*"Our research and teaching explore the contradictory ways of knowing that shape cities, territories and built spaces."*

A growing area of research explores how design shapes urban, transnational, and planetary politics. Kenny Cupers' research and forthcoming book focus on German colonialism to reveal how conflict over land in Africa and the borderlands of central Europe shaped the modernist belief that the world can be governed by design. Manuel Herz' construction of public health and education infrastructure in Senegal, funded by the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation rethinks the practice and implications of design in a Southern context. Future work on this thematic includes, in collaboration with Claudia Mareis (FHNW Academy of Art and Design) and Orit Halpern (Concordia University, Montreal), Kenny Cupers' new project analyzing how design - in its broadest sense - influenced and changed political thinking and governance in the second half of the 20th century. Funded by an SNF Sinergia grant and starting in spring 2020, the project brings together over a dozen researchers with the aim to open a new field for interdisciplinary design research. As a postdoctoral scholar on the project, Laura Nkula-Wenz will build on her experience researching the diverse and situated expressions of creative cityness in Cape Town to explore 'design for development' as an emerging governing paradigm in post-apartheid cities. Michelle Weitzel will focus on resilience in Israeli/Palestine security design, and Kenny Cupers on Eurafrikan afterlives in infrastructure design and governance.

Taken together, these threads weave an exciting research tapestry that is underpinned by a set of shared values, which celebrate collaborative, engaged research, sensitive to its context. These commitments also inform our common pedagogy, collective work which will be reflected in a forthcoming exhibition at the University of Basel in March 2020, accompanied by the publishing of an edited volume later this year.



Research on the effects of EU migration policy in southern Tunisia, 2019.  
Photo by Thomas Schirmer.

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SOPHIE OLDFIELD

Professor of Urban Studies at the University of Basel and the University of Cape Town, where she is part of the African Centre for Cities. She has co-designed and teaches into the Masters in Critical Urbanism at Basel and the Masters in Southern Urbanism at University of Cape Town. Built through collaborative research, her writing explores urban politics, informality and governance in cities of the global south.



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Practicing architect based in Basel and Assistant Professor of Architectural, Urban and Territorial Design at the University of Basel, where he co-founded its new division of Urban Studies. His book publications include African Modernism - Architecture of Independence, From Camp to City: Refugee Camps of the Western Sahara, and Nairobi: Migration shaping the City. He has realised architectural projects across Europe and the African continent.



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Postdoctoral researcher and an educator at the University of Basel. Emilio's research takes on interrelated avenues on the politics of space, architectural heritage, Italian fascist colonialism, postcolonial and decolonial politics in the Mediterranean (Italy, North Africa and the Levant) and in the Horn of Africa.



# The Spatial Development Observatory at the Academy of Architecture

Università della Svizzera italiana (AAM-USI)

Written by  
Gian Paolo Torricelli

The Spatial Development Observatory (OST – Osservatorio dello Sviluppo Territoriale) is a research unit of the Architecture Academy in Mendrisio (University of Lugano – USI), working since 2007 on spatial observation and geo-information in southern Switzerland. From the beginning the laboratory has been conceived as a scientific support for the Cantonal Master Plan Office's activities (Ufficio del Piano Direttore, Sezione dello sviluppo territoriale) and it is funded by the Ticino Canton.

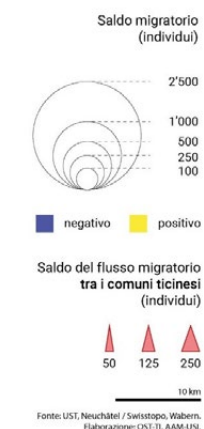
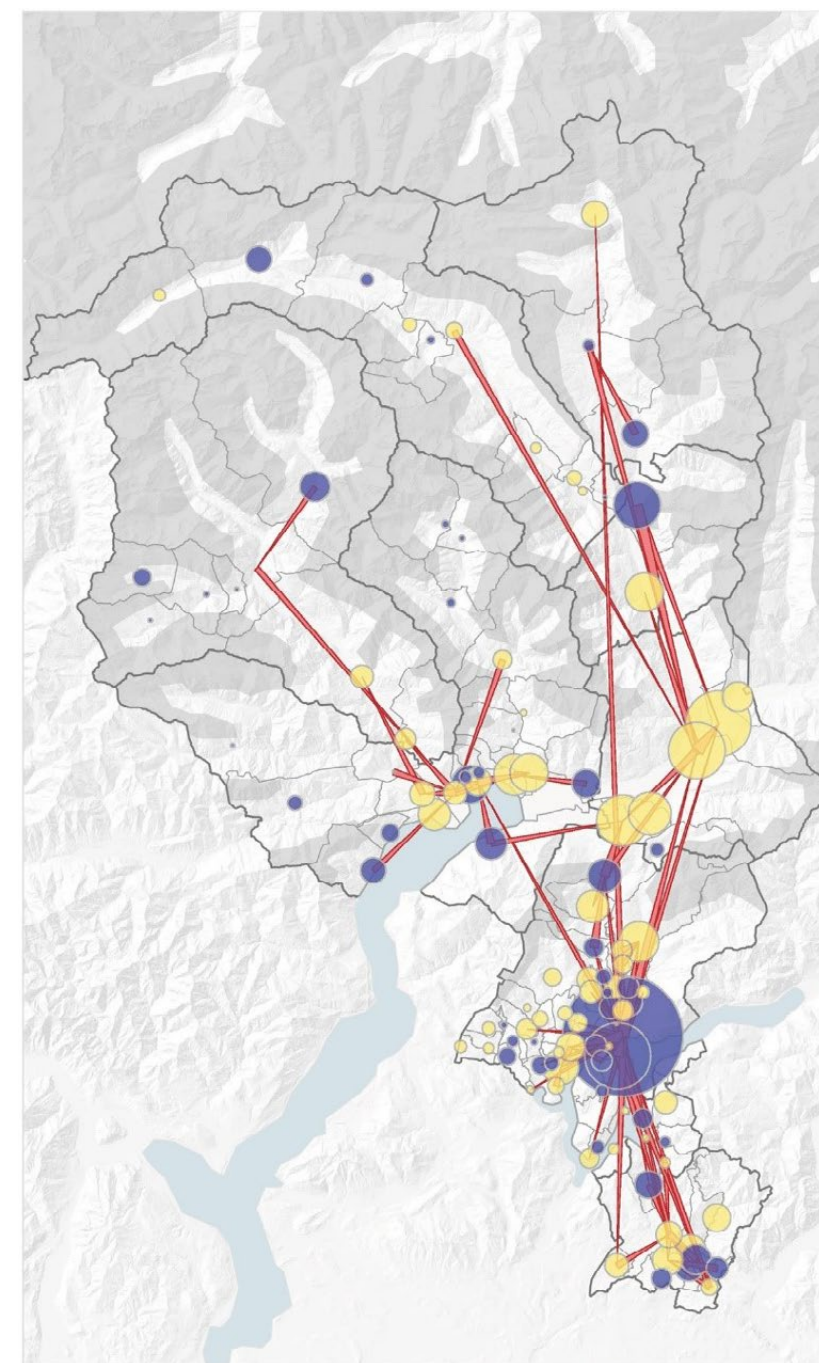
## Research: spatial observation and GIS for urban planning and architecture

