WORLD DESIGN SUMMIT MONTREAL 2017
10 DAYS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

LANDSCAPES OF POWER:
DESIGNING FOR SPATIAL JUSTICE
Landscape Architecture

This document outlines the landscape architecture theme and development of 18 landscape topics included in the World Design Summit Montreal's 2nd Call for Speakers: https://www.topics.worlddesignsummit.com. For this second call, the WDS Scientific and Professional Committee developed 108 topics which are published on summit's website to convey their interdisciplinary outreach. In this document, we outline the coherence of the landscape architecture theme.

The WDS Landscape Architecture Scientific Committee developed an overarching landscape theme that framed the development of the content of the overall Congress theme and subthemes and specifically to the 18 landscape architecture topics.

The numbers listed below refer to the numbering system used in the Call for Speakers.

Landscape theme

Landscapes of Power: Designing for Spatial Justice

With the advent of global warming, sustainable development practices and the energy/food/water/waste question, we can no longer view landscape intervention and transformation (landscape architecture) as a solely urban practice. Instead, living in this particular time of the Anthropocene offers an opportunity to shift towards an interdependency posture and to consider other scales, adjacencies, systems and complexities. We can then prepare adequately for a future with a balanced distribution of social and environmental and landscape values. As the first interdisciplinary design summit, design is at the core of informed spatial change; and as a summit this content must be political. Therefore at the forefront of this summit lie landscapes of power addressing questions of spatial complexities and social equity.

Landscape architects have the unique capacity to synthesize diverse and often opposing or controversial positions and have the creative capacity to translate this synthesis into informed landscape change. This is achieved through design, imagination and pragmatism. Therefore as landscape professionals and as landscape thinkers, we are strategically positioned to strengthen our role as leaders in sustainable development practices to balance spatial quality, ecological values and social equity. This capacity to synthesize and project has the potential to give us political power, power to change how landscape is dealt with. Within a multidisciplinary context, this summit offers an exceptional opportunity to advocate outstanding territorial practices with real, potential and visionary propositions.
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In this era, individuals and groups can take part in social and political life – or all kinds of private or public projects – through a number of public platforms and policies. In this often collaborative and consultative context, what is the role and status of the designer? Design disciplines fundamentally contribute to shaping the virtual and physical public spaces of communities, as well as fostering and shaping culture and heritage, both past and future. How can designers help address issues like inequality or the evolution of participation and representation in the political process and in social life?

37 **Landscapes of Power:**
**Designing for Spatial Justice**

With the advent of global warming, sustainable development practices and the energy/food/water/waste question, we can no longer view landscape intervention and transformation (landscape architecture) as a solely urban practice. Instead, living in this particular time of the Anthropocene offers an opportunity to shift towards an interdependency posture and to consider other scales, adjacencies, systems and complexities. We can then prepare adequately for a future with a balanced distribution of social and environmental landscape values. As the first interdisciplinary design summit, design is at the core of informed spatial change; and as a summit this content must be political. Therefore at the forefront of this summit lie landscapes of power addressing questions of spatial complexities and social equity.

34 **Empowering Landscapes:**
**Designing for Democratic Energy Ownership**

The use of fossil fuels for generating electricity remained a reliable energy source over long periods, however the production of large amounts of carbon dioxide is at the cause of climate change. It is evident that our collective efforts must be directed towards renewable, democratic and local energy systems. The reciprocity of energy and space generates, on one hand, the transformation of existing obsolete fossil fuel infrastructural landscapes of resource extraction, transformation and distribution; and, on the other hand, the choreography of a spatial and geo-political transition and implementation of renewable energy production and distribution. Which spatial-ecological and socio-political strategies must be employed in this transitional era?

35 **Stewardship in the Anthropocene:**
**Leadership as Strategic Design in Action**

We have gone beyond the natural cycles of planetary evolution – the steamy Eocene and the glacial Pleistocene - into a new epoch, the Anthropocene, where acceleration of changes in vegetation, sea level and climate are primarily influenced by human action. This new epoch is potentially catastrophic: global warming, destruction of biodiversity, extinction, floods, drought, earthquakes ... Yet we cannot return to a pre-human epoch, so we must envision a future « Good Anthropocene », which will be radically different from the present state. What are the needed fundamental changes in our relations with nature and with each other, to foster dramatic design innovations and interventions in land-management practices?

36 **Educating for the Future:**
**Landscape as the Common Thread**

Landscape architects have the unique capacity to synthesize diverse and often opposing or controversial positions and have the creative capacity to translate this synthesis into informed landscape change. This is achieved through design, imagination and foundational knowledge and skills. This subject addresses the pedagogical strategies that education must employ to empower future landscape leaders towards the critical understanding of the transformational landscape phenomena to foresee, create, steward landscapes with greater ecological and social qualities. Which pedagogical strategies advocate outstanding territorial and social practices with real, potential and visionary propositions?
In the midst of the Anthropocene, how can we transform our living environments to respect the capacity of ecosystems and, even more, restore their balance and reveal their potential? Humans are indeed part of nature and, as such, as fragile as our living environment. Beyond responding to emergencies and disasters or immediate conditions, the design disciplines can also offer broader, sustainable approaches to shape the world for the long term. Going beyond short-term, market-driven needs can allow designers to drop conventions, look at their work on a different scale and become agents of change who can generate alternatives to the status quo.

