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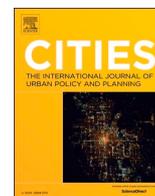
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# The acceptance of density: Conflicts of public and private interests in public debate on urban densification

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## ABSTRACT

Urban densification is crucial for sustainable urban growth. Yet, its implementation often leads to local conflicts. To understand the interplay between private and public interests, we analysed media reports on densification policies and projects in Switzerland from 2009 and 2019, a period when Switzerland revised its Spatial Planning Act, limiting land take and promoting densification. Our results reveal a disconnect between private and public interests. Residents and other established stakeholders tend to dominate the public debate. Arguments in the face of impending building often reflect conflicting social values related to distributive justice, such as rising housing costs, loss of identity of place, and erosion of social cohesion. NIMBYism, the “Not In My Backyard” phenomenon, is insufficient to explain criticism or the rejection of urban densification measures. Other factors, such as ecological concerns, have gained impact. Moreover, our study highlights that the Swiss direct democratic instrument of popular initiatives tends to stimulate public debate and, thereby, has the potential to better bridge public interests with the effects of densification policies on residents and communities.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Urban densification as an instrument of sustainable land use

Population growth, decreasing average household sizes, and continuing urbanization result in a significant demand for housing in areas with thriving economies, excellent public transport access, and other amenities. Within this context, private and public interests may clash, overlap, or contradict each other (Campbell, 2006). For instance, while urban development is necessary to address the pressing need for housing, it can also harm the natural environment and landscapes that provide crucial ecosystem services (Stott, Soga, Inger, & Gaston, 2015). Additionally, it can alter or strain cherished qualities in people’s immediate living environments (Haaland, Konijnendijk, & van den Bosch, 2015; Honey-Rosés & Zapata, 2020) and disrupt the symbolic elements that instil pride in residents (Wallin et al., 2018). Government interventions seek to protect such public interests. Densification policies contribute to broader urbanization strategies, such as the compact city and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development (United Nations, 2015; UNEP, 2011). For instance, Social Development Goal 11 directly

refers to sustainable cities, aiming to limit the depletion of fertile soils, natural habitats, and valued landscapes (United Nations Social Development Goal 11.3; European Commission, 2011; Marquard et al., 2020; Dierwechter, 2014; Westerink et al., 2013).

Whereas the advantages and disadvantages of densification (Angelo & Wachsmuth, 2020; Barresi, 2018; Cerin et al., 2020; Claassens, Koomen, & Rouwendal, 2020; Ahlfeldt, Pietrostefani, Schumann, & Matsumoto, 2018), different densification strategies (Amer, Mustafa, Teller, Attia, & Reiter, 2017; Charmes & Keil, 2015; Nabielek, Boschman, Harbers, Piek, & Vlonk, 2012), and their impact on planning (Gerber, Nahrath, & Hartmann, 2017; Meijer & Jonkman, 2020; Touati-Morel, 2015) have been studied extensively, issues of perceptions, acceptance, or related conflicts between private and public interests have received less attention (Honey-Rosés & Zapata, 2020). This paper addresses these topics by analysing the public debate on urban densification in Switzerland.

Driven by ongoing population growth and limited availability of building land beyond the alpine regions, Switzerland has revised its national policies in 2014 (RPG 1, Federal Office for Spatial Development, ARE, 2014) and 2021 (RPG 2) to mitigate oversized building

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zones and promote densification.

Additionally, residents' right to object to local projects as well as Switzerland's direct democratic mechanisms strongly influence spatial development processes. Specifically, popular initiatives allow the Swiss people to suggest or modify national, federal, or municipal laws (Vatter, 2020). The possibility of direct democratic influence on legislative changes underscores the role of shaping public opinion at different legislation levels.

Public debate thus plays a crucial role in determining the alignment of spatial developments with shared values (Campbell, 2006), and the effectiveness of urban densification depends heavily on shaping public opinion and achieving consensus. This, in turn, affects the perception of equitable distribution of benefits and burdens and whether individuals and communities feel adequately represented (Herdt & Jonkman, 2022). However, as visibility and resources determine the ability to influence public opinion (Van Dijk, 1993), public debates can disproportionately represent a particular group and exacerbate social inequality. Here, we aim to identify critical concerns and conflicts surrounding urban densification and provide insight into how communities, planning administrations, and governmental bodies may plan and communicate urban densification projects.

### 1.2. Value controversies and public and private interests in densification policy

How urban densification projects affect private and public interests depends on the characteristics of the residential setting, e.g., material networks and services (Coutard & Rutherford, 2015), housing types, price level, land use, and its adaptivity to the existing surroundings. Both densification policy and implementation thus concern both public and private interests. Dense urban settlement developments facilitate efficient use of and universal access to infrastructure. They reduce public costs and are often considered a "public good" (Boyer, 1986). Simultaneously, by generating positive externalities, such as job opportunities or housing, energy, and mobility costs, good access to infrastructure and services can also serve private interests (Cirolia & Rode, 2019).

Spatial planning can be viewed as a policy to advance public interests by guiding the actions of land and property owners and other private actors. These planning instruments frequently interfere with property rights or influence property usage, even though such entitlements are typically designed to protect private interests from state interference of other factors (Gerber et al., 2017; Horwitz, 1982).

When balancing private and public interests, it is crucial to have a clear understanding of what constitutes a public interest. In this context, Campbell and Marshall (2002) differentiate between two basic concepts. The first focuses on individual rights, with public interests as the sum of private interests. The second emphasizes processes rather than specific outcomes. Here, public interests are considered collective values or "public goods" that extend beyond the sum of private interests.

Densification affects people's living environments, affecting residents and stakeholders in many ways. Therefore, the protection or enforcement of public interests depends on the acceptance of those whose private interests are affected. The implementation of urban densification projects is often slowed down by a lack of public acceptance, as well as resistance by specific interest groups and the often challenging political processes that accompany spatial planning practices (Manville, Monkkonen, & M., 2019; Manville & Monkkonen, 2019; Whittemore & BenDor, 2019). Consequently, the effectiveness of densification plans and projects relies heavily on shared values among stakeholders.

Values are general goals or ideals that people consider important in their lives and that guide their behaviour (Schwartz, 1992). While values and interests can be closely connected, values are generally more abstract and allow us to "reflect[ing] a belief in something important and legitimate, something that can be used to justify actions or the establishment of more specific behavioural rules" (Langford, 2004). One

of the value dimensions described by Schwartz (1992) is self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence. It reflects the extent to which individuals value the welfare and interests of others (self-transcendent) as opposed to their personal interests (self-enhancing). Elsinga, Hoekstra, Sedighi, and Taebi (2020) describe how these general value categories influence people's behaviour in the context of housing. Value categories like ontological security, autonomy, and well-being address personal interests and self-enhancement. In contrast, the categories of sustainability, social stability or order, and market efficiency address public interest and self-transcendent values. The value category of inclusiveness serves both private and public interests (Appendix 1).

How values influence our behaviour can range from individual to global concerns. Additionally, they can evolve over time, as can their effects on decisions (Martiskainen et al., 2020). Even if values are widespread, there may be discrepancies in attitudes towards modifying our immediate living environment, and even shared values do not guarantee the absence of conflicts (Dignum, Correljé, Cuppen, Pesch, & Taebi, 2016). Importantly, conflicting interests may be rooted in the same value sets.<sup>3</sup> Our analysis of spatial development and urban densification focuses, therefore, on expressed interests rather than their underlying values.

