

# responsible

swiss responses  
to housing in  
socio-ecological crisis

# city

# Lunch Lecture

## The Responsible City Lunch Lecture

In the opening decades of the 21st century, cities have increasingly been threatened by socio-ecological crises that have triggered controversies around how to negotiate the trade-offs between environmental goals and questions of social justice. The Responsible City aims to understand how cities respond to socio-ecological controversies in housing. In this online lecture series, we seek to discuss the projects key research concerns: the grammars of responsibility that guide housing controversies, the ways in which they are put into action by planners, real estate actors, tenants or urban communities, how they shape the urban fabric, and how they can be transformed into a politics of transition.

Fev

12.02.2025, 12:30 – 13:30 | Online → [Zoom Link](#)

Felipe G. Santos, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania  
Social Movements that Care: Empathy, Solidarity, and Empowerment in the Fight Against Evictions

Mar

19.03.2025, 12:30 – 13:30 | Online → [Zoom Link](#)

Elsa Noterman, Queen Mary University of London  
What's the use of property? The (un)making of proprietary publics

Apr

30.04.2025, 12:30 – 13:30 | Online → [Zoom Link](#)

Ivo Walliman-Helmer, University of Fribourg  
Common but Differentiated Responsibilities: Agency in Climate Justice

May

14.05.2025, 12:30 – 13:30 | Online → [Zoom Link](#)

Thierry Theurillat, Haute Ecole de Gestion Arc Neuchâtel  
The dynamics of real estate in Switzerland: a tool for financialization and/or a driver of regional development?

### Organized by the Research Units:

- Social Geography and Urban Studies, UZH
- Laboratory of Urban Sociology, EPFL
- Institute of Geography, UniNe
- Spatial Development and Urban Policy, ETH-Z



Wed,  
12.02.  
2025

12:30 – 13:30

**Felipe G. Santos, Babeş-Bolyai University**  
**Social Movements that Care: Empathy, Solidarity, and Empowerment in the Fight Against Evictions**

The Platform of Those Affected by Mortgages (PAH) has left a crucial mark in the history of Spanish social movements by advocating for the over 700,000 families that have been evicted since 2009. This book explores how the PAH has blocked thousands of evictions through civil resistance, prevented many more through negotiations with banks, and rehoused thousands of evicted families in apartments recuperated from banks and vulture funds. Through the framework of the Politics of Care, F. G. Santos explores the emotional, identity, and participatory challenges that hindered the mobilization of those affected by mortgages. The book also reveals how empathy from a group of people unaffected by mortgage issues sparked mobilization, and how care relationships empowered those facing eviction to lead the fight for housing rights. [Online → Zoom Link](#)

Wed,  
19.03.  
2025

12:30 – 13:30

**Elsa Noterman, Queen Mary University of London**  
**What's the use of property? The (un)making of proprietary publics**

The taking over of unoccupied and abandoned property has long served as a critical tactic of homeless activists to both meet immediate shelter needs, and to draw attention to the exclusionary nature of liberal property regimes. Some activists have specifically made claims to government property, intervening in normative conceptualizations of public use and public benefit. In this paper, I consider the reverberations of one such intervention, where activists took over an abandoned federal building in Washington, D.C. in the 1980s, which contributed to the introduction of legislation that requires 'surplus' and 'underutilized' U.S. federal property be made available for homeless services before they can be sold or transferred for any other purpose. Since 1987, Title V of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act has allowed for around 900 acres of federal land across 30 states and the District of Columbia to be utilized for housing assistance. Examining both state and activist mobilizations of Title V, I critically attend to the ways that the governance of 'surplus' space intersects with the governance of 'surplus' life in the (dis)use of public property, and consider the role of surplus in the maintenance of and resistance to liberal property regimes. [Online → Zoom Link](#)

Wed,  
30.04  
2025

12:30 – 13:30

Ivo Walliman-Helmer, University of Fribourg

## Common but Differentiated Responsibilities: Agency in Climate Justice

Ethical challenges concerning climate change most often involve two issues that are tightly connected. The first is considerations about the just distribution of entitlements and burdens, and the second concerns the fair differentiation of responsibilities. The distribution of entitlements and burdens can be assessed by relying on one or combinations of principles of climate justice. Although the fairness of any differentiation of responsibilities must rely on these principles of justice, the applicability of these principles and the demands they make strongly depend on the agents bearing the responsibility and what policy domains are at issue. Not all agents can be ascribed the same responsibilities, and not all measures for climate action can or should be realized by the same differentiation of responsibilities. [Online → Zoom Link](#)

Wed,  
14.05.  
2025

12:30 – 13:30

Thierry Theurillat, HES-SO

## The dynamics of real estate in Switzerland: a tool for financialization and/or a driver of regional development?

This presentation extends the debate regarding the variegated forms of financialization. On the one end, financialization has been a key concept to address the investments of large property investors and their impacts on urban development such as the capture of urban rent, gentrification or crowding out issues. On the other end, financialization concerns only a part of urban production in large cities as well in lower-tier cities and rural regions. Property development out of large cities remains under-addressed by scholars. Simultaneously, real estate and housing dynamics have been also increasingly dependent on the mobility of people, both as residents and consumers. This implies that housing and real estate are drivers of regional development by attracting people. By using the case of Switzerland, this presentation contributes to a renewed understanding of housing and real estate dynamics within different places by linking them with local dominant activities and various financing circuits. [Online → Zoom Link](#)