

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

SWISS HABITAT CONFERENCE

AN ANNUAL PLATFORM TO ADDRESS THE CONTEMPORARY HOUSING QUESTION

The Swiss Habitat Conference is an annual event organised by social scientists, geographers and architects, in a collaboration between EPFL and UNIL. Its core objective is to provide researchers with the opportunity to engage with colleagues convened under the broad umbrella of **housing justice here and beyond**. The conference welcomes new and transdisciplinary epistemological, theoretical, and methodological approaches to housing and habitat research. Ultimately, it aims to build a plural network of researchers and activists, fostering mutual care, sustained dialogue and the open discussion of ongoing or achieved research projects around housing and habitat.

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Abstracts to be submitted by Oct 20th 2025

4000 characters max. in English
including the topic, problematic and methods
along with a short bibliographic entry
Send to swisshabitatconf@epfl.ch
Selected abstracts announced by Nov 15th 2025

Conference

12-13th Feb. 2026 in Lausanne
Presentations 20 mn. max. with slides or printed materials

Cities across the globe are facing rising housing costs, displacement, and growing inequality. Access to adequate and affordable housing is now recognised not only as a social right but also as a prerequisite for achieving broader urban justice. Debates around urbanisation increasingly focus on who benefits from transformation and who is left behind. Gentrification, informal settlements, and evictions highlight the unequal geography of contemporary cities. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed housing vulnerability. Additionally, our capacity to dwell is increasingly threatened by environmental degradation: pollution, soil exhaustion, extreme climate events, and the narrowing of biodiversity. Adaptation plans now prioritise housing as a frontline defence against environmental risks. Energy-efficient buildings, urban densification, are presented as key to sustainable urban futures—even though spatial sufficiency in housing may also generate new and intensified forms of inequality and domination. International organisations and grassroots movements alike are calling for housing policies rooted in equity and sustainability. The right to the city includes the right to stay put, to access green spaces, and to live without fear of eviction. Housing is no longer a private issue—it's a public concern with global implications. From UN conferences to local protests, it remains a defining struggle of our time. The concept of habitat enables us to address an expanded field of housing concerns—reintegrating territories and soils, lifestyles and political economies, flows and energies. **It foregrounds the fundamental question of the habitability of our world.** Achieving justice in urban transformation requires addressing historical patterns of exclusion and displacement, while also questioning extractivist and capitalist regimes of spatial production.

To rise to these political and collective challenges, one must open up inherited conceptions of dwelling, housing, and home, as they are embedded within broader political, economic, anthropological, and moral

frameworks. Contemporary understandings of the domestic sphere are being profoundly reconfigured through a range of heterogeneous, often conflicting, and only partially convergent dynamics—the pursuit of gender equality and postcolonial emancipation, the emergence of novel production regimes the rise of domestic automation and artificial intelligence, renewed interest in commons-based and mutual practices, population aging... These transformations unsettle established divisions between production and reproduction. They challenge the conventional delimitation of home as a strictly private domain and question its protective functions with regard to various forms of oppression, struggle, and resistance. This invites renewed critical inquiry into the political ecology of habitat and the material conditions of inhabitation that ground identity formation and processes of subjectivation. As a result, reframing housing justice through the broader lens of habitat justice becomes an epistemological and theoretical challenge—one that must once again trace the path linking the intimate experience of bodies, the materiality of lived spaces, the composition of neighbourhoods, the design and implementation of housing and land-use policies, and broader political economies. These various elements can be summarized through the following triad: dwelling, homing, and housing. Thus, the SHC does not only aim to mobilise a wide array of methodological and epistemological approaches; it also aims to bridge disciplines attentive to both the structural determinants of housing-related inequalities and the situated, embodied gestures of inhabitation. In this sense, it brings together neo-Marxist critiques of spatial injustice and pragmatist approaches to everyday practices, alongside architectural anthropology, ecological thinking, and phenomenology of domestic space.

Within this perspective, **the annual Swiss Habitat Conference (SHC)** offers an invitation for scholars and activists to collectively explore the relationship between bodies, spaces, and politics—through the interwoven dynamics of dwelling, homing, and housing—and to reflect on the methodological, epistemological and critical challenges they entail. For its first edition, rather than imposing themes, the **SHC is eager to let its main axes emerge from the submitted and selected abstracts**. We particularly encourage PhDs and early-career researchers to contribute, as the event will provide valuable feedback as well as opportunities to establish lasting research networks and exchanges.

We are interested in contributions on the following topics, though it is not exhaustive and we warmly welcome atypical approaches to housing and habitat, original and exploratory methods and research protocols.

List of topic suggestions

Homing/home-making
Home sharing
Architectural anthropology
Socio-environmental sustainability
Precarity and eviction
Gentrification
Exclusionary mechanisms
Affordability
Commodification
Financialization
Housing policies
Housing politics
Property rights
Land and land use
Taxation
Platforms
Comparative housing studies
NIMBYism
Urban social movements

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