Densification policy is mainly justified by inherent public values. It is rooted in a unitary conception of public interest, protecting collective values that extend beyond the sum of individual private interests. It aims to balance the community-level values of economic development with environmental sustainability by steering and facilitating growth while minimizing its impact on landscapes etc. (Dierwechter, 2014; Marquard et al., 2020). However, this unitary conception may be at odds with more utilitarian views (Koebel, Lang, & Danielsen, 2004; McGregor & Spicer, 2016; Pendall, 1999), potentially infringing on individuals' rights and private interests.

When inherent values are translated into operational values and norms, such as during the planning and design of urban densification projects, value conflicts primarily arise (Van den Hoven, Vermaas, & van de Poel, 2015). As urban densification plans are often based on structural changes, such as limited access to scarce resources like affordable housing or green spaces, they may give rise to value controversies. Such controversies become particularly apparent when the public interest is seen as the sum of private interests and frequently involves matters of distributive justice. However, social justice extends beyond the question of distribution "who gets what?" (Moroni, 2020), encompassing values related to decision-making processes and the recognition of individuals' needs (Fainstein, 2010; Fraser, 1995; Young, 1990). Both levels of conflict can be identified by examining the key arguments in public debates surrounding urban densification.

### 1.3. Beyond NIMBYism

In public debates, NIMBYism, the "Not In My Backyard" phenomenon, is often used to explain local resistance against urban development and densification projects (Pendall, 1999; Wicki & Kaufmann, 2022). The concept implies that local citizens act in favour of private interests, such as protection of ownership, property value, and character of place, and are reluctant to accept personal costs for the public good.

However, this explanation for residents' rejection of projects is controversial. While NIMBYism is frequently invoked as a presumptive argument, it does not adequately reflect residents' complex responses to a project (Kraft & Clary, 1991; Wolsink, 2006). It fails to consider the influence of residents' values, attitudes, and legitimate concerns, such as

<sup>3</sup> For example, the community-level value of social stability may align with private interests regarding neighbourhood satisfaction and meaningful social interactions. Similarly, the individual-level value of well-being forms the basis for private interests (e.g., personal safety) and public interests (e.g., securing a good life).

fair distribution of costs and benefits, the visual impact on the landscape, and the symbolic value of a place (Hoen, Firestone, et al., 2019; Wolsink, 2007; Devine-Wright, 2011, 2013). Furthermore, experts may invoke NIMBYism as a reason for the termination of a project without further explaining the intricate administrative and legal actions that were at play (Verhoeven, 2021). Similarly, local stakeholders and interest groups may cite NIMBYism as a rationale for opposing a project, even if they need to modify their arguments to maintain their public image (Esaiasson, 2014). Finally, many planners and scholars invoke NIMBYism as an established theoretical concept, often without defining or analysing the reasons for this designation (Wolsink, 2006).

Studies on the acceptance of climate change measures have revealed that the approval of urban development projects is closely tied to place attachments (Devine-Wright, 2013). Affective responses and support for projects are influenced by people's housing preferences (Wicki & Kaufmann, 2022; Zimmerli, 2014), the locality, and the proximity of a project's implementation (Einstein, 2021; Hart, Stedman, & McComas, 2015). Situated within broader socio-political structures, institutions, and cultural symbols, some general statements regarding the relationship between the identity of place and opposition to local projects can be made. Place identity is formed at multiple scales (Gustafson, 2009; Hernandez, Carmen Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess, 2007) and influenced by factors such as personal mobility (Lewicka, 2011) and the activities carried out at the respective locations (Breakwell, 1986). For instance, climate mitigation projects like wind farms can face opposition when residents perceive them as being "out of place" (Devine-Wright, 2009).

In both densification policy and implementation, tensions between public and private interests, as well as individual-level and community-level values, come to the fore. Lasting support for densification processes that infringe on private interests will, therefore, depend on public opinion concerning the public interest, shared values, or how publicly shared opinions reflect these tensions. The lack of acceptance can signify discordant values or insufficient influence on decision-making processes (Carattini, Levin, & Tavoni, 2019; Gross, 2007). Research on participation indicates that if residents' concerns are not adequately addressed, rejection of projects is likely to persist, which highlights the importance of designing participatory processes, recognizing diverse stakeholders and communities, and including them in the planning process (Perlaviciute, Steg, Contzen, Roeser, & Huijts, 2018). It may also indicate a general shift in public attitudes (Bourgeois & Schwab, 2009). In both cases, issues of distributive justice are negotiated while public opinion is being formed.

Moreover, when projects encounter opposition, there is often a disregard for the fact that public attitudes towards general arguments, such as the preservation of natural landscapes or the reduction of the carbon footprint, differ significantly from public attitudes towards specific local projects. Specifics frequently face stronger opposition than general arguments (Wolsink, 2007). Consequently, the successful implementation of densification projects requires expertise in designing appropriate planning processes and an understanding of the main arguments and motivations that shape public opinion.

In this article, the influence on public opinion is viewed as a multi-dimensional and continuously evolving phenomenon shaped by social interaction and communication.

#### 1.4. Purpose of the study and research questions

To provide a more nuanced assessment of the factors influencing the acceptance or rejection of urban densification projects beyond a simplistic allusion to NIMBYism, this article examines how private and public interests are addressed and interconnected in public debates on urban densification. To this task, we analyse public debate as reflected in newspapers. Such mass media not only play a significant role in reinforcing established attitudes and opinions, but they can also "activate" latent attitudes through public debate (Bourgeois & Schwab, 2009).

First, we identify the primary arguments of the discourse on urban densification and trace their evolution over time. We analyse how these arguments relate to public and private interests. Then, we explore how various actors shape public opinion. Given that public discourse plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of equity in the distribution of benefits and burdens, as well as the representation of individuals and communities (Herdt & Jonkman, 2022), our analysis can help improve the communication and implementation of planning processes on urban densification by municipalities, planning administrations, and government bodies.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Switzerland as an example case

This paper analyses the tensions between private and public interests in the public debates on urban densification in Switzerland. The country has a relatively high average population density and a historic awareness of the need for land thrift (Bovet, Marquard, & Schröter-Schlaack, 2019). Additionally, Switzerland employs direct democratic processes, such as popular initiatives, to shape legislation.

The national spatial planning law from 1979 (SPA) was renewed in 2014, enforcing economic land use (Federal Spatial Planning Act (SPA) AS 1979 1573, 2019, Debrunner & Gerber, 2021). The revision requires inward settlement development by increasing the density of existing settlements, optimizing the spatial allocation of different land uses, concentrating settlements, and ensuring sufficient housing production (SPA, Art. 1; Danielli, Sonderegger, & Gabathuler, 2014). The objective of the new law was to prevent the degradation of cultivated land and reduce costs associated with the expansion of infrastructure such as roads, electricity, and water (ARE, 2014). Accordingly, spatial planning serves as a tool both for economic development and for environmental conservation and socially acceptable spatial development. It asks stakeholders to reconcile social, ecological, and economic objectives through urban densification measures (Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation (CSC), 1999, Art. 2, 41, 74; Federal Spatial Planning Act (SPA) AS 1979 1573, 2019, Art. 1). This departure from previous planning practice is significant as Swiss federalism, particularly concerning income tax, normally functions as a mechanism that impedes regional planning in favour of competition between municipalities.