Through the use and development of GIS technologies, over the years OST has collected a large amount of information and geodata regarding urban development and planning. Those geodata are espe-

cially useful for the evaluation of Ticino Canton's territory development at different scales and according to different characteristics and perspectives. Some examples are the spatial impact of economic activities, estimation of the valley floor's free spaces, monitoring of working areas, the evaluation of citizen's accessibility to main services or even transnational comparisons between Switzerland and Italy based on thematic maps and complex data-models. In the last few years, OST has trained several young people in the field of geo-information technologies applied to urban development. For example, Dr. Simone Garlandini's EPFL dissertation (co-directed by Gian Paolo Torricelli and Jacques Lévy) was successfully carried out at OST thanks to a study funded by the Conference of the Rectors of Swiss Universities.

OST has also implemented mandates for the Federal Office of Spatial Development, for instance in 2018 developing a methodology for analyzing the spatial effects of the new Alp Transit Gotthard railway infrastructure, which is currently being implemented for monitoring the Gotthard axis.

During the last years, the improvement of GIS technologies has allowed the development of a new

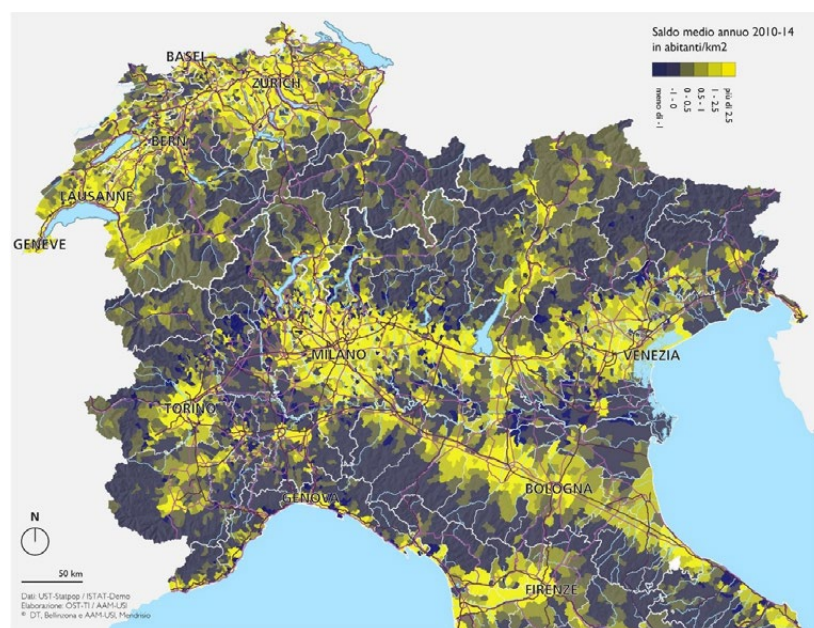


Map 2, Ticino Canton: Internal Municipalities Migratory Balances, 2014–2017

The map shows the internal migratory balances and the migratory flow balances (difference between arrivals and departures among pairs of municipalities) between the municipalities of Ticino Canton. Between 2014 and 2017 an increase of migratory movements from Sottoceneri to Sopraceneri areas can be observed, in particular towards Bellinzona agglomeration, which appears the most attractive urban area of the canton during this period of time.

From Torricelli G.P., Pessoa Colombo V., Vallenari L. e Garlandini S. (2019) Migrazioni residenziali e insediamento nel Ticino. Tendenze 2011–2017, Quaderni OST-TI, 2019, Dipartimento del territorio, Bellinzona – Università della Svizzera italiana, Mendrisio, 76 p. (pp. 22–23).

[https://www4.ti.ch/fileadmin/DT/temi/piano\\_direttore/osservatorio\\_sviluppo\\_territoriale/rapporti/OST-TI\\_Migrazioni\\_residenziali\\_2019.pdf](https://www4.ti.ch/fileadmin/DT/temi/piano_direttore/osservatorio_sviluppo_territoriale/rapporti/OST-TI_Migrazioni_residenziali_2019.pdf)



Map 1 - Switzerland and Northern Italy. Change in Population Density (Municipalities) 2010–14.

This choropleth map was realized considering the average annual variations of population density per municipality (inhabitants per square kilometer) between 2010 and 2014.

This simple indicator lets represent the population increases and decreases across the municipalities in a more relevant way than the percentage variation, since the resident's number is commensurate with the municipality areas. If the map is made with the appropriate scale, the indicator allows to visualize - in a simplified way - the spaces of the metropolitan expansion, i.e. in Switzerland (Swiss Metropolis) and central-northern Italy (Megalopoli padana), and the phases of population expansion or concentration around the main centers.

From Torricelli, G.P. e Garlandini, S. (2017). La frontiera e le mappe. Evidenze demografiche e socioeconomiche tra Svizzera e Italia, 2010-14. Quaderni OST-TI, 2017, Dipartimento del territorio, Bellinzona - Università della Svizzera italiana, Mendrisio, 72 p. (p. 11). [http://www.arc.usi.ch/sites/www.arc.usi.ch/files/ost\\_transfrontaliero\\_170530.pdf](http://www.arc.usi.ch/sites/www.arc.usi.ch/files/ost_transfrontaliero_170530.pdf)



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research field related to interactive and participatory cartography. In 2018 OST co-organized an international workshop on participatory cartography with several research institutions in Brazil, including the University of São Paulo. In 2019 OST developed a tool for the qualitative evaluation of public spaces in peri-urban municipalities, which is potentially exploitable for urban planning experiences. This tool was introduced during the "Mapping, Citizenship and Participation" Workshop, which took place at the Academy of Architecture in Mendrisio in October 2019. The proceedings will be published in 2020.

