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# Critical Urbanisms

Fall 2022 | University of Basel

**Critical Urbanisms Newsletter** Our faculty welcomes the new cohort of Master's in Critical Urbanisms students for the 2022/23

academic year.

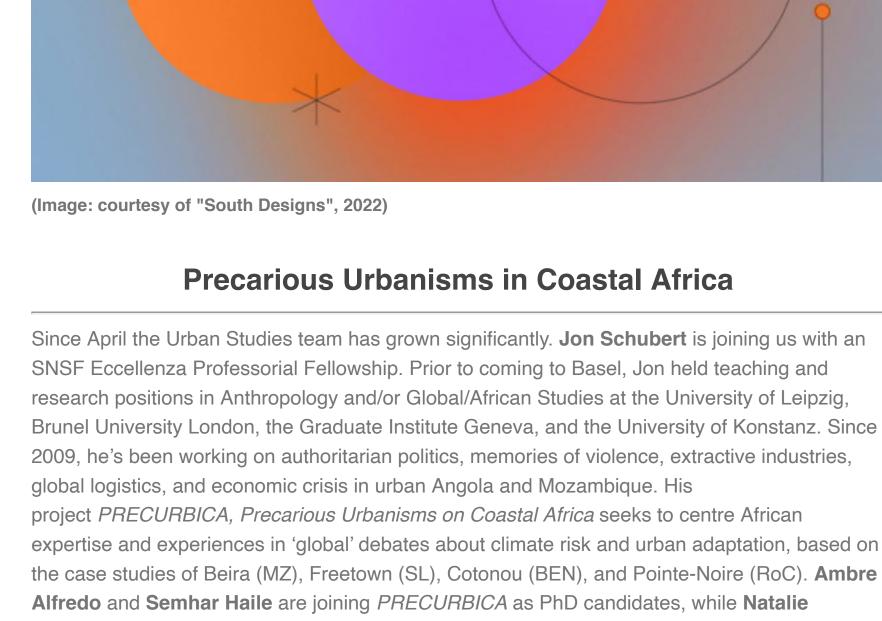
## The students and faculty of the Critical Urbanisms program are thrilled to present the publication

of What is Critical Urbanism?, published in May 2022 by Park Books. Edited by Kenny Cupers, Sophie Oldfield, Manuel Herz, Laura Nkula-Wenz, Emilio Distretti and Myriam Perret, the book offers an innovative toolkit for engaging the many realities of cities across disciplinary

specializations and geographic purviews. Edgar Pieterse, Director of the African Centre for Cities, lauds its mix of "rigour, grounded engagement, criticality and the transformative joys of inquiry into the unknown, unseen and misunderstood thoughtful," and recommends the book as "essential reading for students and teachers of rogue urbanisms." What is Critical Urbanism? BASEL STREET



network of support and engagement, centered on design as a mode of knowing and doing. Ultimately, the aim is to showcase what sustainable futures may look like when they are grounded in the aspirations and struggles of those most affected by climate change.



**Schöbitz** will be attached to the project team, carrying out an independent study in Kampala on

development consultancy, most recently in Germany. She will develop the Cotonou (Benin) case

Semhar holds a BSc in Development Economics and an MA Globalisation and Multinational

Corporations, both from SOAS, Univ. of London, and will work on Freetown, Sierra Leone. For

the past four years Semhar worked as a Junior Policy Analyst on climate change and small and

Natalie will join Urban Studies on a G3S startup grant from 1 October. Natalie did her BA (hons)

in Media Practice and Theory at UCT before earning an MSc City Design & Social Science at

Ambre is a trained architect (Universidade Eduardo Mondlane) with a MSc in Urbanism Studies from KTH Stockholm, who joins the PhD programme after several years working in urban