During the revision of the Spatial Planning Act, three federal popular initiatives were launched, demanding a further tightening of the law. The popular initiative "Raum für Mensch und Natur" ("Space For People And Nature", or "First Landscape Initiative") of 2009 sparked the first discussion on densification in public media. In 2016, the "Zersiedlungsinitiative" ("Sprawl Initiative"), initiated by the green party, sought to freeze the total area of building zones in the country. The initiative was rejected in a referendum in February 2019. The main argument for rejection also cited in the federal government's recommendation was that the law would lead to an excessively rigid system for the spatial allocation of housing.

During the second revision of the law, parliament incorporated certain proposals from the 2019 popular initiative "Gegen die Verbauung unserer Landschaft" ("Against The Building Up Of Our Landscape", or "Second Landscape Initiative"), which had been led by 14 organizations, including Pro Natura, Birdlife Switzerland, and the Swiss Heritage Society. By strengthening the principle of separating building and non-building areas the initiative aimed to give priority to protection of landscape and cultural heritage. The initiative was eventually withdrawn in favour of the counterproposal of the Swiss Parliament (second revision of the Spatial Planning Act).

With more than 60 % of the Swiss population living in rented accommodations (Federal Statistical Office, 2022), the demand for inward settlement development has also profoundly affected the Swiss housing market, and the price of housing puts current residents under considerable pressure (Debrunner, Hengstermann, & Gerber, 2020; Debrunner

& Hartmann, 2020). Simultaneously, private property holds substantial cultural significance and is protected against expropriation ([International Property Rights Index, 2021](#)). The country's federal structure results in diverse implementations of the law, and the measures are unevenly distributed between rural and urban agglomerations. Consequently, complex property-right arrangements influence the extent to which planning can modify inner-urban developments ([Gerber et al., 2017](#)). These circumstances make the Swiss case a unique example of the conflicts between private and public interests.

## 2.2. Comparative analysis of public debates: mixed-method content analysis

We conducted a comparative analysis of newspaper articles using Swiss public media outlets between 2009 and 2019. Quantitative conceptual and relational content analysis was used to examine how the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of urban densification were presented.

The source data comprised 18 German-language newspapers from the public news database *Swissdox* because articles from national, regional, and local newspapers offer a broad range of views on different aspects of densification policy and implementation expressed by various stakeholders. We did not analyse professional journals or official planning procedures. Furthermore, omitting the Swiss French- and Italian-language media, our analysis is not representative of the entire Swiss population but covers the largest public media sector, as 65 % of the Swiss population speaks German.

We used German search terms related to urban densification, sustainable land use, and the Spatial Planning Act revision ([Table 1](#)) to retrieve a dataset of 802 articles. We surveyed this dataset with the qualitative analysis software *ATLAS.ti*. In the first round of analysis, categories were quantified through automated coding to facilitate an initial comparison of developments over time. We used a standardized coding list of 24 German search terms organized into four main analysis categories based on the model of values and norms in the housing field suggested by [Elsinga et al. \(2020\)](#) ([Appendix 1](#)). Three main categories revolved around social, economic, and environmental values. Some codes fall into two or more value-orientation categories, highlighting the dynamic nature of values discussed in the literature ([Appendix 1](#), [Table 3](#)). The fourth category specifically addressed conflicts of public and private interests and matters of spatial justice. This approach aimed to identify conflict-related arguments that indicate tensions between values and interests. To increase the accuracy of the analysis, each code was defined by multiple terms and synonyms ([Table 2](#)).

We selected thirteen search terms with a significant number of hits ([Table 3](#)) to conduct a second coding round. To capture the evolving nature of the discourse, we introduced the additional code "high-rise." For the qualitative analysis, we used data from 2010, 2015, and 2019 and searched for codes within a sentence or related paragraphs. This approach provided an overview of the various debates, topics, and analysis categories attached to them, instances of co-occurrence between analytic categories, and how these co-occurring categories relate to conflict between public and private interests.

Additionally, we conducted qualitative content analysis to examine the connection between private and public interests and how the arguments reflect different interpretations of the public interest. Here, positions and arguments were manually analysed to gain insights into the intensity and evolution of various sentiments.

## 3. Data analysis and findings

### 3.1. Presence and development of public and private interests in public debate (quantitative description of results)

The public debate on densification in Switzerland is linked closely to popular initiatives. These initiatives bring issues into the public domain,

leading to deliberation and, ultimately, playing a significant role in shaping legislation. The popular initiative "Raum für Mensch und Natur" ("Space For People And Nature", or "First Landscape Initiative") of 2009 initiated discussion on densification in the public media. Following the law's first revision in 2014, the focus of the debate shifted towards implementing densification strategies at the federal and municipality levels, including communal zoning and land-use plans. In 2016, the "Zersiedelungsinitiative" ("Sprawl Initiative") reignited public attention on densification. During the law's second revision, the initiative "Gegen die Verbauung unserer Landschaft" ("Against The Building Up Of Our Landscape," or "Second Landscape Initiative") influenced legislation, despite not coming to a vote. Representatives of this initiative criticized the amendments made by the Swiss parliament, arguing that they primarily addressed agricultural and tourism aspects ([Non-profit association \*Wir bestimmen\*, 2019](#)).

Both popular initiatives triggered substantial public debate. Within the analysis timeframe of ten years, the frequency of articles on densification approximately doubled ([Fig. 1](#)). While the electorate rejected the second initiative in 2019, both initiatives brought densification to the forefront of public attention. Twice in ten years, the instrument of direct democratic participation significantly raised awareness on topics related to public interests, such as sustainable land use, preservation of cultural landscapes, and conflicts associated with densification measures, including rising housing costs and the changing identity of place.

#### 3.1.1. Three main sets of debates

To analyse the presence and evolution of public and private interests in the public debate, we identified 13 codes that received the highest number of citations in 2010, 2015, and 2019 ([Fig. 2](#), [Appendix 2](#)). We also identified codes that experienced a significant increase in citations over time ([Fig. 3](#), [Appendix 2](#)). The results of automated coding reveal three main topics that emerged in 2010 and continued to dominate in varying manifestations and arguments throughout the examination period ([Fig. 3](#)). The primary debates focused on the economic impact of densification, the transformation of the identity of place, community and social cohesion, and the quantity and quality of public and green space.

In many federal states, regulations are in place to control the shading caused by high-rise buildings, defined as buildings with a height of more than 25 m. They must not cause significant shadowing in residential areas or adjacent to inhabited buildings.<sup>4</sup> Inadequate shading of a house or property by high-rise buildings is considered to reduce its value and legally justifies an objection to a planning application. This fact may partly explain the large number of mentions of the term "high-rise."

#### 3.1.2. Analysis of 2010

In 2010, the debate surrounding the economic impact of densification primarily revolved around the rising housing costs and the market's ability to efficiently meet the growing demand for housing. The most frequently expressed concerns addressed the implementation of high-rise typologies, the establishment of corresponding zoning laws, and their potential negative effect on housing prices.

The second dominant topic addressed the changing identity of place resulting from the introduction of local zoning plans for high-rise buildings. Negative connotations prevailed, including concerns about spoiling existing skylines and the typology's limitations in creating neighbourhoods with suitable public spaces and an appropriate mix of functions. In this context, "high-rise" is often used synonymously with the loss of community identity and a general fear of change.

