

PLANH@UNIL

Planning & Housing
Research Group
*Aménagement du
territoire & logement*

Institute of Geography
& Sustainability (IGD)
*Institute de Géographie
et Durabilité (IGD)*



Who we are.
What we do.

PLANH Introduction

1. **PLANH Team.** Who we are. What we do.
2. **PLANH Research lens.** Our expertise.
3. **PLANH Thematic fields.** What thrives us.
4. **PLANH Theses topics.** What we would like to continue working on (with you! 😊).

1. PLANH Team

Who we are. What we do.

PLANH team @UNIL/FGSE/IGD

Who we are. What we do.



Prof. Gabriela Debrunner
Assistant Professor
Planning and Housing (PLANH)
IGD



Dr. Jessica Verheij
Postdoctoral researcher
Planning and Housing (PLANH)
IGD



Anne-Sophie Spinaci
PhD candidate
Doctoral researcher
Planning and Housing (PLANH)
IGD



Florence Testorelli
PhD candidate
Doctoral researcher
Planning and Housing (PLANH)
IGD



Carla Jaboyedoff
PhD candidate
Doctoral researcher
CITÉ HES-SO Genève &
affiliated with IGD



Sasha Gex-Collet
Student assistant
Planning and Housing (PLANH)
IGD

Gabriela Debrunner,

Assistant Professor

Disciplinary background

- Postdoc, ETH Zürich
- Spatial planner, PhD, University of Bern
- Human geographer, MSc, University of Bern

Research interests

- Sustainable resources use & environmental studies: Densification
- Housing studies: Affordability, availability, accessibility, adequacy, gentrification
- Urban studies: political urbanism, rights-to-the-city, NIMBYism
- Spatial planning & land use policy: role of the state and the city
- Justice & socio-environmental inequalities

Jessica Verheij,

Postdoctoral researcher & lecturer

Disciplinary background

- PhD in Geography / Spatial Planning, University of Bern
- Msc in Sustainable Urban Planning & Design, KTH Stockholm
- Msc in Human Geography, University of Amsterdam
- BA in International Relations, University of Lisbon

Research interests

- Spatial planning, property rights, urban sustainability, densification, urban green spaces, green gentrification, environmental justice, political ecology

Anne-Sophie Spinaci, PhD candidate

Disciplinary background

- MSc in Urban studies, University College London (UCL)
- BA in Economics and Development studies, SOAS, University of London

Research interests

- Urban studies : spatial politics, informality, community-led projects, inclusive governance
- Urban planning : planning instruments and methodologies

Florence Testorelli, PhD candidate

Disciplinary background

- MSc in Geography, IGD, University of Lausanne
- BA in International Relations, University of Geneva

Research interests

- Political ecology : socio-environmental inequalities of food production
- Planning studies : planing outside buildable land
- Urban agriculture : dependencies urban \leftrightarrow rural land use
- Housing studies & inequalities : temporary housing in agricultural production

Carla Jaboyedoff, PhD candidate

Disciplinary background

- BSc & MSc in Architecture, EPFL

Research interests

- Social sustainability and exclusion of urban densification projects
- Justice of urban (re)development
- Participatory planning process & design

Sasha Gex-Collet, Student assistant

Disciplinary background

- Starting Master in Geography, gestion durable des régions de montagne, at UNIL
- BA of Arts, in English and Geography, at UNIL

