

ARQUITECTURA AGRONOMIA

Founded 2007, Barcelona, Spain/Charlottesville, USA
Interview with Teresa Galí-Izard
Practice in partnership with Jordi Nebot



Territories of Engagement

Scale and Scope

We are working on a range of projects, from public spaces to small private gardens. Right now we are working on the park over the new train station in Logroño, Spain, and some smaller gardens as well. We are also doing some competitions for large-scale parks such as a recent entry for a park in Valencia, Spain. We have just moved our office to the United States, so it is a strange moment for us because now we are going to engage education and teaching in the practice, which I think is very interesting.

Approach

In public projects, we focus all of our energy on living systems. We are designing what we call “living machines” that work as an entity by themselves. They have their own function, language, and personality as well. This could include drainage, topography, soil, vegetation, cycles, management, everything living in the project.

In landscape, we are always building machines, the difference is if you are conscious of that or not during the design process. If you are planting grass, you are building a machine. You can consider just the result of the machine or the design and function of the machines themselves. We always think in terms of the machines themselves, so we try to design with this in mind. How it will function, how it will change over time, and so on.

It's very complex, because the machine has to work normally in a very artificial place. Usually we have to implement some infrastructure before building the machine to allow it to function and to thrive. We also have to think a lot about how to resolve its management over time. Often, the person who is managing the project is different than the person who is designing the project, so we have to consider this in the design.

Tools

The first thing is always the weather. I always check what climate I am working with; I always check the annual rainfall. We work in a very systematic way to understand the most critical factors of the project.

Arquitectura Agronomia,
proposed plan, Central Park
of Valencia, Valencia Spain.
Courtesy Teresa Galí-Izard

In landscape, we are always building machines, the difference is if you are conscious of that or not during the design process. If you are planting grass, you are building a machine.

We have worked in the past with topography, with soil, with the drainage system. There is one moment in the project when it becomes clear whether drainage will be the most important part, or topography, or the quantity of soils. And of course, there is always vegetation, irrigation, the drainage system, management, and so on.

I always work with limitations as well. In Spain, limitations are the most powerful tool we have to make good projects—limitations in terms of weather, money, maintenance, and so on. The more limitations, the better the project.

Challenges

For me, the biggest problem we face as landscape architects is that we're artists, and it can be so difficult to explain our work to others. We have to explain very clearly what we do as landscape architects because, in general, people don't understand what it is that we really do. We have to explain why we are doing certain things to people who don't fully understand the beauty of our profession: for example, explaining to someone who has a garden that she can enjoy the garden in a more powerful way than just having green or a tree. It's more about increasing knowledge about living systems, about nature, about the capacity of nature to design discover. Often we have to design to explain that.

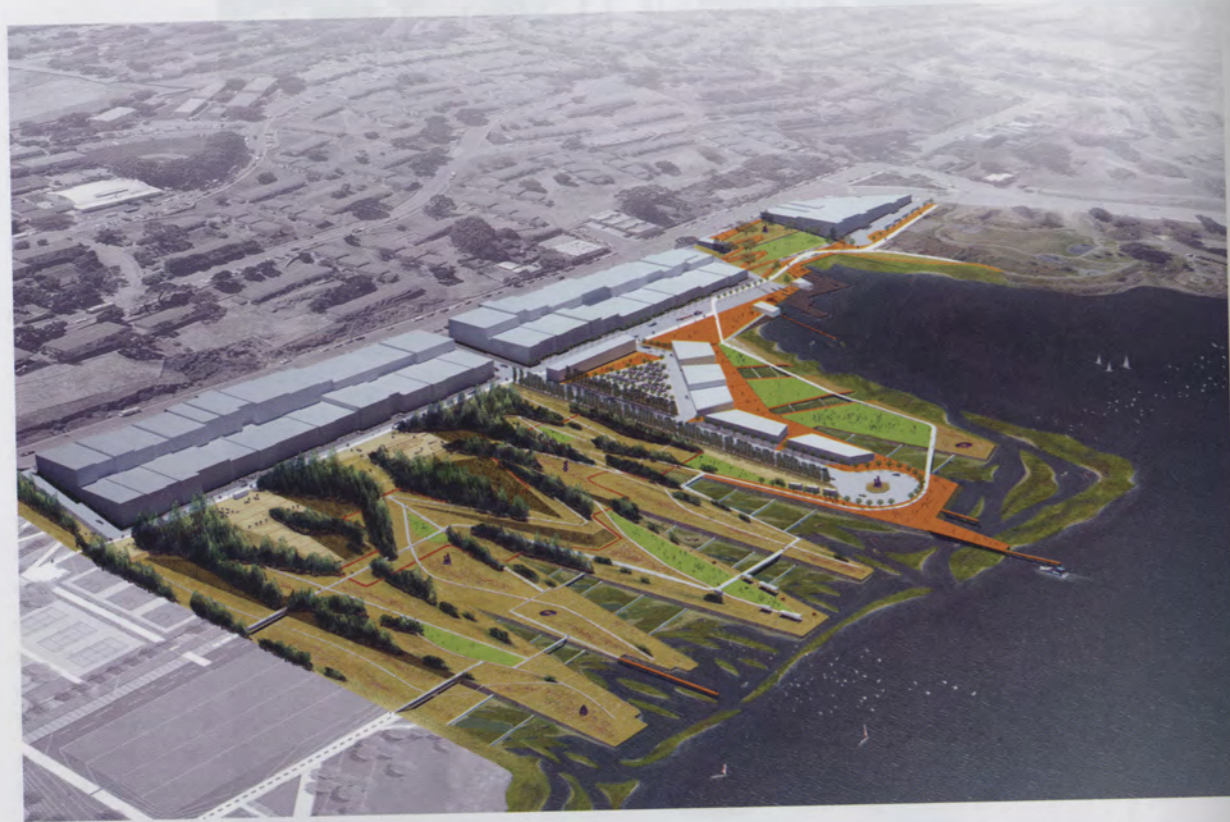
Future Challenges and Opportunities

Our profession has the same name in every country, but it's very different in every country. We have to respond locally in a very global context. So we have to be conscious of that. The most important thing we have to know is to understand our position in the place and in the moment. Why am I working here and now? The response will be different in every place and in every moment throughout history. In France it's totally different from Spain or in the United States, so to be able to have this capacity to understand the moment and the place is the most important thing.

BIONIC

Founded 2007, San Francisco, USA
Interview with Marcel Wilson

Territories of Engagement



Scale and Scope

We work on projects from a very small scale to a very large scale. It's not really about a certain type of work, but more about the potential of a project.

Our projects range from small installations of about 100 square feet, to planning projects of 900 acres, and up to even larger regional scales. The work ranges from urban design to industrial design, from residences to high-rises, from art installations to campuses and waterfronts. We are always trying to find ways to relate the small projects to the large projects and vice versa. I've always practiced that way, and I think being that broad makes all of our work better.

Approach

At the core of any project we do is the pursuit of invention in landscape. That is based in a belief that the world has become such a complicated place that you can't solve all of its issues with the same five materials that landscape architects typically fall back on. The world is far more nuanced and complex, and it has a lot more to offer in terms of tactics and technologies and materials to solve contemporary issues and objectives. That in itself sets up a kind of experimental mindset toward practice.

We're also trying to identify places where this is something we haven't seen before, where there isn't a practiced response to this condition, or where a certain situation may provoke an invention of types.

Tools

In some ways there is a latent belief that there is room for invention in any project, so that runs in the background of all our work. Any project has its set of issues, and very early on we're looking to identify places where there are reasonable, sensible answers to those issues. We're also trying to identify places where this is something we haven't seen before, where there isn't a practiced response to this condition, or where a certain situation may provoke an invention of types.

So to develop an idea like that, we use a variety of tools and techniques. We still draw because of the expediency of it, but we also have a host of computational tools, we build models, and we do research to give ourselves a big collection of 'toys' and materials that will provide the widest variety of tools to approach.

For some things we rely on good visual imaging capabilities to communicate an idea. Sometimes we'll build a mock-up; sometimes we'll model things. I like to keep tools and materials close by. I come from a background of making things, and I've worked really hard to try to keep that in our office so we try not to distance ourselves from materials too much. Even though we could do it all on the computer, we believe it's really important to see things materialize.

Challenges

One thing that we've had to learn how to do is to be more convincing about new things. A lot of clients are going, and for good reason, with a default stance of what's known, what's predictable. And yet those same clients may have complicated issues that there are no stock answers for. But nobody wants to be a guinea pig. Nobody wants to take on unnecessary risk. You have to be pretty bold to be the first one to do something, so we've had to become good at making a leap with our clients to do something new.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

A common conversation today involves the complexity of cities, the rising populations in cities, and investment in cities. We see the evidence of this in our current practice through the different types of clients that engage us to resolve their programs, issues, and sites. I am convinced that industrial and rural scales of landscapes will become increasingly challenged and pressured by the growth of cities.

The challenge, then, is not resorting to the known answers for designing this increasingly complicated world. I see profound potential for landscape inventions at these larger scales.

Bionic, India Basin Waterfront redevelopment study, Hunters Point, The Southeastern Waterfront, San Francisco, California. Courtesy Bionic

ANDREA COCHRAN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Founded 1999, San Francisco, USA

Interview with Andrea Cochran

Scale and Scope

I would say that about 40% is residential work, and the other 60% of the practice varies considerably. We have three large public plazas of about an acre, and we just completed a park next to the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, which is also about an acre but has an urban design component that connects it to a larger community structure. We've done hotels and wineries. Affordable housing is also a very important part of the practice.

Approach

Well, there are a couple of different premises. One is creating spaces that really celebrate the mutability of nature. In the best work, design is a vehicle that amplifies the experience of natural phenomena. For instance, the shadow of a tree branch passing across a wall that causes you to think about that tree as more than just an object in the landscape. It is also about the permeability of space and space that's not strictly defined and that references a larger landscape. The connection between building and landscape is very important—how we bridge that gap and extend the building into the landscape so that the relationship is very fluid, so that it doesn't feel like one thing ended and another began. It's also influenced by how the landscape exists in a larger context, and how we tie that context into the site so that the two things feel seamless. In landscape, unlike in architecture, the edges are not hard, so I like to say that we draw a hard line and then partly erase it so that there is a sense of permeability into another space.

Tools

Well, I think about the quality of surfaces and materiality. For example, the surface quality of gravel as it changes in light is very different than concrete or stone or wood. There is this sort of specular quality to gravel, and also, in my mind, there is a sensual quality when you walk on something and you hear the sound. This idea of using materials to shape the experience of a space is central to my work. I'm interested in creating quiet spaces that are vehicles for engaging with what is happening around those spaces. Another important element is the idea of passage and movement. How you walk through a space is maybe more important in landscape than

in architecture, because you often sit and spend more time in a landscape. So I think about the choreography of movement and the set of experiences and how those experiences unfold.