The third topic concerns the quantity and quality of public and green

<sup>4</sup> According to the Planning and Building Act (PBG) of the federal state of Zurich, for instance, high-rise buildings are only allowed to cast a shadow for a maximum of three hours (Office for Spatial Development, [Federal State of Zurich, 2021](#)).

**Table 1**  
Alignment of topics and search terms to identify relevant articles in the database.

Topic	Common search terms (German)	Common search terms (English)	Topic specific search term (German)	Topic specific search term (English)
Urban densification	Dichte, Verdichtung, Nachverdichtung, Verdichtungsgebiete, Bebauungsdichte	Density, densification, redensification, densification areas, built density	Innenentwicklung, Hochhaus	inward settlement development, high-rise
Spatial Planning	Raumplanungsgesetz, Revision / Anpassung des Raumplanungsgesetzes	Spatial Planning Act, Revision / adaptation of the Spatial Planning Act	Teilrevision des Raumplanungsgesetzes, Anpassung der Bau- und Zonenordnung	Partial revision of the Spatial Planning Act, adaptation of zoning and land-use plans
Sustainable land use	Nachhaltige Landnutzung, Zersiedelung, Schutz / Erhalt der Landschaft	Sustainable land use, urban sprawl, protection / preservation of landscape	Haushälterischer Umgang mit dem Boden, Zersiedlungsinitiative, Initiative gegen die Verbauung unserer Landschaft	Economical land use /Protection of soil, urban sprawl initiative, initiative against the urbanization of our landscape

**Table 2**  
Example of codes, their explanation, and keywords.

Code	Explanation	Keywords German	Keywords English
IDENTITY	Perceived identity of the neighbourhood, sense of belonging, being at home, community building	Identität* identifizier* Erhalt erhalten Heimat* dazu gehört*  teil- sein ausmachen auszeichnen	identit* preservation protection of heritage  belonging being part of Heimat qualify  distinguish
COMMUNITY	Neighbourhood satisfaction, social interaction, quantity, and quality of local social contacts	Soziales Gemeinschaft* Zusammenhalt*  Nachbarschaftsinitiative*  Engagement Nachbarschaftsgefühl  Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl Bindung	social community* cohesion* neighbourhood initiative* commitment sense of belonging   togetherness
SUSTAINABILITY	Protecting the environment, conservation of cultural landscape and natural resources	nachhaltig* Nachhaltigkeit Widerstandfähigkeit  haushälterisch* res-sourcenschonend* Umweltschutz  schütz* erhalten	sustainable* resilient economical use of resources conservation of landscape protection of the environment protect* preserv*
COSTS	Individual housing costs, wealth, finance a home, price increase	Finanzierung finanzier* Kosten  Verteuerung Spekulation Geld verdienen teuer	Financing financ* cost* increase in price  speculation mak* money expensive costly

spaces, such as requiring that densification programs protect green spaces and recognize their contribution to place identity. Place identity is central to this topic, as green spaces are often seen as the feature that distinguishes rural and peri-urban settlement typologies from urban ones, with their potential loss due to densification seen as irreversible.

3.1.3. Analysis of 2015

The year 2015 was dominated by the “Sprawl Initiative,” which aimed to further tighten the Spatial Planning Act of 2014. The campaign for the initiative brought attention to the qualities of the immediate living environment, sustainability, and public and green space. These three issues appear equally often, albeit with moderate frequency (Table 2, Fig. 1). Whereas sustainability arguments aimed at defending public interests, the debate shifted towards private interests and preserving qualities such as green spaces.

Despite being a new referendum, the high-rise typology continued to dominate the public debate, with a substantial increase in citations (Table 2). There was also a renewed debate about the identity of place. One of the most-cited arguments revolved around the potential shadow effects of high-rise buildings, impacting property owners’ private interests, e.g., concerns about decreasing property values.

Compared to both 2010 and 2019, ‘public support and protest’ was mentioned more often in 2015, primarily due to a separate referendum on the “Pilatus Arena” project. This much-debated high-rise development in the rural community of Kriens sparked a debate about the perceived neglect of rural community values in favour of the arena project and its considerable financial impact on the region (Table 2).

3.1.4. Analysis of 2019

The “Sprawl Initiative” made densification a common topic in public debate. The discourse shifted towards general subjects, such as the SPA’s effectiveness and the pros and cons of its further tightening. This shift highlighted public interests and placed them prominently at the centre of the debate. Furthermore, the debate moved from a quantitative perspective to one that emphasised quality, as indicated by the substantial increase of arguments related to place identity and well-being

(Figs. 2 and 3, Appendix 2). There have been numerous calls for planning instruments to define the spatial qualities of densification projects, e.g., for the development of high-quality public spaces. While concerns about gentrification and rising costs remained high, the subject of an added value tax was introduced, representing a public interest by advocating for an economic mechanism to finance public investments, such as public space developments, and affordable housing.

After the referendum in February 2019, ecological topics started to gain importance. Codes related to public interests, such as ‘sustainability’, lost some impact compared to codes addressing environmental issues from the private perspective. The debate focused on specific project developments, highlighting concerns about the loss of ‘qualities of the immediate living environment’ and the demand for high-quality public and green spaces. Along with the arguments in the code ‘identity’, these topics form a thematic cluster where private interests dominated, and individual arguments referenced each other. The rise of private interests in this thematic cluster offsets the impact of the referendum, which had focused the debate on topics of public interest such as sustainability and affordability. In 2019, the high-rise was often mentioned alongside arguments associated with private interests that reflected values like personal autonomy, and well-being as an expression of homeowners’ opposition. Fear of shadow effects and loss of panoramic views, which could potentially decrease property values and the overall quality of the immediate living environment, were frequently mentioned (Fig. 2, Appendix 2).

3.2. Trends and main arguments in public debate

Costs and the economy of housing, identity of place, and qualities of the immediate living environment show the most substantial increase in the number of citations throughout the three sets of debates (Fig. 3, Appendix 2). All three topics reflect the predominant perception of urban change as detrimental. The debate addresses the negative impacts on private interests, such as rising housing costs and fear of gentrification, concerns about losing private property value, fear of the loss of place identity, and decreased quality of the immediate living

**Table 3**  
Codes, related value orientation and operational value examples.

Value orientation	Codes	Inherent values	Operational value examples
Social	Spatial quality	Social stability or order, Well-being, Autonomy	Housing satisfaction, neighbourhood satisfaction, Sufficient space within the dwelling
	Identity	Social stability or order, Autonomy	Perceived identity of the neighbourhood, community building, subjective sense of feeling at home
	Community and social cohesion	Social stability or order, Well-being	Neighbourhood satisfaction, social interaction, quantity, and quality of local social contacts
Economic	Affordability	Ontological security, Inclusiveness	affordable housing costs, rent regulation, and tenant security, accessible dwellings
	Market mechanisms and functioning	Market efficiency	Maximum delivery of products or services for minimal costs, optimal allocation mechanisms
	Costs (financial)	Ontological security, Market efficiency, Autonomy	Housing costs, homemaking, self sufficiency
Environmental	Public and green space	Well-being, autonomy	neighbourhood satisfaction, housing satisfaction
	Qualities of the immediate living environment	Well-being, autonomy	neighbourhood satisfaction, housing satisfaction
	Social, economic, ecological sustainability	Sustainability	Energy-efficiency, resilience, circularity, durability, environmental protection
Justice	Justice (distributive)	Inclusiveness, ontological security, social stability, or order	transparency in procedures, rent regulation and tenant security, accessible dwellings
	Public support and protest	Inclusiveness	transparency in procedures, authority
	Freedom (of choice) and independence	Autonomy	Freedom of choice, privacy, self sufficiency
Additional Code	High-rise		

environment.