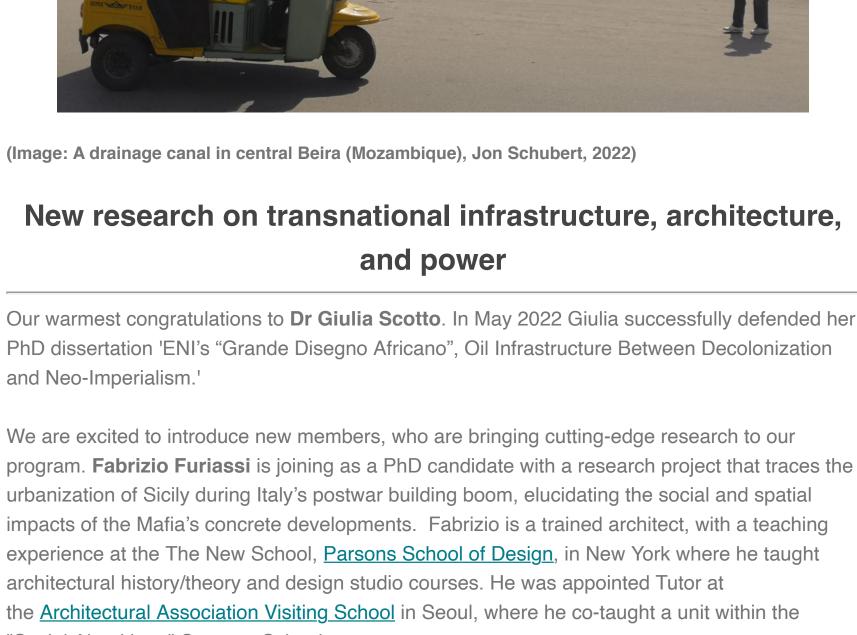
medium cities for the OECD in Paris.

a G3S start-up grant.

study.

LSE and an MAS in Housing from ETH Zurich. She will develop a PhD project on unruly

infrastructures and changing climate patterns in Kampala, Uganda.



"Social Algorithms" Summer School.

### and technology, and political philosophy in the twentieth and twenty first centuries. Her current research examines how the South African mining industry shaped models and concepts of life in deep space during the Cold War. Attending to histories of labor, race, and gender, she foregrounds questions about the future of 'the human' in environments that are hostile to

It is with great pleasure that we also welcome Megan Eardley, as Visiting PhD from Princeton

University School of Architecture. Megan studies the relationships between architecture, science

biological processes of growth and reproduction. In recent years, her work has been supported by organizations including NASA, the National Science Foundation, the History of Science Society, the Canadian Center for Architecture, as well as the Fulbright and Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship programs.

Together with Dr. Makau Kitata and a community-based group of actors, **Kenny Cupers** has

been working on a documentary film about decolonial theater in 1970s Kenya and its legacy

open-air theater became a means by which ordinary people confronted land dispossession,

industrial pollution, and neocolonial injustice. Looking beyond the world-famous Kenyan writer

today. Based on the life stories of original actors and long-term residents, the film explores how

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who was imprisoned for his involvement in the Kamiriithu theatre, the film aims to present a portrait of striving, remembering, and living amongst the lasting infrastructures of colonialism in a rapidly changing Kenya. In May 2022, Kenny and Makau presented a first, rough cut of their work at the Village Polytechnic in Kamiriithu and at the <u>Uta-Do African Cities</u> Workshop in Nairobi. They are now working with African Digital Heritage to raise public awareness about the demolished open-air theatre, and are facilitating the establishment of a community-based organization that would return theatre for social and environmental justice to Kamirithu and beyond. **Critical Urbanisms Pedagogy** As part of our semester abroad at the African Center for Cities, at the University of Cape Town

students of **Critical Urbanisms** and students of **Southern Urbanism** from the University of

Cape Town have come together to participate in a collaborative research studio. The studio