*"During the last years, the improvement of GIS technologies has allowed the development of a new research field related to interactive and participatory cartography."*

University teaching at the Academy of Architecture: Urban Geography and Spatial Development

Urban geography course (MSC)

The course is conceived as an in-depth reflection about contemporary global urbanization, comparing actors, strategies and problems in European, Latin American and African cities. The aim is to offer architecture students theoretical and empirical insights about social problematics related to cities – public space, citizenship, right to the city, participation – with a comparative perspective and through an assessment between European and global South cities.

Spatial Development Course (MSC)

The Spatial Development Course (MSC) started in 2010; it is a seminar in which the student must show commitment and imagination. The goal for the student-architect is twofold: a) to acquire the basics of spatial planning in Switzerland and Italy; b) to master GIS tools for project implementation (practical work in groups).

Urban Research at the University of Geneva

At the University of Geneva, urban research is carried out at several departments and institutes, especially the Department of Geography and Environment, the Institute of Environmental Governance and Territorial Development and the Institute of Environmental Sciences. Relevant research at the Department of Political Science and International Relations and the Department of Sociology is focused on governance and urban sociology.

Within the Department of Geography and Environment, urban research can be divided into two main categories:

An analysis of the modes of living in the city

Research in this category has focused on the residential trajectories of inhabitants in metropolitan areas (*Debarbieux and Petite 2014*), and, more broadly, on the social imaginaries of the city (*Debarbieux 2019*). It questions the uses of urban resources by migrant populations (*see works by Del Biaggio and Matthey*); highlights the transformations of urban practices caused by an ageing population and adaptations in urban planning (*Durollet 2016*); and analyses bottom-up innovating experiences through participatory mapping, digital and low-tech technology uses (*Choplin and Lozivit 2020; Roquet 2019*). Finally, research is also conducted on urban resilience from the perspective of violence and urban memory (*Naef 2018; Lehec 2019*).

Written by  
Jörg Balsiger  
Armelle Choplin  
Bernard Debarbieux  
Frédéric Giraut  
Laurent Matthey

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<http://www.arc.usi.ch/it/ricerca-e-istituti/istituti/ost/attivita-e-ricerca/workshop-mapping-techniques-and-citizenship#null>

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An analysis of the modes of producing the city

This includes research on neoliberal city-making (*Ernwein 2014*), the material economy of urban production (*Choplin 2019*), real estate and the housing sector (*Languillon 2017*), the transformation of modes of government in urban mega projects (*Matthey and Mager 2016*), the politics of the urban night (*Pieroni 2015*), the advent of an event regime of urban production (*Ernwein and Matthey 2018; Matthey, Ernwein, and Gaberell 2016*), the construction of linguistic and toponymic landscapes in metropolitan contexts (*Giraut and Houssay-Holzschuch 2016; Wanjiru and Matsubara 2017*), and urban planning linked to artistic intervention in public space (*Maeder 2020*). Other works, linked to the sociology of professions (*Maeder, Merle, Mager and Matthey 2019; Matthey 2014*), develop an ethnography of the art of city-making, seen from the point of view of the skills different actors mobilize (*Lévy 2013*). Urban transformations are also analysed through the lens of late 19th and early 20th century exhibitions (*Huetz 2019*). Research in this category further includes analysis of urban models and their international circulation (*Green/sustainable/smart city*) (*Bertrais 2019; Kim 2019*); European transnational dynamics, diversity and border effects with a focus on metropolitan contexts (*Michelet, Giraut, and Gloersen 2019*); and the measurement of urbanisation and access to centrality.

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*"Urban researchers use mixed methods, including ethnography, visual studies, statistical analyses, cartography, GIS and geoinformation, in order to grasp the complexity of urban transformations."*

These research projects are based on empirical work in the North and in the Global South. They are carried out in the framework of fundamental research financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), cooperation funds (INTERREG DEVCOOP, CO-OPERA...) or European funding (ESPON, COST...), or applied research mandated by municipalities, cantons or the Swiss Confederation.

Urban researchers use mixed methods, including ethnography, visual studies, statistical analyses, cartography, GIS and geoinformation, in order to grasp the complexity of urban transformations.

These analyses are part of a global reflection on the city as the object and framework of contemporary spatial changes, combining the analysis of the city's production both by public and private actors (national and local authorities, private investors, engineering and design offices, international donors) and by the inhabitants, individually or collectively, who shape their living spaces every day. The University of Geneva pays close attention to the dialogue between urban theory, urban studies, and urban planning, at all scales, based on empirical case studies and using a systemic and diachronic approach



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LAURENT MATTHEY

Professor at the University of Geneva since 2014, and directs both the Master's degree in Territorial Development and the PhD in Urban Planning and Development. He is also co-director of the MAS UNIGE-EPFL in urban planning. He carries out research in the fields of urban policies, urban landscapes and new urban planning modalities.

# Locating the urban at the Institute of Geography and Sustainability University of Lausanne

Urban research at the University of Lausanne exists across many disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, and geography, but here we restrict ourselves to discussing the Institute of Geography of Sustainability. This is an interdisciplinary institute composed of six groups, many of which engage with the urban in some degree. Of these, we focus here on the Urban Studies group, with the caveat that this is only a partial and incomplete representation.

Within Urban Studies, research is undertaken along five broad thematic lines: sustainable urban development, mobilities, cities and dynamic networks, regional analysis, and strategic urbanism. These themes are organized roughly into research groups around a professor or group leader, but they are seen more as common associations, rather than as discrete categories to which researchers must belong. The research that emerges is heterogenous, sometimes ranging beyond group definitions.