**In the best work,
design is a vehicle that
amplifies the experience
of natural phenomena.**

Challenges

I think the main challenge with landscape is the obvious one, that things take time to grow. When an architect walks away from a building it usually looks as good as it's ever going to look, but the landscape is something that often changes over time, and how you envision it to look may not be apparent for a long, long time, and that's a difficult thing. Also, how we address scale in landscape is very different than how an architect might address scale in a building. It's so much harder to hold space in a very large landscape.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

There's this sense that landscape architects are generalists and that we're not taken seriously because we don't know enough about structures, we don't know enough about hydrology, and we don't know enough about civil engineering. But I think that because we do know a little bit about all of those things, and we recognize which experts we need to bring in, we can be effective leaders for large, complex teams. Landscape architects are unique in that we possess all sorts of technical abilities as well as an understanding of space on a much larger scale. So it's really an exciting time for the profession.



Above: Andrea Cochran Landscape Architecture, Walden Studios, Alexander Valley, California, 2006

Left: Andrea Cochran Landscape Architecture, Smith Cardiovascular Research Building, University of California, San Francisco, California, 2012

Photos: Marion Brenner

CLAUDE CORMIER + ASSOCIÉS

Founded 1995, Montreal, Canada

Interview with Claude Cormier

Scale and Scope

Our practice started right away with urban projects where we were engaging the public realm, and we were interested in paying attention to details and the design process. The more it goes, the more we are integrated within the master planning and with the architecture and with the urban planners and urban designers. Everything is blurred more and more, and it gets bigger and more complex, but I think it makes a very healthy methodology.

Approach

Each project has its own approach that is interested in history, but not in the sense of duplicating history. It's interested in creating something that always has a personality and its own story, as well as trying to be extremely contextually fitting. There is no recipe, per se. Each project has its own sense of place and intensity. In certain cases, we bring tension by blurring ideas together and creating new types. In others, we reveal aspects by not covering them. And that's done sometimes by highlighting the contrast between two realities. And also bringing a kind of playfulness to places that connect them very strongly to their context. It is always idea-driven.

Tools

Of course, we have taken into our practice the notion of color. We realized early on that color is actually extremely loaded, and we challenge that aspect within each project. I like to challenge preconceived ideas of color. For example, a swimming pool is always blue and a school bus for children is always yellow, right? It's challenging those conventions and sometimes tipping them. It's amazing when you open up that possibility and try to bring a kind of magical element within it. When you start playing with this, you realize how much potential it has.

But the notion of mood and character precedes this, and somehow to define the persona of the project and then the materiality of the place comes very quickly: the mood, the character, and the kind of ambience that make the experience. It's all based on experience. And the way that you build experience is by being able to

create something that when a person is in it, they are able to describe it. It has a spatial quality with the notion of foreground, middle ground, and background, and then, by how you juxtapose these, you can create a series of moods. As you walk through a park or through a city, that kind of ambience is evident, and that helps quite a bit to define what you're going to do. That's why I don't think we can work in this middle landscape, in the suburban world where everything is the same. There is no notion of experience; it has no personality. I don't know where to start.

Everything has a possibility to be reinvented. And it is a fantastic possibility.

Challenges

I think the more constraints you have, the better. The more difficult, the better it gets. But now, I would say the main challenge is that the bigger the world gets, the more we are working with bigger firms. It seems that we always have to fight for everything, every idea, to prevent it from getting flatter and flatter. It's amazing how things get flattened. You could be in a room with twenty-five people, and 90% of them are there just to flatten the idea.

How do you fight for your own ground and sense of identity? How do you protect it? And how do you feed it? That's a big battle.

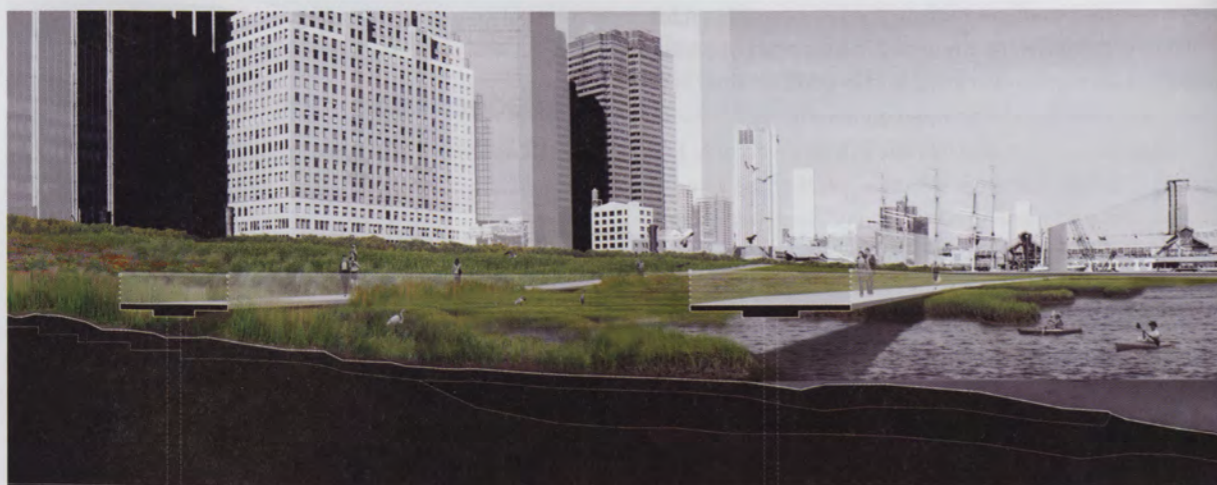
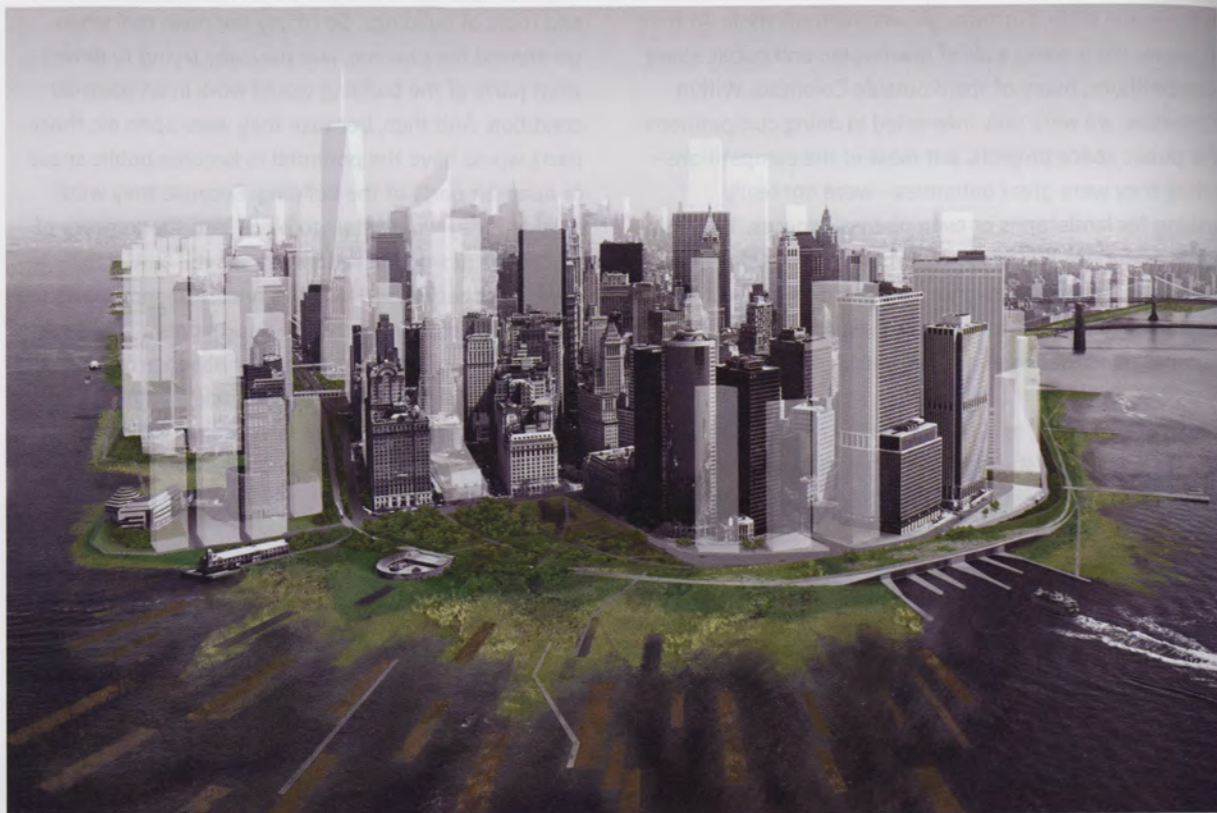
We should be more forceful about what we believe in. The only thing we have to do is to push and to be very honest, bold, articulate, and smart. Everything has a possibility to be reinvented. And it is a fantastic possibility. So it's a positive attitude and being strategic, intelligent, and respectful. I think there's room. I have hope, total hope.



Claude Cormier + Associés, *Pink Balls*, installation for Montreal's *Aire Libre* festival, Sainte-Catherine Street East, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 2011. Photo: Marc Cramer

DLANDSTUDIO

Founded 2005, New York, USA
Interview with Susannah Drake



Architecture Research Office and
DLANDSTUDIO, *A New Urban Ground*,
from MoMA's "Rising Currents" exhibition,
New York City, 2010. © Architecture
Research Office and DLANDSTUDIO

Territories of Engagement

Scale and Scope

The vision and focus of the practice is on urban infrastructure and how to make cities more ecologically productive. We do that through a number of different means. Every one of our projects has a basis in applied research. It's not just theoretical, we're really applying these concepts to real projects. Part of it is being engaged with issues of stormwater management and looking for monofunctional infrastructure systems that could be made more efficient by increasing their density.

Approach

I would say it's research-based, but maybe the thing that differentiates what we're doing is that we also think about the structures of government, the structures of relationships, and the structures of funding that can make projects happen. I think that's somewhat unusual. The typical model might be to have a research practice based in academia and to pursue a research agenda through teaching and research, but we're doing something different. We're looking for what the problems of the city might be, we're applying for grants, and we're working very closely with agencies and with different not-for-profit organizations that have aligned agendas. We're actually getting things done.

It's based on the experience of living in the city, and an awareness of how the systems are working or not working, and how we as designers might engage with these problems and make them better. It also comes from talking to a lot of people about their particular issues. The Department of Transportation has very different issues than, say, the Army Corps of Engineers. If you have individual conversations about what people are doing and really listen to them, you can glean information and then—because we're designers and we're creative—start to think about how different people's agendas might overlap and connect. That is where a lot of these ideas come from. We're the catalyst for change.

Tools

It's about performance and beauty and how you tie performance with beauty. The performative landscapes of the 1960s and '70s were these ecological engines that didn't have a formal signature or a formal expression that related to urban systems, so they were seen as leftover spaces because they were, in a way.

