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Assembling Property in Switzerland A 2-day Workshop

OCT. 8 + OCT. 9, 2026

Kantonsschule Nord,
Irchel Campus, UZH
Winterthurerstr. 190,
Zurich

Organizers:
Gabriela Debrunner
Ifigeneia Dimitrakou
Hanna Hilbrandt

Property fundamentally shapes how societies operate, organize space, use and allocate resources, and distribute privileges and rights. Property holds significant political and socio-economic importance, influencing economic incentives and shaping societal power in decision-making. Considering land and housing in Switzerland and beyond, property rights are among the best-protected legal rights. Yet despite this societal importance, systematic, comparative, and multidisciplinary knowledge about Swiss property – for housing, real estate, and land – remains surprisingly limited and fragmented. Scholars, practitioners, and civil society actors and activists working across Switzerland's diverse geographical regions, disciplinary fields, and institutional contexts rarely engage in dialogue about this topic. That Switzerland is confronted with an intensifying housing crisis, exclusionary housing dynamics, and environmental challenges further intensifies the urgent need for multidisciplinary exchange around property to support an understanding of how property functions in this context. This workshop brings together researchers with diverse disciplinary backgrounds, practitioners, and civil actors/activists to examine how property operates in Switzerland.



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Feral Nuisance: Property & the Untameable Planet

OCT. 8, 2026, 16.00

Keynote by Sarah Keenan – Senior Lecturer, Queen Mary University of London

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Ifigeneia Dimitrakou
(UZH) & Hanna
Hilbrandt (UZH)

In their Field Guide to the Patchy Anthropocene, Anna Tsing, Jennifer Deger, Alder Saxena and Feifei Zhou make a case for paying attention to the feral (2024). Ferality, for them, is that state of nonhuman beings engaged with human projects, but not in the way humans expected or designed. Feral agency is on the rise in this period of late capitalism which many refer to as the Anthropocene, manifesting in radioactive blueberries, mutant insects, cat colonies, carbon dioxide and more. As feral entities are outside of human control yet emanate from human activity, they cross the divide between wild and domestic. They thereby pose a practical and conceptual challenge to property. In this paper I pay attention to how the feral has interacted with and prompted reconfigurations of property, beginning with nuisance cases. Looking in particular at how plants, rock, soil and water have caused trouble for property in the past, I examine ways that land itself - the supposed object of property - has shown itself to be untameable, and how property law has responded in these cases. Critically considering the stories courts have told about land over time, I ask what these feral entities can tell us about property and perhaps its alternatives.

Podium discussion with

Ismene Ehrler – PhD(c), University of Zurich

Luisa Gehriger – Postdoc, ETHZ

Jean-David Gerber – Professor, University of Bern

OCT. 8

08.30 **Welcome & Coffee**

09.00 **Introduction & Keynote**

Gabriela Debrunner – Professor, University of Lausanne
Ifigeneia Dimitrakou – Senior Scientist, University of Zurich
Hanna Hilbrandt – Professor, University of Zurich

10.00 **Coffee Break**

10.30 **Parallel Sessions**

S1. Historical trajectories & property regimes

Chair: Jacob Geuder – Postdoc, University of Neuchâtel

Sanna Kattenbeck – University of Liechtenstein
Nadine Zberg – University of Zurich
Johannes Herburger – University of Liechtenstein
Salome Egloff – University of Lucerne

S2. Urban commons, citizenship & collective decision-making

Chair: Metaxia Markaki – Postdoc, ETHZ

Adrien Guisan – University of Bern
Carla Jaboyedoff – University of Lausanne
Jonas Aebi – Stadt Luzern

12.30 **Lunch Break**

13.30 **Parallel Sessions**

S3. Densification, green narratives & sustainability politics

Chair: Jessica Verheij – Postdoc, University of Lausanne

Hanna Widmer – ETHZ
Stephan Kägi – University of Bern
Myriam Best – independent researcher
Luisa Gehrig – ETHZ
Jennifer Duyne-Barenstein – ETHZ

S4. The power of landowners as legal titleholders

Chair: Thierry Theurillat – Professor, University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland (HES-SO)

Jean-David Gerber – University of Bern
Katharina Künzel – TU Dortmund
Florence Testorelli – University of Lausanne
Lian Stähelin – ETHZ & ZAS*

15.30 **Coffee Break**

16.00 ***Feral Nuisance: Property & the Untameable Planet***
Sarah Keenan , Senior Lecturer, Queen Mary

Podium discussion: Ismene Ehrler – PhD(c), University of Zurich;
Luisa Gehrig – Postdoc, ETHZ; Jean-David Gerber – Professor,
University of Bern

18.00 **Apéro**

OCT. 9

08.30 **Welcome & Coffee**

09.00 **Parallel Workshop Sessions**

W1. Methodological approaches to researching property

Organizer: Ismene Ehrler – PhD(c), University of Zurich

W2. Land as commons: Decommodifying the ground beneath our feet

Organizer: Pius Kobler – Verein Gemeingut Boden

10.30 **Coffee Break**

11.00 **Parallel Workshop Sessions**

W3. Ethnography & the transformation of property & neighborhoods

Organizers: Sandrine Gukelberger, Isabel Herrle,
Miriam Meuth & Sarah Steinegger – Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU)

W4. Property transparency: When journalists disclose ownership

Organizers: Balz Oertli – WAV, Nina Graf – Tsüri

12.30 **Lunch Break**

13.30 **Parallel Sessions**

S5. Urban value creation through pension funds & corporate capitalism

Chair: Johannes Herburger – Postdoc, University of Liechtenstein

Thierry Theurillat – HES-SO
Duncan Lindo – HES-SO
Jessica Verheij – University of Lausanne
Olivier Crevoisier – University of Neuchâtel
Metaxia Markaki – ETHZ

S6. Contested urban (sub)cultural spaces & grassroots

Chair: Hannah Widmer – Postdoc, ETHZ

Leandra Maria Choffat – University of Bern
Anne-Sophie Spinaci – University of Lausanne
Leah Heuri – Geographer
Jacob Geuder – University of Neuchâtel

15.30 **Coffee break**

16.00 ***Film Screening: Züri Totalsaniert***
Lynn Kohli, Filmmaker

17.00 **Wrap-Up & Closing Remarks**