
PhD position as part of SNSF project “André Corboz’s hermeneutics of urban and territorial form: research practices, concepts and methodologies” (100%)

The Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) is a young and lively university, a hub of opportunities open to the world where students are offered a quality interdisciplinary education in which they can be fully engaged and take centre stage, and where our researchers can count on having the space to pursue their initiatives freely. Established in 1996, USI is in constant transformation, always taking on new challenges while remaining true to its three guiding principles: quality, openness, and responsibility.

The Institute for the History and Theory of Art and Architecture (ISA) has a profile inspired by long-established institutions, such as the History Theory and Criticism of Architecture and Art of the MIT in Boston or the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta) of the ETH Zurich. Without limiting their fields of study to any period or geographical area in particular, the purpose of ISA is to foster a fuller understanding of the complex meanings of artistic and architectural action.

The SNSF Project

The SNSF project “André Corboz’s hermeneutics of urban and territorial form: research practices, concepts and methodologies” will investigate the research methodologies and practices of André Corboz (1928-2012), one of the most distinguished personalities in the field of urban and territorial studies. Corboz, initially trained in law, became an academic only in his late thirties. After having taught architectural history at University of Montréal from 1967 onwards, he held the chair for the history of urbanism at ETH Zurich from 1980 to 1993. His research and theorising demonstrate a high degree of independence from the disciplinary codes of their time. Privileging transversal methods of speculation and open forms of interpretation, he brought together various strands of knowledge from the fields of art, architecture and urban history in his scholarly work. The project will examine for the first time Corboz’s entire intellectual trajectory, from his early works in the second half of the 1950s to his late writings and research projects at the beginning of the 2000s. This will be done by means of a systematic analysis of Corboz’s methodological position, balancing it with Corboz’s research practices and their particularities. The main research corpus is Corboz’s estate, held at the Library of the Academy of Architecture.

The project is led by Prof. Dr. Sonja Hildebrand (USI) and co-led by Adjunct Prof. Dr. Elena Cogato Lanza (EPFL).

The PhD project

The SNSF project comprises three interconnected subprojects. The PhD project is part of Subproject 3 “Corboz’s reading of territorial form” which will investigate Corboz’s research on territorial configurations and contemporary urbanisation phenomena, examining how the large scale impacted his research practices, methodologies and theoretical framework and placing him in the national and international discourse on urbanisation. The PhD research

will be supervised by Prof. Dr. Sonja Hildebrand and co-supervised by Adjunct Prof. Dr. Elena Cogato Lanza.

Candidate Profile

We are looking for a candidate with a strong interest in scientific (archival and literature) research and writing.

The ideal candidate should satisfy the following requirements:

- Master's degree, preferably in Architecture History, Art History (with a focus on Architecture and/or Urban History), Urban/Territorial Studies, or Architecture;
- Experience in academic work and in organising one's own work autonomously and in a structured manner;
- Very good command of English, both written and spoken; German and French, at least reading skills; additional knowledge of Italian would be an advantage;
- Willingness to collaborate in a small research team and to contribute to academic activities and exchange;
- IT skills (Word/Pages, Powerpoint/Keynote, Adobe).

The PhD candidate is expected to enrol at the Academy of Architecture's Doctoral School.

General terms

- The PhD position is scheduled to start on 1 July 2026;
- Duration: 4 years;
- The position is considered a full-time role; 80% of working-hours are reserved for PhD research, related academic presentations and writing of related scientific articles and the dissertation;
- Salary levels correspond to those set by the Swiss National Science Foundation for PhD researchers;
- Place of work: Mendrisio; research trips and home office by agreement.

The Application

Applications may be submitted upon acceptance of the Applicant Personal Data Processing Notice found at the following [LINK](#). In the online form, you will be asked to declare that you have read and understood our privacy policy.

Applications must be in English and should contain:

- A detailed CV;
- A letter of motivation;
- BA and MA diplomas and transcripts;
- Academic writing sample.

Applications must be submitted ONLINE by completing the form, which can be accessed by clicking on the following [LINK](#). You will also need to upload the documents listed above.

USI strives to be an equal opportunity and family friendly employer and is further responsive to the needs of dual career couples. We guarantee that the selection process will give equal opportunities to female and male researchers. As an institution that values diversity, USI particularly encourages applications from women and from all individuals from underrepresented groups.

Applications received before 15 May 2026, will be given priority. However, applications will be received until the position is filled.

For further information, please contact:

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