What we're trying to say is that it's OK to have a formal landscape. That it's desirable to have a formal expression that is also performative. Attaching value to

that landscape in terms of its productive potential—how it's sequestering carbon, how it's cleaning the air, or how it's absorbing stormwater is really valuable.

What we're trying to say is that it's OK to have a formal landscape. That it's desirable to have a formal expression that is also performative.

Challenges

In architecture—I'm an architect too—when you design a building it pretty much looks great the day you finish, right? But in a responsible way of making a landscape, it will grow to achieve its beauty in time, and that means it has to be tamed. And it also has to be nurtured. The structures are not necessarily in place to provide a level of nurturing that's needed, particularly in times of economic crisis.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

I don't know if it's a challenge or an opportunity, but with climate change issues there are going to be opportunities for huge changes in the way urban landscapes are designed. I see this as a great opportunity for a landscape architect to take a greater leadership position. We have the chance to transform the urban environment to make our cities much more ecologically productive: how we might make cities more resilient to periodic flooding, or how we might transform our infrastructure systems to really deal with stormwater management in a much more healthy way.

Because landscape architects understand regional scale thinking and geomorphology and urban design and even architectural-level detailing, I think we really do have the opportunity to lead a lot of larger projects. The challenge is going to be having the strength and the voice to be the leaders of these projects.

DLANDSTUDIO

Territories of Engagement

Founded 1995, Edinburgh, Scotland
 Interview with Eelco Hooftman
 Practice in partnership with Bridget Baines

Scale and Scope

We really work at all scales. If you use Rem Koolhaas's small, medium, large, extra-large, we would see the full range in our practice. We're still doing small projects and the odd art installation, but now we're very pleased to have more opportunities to do big projects. We're doing a park of 800 hectares in China. We're doing a project in Berlin which is 380 hectares. But we also do studies. The biggest project we have done was a study for the entire coastline of the Dead Sea.

We sometimes call ourselves the children of the Google Earth revolution. We're zooming in and zooming out. That is really what you can do in our profession, you zoom in and you zoom out. I think that's what actually makes landscape architecture different from architecture: We have a bigger range of scale in which we zoom in and zoom out in order to do projects.

Approach

I always make a little joke that we would like to operate with the Dutch sense of experiment; we would like to have a British sense of humor; and we would like to have a German sense of rigor.

But to come back to the question of approach, we believe landscape is an urban project these days, more so than when we were educated when it was more about countryside and rural land use. In our practice, most of

the work is urban projects, and most of those projects are redesigns of existing projects. We never have a tabula rasa; it's nearly always an existing site that needs a new chapter in its process of transformation. Projects like old airports, or we just finished a plan for the botanic gardens in Kew, which is a fantastic historic site but needs a new dimension, a new layer of the 21st century. I think this idea of projects is not only about redesign but also about recycling pieces of fabric into new projects.

Tools

The word "landscape" these days is more translated to mean the environment, but I like to go back to the origin of the British landscape architecture of the 17th and 18th centuries and say that landscape is also about art—it's about sensations, it's about stimulating the senses. Painting, filmmaking, and all those related disciplines are sources of inspiration for us, more so than the natural environment. So that's the whole repertoire of the art world for creating space and architecture.

Another very interesting tool for us is time—the idea of how you do catalyst projects, and then over time the process starts to work. So, time as a tool, as a strategy, is very interesting.

I like to go back to the origin of the British landscape architecture of the 17th and 18th centuries and say that landscape is also about art.

Challenges

We're in an exciting period when landscape architecture can become a very changing discipline in terms of spatial planning, and territorial organization. The challenge is that we are getting more opportunity now at the bigger scale, and I really think we need to take a step backward in our profession. It sounds strange, but if you take America, everyone studied Ian McHarg's *Design with Nature* and regional planning. And on one hand, it was a very exciting period. But now, designers in my generation are getting more and more interested in cities and design and the public realm and public squares. And so I think we should fight our way back in as landscape architects to have control of the big territory. I want to combine design with strategic planning, which for a long time have been two separate strands. It's either ecology, environment, regional planning, or the small world of exciting design practices

that do interesting but small scale projects. That's the kind of ambition and fight and struggle we have: to use our tools in a way so we can not only make beautiful designs but also do strategic planning.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

The world is still in an incredible process of transformation. We've started to operate in countries like China where the speed of development, actually, everything is multiplied by a factor a thousand. Everything is fast a thousand times; everything is big a thousand times. I made a joke that we are the children of the Google Earth revolution, but I think that revolution is taking place on a global scale, so the territory of the landscape architect becomes global.

When I was a young student, even in Europe you could see that a Danish designer was different from a Dutch designer, different from a French designer. The profession of landscape was really embedded in regional localities, which was important because then you could really understand the landscape. And now the field of operation has changed. Even in our small practice we operate internationally. And that change is a fundamental one.



KARRES EN BRANDS

Founded 1997, Hilversum, The Netherlands
Interview with Sylvia Karres and Bart Brands

Scale and Scope

We work at a really wide range of scales that goes from advising and also supervising completely new highway structures to the smaller scale of small courtyards, university areas, office buildings, and everything in between. At the moment, urban planning and master planning is, say, 30% of our work, and then the rest we can divide fifty-fifty between landscape projects and public space design. Very often our work is a combination of these things. We frequently do the urban planning of a larger site, and then we do the public space while we're also coordinating and supervising the architects who are working on the project.

Approach

We don't have a certain style or a certain fixed approach. The site context, of course, is one of the main things, and for every client there is a specific way of working. It means that sometimes you're coming more from sustainability, or how people use a site, or sometimes it's more the ecological aspects of a site that are interesting. Very often we start by examining the question, and then together with the client formulate the approach.

Tools

We often say that our main tool is time. In a lot of projects we try to play with time, and sometimes that is limited to, for example, seasonal aspects or how people use the site at different times or in different weather conditions, but sometimes it's also planning. We not only plan the final stage of the master plan or landscape, but we always design all the in-between phases as well: how it will look just after completion, how it will look after two years, what we're going to change after three years, and what it will look like after ten years. You also can play and have fun with that, designing the in-between phases.

On the other hand, one of the issues in our work is what we call "the beauty of the unexpected." We like to build something into our projects that we don't design, and let time do what it will—or people or nature or natural processes. We always like to tell to our clients, "You know, we don't want this to look perfect." We don't like projects that are completely finished, completely slick, and completely detailed to the end.

We do this in different scales, but what we try to find is some playing rules, and within that system and framework, we allow a lot of freedom for people to use it and change it themselves, or provide different functions. And we like the change and the intervention of other people in our projects. But it's hard to organize that. Especially with clients who want to have a good project for the money, and then you say, "Yeah, we're not going to finish it completely. We would like to have people start changing it." That takes some time to explain once in a while.

We like to build something into our projects that we don't design, and let time do what it will—or people or nature or natural processes.

Challenges

One of the main challenges is what we just explained about this transformation and time. It is consistently a search and research about how we can implement this in our design projects. Especially in the last couple of years, projects have not been started or funded in the normal way with somebody coming in with a big bag of money. Now, you have to find your own initiative, get people involved, and try to organize different processes to build something anyway because there is not so much money available. That is a challenge, but also very interesting for us.



Left: Karres en Brands, *De Nieuwe Ooster Cemetery and Crematorium*, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2008. Photo: Karres en Brands

Below: Burial chambers in section 65. Photo: Jeroen Musch. Courtesy Karres en Brands



LCLA OFFICE

Founded 2008, Medellín, Colombia
Interview with Luis Callejas

Territories of Engagement



LCLA OFFICE, *Tactical Archipelago*, proposed Kiev Islands master plan and concept for the preservation of the islands, Kiev, Ukraine.
© LCLA OFFICE

Scale and Scope

I am interested in the territorial scale. I am trained as an architect and have the tools of an architect. The practice began as Paisajes Emergentes with Edgar Mazo and Sebastian Mejia, who are architects also, so we started out looking for competitions that allowed us to work at a territorial scale, but through architectural tools. At that time, we were doing a lot of masterplan and public space competitions, many of them outside Colombia. Within Colombia, we were only interested in doing competitions for public space projects, but most of the competitions—while they were great initiatives—were not really asking for landscapes or even open-air spaces. They were asking for buildings. We organically transformed into a landscape based-practice because we found we could use landscape as a way of making public space in competitions that were not really asking for it.

Approach

In 2008, when we started, Medellín was beginning an urban transformation that has been widely talked about. At that time there were a lot of projects that were asking for new public buildings and new forms of public realm in a city where that hadn't been happening 30 or more years. But, as I said, most of the projects were still commissions to do public buildings—nobody was talking about landscape or even public space without buildings. So I would say that our approach started by taking up these new and exciting competitions and commissions, and using architecture as a platform for doing these landscape projects. The aquatic center is a very important example. Initially it was a competition for a building, but we were interested in making an open-air project. It was finished in 2010, and in good weather, it practically behaves like an open-air aquatic park.

It's about context also. We live in a city with only 1.4 meters of public space per inhabitant, but at the same time, we have all these rich and wild ecosystems around the city. So it started first—very naively—as a way to try to reinsert these conditions back into some of the densest areas of Medellín, which is a city that has no parks, or at least not a tradition of big parks in the same way as in North America. And so we were struggling all the time to find a way of using architecture to sustain those conditions inside an extremely dense and harsh urban environment.

Tools

Well, possibly the most interesting tool that we have is simply the fact that the tropics have a very stable climate. Everybody talks about that, but we found that nobody was actually doing open space as part of the program that is usually contained inside walls and roofs of buildings. So I'd say the main tool when we started the practice, was basically trying to detect what parts of the building would work in an open-air condition. And then, because they were open air, those parts would have the potential to become public space or open-air parts of the building. Because they were "outside," they would start to blend into the territory of landscape design operations. It's maybe a little risky to say this, especially in North America, but sometimes the difference between landscape design operations and architecture is just the presence or absence of roofs and walls—the difference between outside and inside. And in the tropics it is easy—well easier than in countries with all the seasons and climates—to physically dissolve the limits between the two.

The second tool is that when we work on large territorial projects, we always end up doing very small-scale interventions that we replicate and connect with infrastructural operations. We have the tools of the architect, and so we usually move in the scales of architecture. Because we are repeating and applying field conditions to small parts across territorial scales, at the very end most of our projects are almost a collection of small-scale interventions linked together by infrastructure, usually water elements or new forms of transportation.

...sometimes the difference between landscape design operations and architecture is just the presence or absence of roofs and walls.

Challenges

For us, it has been challenging because this isn't the discipline that we are actually trained in. So we usually try to overcome that limitation with a genuine interdisciplinary approach. We really need to work with professionals who have the knowledge we didn't get in school.