### 3.2.1. Stable low: 'freedom' and 'distributive justice'

In contrast to the main trends, citations referring to private interests in terms of distributive justice, autonomy, and control remained at a stable low throughout the analysed years (Fig. 3, Appendix 2). This might reflect the active participation in planning processes inherent in direct democratic processes. In Switzerland, the implementation of densification projects is decided primarily at the municipal level and by residents, with large building projects requiring approval by local vote. Therefore, most arguments are made from a local political perspective and pursue the interests of the local population. The analysis of active participants and topics also shows that the debate addressed issues of concern that mainly affected insiders, such as property owners, residents, and local interest groups e.g., environmental or tenant associations, chambers of commerce etc. In contrast, the interests of housing market entrants or less affluent population groups are hardly present.

This suggests that their demand for distributive justice and freedom of choice may be underrepresented in public debate.

### 3.2.2. Divergence: 'costs', 'market', and 'affordability'

The most-cited arguments regarding economics addressed rising housing costs and the fear of their socio-economic consequences. Both concerns represent private interests and are constantly present in public debate (Table 4). Arguments addressing market efficiency usually mediate between public and private interests. Here, the two general ideas represent different political camps and stakeholders and call either for further deregulation of steering instruments or subsidies for affordable housing. Politicians and experts who present general arguments employ sometimes highly politicized language and primarily drive the debate, as the growth rates of the cities of Zurich and Zug exemplify:

*"What we are currently seeing in Zurich is not the growth of a speculative bubble, but a 'total failure of the market'... With their insatiability, money-greedy speculators have overridden the mechanics of supply and price, so that fewer and fewer people in Zurich can afford a flat today."* Socialist party politician Jaquelin Badran. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, May 26, 2010.<sup>5</sup>

While these citations decreased over the course of the debate, arguments taking a more private perspective on individuals' needs, such as in the code 'cost', gained importance. We found that citations related to public interests and codes mediating between public and private interests decreased in frequency. In contrast, concerns over private spending started to dominate the debate, e.g., codes referring to public interests regarding the housing economy, such as 'affordability', decreased. As affordability is a prerequisite for inclusive cities, the reduced citation of this term also relates to decreased interest in intermediate/public values.

### 3.2.3. Substantial increase of 'Identity of place' and moderate increase of 'Community and social cohesion'

The code 'identity of place' was constantly high and comprises two distinct sets of arguments: first, the changing identity of place, and second, the loss of community and social cohesion. Most quotes reflect on densification as a drastic and fast change in the identity of a place and lifestyle. Most arguments address the loss of cultural heritage through demolition. According to other prominent statements, the loss of cultural heritage is more indirect and occurs through altering historically green cityscapes and the skyline or constructing new building typologies. These arguments generally point to a change from the rural lifestyle represented by open building typologies and large open green spaces towards more urban housing typologies. Many call for better protection of areas of historical value or the continuation of existing building traditions. In the context of urban development, densification is described as:

*"A balancing act between self-assertion and loss of identity."* *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, April 26, 2018.

Particularly in newspapers in more rural areas, such as Appenzell, the subject of densification is framed as a matter of building conservation:

*"In view of the increasing densification processes in settlement areas, it is above all important that the quality of the settlements is maintained or improved. A more conscious approach to the building tradition is called for."* *Appenzeller Zeitung Montag*, June 3, 2019.

This argument corresponds to the findings regarding the code

<sup>5</sup> Here, and in all following quotes from German-speaking sources, the automatic translator [deepl.com](https://www.deepl.com) was used to avoid introducing bias into the English translation from the authors.

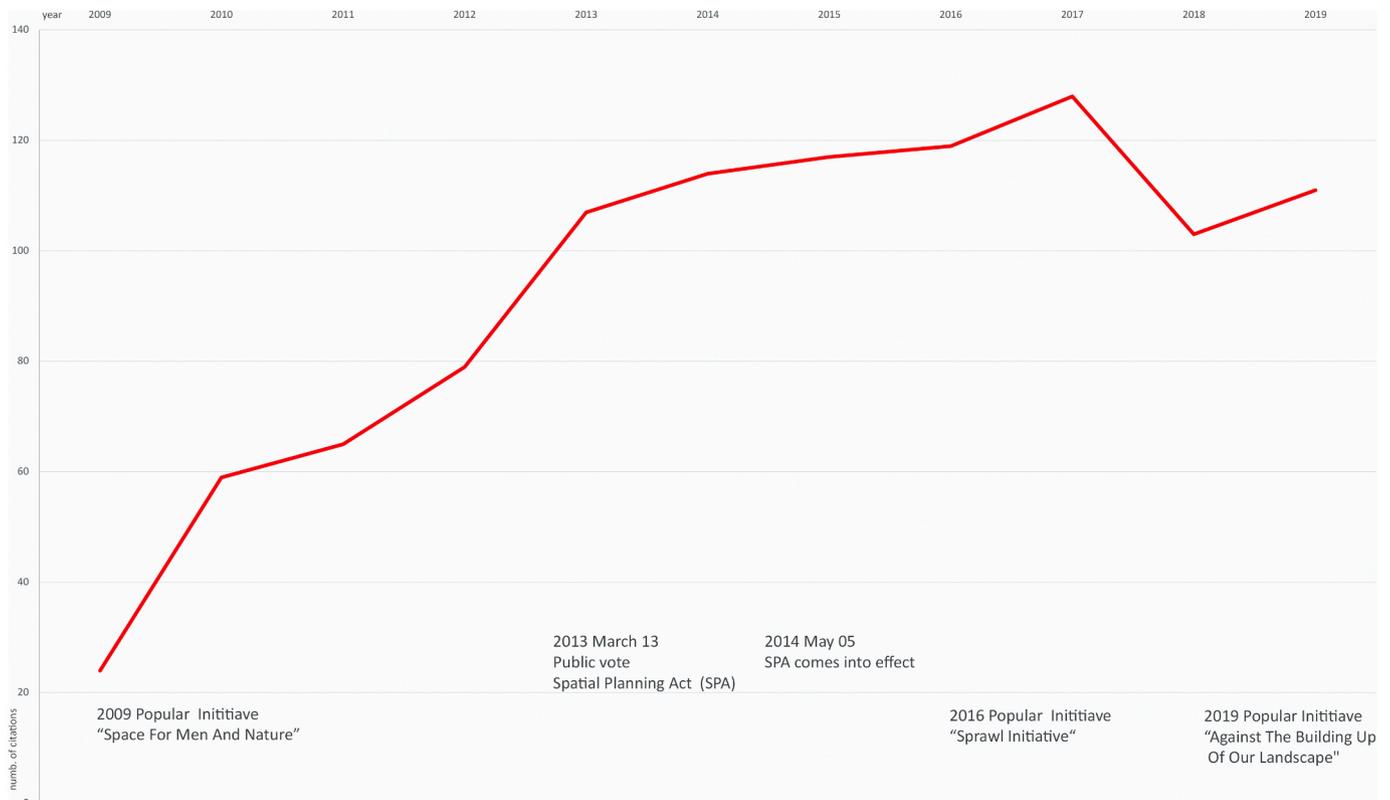


Fig. 1. Number of overall citations and development over time.