Interests

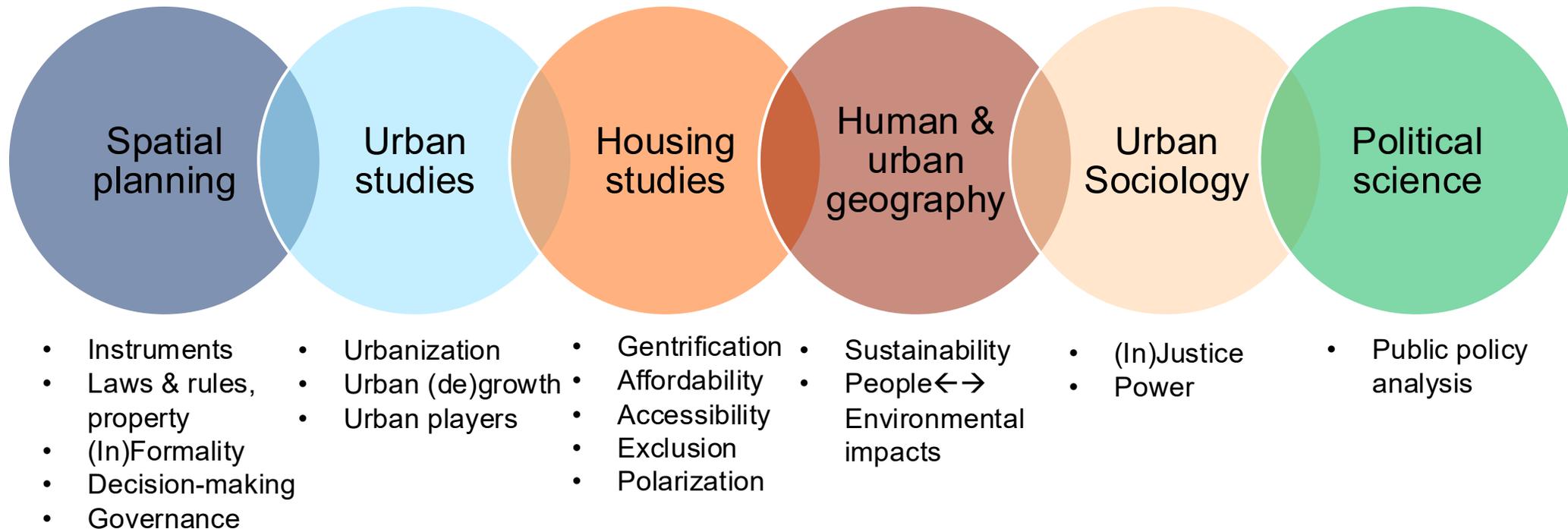
- Social justice in the context of housing and city planning
- Political ecology
- Environmental protection

2. PLANH Research lens

Our expertise.

PLANH research fields: our expertise.

- PLANH critically examines the **complex interplay between densification and sustainability studies, housing and social exclusion research, as well as spatial planning** through the lens of **urban governance**.
- PLANH engages with **cutting-edge theories and concepts** from *inter alia* spatial planning, housing studies, human geography, and urban sociology, developing the **skills to analyze contemporary spatial phenomena** from a rigorous theoretical, empirical, and methodological perspective.



3. **PLANH** Thematic fields

What thrives us.

PLANH core thematic fields. What thrives us.

In addition to the broader fields of research that PLANH brings together and connects with, our **team's expertise** focuses on **three thematic fields and their interrelations**. All of them maintain a **socio-political focus on the urban context**, which, from our perspective, also includes sub- and periurban areas.

These pillars are:

- 1. Densification & sustainable spatial development**, analyzing how natural resources such as land, energy, green spaces, or real estate are used (un)sustainably.
- 2. Exclusionary housing dynamics**, addressing challenges such as affordable housing provision and security of tenure.
- 3. Institutional frameworks, spatial planning strategies and instruments**, linking our investigations in the above topics to relevant rules and regulations.

PLANH core thematic fields. What thrives us.

1. **Densification & sustainable spatial development**, analyzing how natural resources such as land, energy, green spaces, or real estate are used (un)sustainably.
2. **Exclusionary housing dynamics**, addressing challenges such as affordable housing provision and security of tenure.
3. **Institutional frameworks, spatial planning strategies and instruments**, linking our investigations in the above topics to relevant actors, rules and regulations.

PLANH examines these pillars through **the lens of urban governance**—specifically, how actors strategically shape spatial development using planning instruments, property rights, and policy design. We start from the premise that densification does not automatically produce sustainable outcomes such as social inclusion or energy efficiency.

What matters is how densification **is planned, implemented, and governed**. Our projects therefore aim **to politicize spatial development** and to analyze the **socio-political structures and governance arrangements** that work to prevent negative consequences such as discrimination, unaffordability, and displacement.

4. **PLANH** Theses topics

What we would like to continue working on (with you! 😊).

DENSIFICATION & SUSTAINABLE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT *(potential theses topics)*

Densification in Swiss cities
(and beyond)

Total replacement
construction in Swiss cities
(and beyond)

Exclusion of small- and
medium-sized firms (SMSF)
in densifying cities

Density definitions: building
density, use density, others?

Land use conflicts on
Chasseral mountain, Lavaux,
or Prilly Malley

Agricultural land under
pressure: Impact of the
second planning act revision

Socio-environmental
struggles of densification
implementation

Densification or Urban Green
Washing? – Questioning a
Popular Policy Objective

Urban food sustainability:
(In)dependency of cities from
rural areas?

From Superblocks to Green
Gentrification? Challenges of
Implementing Densification

Land for draughts: Draught
periods in Switzerland and
what it means for planning?