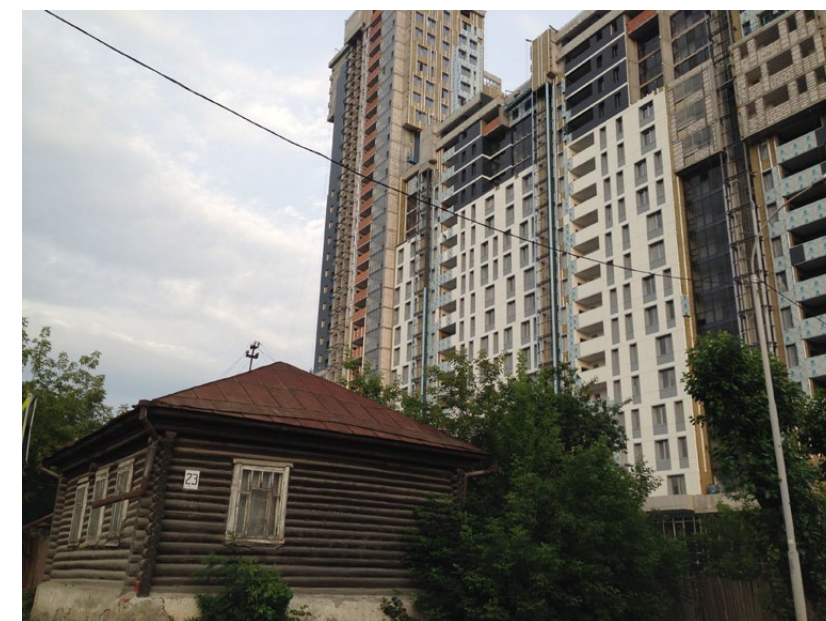
*"Urban research in Lausanne is diverse, reaching from urban networks and flows to far-reaching global influences, from high-density networks of people, politics, and economic power to the green spaces of urban nature and the non-human creatures who share our cities."*

Patrick Rérat and his team work on mobility and transport, such as the renaissance of bicycle commuting (Rérat et al., 2019), telecommuting (Ravalet & Rérat, 2019), and the motivations behind living in car-free housing (Baehler, 2019). Lucas Haldiman's PhD focuses on mobile and non-mobile young Swiss adults, while Dimitri Marincek's PhD centers on the adoption of electric bicycles. In a different vein, Joelle Salomon Cavin's research focuses on the mechanisms and imaginations related to nature in the urban environment, such as urban agriculture, anti-urbanism, and the naturalist's city (Cavin & Kull, 2017). Her work encompasses cultural geography, environmental ge-

ography, and science studies, such as examining how gardening and farming contribute to the production of the urban (Mumenthaler et al., 2020). In her current research project, she works with PhD student Maud Chalmandrier and postdoc Silvia Flaminio to understand the regimes of knowledge production on urban ecology in Switzerland. Moving from ecology to economy, Christophe Mager analyzes the impacts of neoliberalization on the management of natural and/or urban environments. His latest project was about the changing field of urban planners in French-speaking Switzerland, and PhD student Simone Ranocchiari is working on urban self-management. Together they investigated "common" urban management projects in Bologna and Naples (Ranocchiari & Mager, 2019). Further, Muriel Delabarre specializes on the management of urban projects and governance regimes (Delabarre & Dugua, 2017).

Céline Rozenblat studies the urban from a comparative perspective and since 1987 has built databases on European cities and the networks that suffuse them. Her research focuses on the relationships between the evolution of powers and values and the dynamics of networks in territorial systems (Rozenblat et al., 2018). PhD student Mikhail Rogov

Written by  
Nadja Imhof  
Sven Daniel Wolfe



Old house, soon to be demolished for new housing, near the new World Cup stadium in Ekaterinburg, Russia, 2016. Photo by Sven Daniel Wolfe.

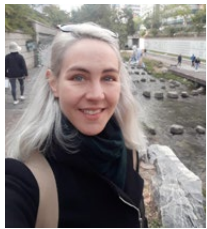


employs a multi-level approach to understanding urban resilience (Rogov & Rozenblat, 2018), focusing in his dissertation on Russian cities during the recent economic crisis. Another person with a connection to Russian cities is Sven Daniel Wolfe, who works in the post-socialist spaces of the Global East and has written on the 2018 men's Football World Cup in Russia (Wolfe, 2019; Wolfe & Müller, 2018). He is part of Martin Müller's group, who share a theoretical approach to the urban where cities emerge as socio-material entanglements, as past histories, present practices, and future potentialities combine – inclusive of human and more-than-human perspectives. In her PhD project, Nadja Imhof's examines how cities and citizens enact their relationship to nature through multiple practices towards rats, while Müller's current proj-

ects include theorizing the Global East (Müller, 2018) and exploring the (non)sustainability of mega-events (Müller, 2017). Müller and Wolfe are continuing their focus on mega-events with a three-year project unpacking sustainability in the 2024 and 2028 Olympics in Paris and Los Angeles.

Finally, Jean Ruegg and his group deal with the implementation of public policy in spatial planning and its effects on territory and professional practice, aspiring to better inform decision-makers and public practitioners. PhD students in this group are working beyond Swiss borders: Hendrikje Alpermann's dissertation involves an ethnographic analysis of the reasons for demolishing or preserving buildings in France, while Irem Ince's thesis project deals with the socio-spatial effects of a law passed in Turkey to prevent risks in urban areas subject to seismic hazard. And Maurice Kwang-Chung Yip has just started a PhD project on land lease issues in Hong Kong.

Urban research in Lausanne is diverse, reaching from urban networks and flows to far-reaching global influences, from high-density networks of people, politics, and economic power to the green spaces of urban nature and the non-human creatures who share our cities. There is more work at the institute that can be shared here, defying group and even disciplinary boundaries, but it is our hope that in the future we will see many fruitful collaborations, both in Lausanne and with other institutions across Switzerland.