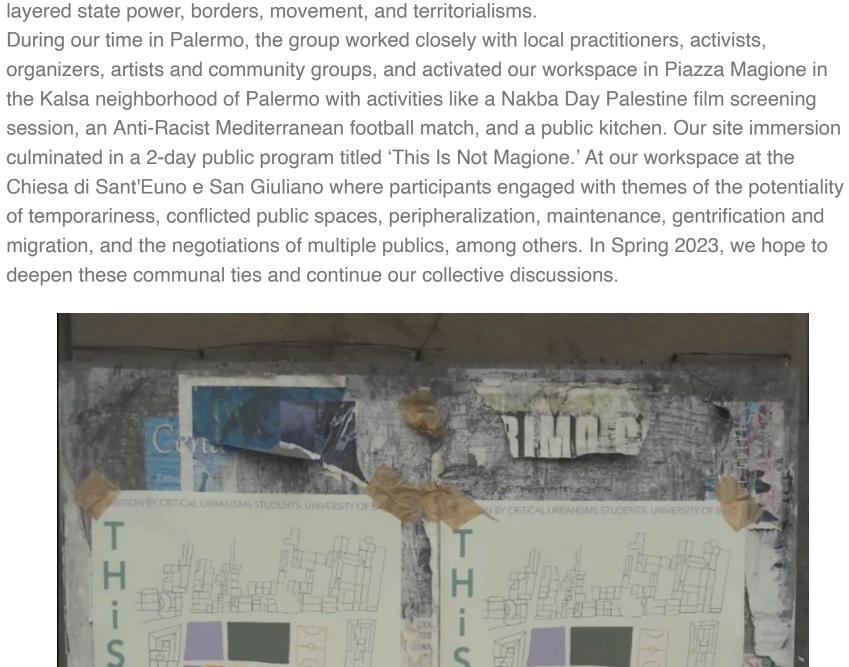
explores housing and service delivery issues, their expression in policy and their everyday lived realities in the city of Cape Town. The studio is carried out in partnership with People's Environmental Planning an NGO that works to solve stalled housing projects. Together, students and residents experiment different forms of urban practice of settlement upgrading through collaborative research. During their time in Cape Town, Critical Urbanisms students have engaged with critical spatial practices in the city through the lens of Repair. Collaboratively exploring questions of 'repair' and 'repairness', tackling questions of urban sustainability, community urbanisms from the perspective of a South, students have created a repair vocabulary box, with new and experimental terminology that have emerged during their site immersions.

Repair

(Image: "Repair vocabulary box" project, by the Critical Urbanisms students, 2022)

Based in Palermo in the Spring 2022, participants in the **Urbanism Across Geographies** 

track engaged with—and sought to (un)learn and challenge—sites that interrogated notions of





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TEATRA A PLAZZ PRETORU

magione. magione. (Image: poster for the exhibition "This is not Magione", by the Critical Urbanisms students, 2022) **Events and Updates** We are pleased to keep the invaluable contributions of Dr. Jana Häberlein and Dr. Claske Dijkema, who will continue their collaboration with Critical Urbanisms as visiting lecturers for the 2022/23 academic year. Additionally, we extend a warm welcome to our new visiting lecturer for

this Fall semester, Prof. Kanishka Goonewardena who is teaching a seminar titled

capitalism.

'Colonialism, Imperialism, Urbanization'. His course investigates the relations between

colonialism, imperialism and urbanization with special reference to the historical geography of

In September, together with the municipality of Carlentini (Siracusa) and members of its local

community, Critical Urbanisms and DAAS-Decolonizing Architecture Advanced studies (Royal

Institute of Art, Stockholm) have met again, for the second edition of the Summer School on

**Difficult Heritage**. The school – directed and organized by **Emilio Distretti** and Alessandro

Sicily in 1940, into a civic space for critical and decolonial pedagogy, fostering new discourses

and practices of healing, reappropriation and re-narrativisation of the spaces and symbols of

researchers, architects, activists, curators and representatives of the international art world.

epistemic, social and environmental justice have set the pace of collective conversations,

activities and cooking sessions at the Borgo.