Large-scale transformation
areas in Geneva: Praille
Acacias Vernets (PAV)

HOUSING & SOCIAL EXCLUSION STUDIES *(potential theses topics)*

Temporary housing: what does it entail; where does it lead to?

Homelessness in Lausanne (Région Lémanique: Case of Vevey)

Housing space consumption per capita: Who consumes how much space?

Gentrification in Swiss cities: what's next to new-build gentrification?

Housing affordability and accessibility in growing alpine hotspots e.g., Zermatt

Expands housing the the region l'Arc Lémanique: effects on (un)affordability?

Squatting in Lausanne (e.g., compared to Zurich, Geneva)

Housing conditions of seasonal workers and/or urban essential workers

The role of pension funds in Swiss housing

Residential grass-roots initiatives in Lausanne vs. Geneva: Differences?

Housing in zones outside buildable land: for whom, how, and who decides?

Public / social housing in Lausanne: External vs. internal perspectives

Residential "right-to-the-city"-movements: in international comparison

Housing-energy-precarity: double impact on lower-income households?

Urban housing commons: innovative models under scrutiny

INSTITUTIONAL RULES & LAWS & ACTORS' STRATEGIES – related to spatial development (potential theses topics)

PUBLIC POLICIES – with a spatial development impact

Formal vs. informal spatial planning instruments: what's the difference?	Active Land Policy in Swiss Cities: comparative investigation	2 nd revision of the Swiss federal spatial planning act: Building outside buildable land
Temporary use as a flexible spatial planning instrument?	Spatial planning in mountain areas: what are the contemporary challenges?	City of Zurich vs. City of Copenhagen: Comparing active land policy approaches
Effectiveness of (Swiss) spatial planning instruments	Second homes in Swiss tourism hotspots	Forms of participatory planning: key learnings from private planning offices
Disaster planning: How do Swiss municipalities prepare for crises?	(Re)Negotiation of spatial planning in Swiss direct democracy	Flexible planning in times of urban complexity: what does it entail in Swiss cities?
Swiss tenancy law in international comparison	The role of private spatial planning offices (e.g., Urbaplan) in Swiss planning	ISOS in Swiss cities: Challenges and pressures

INSTITUTIONAL RULES & LAWS & ACTORS' STRATEGIES – related to spatial development (potential theses topics)

