

## INTRODUCTION BY THE PRESIDENT OF ECLAS

ECLAS, the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools is the organization representing the interests of academic institutions that provide teaching programs and undertake research in the discipline. Founded as a loose organization at a conference in 1989, it grew to first become the European Conference of Landscape Architecture Schools, was renamed a council in 2000 to reflect its wider interests, and ultimately was registered legally as a membership organization in 2006. The main aims are “to foster and develop scholarship in landscape architecture throughout Europe by strengthening contacts and enriching the dialogue between members of Europe’s landscape academic community and by representing the interests of this community within the wider European social and institutional context.” The annual conference forms the basis of the council’s activities, but a number of initiatives have also developed since the early days, the most important being the recently ended “LE:NOTRE Thematic Network. Project in Landscape Architecture.” In 2006, ECLAS founded JoLA, the Journal of Landscape Architecture, as its vehicle for publishing high quality academic output. The conference is therefore the centerpiece of ECLAS’s annual activities and represents the main opportunity for the academic community to get together and discuss research, critical practice, teaching, and so on. The conference program has evolved over time and is held each year in a different country by a member university. There are keynote papers by well-known and highly respected academics and practitioners, oral and poster sessions, parallel activities such as a doctoral colloquium for young academics and researchers, a meeting of heads of landscape schools and departments, and the executive committee meeting. There is also the annual General Assembly of ECLAS and the ECLAS awards ceremony, where outstanding achievements of ECLAS members are recognized and celebrated. The conference also includes field visits and excursions, and of course a conference dinner.

Each school hosting the conference identifies a theme and set of subthemes that form the basis of the conference. Calls for abstracts are followed by reviews and the selection of a full program of oral presentations, with approximately four parallel sessions being held. Papers are then written and published in the proceedings. At the Hamburg conference an innovation was introduced—a PechaKucha session—where contributors could offer something more than a poster, but less than a standard oral presentation. These were often a means for younger researchers to present works in progress and obtain valuable feedback from more experienced colleagues.

For the proceedings to be accurately described as “proceedings,” they should proceed from the conference and reflect not just what people wrote in the papers accompanying their presentations, but also the flavor of the discussions that took place in the sessions, as well as the keynote papers which are usually not produced beforehand, and the summaries, if any, made by session chairs and others. If a conference is to help move forward the discipline or subject area that serves as the program theme, then the ensuing reflections are highly significant. Hence, it is advisable to allow some time to pass before producing a volume that truly reflects the spirit of a conference and captures more than the sum of the papers delivered.

The ECLAS Conference held in Hamburg in September 2013 was memorable for many reasons. The location, St. Katharine’s Church, was an outstanding venue. It was an inspired choice for being a fallback location, after it became clear that the original planned venue in the new HafenCity University Hamburg campus would not be completed in time. Everything could be found under one roof, the pastor made us very welcome and joined in the event himself. We got to hear the amazing organ, a replica of one on which Bach had played, and everyone could easily mix, meet, and network.

St. Katharine’s Church sites on the edge of the HafenCity, across the canal. We were also able to visit and experience the renaissance of the old port area, as well as see the building exhibition and garden show, taking place in Hamburg at the same time. These possibilities added considerable value to the conference. At a reception in the city hall held at the invitation of Dr. Dorothee Stapelfeldt, the Second Mayor and Senator for Science and Research of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, we were able to hear more of the ambitions and aims of the HafenCity project from key people involved in taking it forward.

Finally, I would like to thank Christiane and Karoline (Jane and Karo) for the hard work they put in organizing and running the conference, as well as taking the extra time to produce these excellent proceedings. It is an aim of ECLAS to continually improve the quality of the conference and this example helped to do so.

*Simon Bell*  
*President of ECLAS*

## THE EXPERIMENT “SPECIFICS”

Many questions arose when HafenCity University Hamburg was chosen as the venue for the ECLAS Conference 2013. ECLAS provides a basic framework and structure for every conference, which allows the host university to develop it further and add specific details. We were fascinated by that recurring academic ritual of shaping an event in various fashions according to each location and university. What does it mean for the field of landscape architecture if the HCU hosts and organizes such a demanding conference and exhibits the global professional discipline? And how can we best represent the research profile of a still very young university—a university “under construction”—founded just in 2006? What should be the title? What should be the main focus of the conference program? Or as phrased by Simon Bell: “What spirit can we instill in the conference?”

At HafenCity University, landscape architecture is particularly involved at the interface of architecture, city planning, and civil engineering, which suggests the term interdisciplinary as a possible title for the conference. Hence, the conference program should of course attract a wide range of disciplines. We invited colleagues from various HafenCity University disciplines to explain and define the role of the landscape within their degree programs. In an ongoing process of thought and discussion, the concern gradually shifted to analyzing the differences between disciplines and working patterns, and focusing on individual profiles in order to gain a better understanding of our interdisciplinary discourse. This process led us to the opposite term and finally to the title, SPECIFICS. Through this process, we realized that defining the specifics is, in fact, the basic condition for interdisciplinary practice. The need subsequently arose to define the task and role of landscape architecture as follows: a fundamental task of landscape architecture is to examine the typical characteristics and potential of a place, to reveal its genius loci, and thus extract the specificity of the location. The shaping of cultural landscapes owes much to regional experiences and individual interpretations alike.

