

NRP 81 Seminar Series 2025/26

Baukultur: A European Genealogy



3 November 2025, Lausanne

24 November 2025, Lausanne

9 December 2025, Lausanne

13 January 2026, Lausanne

20 January 2026, Winterthur



The concept of Baukultur has firmly taken its place in the European debate on architecture, cities and landscapes (Davos Declaration, 2018). It has become a well-established research topic in Switzerland (National Research Programme “Baukultur” (NRP 81), 2025–2030), despite the fact that its roots have yet to be thoroughly debated. Due to its topicality, the term is widely accepted and taken for granted, without questioning the significance of the preceding experiences it encompasses.

From November 2025 to January 2026, the Steering Committee of the National Research Programme “Baukultur” (NRP 81) including Paola Viganò (President and Professor at EPFL and IUAV), Pierre Caye (member of the Committee and research director at the CNRS) and Andri Gerber (member of the Steering Committee and Professor at ZHAW) organises a series of sessions, to outline the European genealogy of Baukultur. This cycle of public events, to be attended in person or online, is jointly set in collaboration with the Habitat Research Center (HRC) of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL) and the Zurich University of Applied Sciences in Winterthur (ZHAW).

Rather than searching for the origins of Baukultur, these sessions invite guest speakers, NRP 81 project teams, researchers, and students to explore the numerous ramifications that contribute to understanding its construction and emergence. From a Foucauldian perspective, the sequence of these complementary sessions aims to retrace the successive or parallel paths that led to the recognition of Baukultur's shared principles and values.



SESSION I

The European roots of Baukultur: An Introduction

Monday, 3 November 2025 (18:00 – 19:30)

Lausanne, EPFL, Archizoom

This introductory session assumes a specific format, combining a short introduction to the whole series, an engaging contribution from Sarah Wigglesworth and a roundtable discussion with members of the NRP 81 Steering Committee. The genealogical perspective it opens is first addressed from the present, by questioning its necessity and revealing its opportunities, from political, social and cultural points of view. On this perspective, this opening aims to highlight the lack of visibility surrounding the potential ramifications of the concept of Baukultur at the European level, while also contextualising the various related experiences and debates related to it within the European architectural and urban traditions.

Introduction by NRP 81 Steering Committee President

Paola Viganò, Lausanne

Invited speaker

Sarah Wigglesworth, London

Discussants:

Paola Viganò, Pierre Caye, Andri Gerber, Caspar Schärer

SESSION II

Cultural landscapes, landscape culture and the roots of Baukultur

Monday, 24 November 2025 (18:00 – 19:30)

Lausanne, EPFL, Archizoom

The second session explores the reciprocal influences between landscape culture and Baukultur over time and across space, in the form of two short presentations followed by a discussion. Through the contributions of Jean-Marc Besse and Michael Jakob, it seeks to identify the shared paths that lead from cultural values to the establishment of a normative culture of the built environment.

Invited speakers

Jean-Marc Besse, Paris

Michael Jakob, Genève

Discussants:

Paola Viganò, Andri Gerber, Caspar Schärer, Pierre Caye



SESSION III

Baukultur and the critique of Modernity #1

Tuesday, 9 December 2025 (18:00 – 19:30)

Lausanne, EPFL, Archizoom

The third and fourth sessions revisit various episodes of modernity and its critique. These undoubtedly continue to influence all cultural perceptions of architectural and urban production. As with the previous sessions, both begin with brief presentations, after which the floor is opened for discussion.

Invited speakers

Jean-Louis Violeau, Nantes

Paolo Scrivano, Milano

Discussants

Paola Viganò, Pierre Caye, Andri Gerber, Caspar Schärer

SESSION IV

Baukultur and the critique of Modernity #2

Tuesday, 13 January 2026 (18:00 – 19:30)

Lausanne, EPFL, Archizoom

Invited speakers

Angelika Schnell, Vienna

Irina Davidovici, Zurich

Discussants:

Paola Viganò, Pierre Caye, Andri Gerber, Caspar Schärer

SESSION V

Umbaukultur: the roots

Tuesday, 20 January 2026 (18:00 – 19:30)

Winterthur, ZHAW, MD E0.17 (Tössfeldstrasse 11, 8401 Winterthur)

This concluding session broadens the genealogical question, exploring the theme of transformation. Undoubtedly, Umbaukultur is inextricably linked to the very concept of Baukultur, and can also be read by tracing back through the main strands of European urban culture.

Invited speakers

Paul Landauer, Paris

Discussants:

Paola Viganò, Pierre Caye, Andri Gerber, Caspar Schärer