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# Lasur/enac/epfl laboratory of urban sociology

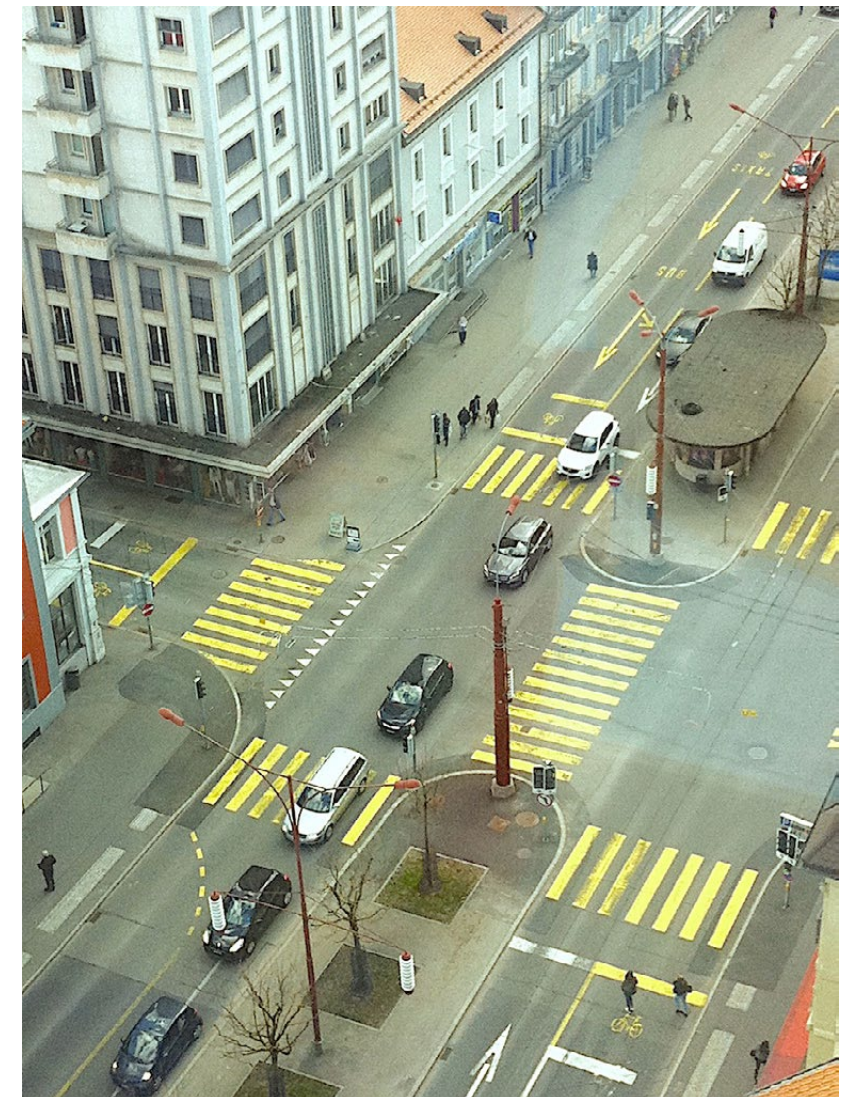
Under the direction of Prof. Vincent Kaufmann since 2003, the Laboratory of Urban Sociology (LASUR) comprises around twenty researchers and PhD students united towards the comprehension of urban experiences within a social science perspective. A unique case in Switzerland and a lot of countries of the world, LASUR is situated within the Swiss Federal Institute of technology Lausanne (EPFL), in the ENAC Faculty (Architecture, Civil and Environmental Engineering), the ideal place for interdisciplinary research and teaching. Multidisciplinary itself, LASUR researches the social conditions that produce and appropriate cities or territories, collaborating intensively with its partners in engineering and architecture. LASUR confronts urban phenomena through the mobility capacities of its actors. In this perspective, the principal research themes are daily mobility, residential history, life and territory rhythms, urban hospitality, citizen participation, urban commons, dynamics of suburbanization and gentrification, public space, and network management. From the contextualization of research conducted by LASUR these past decades, we can underline three main aspects about its place in urban studies both on national and international levels. First of all, through an interdisciplinary approach toward urbanization, urbanism, and urban planning, LASUR questions the role of social sciences, particularly within engineering and architecture schools. LASUR also works within the field of urban studies and, finally, its work implicates and contributes to contemporary issues of sociological thinking of the city.

## A focus on ordinary territories

For about twenty years, LASUR has progressively designed a singular vision of the urban context, in scientific perception with commitments that led its researchers to propose a new "trans-local" vision of the fabric of cities. This has taken shape through research projects, various expertise, and PhD theses – with case studies not only realized in Switzerland but also in countries as different as France, Spain, Ethiopia, China and Venezuela. Incorporating all the lessons from worldwide investigations, some years ago LASUR launched an innovative and critical analysis of "ordinary territories", with a special focus on its ordinary "neighbors" who aren't habitually considered by the academy. This research ambition allows us to address the asymmetry between global research with huge media reach, and local and very ordinary situations frequently situated under the radar of scientific research. That is the reason why LASUR is currently exploring Swiss marginalized spaces. Based on ethnographical methods, these explorations aim to reconsider the metropolization process and the concept of the global city.

In the frame of the Swiss academic landscape and public policies, "ordinary territories" escape the researcher's gaze because of their spatial, social and symbolic marginalization. In actuality, few researches and academic training are considering "ordinary territories" as an important issue. Yet, recent analyses of Swiss ordinary territories underline complex significations which switch from seriousness to casualness. LASUR's approach employs experiential methods to turn the perspective from connected "hyperspaces" to "ordinary territories." This approach is based on exploration protocols which bring together different disciplines (architecture, urban sociology, geography, urbanism, anthropology), and by crossing epistemologies and collecting techniques (interviews, observations, photography, spatial analysis). LASUR's theorization of ordinary territories claims a frugality

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La Chaux-de-Fond, March 2017. Photo by Y. Pedrazzini





Hong Kong, occupied building, June 2018. Photo by Y. Pedrazzini.



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Is associate professor of urban sociology and mobility at EPFL. Since January 2020, he is Associate Dean for Education and Knowledge Transfer of ENAC Faculty. He is also scientific director of the Mobile Lives Forum in Paris.



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Senior scientist in LASUR EPFL, is an urban socio- and anthropologist, working on ordinary and popular architectures and informal urbanism, in Switzerland as in (not only Global) South.

of research methods, bodily experience, and disciplinary boundary crossing. Even if ordinary territories are often considered as negligible territories, these spaces seem essential for research studies on urban, rural and mountain regions in Switzerland. Beyond the research issue, ordinary territories teach us about everyday life urbanity as much as Zurich or Geneva in the context of global and extraordinary world cities world. LASUR, therefore, would like to be a leader in researching the social dimensions of urbanism in ordinary cities as much in Mexico City or Shanghai, Glasgow or Napoli, as in Courgenay, Payerne or Saint-Imier.