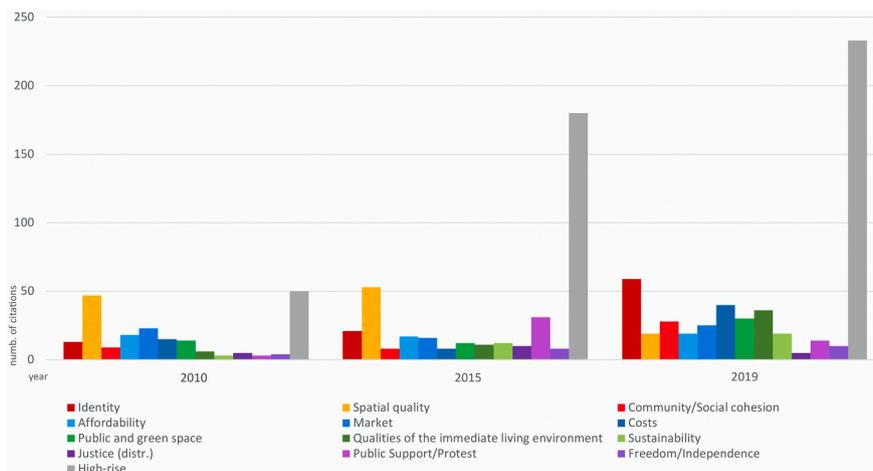


Fig. 2. Overview of categories of codes and number of citations by year.

‘community/social cohesion’, which maintains a moderate citation frequency. Here, demands for a diverse social mix and greater accessibility of public spaces are most common. Identical arguments are found in the code ‘public and green space’ that gained prominence during the debate. Corresponding statements vary significantly. However, many of them reflect the perception of densification as a threat to an existing lifestyle. In peri-urban areas, politicians’ fears of loss of community and identity of place are linked to lost taxpayers, e.g., the middle classes that favour homeownership. Representatives of tenants or residents, however, call for the protection of rents for fear of gentrification through increasing prices. The major of Pratteln, a city with 16,000 residents in the metropolitan area of Basel, comments on the city’s densification plans:

*“Only the owners of single-family homes are somewhat neglected. It is very important that we do not forget them. Homeowners are not only more sedentary, but they are usually also more involved in the community, thus creating identity and paying more taxes.”*  
 Luzerner Zeitung, January 29, 2019.

Similarly, Corinne Mauch, the mayor of Zurich, states:

*“... in 20 years’ time — to put it bluntly — there will be only two population groups living here: those who are poor enough to get a flat from the city, and the wealthy people who can pay the rents on the free market.”*  
 Tages-Anzeiger, October 11, 2010.

However, ideas about community and culture also vary greatly. Some call for the protection of community values in rural areas and

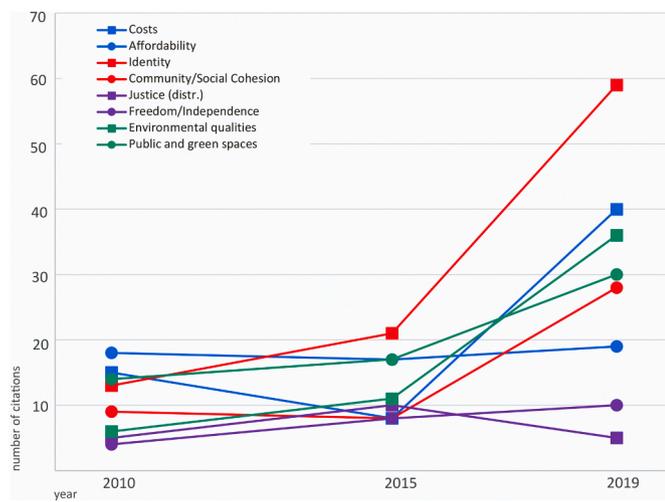


Fig. 3. Overview of main trends.

small villages. Others see social cohesion as endangered because of the pressure on existing suburban lifestyles in the metropolitan areas. These arguments focus on private interests, especially the views of those who perceive changes in their lifestyles as negative.

#### 3.2.4. Increase: ‘Qualities of the immediate living environment’ and ‘public and green spaces’

The debate on the qualities of the immediate living environment increased with the launch of the second public initiative in 2016. The public initiative also triggered a broader discussion on environmental concerns. The first completed urban densification projects may have intensified this debate, whose main arguments were centred around densification’s harmful effects on the quality of public and green spaces. In 2019 the code ‘public and green spaces’ became one of the most-discussed topics. In 2010, the debate focused on private interests, specifically those related to NIMBYism. The reduction of quality of the immediate living environment due to shading (i.e., a reduced time with direct daylight in and around an apartment) and obstructed views was opposed in terms of lower property values. The argumentation focused on protecting private property or, in other words, on public interests’ infringing on individuals’ rights. In 2019, the immediate living environment and green space qualities were promoted as public goods. The public interest was considered the sum of private interests. The maximum exploitation of individual private plots was interpreted as a driver of cultural change that led to a lack of green space and changed the character of a place. Although this change was not challenged legally, it was seen as neglecting community values in favour of commerce.

*“The generous, somewhat chaotic, but stimulating interstitial space with gardens and all kinds of niches has shrunk to a purely functional and distant space due to the pressure of marketing.”*

*Neue Zürcher Zeitung & NZZ am Sonntag, January 29, 2015.*

Despite the general increase in the number of citations regarding environmental subjects, the code ‘sustainability’ stayed at a constant low throughout, indicating the low level of arguments directly referring to public interests. Sustainability is often used for more general argumentation in the context of the two popular initiatives. Nevertheless, this did not lead to a significant increase in citations. Rather uncontroversial and potentially even influential, this may mean that, despite the initiatives, the complex topic of sustainability does not lend itself to public opinion forming.

In 2019, arguments referring to environmental qualities started to address climate change and adaptations to control urban heat. Here, the concern over climate-adaptive measures, such as the prevention of

urban heat island effects, replaces older arguments, such as the concern over the shadow effect of high rises. In 2019, the discussion on sustainability was closely tied to the discussion of the qualities of the immediate living environment and the call for long-term change through public investment. This may indicate a future change in the role of public interests in public debate. In contrast to the earlier arguments, public interests, such as enhancing public space to protect against climate change, are seen as overriding private interests.

#### 3.3. Who participates in public debate?

Typically, politicians and representatives of various interest groups, such as environmental or tenant associations, chambers of commerce, or neighbourhood initiatives, dominate the public debate on urban densification. In the run-up to popular initiatives or local votes, politicians from different parties form alliances with interest groups that speak out for or against an initiative or project. During this time, interviews or debates are published, allowing different groups to present their positions. Associations and political parties use these debates to make voting recommendations. More generally, their arguments represent the values and perspectives of their respective constituents. When the debate is about specific projects, professionals from development, planning, and architecture participate, functioning as experts who comment on the projects. Often, representatives of citizen initiatives argue for liveability and demand high-quality public and green spaces. These initiatives are essential to municipal planning, giving residents the opportunity to influence or object to projects. A typical sentiment is expressed below using the example of “Stopp Agglolac,” an initiative opposing the new housing scheme at Lake Biemme for its lack of public and green space and the high-rise schemes that obstructed the scenic lake view.