AND OFFICE OF LANDSCAPE MORPHOLOGY

Founded 2005, Paris, France
Interview with Philippe Coignet

Scale and Scope

Our name reflects the diversity of scales a approach that we take. Today we practice in Italy, Belgium, Morocco, and, of course, in France where we deal with the conversion of large postindustrial sites as well as urban and landscape studies on the future of uncertain sites. We deal with the large, complex, and slow transformation of parts of the city—Downtown sites, brownfield sites, through to mid-suburban sites that nobody wants to go or does not get to go.

The more we work on public commissions, the less it is about traditional type of work that landscape architects are supposed to work on such as parks, squares, and gardens. We still have some of that, but considering the increasing attention to nature, environments, green spaces, and other topics on outdoor spaces in France, we need to extend our scope of work and to orchestrate everyone's expertise toward a flexible design for complex spatial organizations.

Currently, we are working on the transformation of agricultural fields in industrial and office areas in the east of Paris. These types of work zones were traditionally set outside the city without any design intention or attention to ecology. On this project we are working not only on designing these large spaces but also on ways to articulate them into the existing city, and to establish a program where people can work and stay. At the same time we are creating several physical and visual connections in order to access them.

Approach

I started OLM to be a place of making and thinking between a tactical and tectonic approach to topographical design. So using topographical design as a way of registering most of the parameters that constitute landscape design: ecology, urbanism, road networks, utilities, hydrology, and so on. Each of them acts on the ground and reacts upon it. In our work, we aim to transgress traditional landscape practice and to be more responsive to the larger geographical, urban and programmatic conditions that inform landscape design. Each of these conditions needs to be understood, not only by mapping in various and separate layers, but in a range of effects through time and space. Here in France we say

that the time to construct a garden is usually between two and three years, a building is between three and five years, and a landscape is about ten years. And so if we don't understand the geography, ecology, and program, I don't think we can really understand exactly where we are and how to transform the space.

The second aspect of OLM's approach is to work with the uncertainty and the instability of forms and process in places often called void or in-between, where the what we call "not yet there" is mostly probable. The idea, for us, is to anticipate as much as possible how the site will be used and then in the meantime let other possibilities and transformations happen. In the end, we are aiming to provoke new ways of understanding the relationship between user and landscape.

One of the main challenges we face is how to be able to create the right set of conditions to engage the transformation of landscape.

Tools

I believe in your question there is a second one I would raise directly. The question is, what are the new tools we are using today in comparison to the tools that have been taught for many years in, say, America, or in France, or in Switzerland?

I think today we can no longer rely on just sections and the master plan. They are still necessary, but they are no longer enough to elaborate several scenarios through time. They aren't precise enough to work with civil and hydrological engineers and they are not flexible enough to communicate a strategic plan over 20 or 30 years. Today, landscape architects are as capable as anyone else to use 3-D techniques—3-D models, Rhino, RhinoCAM, CNC—not only for final representation, but as a constant iteration between process and the final forms we produce.



Challenges

One of the main challenges we face is how to be able to create the right set of conditions to engage the transformation of landscape. One of these conditions is scale. Scale is always one of the first things we raise at the office: At what scale do we work, and what are the tools we engage in order to transform this kind of space?

The second is what kind of diversity do we want to have? Diversity, of course, englobes biodiversity, ecology, and also the numbers of people who are going to work on the project in order to build it. So how many influences, how many components do we want to integrate into the project in order to make it succeed? How can this diversity be one of the components, and how can it evolve?

And third, during this economic crisis period in Europe and America, how can we achieve meaningful projects with little money? I think that is common to everyone, even architects and urban designers. We are dealing with less and less money, but I don't believe at all that we have fewer ideas. I think it provokes and generates a lot more ideas.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

Well, that comes back to the question I raised earlier about the overflow of data we have today. When we start a project, we are flooded by data, by precedents, by reports, by technical charts, and it seems like we have to read endless reports in order to just get an idea of what the client wants.

My concern is that sometimes we are waiting for the right solution that is the answer to everything the client wants. One of the main challenges is to overtake this data. We have to integrate it, but sometimes we have to overtake it, to make a decision, to rephrase a given problematic—that is the way we are going to be creative and provoke new ideas.

I often reference the French philosopher Alain, who said that there is a way of phrasing the question that kills the right answer. If we don't set up the right question, there is no way of actually creating the right conditions in which to answer it. We have to be aware of that and constantly redefine our discipline and rephrase our questions. That is how we are going to be creative. Otherwise, we are going to answer somebody else's questions and not our own.

Office of Landscape Morphology,
Toulouse Montaudran Aéro-
space, Toulouse, France. To be
realized 2020. Courtesy Office
of Landscape Morphology

Founded 2009, Hamburg, Germany

Interview with Antje Stokman

Practice in partnership with Sabine Rabe

Scale and Scope

We try to work on projects on the interface of infrastructure—projects that are done by engineers, especially dealing with water management. The scale is mostly coming from the large scale of understanding a system. Many of our projects are, in the beginning, projects with students at the university. We develop proposals and then approach a company and tell them that to get some real results, they would need to commission us to do a real study. And then it becomes a research project, but in the study we propose some actions that need to be taken, so it gradually develops into a practice project that we do in cooperation with different offices or we do ourselves.

We try to read the landscape as a process-driven entity, where the image of the landscape that you see is actually the result of a process.

Approach

We try to read the landscape as a process-driven entity, where the image of the landscape that you see is actually the result of a process: the interaction of people with the ecosystem and with the infrastructure systems that actually shape the landscape. We try to understand what authorities are responsible and which people are actually acting and shaping the landscape—we find the drivers and then we identify with whom to cooperate to become part of the process. We try to see a landscape not only from the image but also from a process that then takes shape; and to think about the dynamics that create this landscape and how to intervene and form a different kind of landscape.

Tools

The first step is a kind of mapping that shows the processes and the driver of a landscape a new image that results more from recognizing the processes rather than a map like people are used to seeing. We do this by defining the different types of components or layers, and then naming them and restructuring the landscape according to the way that we interpret it. From there, this mapping or atlas is a first step toward defining the strategies for how to transform the landscape.

We also work a lot with dynamic models that show not only a good presentation of a landscape, but also the forces that are working together and how they shape the landscape. Then, if you change something in the process, it also changes the landscape.

Challenges

It's quite challenging to find the right balance of how deep we need to get into the thinking of other disciplines. A lot of the time, I feel like I am in between. If I talk about infrastructure systems, I want to understand the rules and the regulations behind the function of these systems, and I need to have a critical vocabulary and a critical way of thinking in order to relate, but I don't need to become an engineer myself.

Another challenge is that most people we work with don't know that landscape architects work in the way that we do. They have a very different image of what landscape architects do, so it takes some time to approach them with our ideas. They only know that landscape architects are the ones who are commissioned to not really work on these infrastructure issues but to build parks and gardens.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

I think if we manage to place ourselves very well within the climate change debate it's a good thing for our profession. But we have to link that with the issue of aesthetics and beauty and the performance of the system, not only in a technical way. For me, the challenge is how to really position ourselves within this discourse, and I find we have already gotten a much stronger voice, which is a good step toward that goal.

Right: OSP URBANELANDSCHAFTEN, Dike Park Elbe Island, sheep in the park as a symbol of combining the useful and the beautiful, Hamburg, Germany.

Below: Dike hut as IBA pilot project, Kreestand.

Courtesy OSP URBANELANDSCHAFTEN



GLOBAL ARQUITECTURA PAISAGISTA

Founded 1997, Lisbon, Portugal

Interview with João Gomes da Silva

Practice in partnership with Ines Norton

Scale and Scope

Today, a lot of things are changing. Up to this point we have tried to approach every project as a new experience that can help us understand the environment in which we live and to figure out how we can continue to make it contemporary, to make it useful. But more recently this conversion of public space, which in Europe is very much controlled by public authorities, is decreasing in quantity. So we are moving more and more to other problems that are really fundamental in our society and that sometimes move us away from urban spaces to more agrarian landscapes.

We have been working more with new enterprises related to our region's core production, such as wine and olive oil and other typical Mediterranean products. What we have been doing is to relate this kind of landscape to the very contemporary demand of experiencing these spaces. For example, one project we are working on is providing access to a 1,000-hectare winery and revealing to visitors the processes of production, growing, and so on. It seems like this kind of approach is becoming one of the most demanding goals that these companies are moving toward.

To really understand the potential cultural value of these sites, we have worked in collaboration with archaeologists to interpret the layering of all the different landscapes that we know have occurred in the same place. The prehistoric landscape, the agrarian landscape, the Roman landscape, the 19th-century Andalusian landscape—this is more or less the complexity of these kinds of sites.

Approach

I think our approach has to do not with language or with style or with those kinds of concerns, but much more with the idea of landscape as a process. In Europe and especially in Iberia, landscape in reality is the superimposition of different layers—layers of time, layers of material culture, and at the same time, layers of different spatial organization.

Some months ago I organized a workshop in Barcelona called 'The Thickness of Time.' This really expresses some of the projects that we have been doing in the office that are related with time—that landscape

space and layering has to do with the implementation of superimposition.

What we have been focusing on more and more is this effect of balances, the effect of layers of time, which makes us try to understand the forces and processes of transformation, not only in terms of a sociopolitical dimension but also in terms of spatial organization. We are focused on how to qualify in the spaces that we experience today the different layers of time, and the meaning of different remains that we encounter each day.

We are trying to work not only in three dimensions but also with time to extract the meaning of these spaces. This is the main direction that we are trying to go.

**We are trying to work,
not only in three
dimensions but also with
time to extract the meaning
of these spaces.**

Tools

We work not only in terms of information—we have produced maps and drawings that allow us to understand different times in the same space—but also in terms of dealing with this dimension of thickness, as a property of the surface. For example, one project we did recently deals with the remains of the Islamic city in Lisbon. It was a typical archaeological area that should be made accessible for the public to understand the complexity of the place. And what the archaeologists found was, at five meters from the surface, the remains of a sanctuary of the Iron Age. At one meter and a half from the surface, they found remains of the core of the Islamic city and then one meter below the surface another layer with the Christian city. And then, a little bit up from that, they found remains of a 16th-century palace. When put in context, this creates a problem of space—how to relate these different levels and different layers of time. We tried to develop a system of retaining elements to create a relation between these levels. And the space that can now be experienced is very much mediated by this language that we use.



Challenges

Well, somehow there is this conflict between tradition and contemporary life. I used to work with an architect who always used to say, "Landscape is conservative, and architecture is revolutionary." And I laughed a lot about this because I don't see myself as a very conservative person. But I have been seeing that the conflict and contrast between the continuity and what remains in our collective memory in terms of material and also immaterial culture contrasts very much and somehow creates a very creative tension with contemporary time.

I'm interested in exploring how we can develop contemporary spaces that enable us to live fully in the public space but that are also in relation to all these remains that we can find. This tension between the past and the present is what very much concerns us.