Unsolved questions of internal colonization, forced modernizations, histories of migration, and

colonialism and fascism. The 2nd edition saw the participation of students, independent

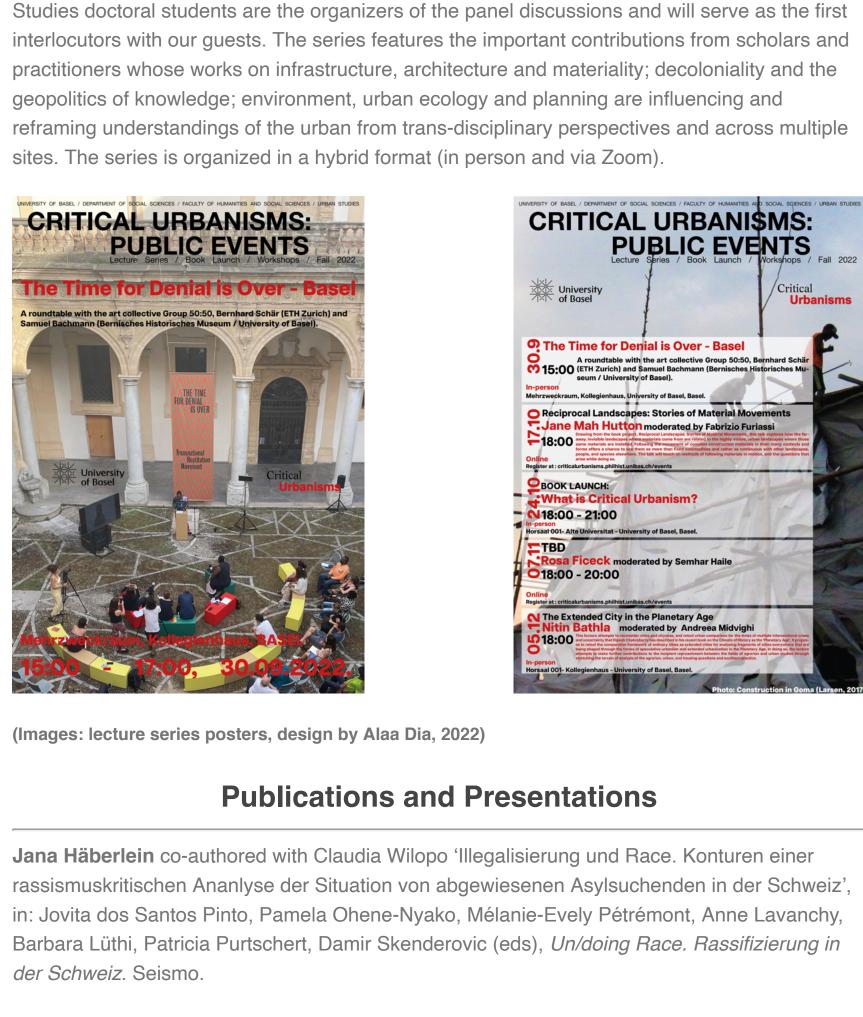
Petti - aims to transform Borgo Rizza, a rural settlement built by the Italian fascist regime in

(Image: Summer School on Difficult Heritage at Borgo Rizza, photo by Sara Pellgrini, 2022)

**Critical Urbanisms Public Lectures** 

The Critical Urbanisms Public Lectures is open to our academic community at the University

of Basel and beyond. This year the series will offer a new pedagogical format in which Urban



Jon Schubert has published in Africa 92(2): 'Disrupted dreams of development: neoliberal

neoliberalizing tropes of market efficiency have been deployed to position the country as

solidarity and development.

political space.

efficiency and crisis in Angola' (dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0001972022000055) The article traces how

'attractive destination' for foreign investment, despite little evidence of transparent and efficient

**Fabrizio Furiassi**'s essay 'Mafia Matters', an introduction to his doctoral thesis, was included in

the architecture and criticism journal *Log 53:Why Italy Now?* The thematic issue of the journal

explores Italy's impact on contemporary architecture through the contributions of prominent

scholars including Giorgio Agamben, Mario Carpo, and Paulette Sigley, among others.

Claske Dijkema published 'Claiming space, when Muslim women of marginalised social

housing neighbourhoods declare themselves citizens', Justice sociale / Social Justice 17, 2022.

mixed spaces, which are not spaces of separatism but spaces where politics becomes possible.

