

Faculty of Law

Ursula Brunner Lecture Series

Civil Disobedience amid the Climate Crisis



Prof. Erica Chenoweth (Harvard)
Prof. Sonia Seneviratne (ETH Zurich)
Georg Klingler Heiligtag (Greenpeace)

Tuesday 16 November 2021, 18h15
University of Zurich, Rämistrasse 59, 8001 Zurich
Room RAA-G-15

Prof. Dr. Erica Chenoweth

Erica Chenoweth is the Berthold Beitz Professor in Human Rights and International Affairs at Harvard Kennedy School and a Susan S. and Kenneth L. Wallach Professor at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies at Harvard University. Prof. Chenoweth is a faculty member of Harvard's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, and directs the Center's Nonviolent Action Lab. Prof. Chenoweth has worked extensively on political violence and its alternatives, and was ranked one of Foreign Policy magazine's Top 100 Global Thinkers of 2013. Prof. Chenoweth's newest book, *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs to Know* (OUP, 2021) outlines what constitutes civil resistance, and what contributes to its success.

Prof. Dr. Sonia Seneviratne

Sonia Seneviratne is Professor at the Institute of Atmospheric and Climate Science at ETH Zurich. After completing her PhD at the ETH Zurich, she was a Postdoctoral scientist at NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center. Her research addresses climate change and extreme events, land-climate interactions, and terrestrial water processes. She was a (Coordinating) Lead Author on several IPCC reports, including the IPCC Special Report on Extreme events (SREX), the IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C Global warming, and the IPCC 6th Assessment report. Prof. Seneviratne received several awards for her research, including a Consolidator Grant from the European Research Council (2014), the Macelwane Medal from the American Geophysical Union (2013), and the Hans Oeschger Medal from the European Geosciences Union (2021) and belongs to the most cited scientists in her field.

Georg Klingler Heiligttag

Georg Klingler Heiligttag has been the Lead Link of the Climate Circle and Campaigner/Specialist for Energy and Climate at Greenpeace Switzerland since 2011. As part of his role, he is also the project leader and secretary of the KlimaSeniorinnen association, which recently submitted an application to the European Court of Human Rights concerning Switzerland's climate policy. Before joining Greenpeace, he was a project officer at ecocept AG (2006-2011). Georg Klingler Heiligttag holds a degree in Environmental Sciences from the ETH Zurich and a MAS in Applied Ethics from the University of Zurich. Since 2013, he has further been experimenting with new ways to help solve the climate crisis and species extinction on his farm Hof Narr in the Zurich Oberland.

The Ursula Brunner Lecture Series

The Ursula Brunner Lecture Series was initiated in 2021 by Prof. Dr. Helen Keller, Prof. Dr. Johannes Reich, and Dr. Corina Heri in honour of the late Dr. Ursula Brunner († 2019), a distinguished lawyer and legal academic who contributed prolifically to the development of environmental law in Switzerland. The lecture series is dedicated to the relationship between environmental law and human rights, especially in the context of the climate crisis. Aiming at a multidisciplinary perspective, we invite distinguished speakers to share their views on some of the most pressing issues in the field to which the lecture series is devoted.

Introducing the Brunner Lectures

As the effects of anthropogenic climate change intensify, activism and protests seeking climate action have increased around the world. Aimed at bringing attention to the impending climate catastrophe, these acts of resistance and civil disobedience have not been without criticism and repression. Recent examples from the Swiss context illustrate this phenomenon: activists were charged with coercion, breach of the peace, and damage to property in criminal proceedings with potentially steep penalties. This raises the question of how to push legal and political reform ensuring adaption to and mitigation of climate change. In studying civil resistance to climate change, and the response to these movements, legal scholars have much to gain from engaging with other disciplines. The inaugural Brunner Lecture will facilitate an interdisciplinary conversation on this topic. The Swiss example will serve as a starting point for an interactive discussion of activism in the context of the climate emergency. Against this background, this inaugural lecture seeks to create a better understanding of climate-related civil resistance, as well as its effects and its limitations.

Programme

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| 18.15 | Introduction of the Ursula Brunner Lectures and the speakers
<i>Prof. Dr. Helen Keller</i> |
| 18.25 | Introductory remarks and comments from a Swiss perspective
<i>Prof. Dr. Johannes Reich</i> |
| 18.35 | Civil Resistance and Climate Change: Imagining Alternatives to the 'End of the World'
<i>Prof. Dr. Erica Chenoweth</i> |
| 19.10 | Climate Crisis: Evidence from the latest IPCC report
<i>Prof. Dr. Sonia Seneviratne</i> |
| 19.25 | NGO Perspectives on Climate Activism
<i>Georg Klingler Heiligtäg</i> |
| 19.40 | Interactive Discussion
<i>Moderated by Prof. Dr. Johannes Reich</i> |
| 20.10 | Closing of the Event
<i>Prof. Dr. Helen Keller</i> |

Language and Format

The event will be held in English. A recording will be made available online. A valid COVID Certificate is required.

Image: Goran Basic, Young climate activists peacefully occupying the Bundesplatz (the square in front of the Swiss Parliament Building in Bern) for almost two days until they were removed by the police.