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# The landscape of urban research at the ETH Zurich

The past several decades have been marked by a sharp increase in environmental and social challenges. Ranging from the fields of geography to planning and policymaking, urban research has been at the forefront of debates on climate change, uneven development, global migration, economic crises, and social conflicts. Current work at the ETH Zurich emphasizes how urban and rural landscapes are the key sites in which these challenges are staked out and negotiated today. The ETHZ's diverse research pursuits are conducted across a wide range of scales – by many different chairs and institutes – but they share two common threads: first, uncovering new possibilities for sustainable human settlements and landscapes; and second, emphasizing the importance of engaging in transdisciplinary research.

Urban research at the ETHZ is conducted by an affiliation of institutes entitled Network City and Landscape (NSL). Several Institutes from the ETHZ Department of Civil, Environmental, and Geomatic Engineering operate under this umbrella, including professors with specialties in spatial planning, mobility, transportation planning, and infrastructure management. Within the ETHZ Department of Archi-

tecture, the NSL includes the newly formed Institute of Landscape and Urban Studies (LUS) as well as the Chair for the History and Theory of Urban Design (gta). LUS focuses on contemporary issues of urbanization and rural regional transformation, housing a broad spectrum of research pursuits from landscape architecture and urban design, to planning, ecology, housing, and sociology.

Creating more equitable and sustainable planning – in the face of climate change, resource scarcity, and population growth – requires approaches addressing the manifold range of human conditions found globally, while simultaneously remaining adaptable and flexible enough to account for local specificity. As such, one of NSL's explicit goals is to frame possibilities for sustainable human settlements through research that is closely linked to design and practice. For example, the newly launched LUS Doctoral Program uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to cultivate a critical discourse on the urgent environmental challenges of today. By engaging with the processes of urbanization and civic transformation with respect to their cultural and historical contexts, the program addresses current design and development

Written by  
Lindsay Blair Howe  
Matthew Skjonsberg



Recent urban research by the ETHZ's Chair of Sociology has interrogated urban qualities and processes of gentrification along Zurich's Langstrasse. Photograph by Caroline Ting, 2019.



practices while also providing innovative solutions for the future.

Linking science and design with the specificity of the built environment to meet these challenges requires engaging in such transdisciplinary research at the ETH Zurich. Working with a broad range of stakeholders is the crux of transdisciplinarity: integrating people otherwise situated outside of academia – from governance and planning experts to civic actors and “everyday” people – in both research and in the dissemination of research. For example, a recent collaborative research project and exhibition by Christian Schmid’s Chair of Sociology and the ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE explored the transformation of Zurich’s infamous Langstrasse, conducting a series of discussions and workshops with stakeholders such as the street’s residents, business owners, urban planners from the City of Zurich, artists, and local academics. This project posited that a deeper dialogue between policy, design, and people was necessary, in order to better understand specific urban qualities and development challenges for this unique space (Kretz and Küng, 2016). As this approach revealed, the threat of gentrification was shared by many of these actors,

and facilitated the identification of spaces where inventive design and policy could positively – and inclusively – respond to their needs.

Christophe Girot’s Chair of Landscape Architecture also utilizes transdisciplinary approaches to investigate topics such as the social agenda of “civic design,” focusing on ecology and community. Civic design is the direct predecessor to urban design—its more explicitly commercial disciplinary successor, whose industrial agenda tends to emphasize economy and technology. Currently, at a time of fierce debate about ecological issues, the proven intergenerational value of civic designers’ regional “park systems” – green ecological armatures hosting civic services such as playgrounds, schools, museums, and other cultural and municipal institutions – is being rediscovered, enabling communities to take a more active role in reconciling “bottom-up” design with “top-down” governance, rural with urban, and nature with culture. The definition of a stakeholder is even called into question in this inventive research into the production of landscape architecture by civil society, including plants and the planet, as is suggested by the Swiss Constitution’s famous 1992 amendment assert-

ing that the purpose of the constitution is “to ensure the dignity of living beings” (ECNH, 2008).

Urban research is also being conducted at the NSL-affiliated Future Cities Laboratory (FCL) Global in Singapore and Zurich (beginning in 2020), as well as the Institute for Science, Technology, and Policy (ISTP) in Zurich. FCL projects include applied research into high-density, mixed-use cities that improve environmental sustainability; responsive cities relying on cutting-edge IT tools; and linking “archipelago” cities to improve resilience in the ASEAN+ region. ISTP includes several “research incubators” into topics such as e-mobility, urbanization, and mineral extraction. Each of these endeavors contributes to the ETH Zurich’s stated mission to conduct research into future cities, creating adaptive responses in their landscape and infrastructural systems to address the urgent challenges of climate change.

Appropriate policy and adaptable design underlie this array of research practices at the ETH Zurich: concepts that can continue to address the changing needs of people and places long into the future, by focusing on inclusive processes for a wide range of stakeholders and landscapes. This stance recogniz-

es that rapid urbanization is a global phenomenon, yet profoundly shaped by local cultures and regional specificities. As such, it is intricately, inextricably connected to the effects of one’s own actions on the environment, and it is also effectively predetermined by policy and space. By linking spatial practices to the uneven geographies of global urbanization and new forms of ruralization, urban research at the ETHZ reveals possible moments where social transformation can begin, and what kinds of material strategies can improve communities’ resilience from both a local and global perspective.

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A gallery view of the pointcloud video and audio installation in ‘Einfach Zurich’ permanent exhibition at Landesmuseum Zurich – opened in 2019. While the technology comes from urban studies, this method of proactively engaging in public discourse focuses on storytelling and narrative. Credit: Pointcloud animations and story, SCANVISION (Dennis Häusler, Johannes Rebsamen, Matthias Vollmer - ETHZ, Chair of Prof. Girot); Sound composition: Ludwig Berger - ETHZ, Chair of Prof. Girot. Concept, content and design: Holzer Kobler Architekturen and Heller Enterprises. Image courtesy of Landesmuseum Zurich.



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MATTHEW SKJONSBERG

Architect, landscape and civic designer with a long history in both the academy and private practice. He was a project leader at West 8 urban design and landscape architecture in New York and Rotterdam, and studied at Taliesin, the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, ETH Zürich, and EPFL Lausanne. He is currently a post-doctoral researcher in the Theory-Lab at Christophe Girot’s Chair of Landscape Architecture at ETH Zürich where he focuses on curriculum development, and he is program coordinator for the Institute of Landscape and Urban Studies doctoral seminars.