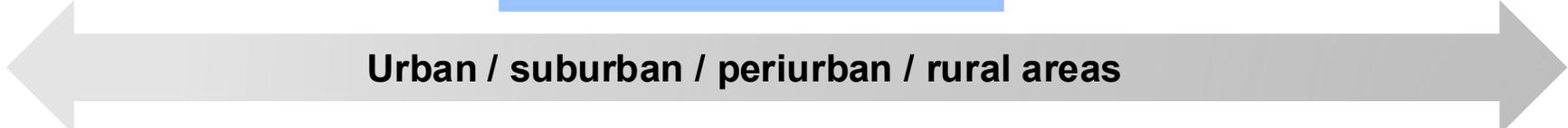
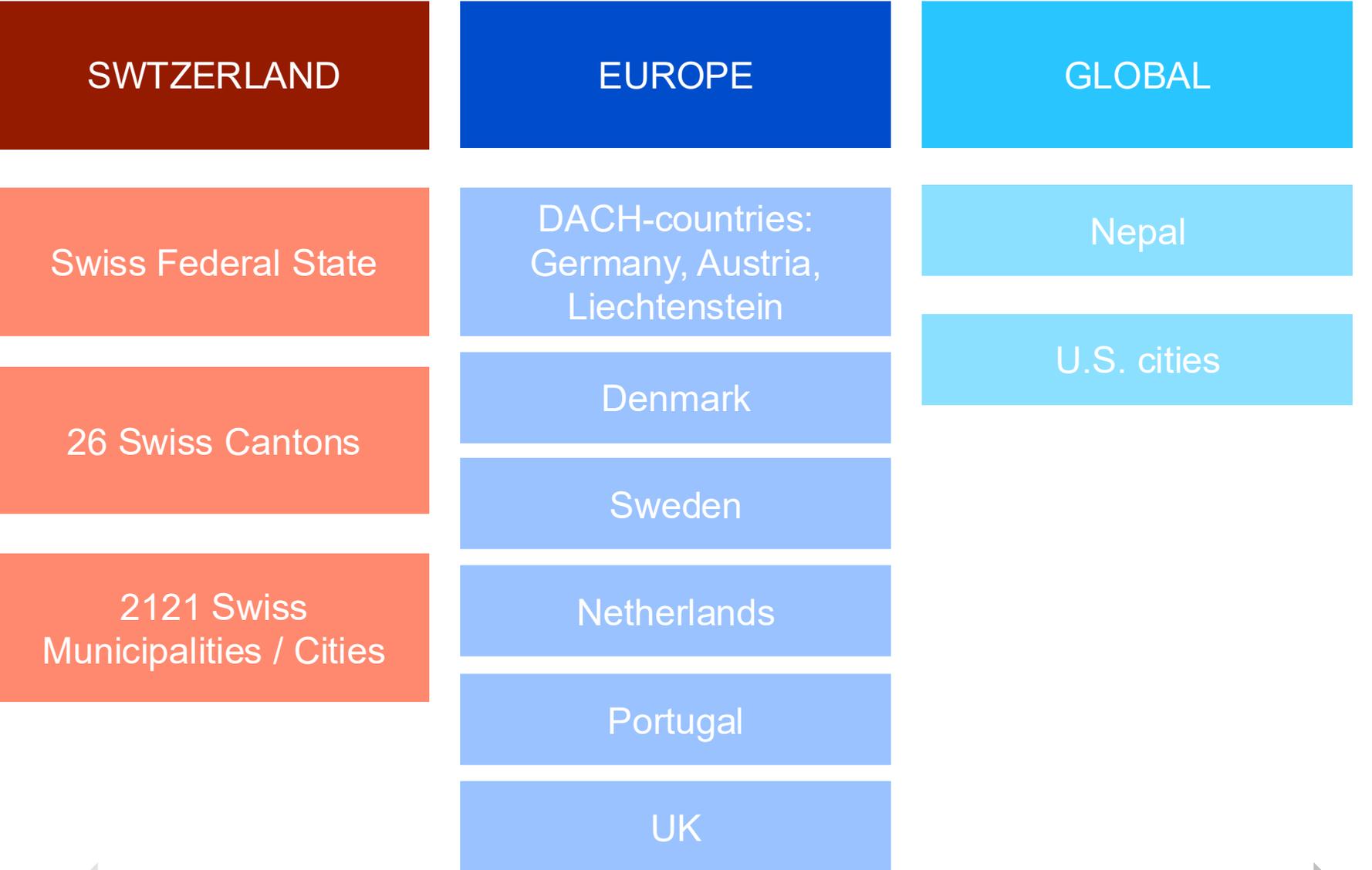
PROPERTY RIGHTS – defending individuals' interests against state interference

Role of CFF/SBB as the largest landowner in Renens	Common pool resources (of forests, pastures, water) in Törbel – Vallais VS	Who owns the moon or digital space in Switzerland? An exploratory study
CFF and/or Poste property, land use and development strategies	Philosophical trajectories of property rights	Pension funds' land use rights & investment strategies
History of property rights in Switzerland	Landownership data transparency & analysis	Single-family homeowners: from NIMBY to YIMBY?
Swiss housing cooperatives in comparison: social mixing rules & control mechanisms	Residential expropriation in the Canton of Thurgau: What has happened, how?	Biggest landowners in Lausanne town? <i>La Foncière, CODHA, ASLOCA-VAUD</i>
Who owns Lausanne (and who does not)?	Ground leases on public land to for-profit firms and players: how does that work?	

THEORETICAL ANGLES & PERSPECTIVES (*inter alia*) – concepts we work with.

Governance of Spatial Development	Urban commons	Temporary urbanism	Urban sustainability
Public policy analysis	(De)Commodification	Urban social movements	Active Land Policy
(Neo)Institutionalism	Financialization	NIMBYism	New Institutional Economics
Social justice	Power	Property & ownership	New public management
Environmental justice	Urban Political Ecology	Social justice	Co-creation / collaborative planning

EMPIRICAL CASE STUDY KNOW-HOW (*inter alia*) – our team expertise.