Global Arquitectura Paisagista,
Bicycle Path, Lisbon, Portugal,
2009. © João Silveira Ramos.
Courtesy Global Arquitectura
Paisagista

SCAPE/LAND ARCHITECTURE PARKKIM

Founded 2004, Seoul, South Korea
Interview with Yoonjin Park and Jungyoon Kim

Practice in partnership with Elena Braccia

Scale and Scope

We started out doing many competitions, but now we are concentrating more on built work. Last year we completed a two-kilometer riverfront park, a high-end condominium, as well as some infrastructure projects.

All the projects we are doing begin as just simple landscape projects, but while we are doing the projects, we start looking at the architecture and civil engineering because they are very closely related to the landscape as a whole. So in the end our projects are a combination of architecture, landscape, and civil engineering projects, not just landscape as you usually see it. The clients aren't concerned with disciplines; they just want to get the best possible projects. As long as we have great ideas and the ability to push them into real design, they say, "OK, why don't you develop the architecture? And why don't you also lead the civil engineers?" That's how this type of interdisciplinary practice is possible.

Many engineers like to execute what is already proven to be possible, but we like to inspire them to think a little differently from their normal practice.

Approach

Our aim is to invoke the experience of real nature in an urban or a suburban setting because people do not have access to this in their everyday lives. First we observe the status of nature in the locations where we are working. In Seoul, for example, we have lost a lot of things through the modern period. The biggest and, for us, the saddest is the loss of nature in the city. For us it is crucial to revive those experiences of nature, but, of course, it is not possible to restore lost nature to its original form so we reformulate them through totally different spatial forms.

For example, the Hangang Riverfront in Seoul was converted into a concrete dike system in the 1970s to protect the city from annual flooding. When we re-designed the riverfront last year, we tried to revive the

same experience of intimate visual and physical contact with the water that people who visited the beach 40 years ago would have had. It is not hydrologically possible to recreate the beach today, so instead we broke the concrete edge into a soft edge. By sculpting the topography into a series of slopes and plateaus, the water's edge now also functions as mud-infrastructure, helping to more quickly flush out the floodwater and mud after inundation.

Tools

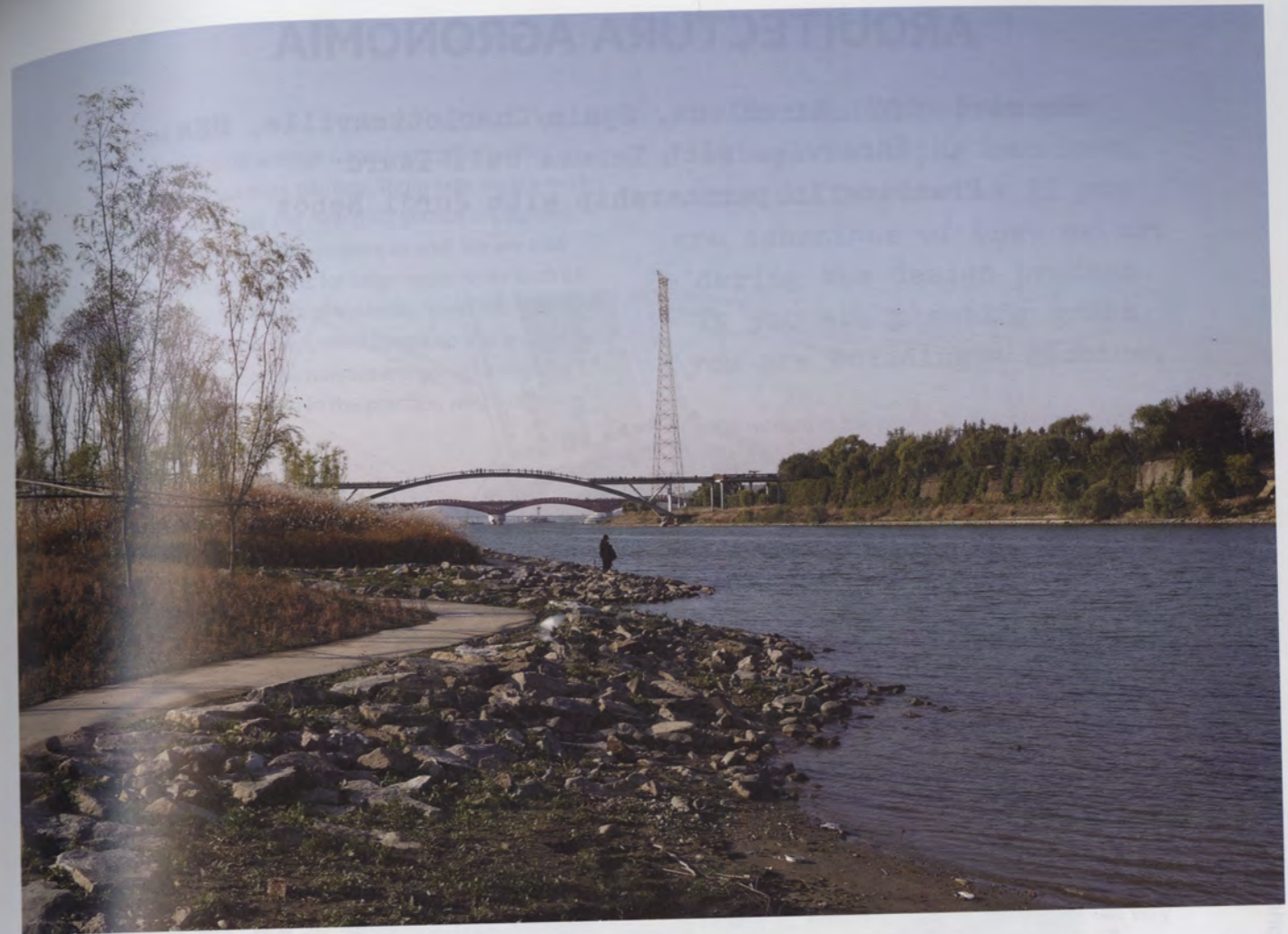
The design medium varies with each project, but three-dimensional thinking is common to all of our work. We use this three-dimensional thinking to generate site-specific spatial experiences for each project. For this we collaborate with engineers from various fields so we can interweave everything on, over, and under the ground throughout the process. Many engineers like to execute what is already proven to be possible, but we like to inspire them to think a little differently from their normal practice. We are often inspired by them as well.

We have also spent more than ten years living and working abroad, so by being detached from any specific cultural realm we have developed what we call a "third eye." This international experience gave us a new opportunity to see things with a more hybrid perspective

Challenges

Being young and inexperienced in Seoul is almost like being guilty. A lot of our early challenges came from this prejudice. There are many Koreans of our generation who have studied abroad and although some young people are returning to Korea, many of them want to teach or work in bigger corporate offices because opening your own practice is not an easy thing here.

But we have also had a lot of support and international recognition, and that makes us continue our practice. It always recharges us to know that there are people who are aware of and who appreciate our work somewhere in the world. We have also been fortunate to work with very intelligent and knowledgeable clients who are looking for alternative approaches.



If we are doing well in the future, more young people will come back to Korea, because they will have some hope that if "ParkKim is doing well, then maybe I can do it too." So we think we have a responsibility to them.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

The opportunities come from the fact that people really love landscape. On the other hand, that is a challenge because we're not sure if the profession of landscape architecture is really prepared for that kind of love and expectations.

If people love landscape architecture, they always expect something. As a profession, we have to always show something better or something more than what they expect from us. But are we really showing them something better or something more? Landscape architecture doesn't have a culture of criticism in the way architecture does. All these things make it very challenging.



PARKKIM, Yanghwa Riverfront, Phase 1, Seoul, South Korea, 2011. Courtesy PARKKIM

PEG OFFICE OF LANDSCAPE + ARCHITECTURE

Founded 2004, Philadelphia, USA

Interview with Karen M'Closkey

Practice in partnership with Keith VanDerSys

Scale and Scope

Our scale of work ranges from the individual lot all the way up to large parks. The speculative smaller-scale work is exploring the combination of organic and inorganic materials that are made possible by recent media machines like parametric software and CNC fabrication. So that's looking at experimenting with modular pattern and modular material units for small scale and how they participate in site functions, such as water collection, plant growth, or maintenance. Those tests are small, but we think they have the ability to aggregate to a much larger effect. And then the larger projects are things like the Taichung Park competition, or taking the geo-cell work that we built last year and putting that into a larger context, both institutionally and physically.

...the emphasis has often been on process in opposition to form, and what we're saying is that they're inseparable.

Approach

Right now the topic that I would say that our approach to almost all of our work fits under an interest in pattern—whether that has to do with modular-type patterns and modular material units at the small scale, or how they guide and convey processes, even at larger scales. Our interest in pattern is because their structure is coherent and legible. So at the small scale that might have to do with rendering visible things dealing with surface materials and variation in surface materials.

At the larger scale it's about how you use a geometric framework to foster connections to the larger context while simultaneously producing a range of repetition and recurrences that are both formal and temporal. We're definitely interested in questions of form, appearance, and foregrounding the subject to be inherent in what we do, which is something not generally focused on at the moment, or they're often downplayed. But they're inescapable issues, and ones that are core to the questions of the discipline.

We're trained in both landscape and architecture, and I think we take our interest in fabrication, pattern, and ornament from architecture, but thinking about how that applies to natural systems and the relationship between organic and inorganic material is how we combine architecture and landscape.