During the conference, guests were introduced to the specificities of Hamburg as a subject of consideration. Under the title, “Specifics in One Place,” Jürgen Bruns Berentelg, director of the HafenCity GmbH and sponsor of the conference, invited internationally renowned landscape architects, who distinguish themselves as being responsible for HafenCity’s open spaces, to a critical discourse on the nature of their work. This resulted in a keynote contribution on the prelocation of HafenCity University, now within the new HafenCity Hamburg urban district, to that of the former port. But can the title SPECIFICS be applied to the question of research profiles and the methods that accompany them? Research and teaching approaches shape the thinking of future generations of landscape and environmental planners. The immediate task is to emphasize differences of quality and concentrate on significant strategies for research and teaching against the backdrop of globalization. During another intensive discussion on various research perspectives at the HCU, we developed together with our neighboring disciplines the following subtitles for the sessions: “Nature Happened Yesterday,” “Who Owns the Landscape,” “Best Practice Landscape Architecture,” “Landscape and Structures,” “Event and Conversion”

The call for papers triggered an intense process of evaluating the 268 submitted abstracts and selecting suitable contributions for the final shaping of the program. Selected presenters—all highly respected academics in different fields—were

involved in the organization and selection process from the early developmental phases of the sessions. They were responsible for the arrangement and configuration of their panels. The moderators’ final assessments and comments on the sessions in these proceedings enriched and revised the overall perspective beyond the respective views of each individual presenter. We have allowed ourselves curatorial freedom and opted for a personalized selection process based on a preceding anonymous review procedure. In her contribution, Kelly Shannon excellently presented the scientific practice of such methods but moreover analyzed the weaknesses of amalgamation.

We were also particularly interested in the marginal areas, the interfaces between art and the sciences. Landscape architecture is a relatively new profession in research. It is not possible to rely on traditional methods and is often reliant on the methods used by other sciences (humanities, and so on). Therefore, it was our concern to include the specific practice of landscape architecture in the conference as a subject of reflection, within the session of best practice landscape architecture. Design theory has been pointed out as an original means of expression and of landscape architecture. To what extent can different design methods contribute to the construction of a basis for theory? The question as to whether design itself is research was an issue of controversy. This, and other discourses, is analyzed in this publication.

Opening with the film *Nightfall* and the parallel lecture by artist and researcher James Benning created a wonderful prelude to the spirit of the conference. The film *Nightfall* opened the conference entitled SPECIFICS with a call to reveal, to bring forth nature in its unending (sustainable) existence. In his lecture on the methodology of his practice, James Benning addressed landscape architecture as an ontological discipline. What could we learn from the widespread international network of specific experiences and how can we draw inspiration from them? Bringing together all the specific cultures in landscape architecture led to a true, overall understanding of the similarities and differences in our professional practices. We look back on an exciting time and are impressed by the richness of content. It documents the current discussions in landscape architecture in the form of the Proceedings of the Conference of 2013.

*Christiane Sörensen, Karoline Liedtke*  
Editors

#### **“SPECIFICS” AS FORUM FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY LANDSCAPE RESEARCH**

SPECIFICS was an exciting opportunity and challenge for the HafenCity University Hamburg (HCU). As a still very young university, we felt honored and privileged to host the 2013 annual conference of the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools (ECLAS). Christiane Sörensen and her team of landscape architects at the HCU were able to host and organize an inspiring program for the conference, which attracted researchers and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines. Not only planners and designers, but also social scientists, engineers, artists, and representatives from the humanities gathered in Hamburg to discuss vital and prevailing topics of landscape architecture. To have the international community of leading scholars and professionals in this field as guests at our university was a unique experience and a chance for fundamental debates about landscape architecture and its intertwined relation to other areas of research. I am, therefore, glad that by publishing the papers of the conference in this volume, readers will have the opportunity to relive major discussions and intellectual debates of SPECIFICS.

The notion of landscape is in itself already interdisciplinary. It is omnipresent in planning, in cultural aspects of metropolitan development, as well as urban design. Therefore, the HCU appears to be not only a suitable, but also a demanding venue for the annual ECLAS Conference. As a focused university of the built environment, interdisciplinary teaching and research between design, technology, culture, society, the arts, ecology, and economics are everyday challenges at the HCU. During the time of the conference, our researchers had many chances to put forward their interdisciplinary approaches and questions of the role of landscape within the manifold debates about the built environment and urban society. The new ideas, methods, and hypotheses presented in response by specialists of landscape architecture and planning from around the world will be a lasting benefit for our university. Therefore, the contributions of this volume show, once more, in which ways the analysis of urban and regional landscapes are at the heart of every institution of the planned and built environment. For a conference dedicated to specifics in landscape architecture, we believe that choosing Hamburg as the conference’s location had a lot to offer for the participants of the conference. The HCU is a significant component of the emerging HafenCity district, currently Europe’s largest Inner City development project. Right next to HCU, Lohsepark, envisaged as the “Central Park” of HafenCity, will be built by 2015. Being a vital part of such a large project with a development time that will last for another decade proves that institutions of higher education such as the HCU can play a major role in urban revitalization. At the same time, as a university, Hamburg’s HafenCity gave us the possibility of being in the middle of a laboratory, of an urban experiment ready to be explored. While SPECIFICS was taking place in Hamburg, two other experiments were held: the International Building Exhibition, and the International Garden Show, which also raised new questions, offered new approaches, and presented new solutions for urban development. All this added to the intellectual uniqueness of the conference in Hamburg, which was made possible through the support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, HafenCity Hamburg GmbH, Hamburg’s Architectural Association, and others.