# Mit GIS reale Probleme im digitalen Lebensraum analysieren

## Zur Debatte

- **Wie findet man qualitativ gute Daten?**
- **Wie sieht konkret der Einsatz im Unterricht aus und wo gibt es Unterrichtsmaterialien?**
- **Wo finde ich Blogs oder Unterrichtsszenarien zum Thema GIS Einsatz im Unterricht?**

Geschrieben von  
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Programm Manager  
Esri Schweiz &  
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Mit der digitalen Revolution und dem Klimawandel erleben wir zwei unwiderrufliche Entwicklungen. Die nächste Generation löst Problem primär auf die digitale Art und ist um die Gesundheit unseres Planeten besorgt. Wie reagiert die Schule darauf, insbesondere das Fach Geografie?

Digitale Geomedien stellen eine Möglichkeit dar, diese Brücke zwischen der realen Welt der Lernenden und der digitalen Welt zu schlagen.

Mit modernen Geomedien lösen wir räumliche Probleme unseres Lebensraumes direkt im Web mit Geographischen Informationssystemen (GIS). Ein GIS ist ein Computersystem, das hilft räumliche oder geographische Probleme mittels Daten zu erfassen, bearbeiten, analysieren, und darzustellen. Bei Lernprojekten mit Fragestellungen zu räumlichen Phänomenen sind räumliche Abfragen und Analysen die zentralen Aspekte. Diese Aspekte beruhen darauf, dass diese räumlichen Daten auch direkt im Browser im Computerlab oder mobil zu Karten verarbeitet werden und in digitaler oder analoger Form publiziert werden können. Eine bewährte Projektmethode mit GIS ist das MEVAP-Modell mit folgendem Beispiel.

*«Ein GIS ist ein Computersystem, das hilft räumliche oder geographische Probleme mittels Daten zu erfassen, bearbeiten, analysieren, und darzustellen.»*

M – Modellieren der Frage: Am Anfang steht das geographische Problem, welches sich in Form einer Fragestellung äussert. Beispielsweise könnten sich Lernende mit der Lärmproblematik in der Schulhausumgebung befassen.

E – Erheben von Daten: Einerseits können die Daten von den Lernenden selbstständig per Smartphone erhoben werden. Andererseits kann aus dem GIS direkt auf eine Vielzahl frei verfügbarer Geodaten zugegriffen werden. In Bezug auf den Lärm würden die Lernenden Lärmmessungen mit dem Smartphone erheben und diese mit der Survey123 App direkt im GIS erfassen.



Lernende bei der Felderfassung mit der App Survey123 for ArcGIS.

V – Verarbeiten der Daten: Danach sollen die Daten kartografisch so visualisiert werden, dass die Informationen bestmöglich zur Geltung kommen. Im GIS würden Standorte mit einer hohen Lärmbelastung somit beispielsweise mit einem grösseren Kreis dargestellt werden.

A – Analysieren der Daten: Dieser Schritt fokussiert sich auf das finden räumlicher Muster und versucht, das dargestellte zu interpretieren. Eine Möglichkeit wäre, die einzelnen Lärmmessungen zu interpolieren, um eine Lärmfläche zu erhalten.

P – Präsentieren der Erkenntnisse: Schliesslich können die Resultate beispielsweise für die Öffentlichkeit freigegeben werden, um eine grössere Verbreitung zu erreichen. Hier wäre die Präsentation der Ergebnisse in einer Storymap sinnvoll: [www.esri.ch/laermkartierung](http://www.esri.ch/laermkartierung).

Somit deckt GIS eine Vielzahl von Kompetenzbereichen ab, die in der Geografie eine entscheidende Rolle spielen. Wichtig ist dabei jedoch, dass GIS nicht

einfach nur theoretisch vermittelt wird, sondern als Unterrichtsmethode angesehen wird, mit welcher man geographische Inhalte anders vermitteln kann. Dies hebt auch Marcel Engel hervor, welcher GIS seit einigen Jahren im Geografieunterricht am Freien Gymnasium Zürich einsetzt: «GIS ist für mich ein integrales Werkzeug des Geografieunterrichtes. Meine Schülerinnen und Schüler sollen keine vorgefertigten Karten konsumieren. Ziel ist es, dass sie zu Unterrichtsthemen auf Grundlage von Daten eigene Karten erstellen und sich so zu selbständig denkenden Persönlichkeiten entwickeln. Mit aktuellen Werkzeugen wie ArcGIS Online ist eine Kartendarstellung schnell möglich, was im Unterricht zu einer ganz anderen, tieferen Diskussionsqualität führt.»

Einsetzbar ist GIS in vielen Themenbereichen der Geografie. Ein mögliches Beispiel wäre der Einsatz von GIS in der Plattentektonik. Aktuelle Erdbeben Daten können leicht in ArcGIS Online angezeigt und durch weitere Datensätze wie Plattengrenzen ergänzt werden. Auch Zusammenhänge zwischen den Plattengrenzen und der Stärke sowie Tiefe von Erdbeben, können thematisiert werden. Weiter könnte man die Regenwaldzerstörung in Indonesien untersuchen, potentielle Standorte einer Windkraftanlage ableiten oder die einzelnen Ziele für nachhaltige Entwicklung genauer betrachten.

*«Auch die Verwendung in ausser-schulischen Lernorten, wie beispielsweise auf geführten oder explorativen Exkursionen, ist sehr gut möglich.»*

Auch die Verwendung in ausser-schulischen Lernorten, wie beispielsweise auf geführten oder explorativen Exkursionen, ist sehr gut möglich. Die Klasse von Marcel Engel hat auf einer zweitägigen Glaziologieexkursion die Verbreitung einer Pionierpflanze im Vorfeld des Morteratschgletschers kartiert und anschliessend im GIS genauer analysiert. Auch kleinere Aufgaben im Umfeld der Schule sind denkbar, wie Abflussmessungen eines Flusses oder das Kartieren von Zeichen der Gentrifizierung.