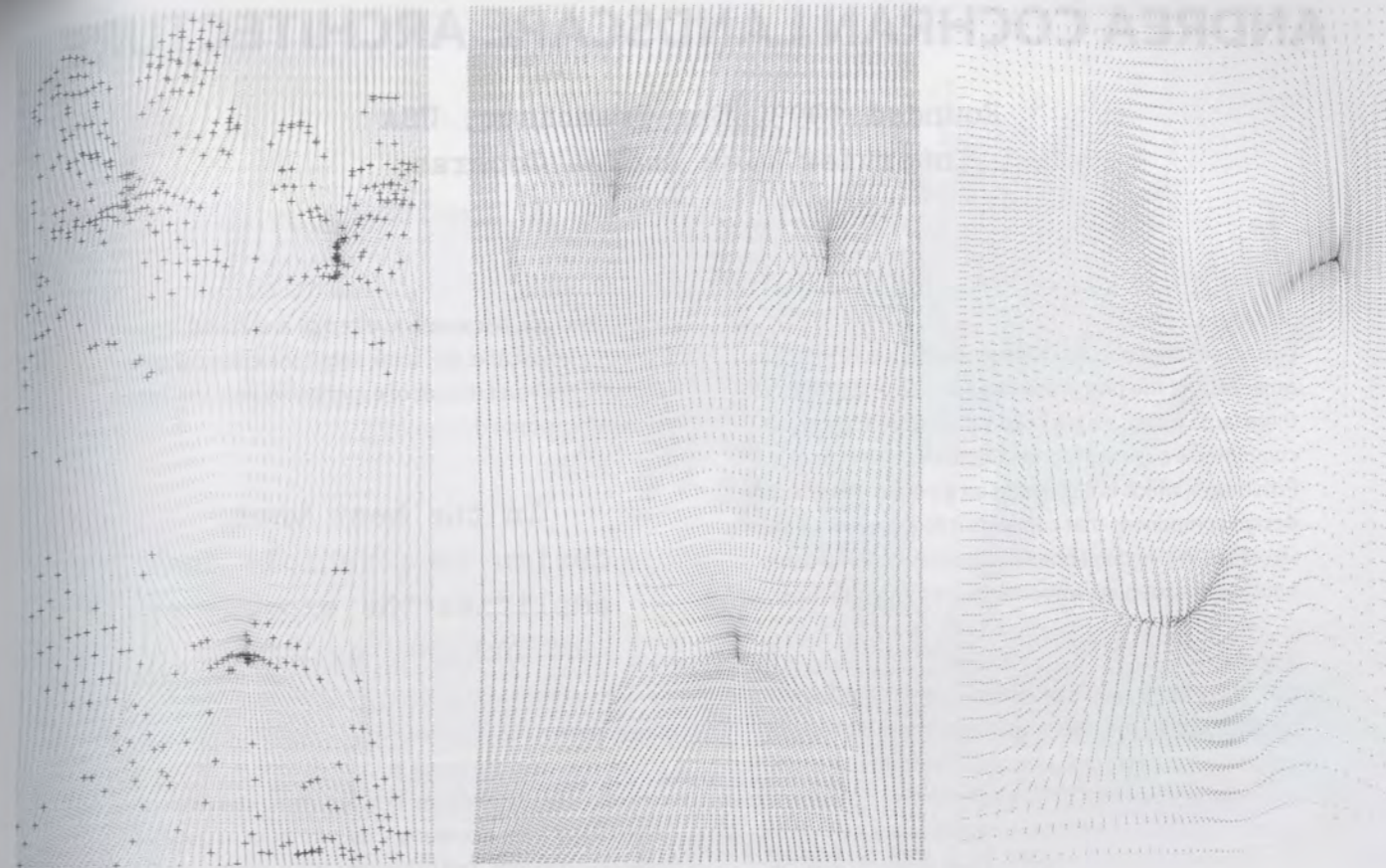
Tools

We like to borrow a phrase from landscape architect Simon Bell: "Patterns are the diagrams of process." Process is something that has been discussed in landscape architecture because it's material, it's mutable, but the emphasis has often been on process in opposition to form, and what we're saying is that they're inseparable. The use of pattern is something that ties them together. It's inherent in ecological systems, it's inherent in information and how we understand information, and so pattern is something that helps us see order out of chaos.

The pattern is not meant to be specific to a particular geometry. It's the criteria of repetition, meaning that we're interested in legibility and subjectivities of how people might recognize these practices. It's not about coming up with pattern as a model that gets applied anywhere. That is why it's been perceived negatively, because of things like the parterre, the two-dimensional static pattern. We think there is a lot of opportunity for how larger-scale organizations, because of repetition, can make certain processes legible.

Challenges

Unfortunately, I think landscape architecture is still operating under dichotomies that don't really need to exist—dichotomies between utilitarian and aesthetic functions or between form and process or between vision and multisensory immersion. I could go on. I would say that some of the other things that we're interested in like ornament, pattern, framing, and legibility are things that have been suppressed for the last decade or so. I wouldn't call that a difficulty. I just think that at present we see skepticism over things like form and pattern.



Top: PEG Office of Landscape + Architecture, *Edaphic Flow*, water flow distribution and density pattern studies, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2011. Courtesy PEG

Above: *Edaphic Effects*. Photo: Keith VanDerSys/ Courtesy PEG

Future Challenges and Opportunities

Landscape architecture has been marginalized compared to other disciplines like engineering and architecture, because it doesn't have the assuredness of the quantification of engineering. It also doesn't have the object-like characteristics of architecture, meaning its visibility. I think that this is a challenge. The visibility and definition of what constitutes the field and even what to call the field is something that the discipline has struggled with since its inception. Landscape has a PR problem, basically, and the breadth of the field doesn't help that.

That's a challenge we've always grappled with and probably always will, but I think the potential right now is that we happen to be in a moment where the perception of landscape as the very ground that holds together all these other disciplines is becoming more apparent to those outside the field, as is evidenced by landscape architects being team leaders on competitions, for instance. This gives the discipline an opportunity to capitalize on that in a way that can challenge people to go beyond what they expect or know.

PROAP

Founded 1989, Lisbon, Portugal

Interview with João Nunes



Scale and Scope

We are mainly a landscape architecture office. We do master planning also, but even when we do master planning, we use the principles of the practice of landscape architecture as a driving force of the work. This is interesting because it is precisely the same method that we use to develop a small-scale private project or a big-scale master plan. So right now, we have very big-scale works, like waterfronts, big parks, and infrastructure projects, but we still keep our interest in small gardens and private gardens. I think they are quite compatible at the same time.

Approach

It's difficult to put our approach in a syncretical way. I think it is contextual as we try to develop our work and find the new things that we are going to implant in the territory or inscribe on the earth. We try to get those things precisely out of what is present on the site, not out of an imaginary abstract that has nothing to do with the site.

It's like rewriting things that are already there, and taking things that are not quite visible and making them a little bit more visible. It's providing a reality that is there and that has been there for a long time, but sometimes it's not quite visible or totally perceptible.

Another important thing is that we always reject a formal approach. We try to develop the form out of a functioning system, something that has to do with the way that reality works. If I had to describe it, I would say that we have a metabolical design process. We try to read the metabolism of landscape on the site, and we try to make that metabolism the feeder of our design.

Tools

The first thing that we have in mind is to understand what metabolisms are active on the site. We try to analyze and read very carefully the construction of the landscape, in terms of evolution and in identifying the major drivers of that landscape. For example, water can be very important, of course. So one of our concerns has to do with how water functions and how water activates landscape functioning. This is probably one of the first things that we try to read. But, of course, it's according to the context of where we are working, the history and comprehension of how landscapes have been written through the centuries.

RICHARD WELLER

It is obviously very different to work in Libya or Mozambique than it is to work in the north of Italy. The problems are different, and the questions are totally different. So I think that working in several different places of the world has probably taught us to understand that each landscape is a different challenge. And our methods have to be able to cope with this diversity.

It's providing a reality that is there and that has been there for a long time, but sometimes it's not quite visible or totally perceptible.

Challenges

There are many aspects where I think working in landscape is particularly challenging. One is the fact that we are working in very fragile and ephemeral realizations. We are working with things that if we dream of making them perennial, they have to achieve this condition through the love of people. So we have to get through time, into the hands of people who will care for things, who will have to like them enough through time. That is quite challenging, because it is a different approach to time. In landscape, we are not imposing physically against time, we are getting inside time and we are proposing to go along for a long period of time. But we need the support of communities to be able to do that.

The other challenge has to do with methods, and I think it also has to do with the first one. Working in landscape is working with dynamics, with a process. So it's working in something that is constantly changing. Applying the methodologies of projects that we get from architecture and engineering is quite challenging when we are facing an approach to something that is deeply dynamical. We have to be able to give that answer in terms of method to help with this fantastic characteristic of landscape that is a little bit different.

PROAP, Castelo de Silves, Silves, Portugal, 2008. Photo: Fernando Guerra. Courtesy PROAP

RIETVELD LANDSCAPE

Founded 2006, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Interview with Ronald and Erik Rietveld

Territories of Engagement



Rietveld Landscape with
Atelier de Lyon, *Bunker 599*,
Diefdijk, The Netherlands, 2010.
Courtesy Rietveld Landscape

Scale and Scope

We work at a lot of different scales. For example, for one project, Vacant NL, we have been studying vacant buildings across the Netherlands and using them to advance the innovation agenda of the Netherlands. It's a kind of politically driven project. But another project, Bunker 599, is at a completely different scale. It's on the scale of a point in the landscape. But even though it's a small intervention, it tells something about a bigger system.

Approach

It's what we keep asking ourselves over and over again. It's always about fascination, of course, in the first instance. And then there is often a given task or a program, but we look at how those can contribute to the relevant questions for society today. We are searching for the biggest problem and then finding the most radical solution. That's really important because otherwise nothing happens.

Given the contemporary complexity of cities and landscape and society, urgent societal tasks call for an integral and multidisciplinary approach. We characterize our context-sensitive approach as making 'strategic interventions' or carefully designed interventions in the city or landscape that use the forces of existing developments and processes to set desired developments in motion. That's the general thought, and it works in our projects most powerfully if they are connected to larger societal issues.

We think that if landscape architecture and architects in general really want to make a relevant contribution to the big problems that society is facing today it's necessary to go into alliances, and that's what we do in our office, with researchers, interested parties, and specialists.

And so the role of the landscape architect—or the architect—is to integrate the relevant knowledge of the team and all the different ingredients at different scale levels, and then translate that into strategic interventions. That's when you'll need to use, of course, a broad set of design skills, and so it's important that you know what you're good at and what you can translate into a design.

Tools

Our approach often takes advantage of those landscape processes that are already going on. If you look at a project like Deltaworks 2.0, it's about how design anticipates floods and can organize a whole new urban area today and make new emptiness. In the 21st century we build everywhere, but we're trying to make a new emptiness, an urban emptiness in-between cities. In that sense, you are making use of a natural force to create a new kind of landscape and also the necessity for it. So it's always a search for a relevant question to do something, to come up with an intervention. But we always try to do this as minimally as possible—not to give too much form. In our opinion, designing is not about form; it's about organizing, giving energy to a place, and using available ingredients. That can be the energy of people; it can be a natural force. So in general you can say it's always a search for relevance.

We are searching for the biggest problem and then finding the most radical solution. That's really important because otherwise nothing happens.

Challenges

It's always about designing for people, of course. It's about the way people use a certain kind of space and about trying to create a new kind of public domain—that's really important. And we think that doesn't happen too much in general, because lots of designers are just designing because they like a certain kind of form, or they have not asked really basic and relevant questions about how something is going to be used by the community. Our fascination is always in the way people can use a kind of space.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

One of the important issues in landscape architecture is the inner city, where landscape architects have more and more influence. And if they still want to contribute to this in the future, it's very important that they get really interested in the way a city functions today. The public domain is what we are talking about. The public domain and social cohesion in the public domain is really important. And that's something completely different, in our opinion, than just designing outdoor space.

SCAPE/LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Founded 2007, New York, USA

Interview with Kate Orff

Practice in partnership with Elena Brescia

Scale and Scope

I have tried to steer the firm toward public realm projects. We've done residences as well, that are all kind of unique and have a special quality to them. For example, one of the residences we're doing is on a really important point in Sag Harbor, but rather than do a super rich grassy landscape, we're doing a large-scale eco restoration. We do some urban design, planning, landscape, and large-scale landscape reclamation projects. We also have a lot of smaller-scale public projects here in New York City.

Approach

I'm very interested in politics, and in making change. I see the landscape as a set of tools and a window into a discussion that melds architecture, politics, and landscape.