Who can take up the current challenges to generate new ideas for exploring urban landscapes if not young researchers? Therefore, I was especially grateful to be asked to introduce the PhD colloquium “Creating Knowledge” during the ECLAS Conference. Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, once said: “When you do research, you haven’t discovered yet what you don’t know.” This quote is a reference to the well known (and shortened) ancient quote “I know that I know nothing,” but it transforms the thought into a double negation making the task of the researcher even more complex. Rheinberger’s quote tells us something about the special condition of research: a serious researcher is in the dark and hopes to discover something that nobody has found before on his or her expedition. Research, therefore, should raise types of questions which do not predict what they will discover. As a researcher, one needs to bear the state of irritation, disturbance, at times also boredom, indirect perception, or insight. Allowing uncertainties is necessary to find the right questions of research. In this sense the conference motivated young researchers to question and challenge their presumptions, causing a helpful “PhD-confusion.” SPECIFICS in this way stimulated a new generation of researchers to find the right questions for many years to come.

*Gesa Ziemer*

*Vice President of Research, HafenCity University Hamburg*

## THE PARADOXES OF PEER-REVIEW (FOR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE)

Since the eighteenth century, methods for the assessment of science have been instilled through official societies and academies, initiated with the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1732. Today's peer review process is a direct descendent of its earliest iteration developed for the hard and social sciences, whereby an impartial review of experts in the same field (peers) serve an evaluative or gatekeeping role towards claims to knowledge, old and new, and for "possible errors of fact or inconsistencies of argument" (Ziman 1984 quoted in Bedeian 2004,198) before publication. The now conventional format for modern science—introduction, method, results, discussion—repeated in countless "scientific" papers in all academic disciplines and followed by rote, is a supposedly rational sequence of activities resulting in new knowledge. "Peer review ... is a linchpin of academic life" (Eisenhart 2002). The process controls access to funding, is utilized by universities to make decisions about hiring, promotion, and tenure, and to assess the quality of departments and programs.

Yet, for decades, the peer review process has been held under increasing scrutiny and has raised concern regarding bias, fairness, unnecessary delay, and general ineffectiveness. Moreover, critics contend that review panels tend to comply with conventional standards, thus disqualifying innovative and unorthodox scholarship, as well as young researchers and researchers with diverse perspectives (Bedeian 2004; Eisenhart 2002; Suls and Martin 2009; Trafimow and Rice 2006). Inevitably, peer review panels are vulnerable—to a certain degree—to nepotism and strategic maneuvering, depending on the contexts in which the process occurs.

In the arena of the built environment, there are further complexities and concerns regarding peer review. First, there remains the continual transition from professions to disciplines; the shift from professional diktat towards cerebral endeavor has been evolving worldwide. According to the Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi, research is the mechanism through which professions advance and improve their techniques, and escape the tendency to reflect the prevalent mode of production (quoted in Milburn et al. 2003, 126).

The transitory process is artificially hastened by the "democratization of education" and leveling of the educational playing field (evidenced in Europe by the Bologna Process), with the consequence that more research must be produced by faculty and doctoral students alike. Second, in landscape architecture and architecture, the perceived dichotomy between research and design has led to tremendous debates concerning academic scholarship and research assessment (Benson 1998). Knowledge production in landscape architecture, as in architecture, is generally a complex interplay of socialcultural, historical, economical, and even technological components, rather than the product of an absolute truth, as in the sciences. And, at the same time, it has been well-documented that, historically, there has not been a deep-rooted research culture in landscape architecture; it is predominantly an emerging phenomenon. The field's ongoing struggle to establish design as a viable form of research comes from a long-standing battle to reconcile forms of traditional knowledge with requirements of rigorous scholarly research (Benson 1998; Milburn et al. 2003).

Landscape architecture clearly needs research, and a double-blind peer review process guarantees a certain degree of impartiality, validity, and reliability. At the same time, there are numerous faults in the peer review system that can be improved. However, if its basic principles are followed, then it appears to be the best process academia has at this point to "democratically" assess research. Yet, landscape architecture (like architecture and other creative fields) can perhaps do better and create new frameworks for research and papers in the applied arts—particularly, for instance, ones that are distinct from science's "introduction, method, results, discussion." Landscape architects can more convincingly become reflective practitioners, provide engaged critique, and not simply attempt to mirror the science canon. ECLAS conferences are the perfect test beds.

*Kelly Shannon*  
*JoLA Editorial Team*

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