Dismantling the Human / Nature Dichotomy: Wholeness and Immersive Reality

The advent of global warming has deeply challenged the 20th century’s inherited Cartesian worldview, in which Man has dominion over Nature. In the seamless cosmology of Native Nations, demarcations between humans and their habitat are muted. Can the call for a paradigm shift, strongly voiced in Pope Francis’s latest encyclical LAUDATO SI on the environment and human ecology, contribute to dismantling the deep alienation between humanity and nature? Can immersive reality bring wholeness to our spatial and sensorial experience, allowing us to bridge the nature/human separation?

Going Beyond Sustainability: Regenerating Large Scale Damaged Landscapes

Regenerative design poses a viable method to improve the single-use landscapes created by processes based on economic production/monetary gain, such as large scale industrial production, extraction and industrial agriculture. These processes have led to environmentally/eco-logically challenged or degraded landscapes. The effects of industrial processes often reach far beyond the limits of their original sites (impacting dynamic hydrological processes, causing vast algae blooms, etc.). What strategies can be employed to improve these degraded landscapes? How can ecological processes begin to reverse these damaging impacts, or be integrated in these large scale landscapes, creating sustainable systems that integrate the needs of society with the integrity of nature?

Inhabiting Degrowth: When Habitat Returns to Nature

Diminished economic prosperity, discouraging economic outlook and threatening climate events have led to drastic changes in the demographic makeup of cities and regions. These regional shifts have given rise to such spatial consequences as vacant land and underused infrastructures that are now being colonized by natural systems. How can the spatial consequences of these events/dynamics be addressed?
From creating useful objects to planning green spaces in urban contexts, design disciplines share a concern for sensible and wise design, in a world in search of meaning and prosperity. The beauty of designed objects, buildings, interiors, cities and landscape isn't superfluous: it is essential. However, the decision of making them beautiful or not is often political. Furthermore, these perspectives on sustaining wellbeing and making life more than just bearable oscillate between universal design that reaches across the globe to inspiration from local realities that can provide more adapted ways to improve quality of life.

BUILD IT (DIFFERENTLY) AND “THEY” WILL (NOT) COME: PUBLIC SPACES AGAINST DISPLACEMENT

Today, public space confronts many challenges: designing for inclusion in today’s globalized cities, accommodating refugees escaping wars and global warming, accepting increased social diversity in urban environments, revitalization without causing gentrification. The key challenge is to design public space as a true commons, enabling citizens to take ownership and to express locality, while remaining open to all. Recent global justice movements have reclaimed public space from commercial domination to create a locus of power for political action, and an expression of democracy as an open process. What is the design process that allows for urban growth while providing a secure cultural, political and community anchor?

MAKESHIFT LANDSCAPES: LEARNING FROM PATTERNS OF INFORMALITY

Informal settlements are a global urban phenomenon, widely present in developing countries worldwide. Despite significant improvement to living conditions, makeshift urban landscapes continue to grow, attracting close to 25% of the world’s urban population; the Habitat III conference recognised them as a critical issue for sustainable urban development. Can formal urban landscape design learn from these patterns of informality, addressing questions of spatial complexity and social equity? Traditional design and practice does not seem able to reduce either social or spatial inequality; can alternative design approaches that accept existing complexity and welcome local and participatory knowledge help us to envision tangible urban solutions that affect the quality of life and health, and to build more resilient communities and landscapes?
The role of design within modern economic systems can take many shapes and generate often unexpected results - with outcomes that can be significantly better or worse than originally planned. What is the value of design, within the production of goods and the development of society as a whole? While design can be used for commodity, it can also be used for the common good, with the latter implying a more political design voice, driven by values and ideals, rather than a solely monetary purpose.

**From Commodityfying to Commoning the Land:**

**how first nations are showing the way**

Like indigenous peoples in many countries, the First Nations and Inuit of Canada have espoused a spiritual attitude towards the Earth which stands in marked contrast to the European practices with which they have been confronted. Without exaggerating or romanticizing this philosophy, many of these peoples still see the natural world as a common and shared heritage, of which we all form a part, rather than as a commodity apart from ourselves, to be owned and exploited. Can such ideas help us to address contemporary challenges to the land, caused largely by the extreme commodification of nature among developed nations?

**Capitalizing Natural Resources:**

**taking a stance on environmental change**

A fortunate minority of countries around the world possess abundant natural resources that constitute tremendous capital assets. But how should these resources, and the future revenue streams their exploitation will generate, be wisely and efficiently employed? Since many such resources (oil, natural gas, minerals) are non-renewable, should we invest the proceeds in longer-term public assets rather than treating them as a short-term bonanza? Should we leave some of these resources in the ground to await more efficient future technologies? And how should we account for the many “ecosystem services” provided by natural systems, often valued at zero: flood control, water supply, wind and earthquake protection, aquifer recharge?