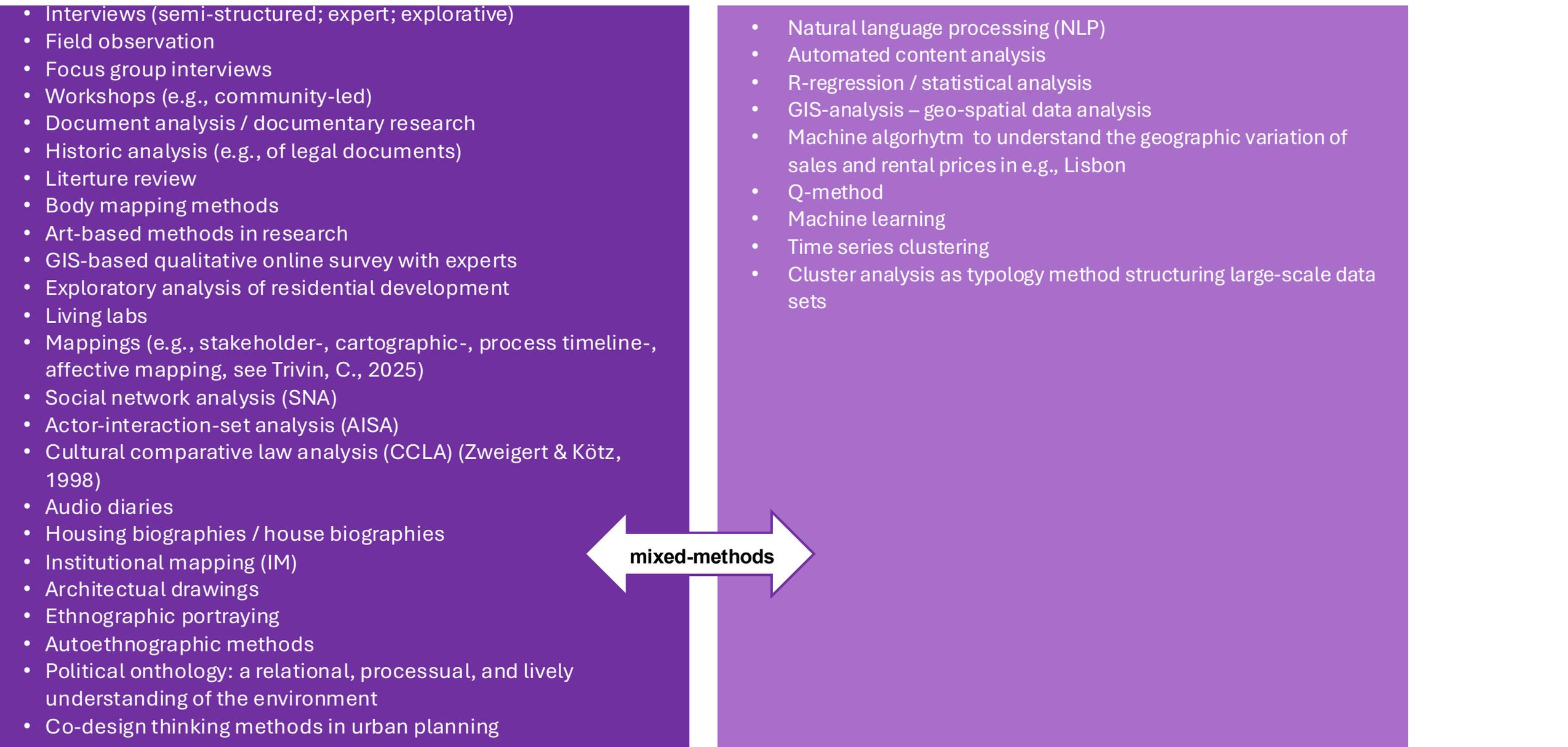
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES (*inter alia*) – methods we have worked with or collaborated with colleagues.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

- Interviews (semi-structured; expert; explorative)
- Field observation
- Focus group interviews
- Workshops (e.g., community-led)
- Document analysis / documentary research
- Historic analysis (e.g., of legal documents)
- Literature review
- Body mapping methods
- Art-based methods in research
- GIS-based qualitative online survey with experts
- Exploratory analysis of residential development
- Living labs
- Mappings (e.g., stakeholder-, cartographic-, process timeline-, affective mapping, see Trivin, C., 2025)
- Social network analysis (SNA)
- Actor-interaction-set analysis (AISA)
- Cultural comparative law analysis (CCLA) (Zweigert & Kötz, 1998)
- Audio diaries
- Housing biographies / house biographies
- Institutional mapping (IM)
- Architectural drawings
- Ethnographic portraying
- Autoethnographic methods
- Political ontology: a relational, processual, and lively understanding of the environment
- Co-design thinking methods in urban planning

QUANTITATIVE & GEOSPATIAL RESEARCH METHODS

- Natural language processing (NLP)
- Automated content analysis
- R-regression / statistical analysis
- GIS-analysis – geo-spatial data analysis
- Machine algorithm to understand the geographic variation of sales and rental prices in e.g., Lisbon
- Q-method
- Machine learning
- Time series clustering
- Cluster analysis as typology method structuring large-scale data sets



mixed-methods

À toute à l'heure à IGD. <https://wp.unil.ch/planh/>

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Aménagement du territoire et logement

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Check out our PLANH webpage

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