*“The fact that the high-rise building at Barkenhafen is no longer to be 70 meters high, but only 48, is a positive development, said co-president Manuel Schüpbach (GLP) to the BT. However, one would like to see more green and public spaces, which is not the case at all [...] There are hardly any trees around the three high-rise buildings in the centre: something like this must not happen again.”*

*Bieler Tagblatt, August 21, 2019.*

#### 3.4. The use of the ‘high-rise’ as a representative term

The term ‘high-rise’ seems to encompass many previously mentioned arguments in public debates. It often appears alongside other codes, connecting topics or describing potential cause-effect relationships. In debates over the entire study period, the high-rise, as a densification typology, played a central role. In 2010, ‘high-rise’ was the most frequently mentioned term. By 2019, its frequency had increased disproportionately to other codes, by 400 %. Whereas negative connotations of the high-rise building typology dominated the debate in 2010, the discussion shifted towards a more differentiated view in 2019. The most-cited arguments in these clusters address their unsuitability for densification and expected adverse effects on housing costs, the identity of place, and the qualities of the immediate living environment.

*“The village doesn’t win any beauty awards, so this high-rise doesn’t matter anymore. One supporter.”*

*“We already have too many apartments, and we couldn’t afford those on the MParc site. An opponent.”*

*Residents of Ebikon, Luzerner Zeitung, 26. January 2019.*

We have also found that the high-rise is often used in debates to address a new economic dynamic introduced to urban development. With many Swiss municipalities competing over taxes, densification is also used to attract wealthy residents, large firms, and developers. Most accounts that follow this line of argument claim that high-rise projects are mainly profit-driven developments targeting the medium- to upper-priced housing segment. They would serve municipalities to attract

“good taxpayers” and are therefore seen as drivers of gentrification. Officeholders such as majors or members of working groups use the argument of location advantages over nearby competitors in support of project developments (see the statement of Kurt Steiner, *Luzerner Zeitung*, January 10, 2019, quoted below). Opponents of densification projects often accuse officeholders to ignore residents’ needs for affordable housing. While residents are accused to be against growth, officeholders claim to lose local advantages over competing municipalities in the area:

*“Such an urban district scares some people, which is understandable... Unfortunately, many Ebikoners are not so much concerned about this project, but they generally want less growth and are using this vote for that. In the event of a ‘No’ vote, they (developers) will simply build somewhere else — in neighbouring communities. They can then lower their taxes - and we must raise them.”*

*Kurt Steiner, President of the Planning, Environment, and Energy Commission. Luzerner Zeitung, January 10, 2019.*

*“Hinnen: As in the case of Neuhausen am Rheinfall, the residents feared that their view would be diminished and that the value of their land and properties would decrease. In Neuhausen am Rheinfall we are creating value with new taxpayers, but on the other hand we are possibly destroying the existing one. We must discuss whether this is really future-oriented. Rawlyer: We do not destroy (property) values but create additional ones. In the case of new buildings, we can only exert a direct influence if an investor is willing to take up our ideas... And there are people who want to live in a single-family house, others prefer an apartment building or would like to live in a higher house.”*

*Schaffhauser Nachrichten, May 25, 2013.*

In 2015 and 2019, the high-rise emerges as a housing typology in public-private partnership projects, such as the Pilatus-Arena in Kriens, the Hardturm-Stadium in Zurich, and the new football stadium Torfeld-Süd in Aarau, which were intensely debated in public. High-rises in these cases were criticized for reducing qualities of the immediate living environment and serving to cross-finance large-scale projects. The second set of arguments points to the negative impact of high-rises on the identity of place as part of larger area development schemes. Here, the public debate refers to former experiences with modernist high-rise settlements from the post-war period that had been mainly dedicated to social housing. These arguments connect the high-rise to social segregation effects and the fear of immigration:

*“Experience with high-density high-rise districts from Le Lignon to Bümpliz to Oerlikon shows: In the first generation, mixing is organized; in the second generation, social segregation creeps up to ghetto neighbourhoods and school classes with 20 foreign-language children.”*

*Rudolf Strahm, economist, and politician. Basler Zeitung, January 22, 2019.*

It is remarkable how similar the high-rise typology is used across all topics. From the beginning of the investigation period, 2009, the debate increased significantly until 2015 to stay at a high level of mentionings. Predominantly, asserted private interests fall into two categories: Fear of losing the identity of place and well-being or fear of losing economic wealth and private autonomy. Actors in public debate are mainly local politicians or representatives of interest groups, which include property owners or residents.

The fact that different interest groups can identify with the high-rise as a symbol of unwanted change may explain the emphasis in public debates on the high-rise. Left-wing politicians argue that the high-rise is not an appropriate typology of densification because it does not offer affordable housing; politicians of the green parties argue against the high-rise since it would disturb historic townscapes and strongly interfere with scenic landscapes; finally, ultra-conservative politicians connect arguments against immigration with the high-rise as an inadequate typology for densification. Simultaneously, incumbents, especially

politicians from growth communities or liberal and centrist parties, use the high-rise to argue for progress and economic growth that would attract taxpayers and create jobs. Members of the federal government also adopted this position early on in public debate by presenting the high-rise as the ultimate answer for the provision of affordable housing and the modern development of cities. This argument was accompanied by the threat that abandoning this typology would automatically lead to rising housing prices. In an article from *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ), the former federal councillor Doris Leuthard (2006–2018) is quoted:

*“In terms of architecture, Zurich is almost still a medieval city, ... Bern could also build more towers like those in Zurich West: ‘Unless we want to live with the fact that housing is becoming more expensive’...”*

*Doris Leuthard, NZZ am Sonntag, April 1st, 2012.*

By 2019, arguments have become slightly more differentiated: Some address the positive effects of high-rises on placemaking by creating urbanity, while new arguments on qualities of the immediate living environment emerge that address urban heat and the need for climate adaptation.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

The primary objectives of this study were: i) to understand how various private and public interests are negotiated in the public debate surrounding urban densification, ii) to better understand its acceptance and inherent conflicts, and iii) to uncover the arguments that influence public debate.

We find that the public debate on urban densification in Switzerland revolves predominantly around the topics ‘costs’, ‘identity’, and ‘public and green space’. These topics primarily highlight densification’s negative impacts and the protection of private interests, such as private autonomy, ontological security, and well-being.

The public debate focuses on loss or price increases, with minimal emphasis on the potential benefits of change. Arguments tend to take an insider perspective, reflecting the viewpoints of local politicians and current residents who perceive densification as an unwanted agent of change. Conversely, public interests and collective values, such as sustainability and affordability, are less well-represented. Taking debates on rising housing costs as an example, densification is seen increasingly as a threat to social cohesion. In contrast, public interests regarding housing costs, e.g., demanding political intervention for affordable housing, receive only limited attention. Arguments about private interests, such as rising housing costs and fear of “displacement by good taxpayers,” have gained importance. However, arguments related to distributive justice, protest, or freedom of choice have only a minor presence in the public debate.