Through the example of Nous Citoyennes, it demonstrate the direct encroachment of the state in

The article claims that living up to the democratic ideal in France means to open up political

space for Muslim women and to open up spaces for autonomous organising, including non-

markets, cloaking projects of elite accumulation in the commonsensical language of national

the everyday institutions of these neighbourhoods and community life, and the struggles around Claske presented a paper on 'Museums as actors of agonistic peace? Dealing with racist legacies in Switzerland' at the Conference "Why Remember? Peace, Conflict and Culture" in

Sarajevo. The paper presents exploratory research on conflicts in public urban space in Swiss

Dijkema builds on is that of the Bern Historic Museum, which is one of the many players in the

process of finding a solution to a contested racist painting in a schoolhouse in

position in France in a session on "Locating the 'Global' at the State's

Bern. <a href="https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-03723670">https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-03723670</a>

because-you-were-there Claske.pdf

History Network Conference in Madrid.

cities, and the role museums can play in dealing with these conflicts. The empirical case Claske

At the RGS-IBG Annual Conference 2022, the University of Newcastle (UK), Claske presented a

paper on the role of colonial circulations and imperial wars in understanding one's marginalized

Margins". <a href="https://www.swisspeace.ch/assets/activities/downloads/Presentation\_We-are-here-">https://www.swisspeace.ch/assets/activities/downloads/Presentation\_We-are-here-</a>

Andreea Midvighi presented her research during the International Summer School on "War,

Gender and Precarity" which took place in July in the Republic of Moldova and was organized by Ivanovo Center for Gender Studies in Russia, National Coalition 'Life Without Violence' from the Republic of Moldova, Civil Society Forum EU - Russia and Moldovan State University. Andreea also presented her research during the "5th Storytelling and Storyboarding at Locarno Film Festival" organized by the Swiss Film Academy in Locarno, Switzerland in August. **Ernest Sewordor** has published the article "The Urban Culture of the "Model" Christian Settlement of Abokobi, Ghana, 1854-1929" for the *Journal of the Society of Architectural* Historians (no. 2, vol. 81, 2022).

Together with Girma Hundessa (Addis Ababa University) and Cole Roskam (Hong Kong

Ababa, Ethiopia. They take the site's historical legacies, geopolitical entanglements, and

University), Kenny Cupers has been researching the African Union headquarters in Addis

material technologies as a lens for analyzing the organization's role in Africa's current urban

transformations. In June 2022, they presented their first findings at the European Architectural

**Awards** 

**Andreea Midvighi** was awarded the Mobility Grant offered by the University of Basel and also

Fabrizio Furiassi was awarded the Columbia University GSAPP Incubator Prize. The prize was

dedicated to supporting new forms of anti-racist professional practice that critically redefine

Big congratulations to **Giulia Scotto** who will be coordinating a joint SNSF project (October 2022) on the urban densification of the city of Zurich between the Institute of Urban and Landscape Studies (ISUP) at the Mendrisio Academy of Architecture and the ETH Zürich, Chair for the History and Theory of Urban Design.

received the Doc.CH grant offered by the SNSF. Congratulations Andreea!

community engagement and participation. With the project "Uni(wi)fied," Fabrizio is designing and engineering community-owned wifi networks that provide free internet access to underserved Black and Latinx communities in Harlem, New York City. Fabrizio's doctoral project "Mafia, Concrete, Territory: A Material History of Power in Postwar Sicily, 1945-1975" was awarded the Swiss National Science Foundation's Doc.CH individual research grant.

Fabrizio was awarded The Architectural League of New York & New York State Council of the

Arts' Architecture + Design Independent Projects Grant. The funds will support the development

of Uni(wi)fied's pilot project focused on the design and installation of a publicly accessible free-

them every success in their new roles, and thank them warmly for their contributions to the

program and the University of Basel over the past years!

wifi "antenna" structure that incorporates artistic contributions by local BIPOC artists.

Last but not least, we congratulate former faculty **Dr Michelle Weitzel** and **Dr Nikolay Erofeev** for their new positions. Michelle has joined the Graduate Institute of Geneva (IHEID) as Assistant Professor of International Relations. Nikolay has been awarded a 2-year Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Department of Architecture, State Planning and Landscape design, University of Kassel, supported by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Research Grant. We wish

This newsletter is published once in the academic year and facilitated by the Communications Team in the Department. For any new announcements, please get in touch with Emilio Distretti and Vinicio Altmann at

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