Durch den Einsatz von GIS sollen jedoch keinesfalls analoge Hilfsmittel wie Atlanten oder Schulbücher vertrieben werden. Beide Welten haben ihre Daseinsberechtigung und sind je nach Situation besser für den Unterricht geeignet. Dies sieht auch Marcel Engel so: «Sowohl Atlanten wie auch digitale Karten sind Werkzeuge, die im Geografieunterricht aus pädago-

gischer oder didaktischer Sicht Sinn machen – je nach Fragestellung und Situation. Es liegt mir fern, die analoge und digitale Welt gegeneinander auszuspielen. Gleichzeitig müssen die Schülerinnen und Schüler in einer stark digitalisierten Zukunft bestehen können. Der Umgang mit „Raum/Zeit-Daten“ und mit offenen Daten wird in Zukunft in verschiedenen Berufsbereichen eine große Rolle spielen. Dort kann meiner Meinung nach GIS im Unterricht mehr leisten als vorgefertigte thematische Karten.»

Damit ist ein weiteres wichtiges Thema angesprochen. Die Geografie kann einen wichtigen Beitrag leisten, damit die Lernenden für eine digitale Berufswelt gerüstet sind. Auch in Bezug auf eine grosse Bandbreite an Forderungen und Bedürfnissen bezüglich Medien- und Informatikvorbildung der Universitäten, kann die Geografie durch den GIS Unterricht viel beisteuern.

Marianne Wülser-Etter, Geografielehrerin an der Alten Kantonsschule Aarau, bestätigt die Wichtigkeit von GIS im Unterricht: «GIS ist ein zentrales Berufsfeld der zukünftigen Generationen, da in vielen Lebenssituationen Geodaten nicht mehr wegzudenken sind. Die aktuellen Schülerinnen oder Schüler können nicht genug früh mit den Grundfragen der räumlichen Datenanalysen konfrontiert werden, um für die Zukunft gerüstet zu sein.»

Wir sind daher der Meinung, dass die Geoinformatik und im speziellen auch GIS im aktuellen Ausbildungsdiskurs der Stufe Sek I und II eine grössere Rolle spielen soll. Gerne begleiten wir Sie auch auf diesem Weg und stellen unsere Unterstützung zur Verfügung.



ArcGIS Online als integrales Werkzeug im Geografieunterricht.





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### Save the dates!

5. März 2020  
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## MANIFESTATION / VERANSTALTUNGEN



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en vue du développement durable (LirEDD)

# hep/

## Urgence climatique et Anthropocène: quelles implications pour l'école ?

Une conférence de Daniel Curnier  
Docteur en sciences de  
l'environnement de l'UNIL

**Mardi 3 mars 2020,  
18 h 30 Aula des Cèdres  
Avenue de Cour 33 bis, Lausanne**

**ASG** Verband Geographie Schweiz  
Association Suisse de Géographie  
Associazione Svizzera di Geografia

## Impressum

### Editeur / Herausgeber

Association Suisse de Géographie (ASG)  
Verband Geographie Schweiz (ASG)  
Associazione Svizzera di Geografia (ASG)

### Avec le soutien financier de / Mit finanzieller Unterstützung von

sc | nat <sup>▪</sup>

Swiss Academy of Sciences  
Akademie der Naturwissenschaften  
Accademia di scienze naturali  
Académie des sciences naturelles

### Rédaction / Redaktion

Isabelle Schoepfer  
Université de Neuchâtel

### Editeur invité « focus » / Gastherausgeber «Fokus»

Sven Daniel Wolfe  
Julio Paulos

### Mise en page / Layout

Nadia de Donno  
Isabelle Schoepfer

### Contributions / Beiträge

Les auteurs sont responsables du contenu de  
leurs articles.  
Die Autoren sind für den Inhalt ihrer Beiträge  
verantwortlich.

### Diffusion / Versand

1000 Ex. (5 éditions par année / 5 Ausgaben pro Jahr)

### Images de couverture / Titelbilder

Sven Daniel Wolfe

### Prochains délais rédactionnels / Nächste Redaktionsschlüsse

GeoAgenda 2020/2: 15.04.2020, parution: 01.06.2020  
GeoAgenda 2020/3: 15.08.2020, parution: 01.10.2020

### Adresse de Rédaction / Redaktionsadresse

Secrétariat Général de l'ASG  
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2000 Neuchâtel  
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### Abonnement / Abonnement

[Formulaire d'inscription](#)

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### Prix des annonces / Inseratenpreise

Page entière / Ganze Seite CHF 300

½ page / ½ Seite CHF 160

¼ page / ¼ Seite CHF 85



# Agenda

03.03.2020 18h30	<b>Urgence climatique et Anthropocène</b> : quelles implications pour l'école ? Conférence de Daniel Curnier UNIL, Aula des Cèdres Avenue de Cour 33 bis, Lausanne
04.03.2020 14h15 – 15h15	<b>Sonic Spaces</b> : Voices, Intimacy and the Politics of Sound Conference Luis Velasco-Pufleau Wednesdays, Room 324, Mittelstrasse 43, 3012 Bern
05.03.2020	<b>Geographie in Aufruhr</b> Uni Irchel, Zürich <a href="http://www.geo.uzh.ch">www.geo.uzh.ch</a>
18.03.2020 14h15 – 15h15	<b>Small data (Deutsch) NutzerInnengenerierte Daten und Partizipatives Kartieren</b> , Flurina Wartmann Room 324, Mittelstrasse 43, 3012 Bern
20.03.2020	<b>Assemblée des délégué(e)s de l'ASG</b> Neuchâtel <a href="http://www.sciencesnaturelles.ch/organisations/swissgeography/portrait/meetings">www.sciencesnaturelles.ch/organisations/swissgeography/portrait/meetings</a>
25.03.2020 14h15 – 15h15	<b>Ethnography of social media</b> , Online and offline ethnography to research social media, Elisabetta Costa Room 324, Mittelstrasse 43, 3012 Bern
28.03.2020	<b>Fachtagung Schulmuseum Bern Lernen im umbruch</b> : wie verändern materialität und neue medien den unterricht? <a href="http://www.smb-konkret.ch">www.smb-konkret.ch</a>
08.04.2020 14h15 – 15h15	<b>Geographies of film</b> , Digging Deep – Erforschung von Geografien des Hei-mischen, Alex Gerbaulet Room 324, Mittelstrasse 43, 3012 Bern
15.04.2020	<b>Délai rédactionnel GeoAgenda 2020/2</b>