One possible explanation for the prevalence of private interests across diverse topics is that they can encompass various motivations, backgrounds, and conflicts related to individual values like ontological security, autonomy, well-being, and inclusiveness. In the context of this study, these values represent arguments that address the individuals’ connection to their community. Accordingly, private interests closely intertwine with cultural notions of community, social cohesion, and building traditions. Rooted in people’s core values, such arguments are apt to influence public opinion and foster public interests.

Our findings indicate that private and public interests are primarily discussed separately and by distinct groups. This disconnect hampers, among other topics, any exchange about non-distributive dimensions of justice and insider/outsider issues. Arguments related to public interests are commonly raised by experts in the context of popular initiatives, and they often remain abstract. On the other hand, when specific plans and projects are discussed, the focus shifts to the immediate impact on current residents. In this context, we emphasize the difference between rural communities, where agricultural economies dictate the form of homeownership, and metropolitan regions, where the rental housing market exhibits a very low vacancy rate, severely limiting the choice of

residence. This difference might partly explain why most arguments take an insider perspective, reflecting current residents’ perceptions while perspectives from outsiders or the potential benefits of change are rarely addressed.

In the public debate on densification measures, conflicts often arise when public interests are perceived only as the sum of individual private interests, particularly often exemplified in the context of the high-rise typology. The disconnect between private and public interests also aligns with the concepts of unitary and utilitarian public values. Accordingly, the public debate lacks essential elements of a thorough and fair “situated ethical judgment” (Campbell, 2006) and is, thus, incomplete. Outsiders, such as those entering the housing market, may not participate equally in the debate, and the potential benefits for outsiders and public interests only play secondary roles.

Our research indicates that, while NIMBYism may partly explain the dominance of private interests in our data, it cannot be solely attributed to the protection of wealth or personal autonomy. A more differentiated analysis of private interests and underlying values is necessary to understand the complex causes of acceptance or opposition.

Research on the acceptability of climate policies and projects indicates that adverse reactions often arise when people’s core values are threatened, emotional reactions are evoked, or when elements of distributive or procedural justice are not adequately addressed (Marshall et al., 2019; Perlaviciute et al., 2018; Sargisson, De Groot, & Steg, 2020). This applies both to individuals’ values and to shared ones (Elsinga et al., 2020). How well a project aligns or conflicts with individuals’ core values significantly influences the extent of opposition to that project. The concept of identity of place is particularly closely connected to these values.

Our study supports Wolsink’s (2007) assertion that, as the planning process transitions from general arguments to specific projects, there is an increase in debate and opposition. This does not necessarily indicate a conflict per se but a communication gap. A clear and effective link between general arguments and the potential impacts of local projects is highly desirable because of its direct influence on the formation of public opinion.

We also find that debates on place identity or public and green space are rooted in different “lived” experiences, which are not appropriately addressed in public debate. By making conceptual considerations more tangible and connecting debates to potential spatial outcomes and real-life situations, a stronger link between private and public interests could result in more well-grounded ethical judgments. The increasing significance of ecological issues in the public debate may contribute to reshaping the intersection of public and private interests. However, the lack of an outsider’s perspective highlights tensions between different notions of collectivity and may signify injustices and discrimination

against marginalized groups or newcomers. Since our data stem from the public media, which are dominated by insiders such as politicians or organized residents, alternative sources should be explored to address these topics in the future.

Based on our findings, we recommend that government officials and administrations prioritize planning processes that provide ample opportunities for communication and participation. Recognizing and amplifying the local specificities and the various voices within the population is crucial. Particular attention should be given to developing instruments that facilitate the participation of minorities, individuals entering the housing market, and other underrepresented groups. This requires stronger connections between the different planning levels, from federal instruments to local ones. Additionally, considering different forms of support from the federal government may be necessary, as the mainly small Swiss municipalities often lack technical and financial resources.<sup>6</sup>

Our research highlights the potential of the direct-democratic instruments and their stimulating effect, establishing a closer connection between public interests and the effects of densification policies on residents and communities. The concept of “deep democracy” (Appadurai, 2001) emphasizes the importance of “roots, anchors, intimacy, proximity, and locality” in facilitating socio-environmental change (Zapata Campos et al., 2021). We believe there is significant value in investigating the influence of this strategy on site-specific implementations of densification projects, particularly in terms of utilizing urban design and participation instruments to inform place-specific designs. Further research into these areas could provide valuable insights into promoting sustainable urban development.

**CRedit authorship contribution statement**

**Tanja Herdt:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Original draft preparation, Writing- Reviewing and Editing, Visualization.

**Arend Jonkman:**, Conceptualization, Writing and Editing.

**Declaration of competing interest**

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

**Data availability**

The authors are unable or have chosen not to specify which data has been used.

**Appendix 1. Values and norms in the field of housing (source: Elsinga et al., 2020)**

Inherent value	Operational value examples	Norm examples	Level
Ontological security	Physical and social safety, affordability	Low chance of becoming a victim of crime, safe dwellings, affordable housing costs, rent regulation, and tenant security	Individual
Autonomy	Freedom of choice, autarky, privacy, homemaking	Sufficient space within the dwelling, subjective sense of feeling at home, housing satisfaction, degree of self-sufficiency	Individual
Well-being	Physical and social safety, health, accessibility, social cohesion	Low chance of becoming a victim of crime, safe dwellings, accessible dwellings, life satisfaction, housing satisfaction, neighbourhood satisfaction, quantity, and quality of local social contacts	Individual
Inclusiveness	Accessibility, affordability, procedural justice	Accessible dwellings, affordable housing costs, transparency in procedures	Individual and community

(continued on next page)

<sup>6</sup> The Federal Office of Culture included in 2020 current social and space-related challenges, such as climate change, the energy transition, and inward urban development, in their national strategy towards high-quality design of space (“Baukultur” policy, Swiss Federal Office of Culture, 2020).

(continued)

Inherent value	Operational value examples	Norm examples	Level
Sustainability	Ecological sustainability, social sustainability, economic sustainability, resilience, circularity, durability, adaptability	Energy-efficient dwellings, CO <sub>2</sub> -neutral dwellings, reusable building materials, voluntary certification systems, degree of self-governance	Community
Social stability or order (local community level)	Sense of community, social cohesion, social safety, vernacular, placemaking	Neighbourhood satisfaction, social interaction, appreciation of the neighbourhood, perceived identity of the neighbourhood, community building	Community
Market efficiency	Economies of scale, optimization of procedures, market as optimal allocation mechanism	Maximum delivery of products or services for minimal costs, reducing government involvement	Community

## Appendix 2. Overview of categories of codes and number of citations by year

Year	2010	2015	2019
<b>Number of articles</b>	59	117	111
<b>Number of citations by code</b>			
<b>Social</b>			
Identity	13	21	59
Spatial quality	47	53	19
Community/Social cohesion	09	08	28
<b>Economic</b>			
Affordability	18	17	19
Market	23	16	25
Costs	15	08	40
<b>Environmental</b>			
Public and green space	14	12	30
Qualities of the immediate living environment	06	11	36
Sustainability	03	12	19
<b>Justice</b>			
Justice (distr.)	05	10	05
Public Support/Protest	03	31	14
Freedom/Independence	04	08	10
<b>High-rise</b>	50	180	233

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