**The Opening of the Arctic:**

**grounding a different spatial paradigm**

The rapid opening of the North is an inevitable consequence of the melting of the polar ice cap and the reduction of land area versus an increasing water surface, one of the greatest impacts of climate change. A greater body of open water certainly has a «desired outcome» for trade and transportation, with shorter distances as well as new resource extraction possibilities. With this dramatic shift of the edges of the continental territory, what are the challenges to the traditional ways of life, economy, and settlements of the Northern Inuit peoples in Canada and in the other Arctic Circle countries? What are the innovative landscape approaches that integrate interdisciplinary research and design to bring about a thriving, regenerative and equitable development for all? How can we ground a different Spatial Paradigm?
Climatic shifts, seasonal changes, day and night cycles, high tides, low tides and human tides all impose transformative criteria and context to the design of goods, experiences and processes, both for more permanent projects and for more fleeting moments. The evolving nature of the relationship between cities, their surrounding hinterland and global networks of all kinds also create a need for adapting and rethinking territories and exchanges. New insights, new approaches, new tools and new materials facilitate the increased need to design, redesign or rethink - and therefore make design a source of transformation.

53 SHIFTING TERRITORIAL CONNECTIVITY:
ECOSYSTEM-CENTERED DESIGN

Land planning involves dividing the landscape into distinct spaces where we live and work, enjoy recreational activities, grow food and extract resources. Over time, each of these narrowly-purposed territories becomes increasingly specialized: agriculture is intensified; villages and commerce are excluded from National Parks; urban planting aspires only to functionality and esthetic appeal. We forget the lesson of Michael Hough, Anne Whiston Spirn, and Bill Reed, that all these territories are unique ecosystems, and treating them as such allows us to maintain and enhance air and water quality, prevent erosion and flooding, treat wastes economically, supplement food supplies, and ensure biodiversity and human health.

54 NATURE AS TECHNOLOGY :
SOIL SOLUTIONS TO CLIMATE PROBLEMS

Soil is an "unseen" entity in our daily environment. Hidden below lawns, paved surfaces, crops, and mulch, soil is an entity that is absent in discussions on the quality of the built environment. Yet soil is fundamental to supporting life forms and storing water. Its relation to food security cannot be overstated. Soil organic matter or SOM contains approximately 75% of the carbon pool on land – or three times more than the amount stored in living plants and animals. Therefore soils play a major role in maintaining a balanced global carbon cycle. This subject invites submissions that foreground soil applications as a CO2 harvester to mitigate global warming.

55 IN PRAISE OF TREE HUGGERS :
FORESTS AS THE BALANCE OF POWER

Most urban centers have adopted policies to increase the number of trees. The presence of trees in an urban environment increases economic value and provides wildlife habitat, shade, pleasure, improved spatial quality and oxygen, while absorbing excess runoff. But what is the overall value of large scale tree plantations, in terms of local and global benefits? What is their potential role in fighting/slowing/addressing global warming? Though many citizens see trees as an important measure of the quality of their communities, other issues such as urban space inequality and the right of all to live in a healthy environment must also be addressed. Can tree planting help create landscapes for spatial justice?
Recent migratory movements are challenging political and design strategies to forecast gradual human migrations between countries and even within one country, through political upheavals and/or as a result of climate change. As rising sea levels change the shape of continents, as new spaces become more accessible and others uneliveable, the capacity to adjust to such dramatic shifts will become even more essential. Canada, reaching all the way to the Arctic, will be at the heart of those changes. How can design solutions support these sociological, economic or political migrations?

**Design for Extremes**

**Urbannization Beyond Cities:**

The historic cities of classical Greece and Renaissance Italy evolved as dense, compact centers of local regions. Beyond city walls, farmland and wilderness provided the resources needed for the city to produce the urban goods and services needed for its own prosperity and, symbiotically, that of its regional hinterland. As city-states combined to create larger entities, the hinterland expanded in parallel, to a more extensive national scale. Today, the proliferation of world trade has created a “planetary system of production”, extending each city’s hinterland to global scale. What are the implications for cities and hinterland landscapes of this revolutionary development?

**The Edges Become the Center:**

Climatic events attract development away from urban cores toward fringes and edges, often at the margins of large bodies of water, dramatically affecting local communities (often poor) and ecologies, disrupting economies and habitat, and forcing resettlement. How often have projects designed to mitigate or to adapt to climate change instead affected potential areas where people are living, inducing relocations to less productive and sustainable areas? Through which spatial/ecological and socio-political strategies can resilience be achieved to better prepare local communities in disaster-prone zones? And through which spatial/ecological methods can communities affected by climatic events begin to develop resilience?

**Landscapes of Violence:**

As countries in the Old World and the New undertook vast programs of urban, industrial and agricultural expansion in the nineteenth century, they adopted patterns of behavior and exploitation hitherto restricted to violent military operations. Thoughtless destruction of geographic features, lakes and rivers, and vegetation often characterized the first wave of development. But these errors have often been corrected in subsequent stages; and the profession of landscape architecture, while in many ways a servant of the land-development industry, frequently played a key role as a “countervailing force” in this reaction to the forces of violence and destruction in the environment.