I'm also a very analytical and conceptual person so each project has a strong conceptual base. With every one of my projects, I'm trying to bring a strong formal concept and analytical concept to it, and lots of biodiversity in terms of a plant palette and the staging and phasing of it.

The big challenge is bringing landscape to the front of the process rather than at the end.

Tools

Landscape is really useful in a number of different ways. First, it's useful as a scale that can bring people together, that unites people, a collective idea. In a lot of my projects, like Petrochemical America and Oyster-ecture, I tried to formulate them as powerfully as a set of ideas as anything else. The notion of a big vision that can connect a lot of different people together is super powerful. Landscape as a scale is very helpful as part of the political tool kit.

And then second, the actual materiality of landscape, in terms of being able to work with the earth as a constructed and fabricated nature, is also incredibly useful in that realm, because rather than just adding a bridge or

a concrete retaining wall, the best landscape architects are forced to think integratively and synthetically.

That is also a great window into change, because we are making connections and pulling together forces that not only exist within a site but that connect the many different scales as well. The integrative way that a landscape architect can think is also an incredibly powerful tool for social and environmental change.

Challenges

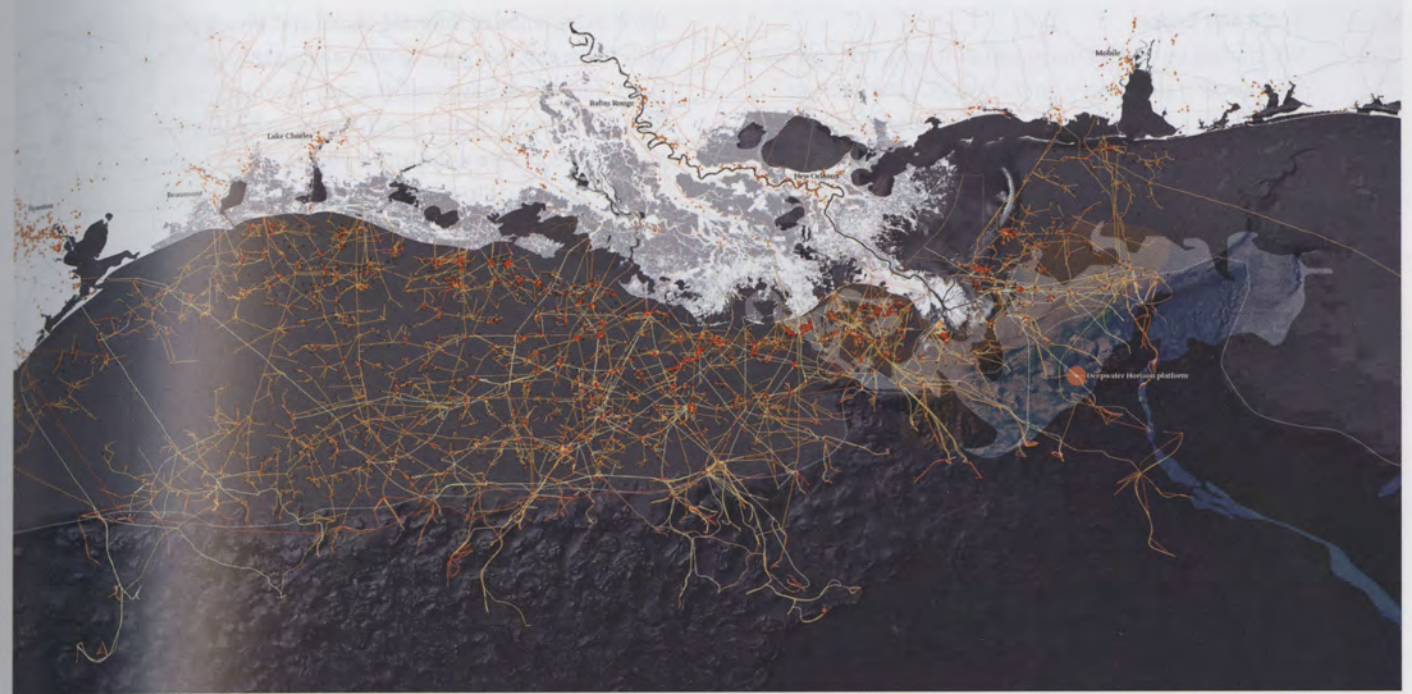
The major future challenge is to understand how landscape architecture can not only participate in but also inform the climate change discussion. Very typically, even in the phasing of a construction project, landscape comes last. I don't know of an architectural or an engineering project that's ever been under budget, so what's been incredibly frustrating to me in my practice is that often by the time the landscape is under construction, then the project has been basically defunded. I think to somehow invert that sequence would be huge.

The landscape architect's vision has to be incredibly strong and powerful and resilient to be able to hold the ground and ensure that your project has a strong life. This very strong framework, whether formal or conceptual, has to be in place in order for the landscape project to be legible and powerful.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

The major future challenge is to understand in a profound and politically charged way how landscape architecture can not only participate in but also inform the climate change discussion. And the second thing is that landscape architects could learn, frankly, a great deal from other kinds of professions, like community organizing, public health, and other modes of working. Because to me, the kind of private client-driven landscape architecture, as a service profession model, is wearing thin. We need to reestablish our field as a critical force and as a force of change.

SCAPE with photographer Richard Misrach, *Petrochemical America*. This collaboration visually investigates the cultural, physical, and economic ecologies of the Southern Louisiana landscape known as "Cancer Alley." Courtesy SCAPE



Founded 1994, Copenhagen, Denmark
Interview with Stig L. Andersson

Scale and Scope

What we are doing is urban design and planning and environmental design, but from the landscape architectural view. It is not landscape in the traditional sense, because most of our projects are urban planning and transformation of urban areas, but we always start with landscape architecture.

Approach

We don't see the city as a certain number of structures. This is an architectural view or a planning view that the city is a connection of structure, infrastructure, technical structure, and social structure all on their own. We don't see it like that. We see the city as a system, and when you see things as a system, then you have to learn from nature and from landscape, how the system's individual components—although they are heterogeneous—depend and react to each other. So it becomes something different. It's not a question of integrating nature and the city; it's a question of making something completely different. The city becomes a system of processes instead of fixed structures solving different things. We call that process urbanism.

Structural thinking always has to do with abiotic matters. But when you think of a system you have to deal with both biotic and abiotic components. And so we don't distinguish between dead and living material, we combine them. This is a different way to look at a city. We think it's much more important that a city is able to adapt to change, whatever it is—climatically, economically, socially, population, pollution, and so on. So how does the city develop, and what does it look like when it's adaptable instead of preventing change from happening?

Tools

The interesting thing in landscape architecture is the ability to think in sequence, in processes, and in shift of states. It can be difficult to explain what the changes of a space will be or to explain how it might evolve. How will the space develop? How will the space change due to the environment, due to your mood, due to your movement?

And how will the landscape grow? Are you going to show the tree when it's one year old or when it's fifty years old or somewhere in-between? So we make many drawings and many different layers of each drawing. One is about the change of space. One is about the change of vegetation. Another will show how climate affects the appearance of the space, or how artificial light changes the space. And when we're finished, there are a lot of drawings to explain how you could experience it.

It's not a question of integrating nature and the city; it's a question of making something completely different.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

The ideological thinking of the last 200 years—the belief of the industrial era that we could solve all our problems technologically and without regard to nature—is coming to an end. Today, we are seeing the consequences of this kind of thinking as more and more urban structures break down because they aren't able to adapt to climate change.

We are now realizing that we have to learn from nature and incorporate its principles in urban development if we want to create living and adaptable cities.

A lot of expertise from landscape architecture will be needed in this new approach to the design of our cities. This has very much to do with the knowledge of landscape architects, whose expertise is in understanding space and processes of nature, as well as in dealing with complex systems that will be useful for urban development. There will be a lot more work for landscape architects in this sense, but not for beautification. It's not a question of what should it look like, it's now a question of how these complex systems will work so the city becomes a nice and healthful place to live. That's the knowledge landscape architects have.



SLA with Lundgaard & Tranberg Architects, Rambøll, *The City Dune/SEB Bank*, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2010. © SLA A/S

STOSS

Founded 2000, Boston, USA

Interview with Chris Reed

Scale and Scope

One thing we have done from the start is to go after limited design competitions, at the national and international level, that would allow us to take on the complexity, scale, and challenge of the work that we really wanted to do—complicated urban problems that dealt with infrastructure, denuded ecologies, ripped up sections of urban fabric, those sorts of things.

The practice now has an incredible range of projects, from designing a plaza that's an acre and a half on top of a tunnel infrastructure at the heart of Harvard University, where the issues are on a complex and detailed scale, all the way up to collaborating on a team of planners and designers that is looking at 139 square miles around the city of Detroit, with the question of how to reshape that city, to rework how that city operates for the next twenty to sixty years. There are also a number of projects of scales and complexities in between. Those two examples are quite stark in their contrast, but they go to the heart of where I want the practice to be.

Even at the small scale we're taking on issues of infrastructure, ecologies, environmental systems, and social dynamics that extend far beyond the site that we're looking at. Although they're small, they're still caught up within these larger currents. And then the larger scale gets really at the questions of urbanism and landscape.

Approach

As I was learning the practice, I saw landscape being driven by issues of art history and of art culture, particularly in the 20th century. When I attended graduate school at Penn, the program was rooted in Ian McHarg's regional planning methodology and his questions of how urban or metropolitan developments might situate themselves in relationship to natural systems. And so all of a sudden there was this vastly different scale of operations that was possible.

I studied with James Corner who was extending that work and also taking it in a different direction, really looking at cities, looking at multiple social systems, looking at the remnants of former economic bases of industrial production, that sort of thing.

And all of a sudden for me the field of landscape opened up to an understanding that we could be working with a set of systems that operated at a very large scale and yet had impact on the ground in very specific and detailed ways.

The idea that we operate primarily in these two realms simultaneously—large system scale and detailed design scale—is very important, but also that issues of infrastructure, ecology, environmental systems, and open-ended systems could really be the heart of landscape practices moving forward. So it's there that we began.

Even at the small scale we're taking on issues of infrastructure, ecologies, environmental systems, and social dynamics that extend far beyond the site that we're looking at.

Tools

I will use the example of a competition project in Toronto at the Lower Don Lands where there were questions of how to reinaugurate the dynamics of a river that had been channelized and abused for many decades. We looked at how the piece of the river we were dealing with fit into a set of larger systems, but also how those systems could be adapted as they met urbanized conditions both in our site and as they approached our site. And so for us it became the question, how can we set up the right set of relationships and the right set of conditions so that at the larger scale these things operate in the way that they need to? But then at the detail scale, how can we create a set of design details and physical forms that will allow these things to develop?

I think landscape architects bring a lot to the table. We're trained as designers, just like architects. In some ways we're trained as planners and regional planners, understanding the larger-scale systems. I'd say it's primarily those two extreme scales that set us apart. I don't see architects looking at the larger-scale systems, and I don't see planners looking at the detail-scale issues.

