J. W. Kleemann, Lützelflüh, Looking southwards up the River Emme, circa 1780

Public Drawing in Emmental

Seminar Week HS26

The Emmental region, situated in the canton of Bern, is often associated with its rolling hills, traditional timber farmhouses, and world-renowned Emmentaler cheese production. Yet beyond this idyllic image lies a complex territorial system shaped by the interaction of geology, hydrology, agriculture, forestry, settlements, and infrastructure. Structured by the Emme River and its tributaries, the region has long been exposed to sudden and unpredictable fluctuations in water discharge, making flooding a recurrent event. The flood disaster of 1837 near Lützelfluh, described by Swiss writer Jeremias Gotthelf, marked one of many moments in which environmental dynamics reshaped the region. Over the past two centuries, the landscape has been heavily engineered: settlements shifted to higher ground and extensive canal systems were constructed to tame the river.

Today, Emmental is undergoing another phase of transformation. Agricultural production remains central to the region, yet the networks of labour and local economies that historically sustained rural settlements have significantly changed. Small industrial facilities and historic village centres that once played an important role in regional development have largely lost their productive functions or survive through selective adaptation to tourism. At the same time, climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of flood events, challenging established forms of inhabitation and resource management.

The seminar week will be dedicated to drawing a section of Emmental, using representation as both a research method and a communication tool. Public drawing is here understood as a way to literally “draw together”: by mapping both the visible and invisible networks that shape the territory, students will not only document the complexity of its spatial and social structures but also render them legible and shareable within a broader public discourse. Over the course of five days, participants will engage directly with the landscape and its ongoing transformations, collaboratively producing sectional drawings that reveal the layered interactions between geology, hydrology, architecture, economy, and society in a rural region undergoing change, enriched by exchanges with local communities and regional experts.

Chair of Architectural Behaviorology:	Prof. Momoyo Kaijima Lowis Gujer
Chair of Theory of Architecture:	Prof. Dr. Laurent Stalder Dr. Giulia Boller
Pädagogische Hochschule Bern	Dr. Verena Huber Nievergelt Dr. Sarah Ryser Elisabeth Jahnke

Location:	Emmental (BE)
Date:	Monday, October 19th - Friday, October 23th
Language:	DE and EN (local exchanges and inputs in DE)
Number of Students:	16 students at D-ARCH + 4 students at PH Bern
Cost category:	B
Contact:	boller@arch.ethz.ch

PH Bern Pädagogische Hochschule

D ARCH Department of Architecture

ETH zürich