Challenges

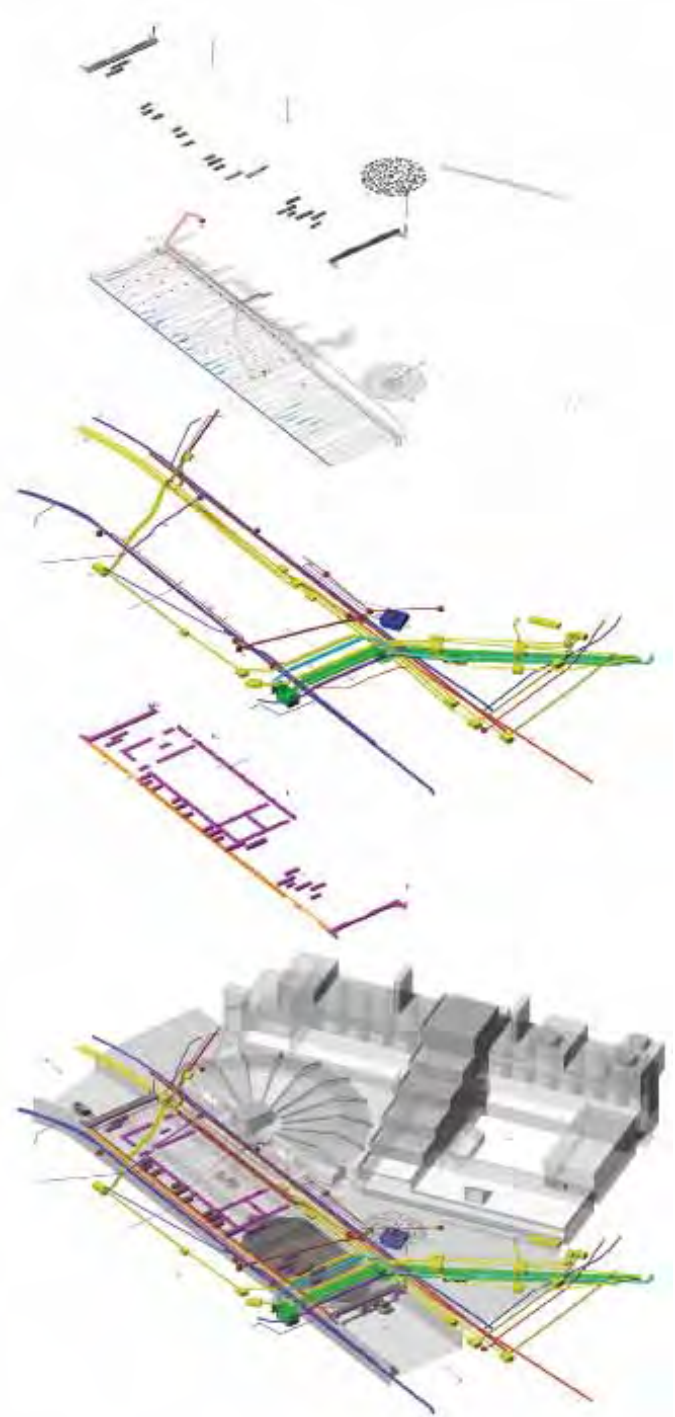
The positive challenge of landscape is that no matter what you do something is going to change. Understanding that is critical because it can become very constraining to you or it can become emancipating. If you start to think in that way, if you understand that you're not fully in control of these things but that your role is a coordinator of systems or performances or trajectories, then you don't have to fully dictate every single thing that's going on. That's the beauty of landscape.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

I think the challenge is limited resources, whether they're nonrenewable resources for production or energy, whether they're food or water resources, or whether they're economic resources. I think we need to engage in and lead these conversations that are happening. The nature of landscape can grow and change in that way so that we're not just looked to for our ability to make a nice garden or park or streetscape.

Another challenge is how we take on more fundamental issues of rapid urban growth, and here I'm thinking about places in Asia and in the Middle East. How is it that we can take on the challenges of emerging developments in places like Africa and South America, for instance? How is it that what we do can set a new tone for reimagining cities that have been abandoned in the wake of changes in industrial production and distribution?

In some ways these are all more essential roles for landscape than the role of simply creating nice spaces to inhabit. These are projects and challenges that take on more fundamental issues around the world.



TOPOTEK 1

Founded 1996, Berlin, Germany
Interview with Martin Rein-Cano
Practice in partnership with Lorenz Dexler

Territories of Engagement



Scale and Scope

I must say, we are incredibly eclectic. We have been working on very different typologies and at very different scales. We never really specialized in a typology; we just follow the flow. And it is continual because no one can put us really in one box. People sometimes take us for the artist, sometimes for the urban designers, and other times for concept developers. Our not clear identity is something that we also cultivate to an extent.

**Our profession is a
borderline profession,
and borders are interesting
places. There are a lot of
conflicts, a lot of things
to discover.**

Approach

Before I started my career in landscape architecture, I studied art history, and that's how I discovered landscape architecture. I was fascinated by the art of landscape and how you can implement artistic methodologies into space and this idea of being an extremist and looking for ways of exaggerating to a point of provocation. It's a very sensual approach, a very emotional approach, and even a very conceptual approach.

Artists or artistic strategies are more radical in the end than any academic can be because there is also a personal aspect, and this, for me, is still a driving force—my inabilities and abilities and my personal desires and ambitions. In the beginning there is always a kind of feeling toward a place, toward a situation. It is nothing I can explain in the very beginning; the explanation comes mostly afterward. And this sensibility, I would say, is artistic. Concept follows form.

Tools

I like to think of the big choice of strategies and forms and materials that you can use, but I am not committed to one or the other. I also like the possibility of discovering things—you never know everything. And I'm constantly discovering new things and new ways of working. I do a lot of collaboration with architects, so I also learn their strategies of working, and sometimes I'm used to them, but many, many times I'm surprised by how differently you can approach things.

I like the possibility to have different weapons for different projects. If you compare it to being a doctor: if you have a headache, you need an aspirin. If you have cancer, you need chemotherapy. And as a good doctor you have to have all these different treatments and be trained to work in different places.

I'm very open when I choose my weapons. I don't have to work under the canon of landscape architecture, which still works on the romantic idea of growing, dying, and flowering and this kind of eternal circle that we have been so fascinated by since romanticism. I'm a bit immune to these things because I don't care if something is made out of plastic, or if it's a painting or a tree, or if it's whatever.

Landscape architecture has always been a pacifying profession. That is the reason I am so fond of Martha [Schwartz] because she was the first really angry woman in landscape architecture. She was the first to introduce conflict into the profession. And it was so necessary, and it was so important. And conflict, aesthetic conflict, is something I work with a lot. Not to solve conflicts but to cultivate them, to make them bearable.

Challenges

The profession has a certain out-of-focus thing, but I have always liked positions that were not clear. I live in Germany, but I'm not German. I like to be an artist, but I'm not. And I am a bit of an architect, but I'm a landscape architect. This in-betweenness, the borders of things, is interesting. Our profession is a borderline profession, and borders are interesting places. There are a lot of conflicts, a lot of things to discover; it's constantly challenging.

And that is what I actually enjoy about the profession. You can move with a certain amount of freedom. You can construct things. You can realize things. You can change reality in quite an intense way. So this combination is extremely enjoyable and challenging.

Topotek 1 with Bjarke Ingels
Group and Superflex, *Superkilen*,
Copenhagen, Denmark, 2012.
Photo: Iwan Baan

RICHARD WELLER

Founded 2004, Perth, Australia
 Interview with Richard Weller
 (The Australian Urban Design Research Centre)

Scale and Scope

All of the consultancy I have been doing is through my research center, so by definition I really only work on things that have a research question of some importance embedded in them. Population growth, for example, is a big issue here. We have just finished a two-year study into the location of future cities in Australia, so in this case I am working on urban and landscape planning at the mega-regional scale. Related to population growth is the issue of how to achieve urban infill development, so we are also working on major residential projects, where we are specifically trying to invent novel public open space systems to generate dense urban form.

Another thing we are being asked to do more and more by government departments is to set up project methodologies that bring speculative design exercises to the front end to influence the initial business case for major infrastructure projects. A lot of this is, theoretically, stock-standard landscape urbanism, but convincing large, conservative bureaucracies of its value is really the trick.

Approach

I've always been interested in using the landscape project as an agency for reaching out to bigger things—bigger cultural ideas, bigger ecological systems, and bigger planning problems of the moment. I don't just do projects for the sake of doing projects. I don't have a commercial impetus. I conceive of the project as a question that is relevant to the historiography of the discipline. Right now, I'm taking landscape architecture up to a planning scale, which I don't think we have been doing enough of. Next, I am going to start applying that to North American mega-regions.

In regards to the mode, whether it's catalytic, whether it's strictly ecological, or whether it's social, those questions are usually site and scale driven. I am interested in maximizing any aspect of the landscape architectural repertoire, and so that depends on site.

Tools

I still think the tool is language primarily. For me it's not about the gravitas of the earth, the nature of plants or the landscape architect as an augur of place. All those things are important, but they are primarily based on meaning and therefore language. I've become more interested in the power of the project and specifically its polemical power as a sociopolitical tool.

Challenges

I think by definition, landscape is a field condition, and therefore, it's so inclusive. It's so ill-defined in many ways, and so broad, and so much about things that flow through the project rather than contained by the project. So it's not an architectural project where the question is how do you design a hospital, for instance. This field condition is always open-ended, and a lot of designers can't deal with that, so they try to literally shore up the project, secure its edges and define the territory, and reduce the meaning.

I've always been interested in using the landscape project as an agency for reaching out to bigger things—bigger cultural ideas, bigger ecological systems, and bigger planning problems of the moment.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

The challenge is for landscape architects to be at the table, to be taken seriously about the major challenges of the 21st century. This includes parts of the world where there will be political conflagrations because of water resources or other questions like carbon sequestration, food production, ecological systems—the entire suite of issues that are a part of what I call the new instrumentality. These are really big issues, but landscape architects haven't been in the room to discuss how to reconcile them. We are all aware of them,



and we're paying lip service to all those issues in our projects; but I think there is a lot of research that needs to be done, and we need to find strategies to engage those issues in a serious structural manner, not a decorative manner.

This raises the issue of the degree to which we truly engage with urbanization. Everyone always talks about the fact that this is the century of urbanization. But I don't know many landscape architects who actively engage with urban development. And that's the promise of landscape urbanism for me—that we can lead from a landscape systems perspective and find new ways of designing the city. That's a big one.

But before we rush off and all try to become urban designers there is always the core issue of the aesthetics of landscape, which rests on a society's philosophy of nature. I'm very interested in the aesthetics of what could be referred to as "landscape after nature," that's new territory in the history of the arts and its ours.



Top: Australia's emerging (southwestern and southeastern) mega-regions connected with high-speed rail and broadband telecommunications for a population of 62 million by 2100.

Above: A new city on the west coast of Australia.

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