

**Crossing borders in Landscape Architecture  
Discussing internationalisation**

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Dutch School of Landscape  
Architecture **perspectives 2**

**Crossing borders: discussing  
internationalisation**

**DSL**

# Crossing borders in landscape architecture

## Discussing internationalisation

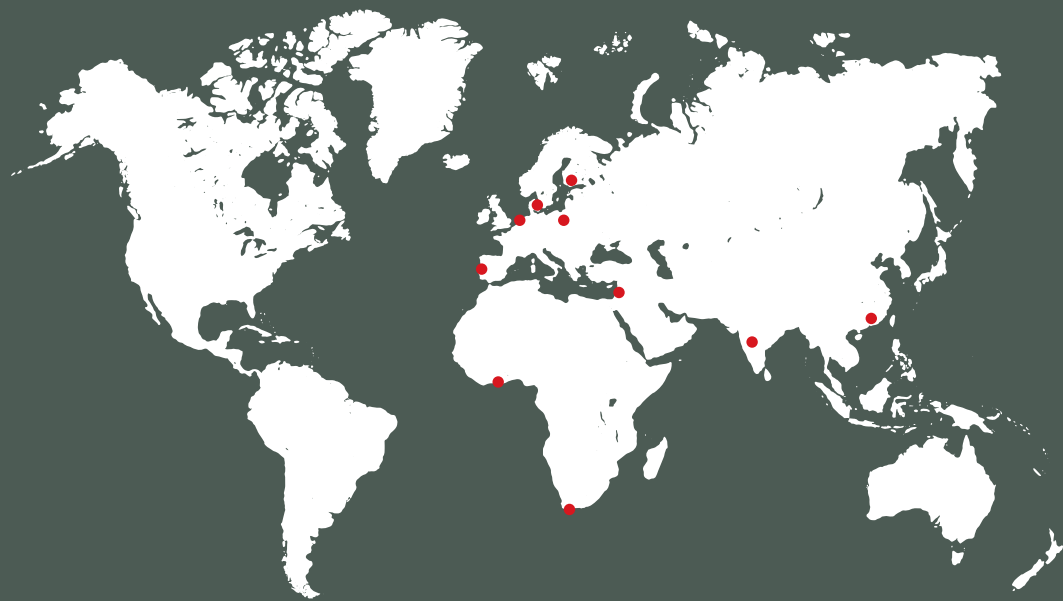
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Dutch School of Landscape Architecture 2020



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# The global landscape

The department of Landscape Architecture at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of Delft University hosted a symposium on the internationalisation of the discipline on November 2019. The Dutch School of Landscape Architecture, the foundation through which all undergraduate and graduate schools for Landscape Architecture in the Netherlands share initiatives and communicate, put the theme of ongoing globalisation on the agenda.

There are many valid, beneficial and urgent reasons to focus on this issue. For us, colleagues from the section of Landscape Architecture at TU Delft, this seemed a suitable medium to have a closer look at the phenomenon of cross-national exchange and collaboration both in the field of education and research as well as in the rapidly increasing multi-nationality in advisory and design practices. Our responsibility as schools is to teach and train young designers to be prepared for a contribution to the landscape profession. And we do need to take a position with respect to the differentiation of what we as Dutch schools have to offer. Do we have to become a generic educational institution offering non-specific and non-discretionary knowledge and skills or are we indebted to defend and transfer the spatial challenges, design repertoire and traditions that define our region?

Internationalisation requires a thorough evaluation of national curricula, learning goals and disciplinary competences. Is it 'The International Style' in landscape architecture that we should proclaim or are there substantial arguments for a renewed 21st century regionalism – be it critical or not? The afternoon in November proved to be worthwhile because the internationalisation challenge was discussed from various angles. Representatives from European and Dutch schools, professional practices and other related institutes gathered to discuss the consequences of a globalising profession. The document that lies in front of you summarises the discussions, but the debate has only started. Let's keep talking.

Eric Luiten  
Chair of Landscape Architecture  
Delft University of Technology

# Updated note on the COVID-19 pandemic

May 2020

In March 2020, as we were about to finish this booklet, COVID-19 pandemic brought about travel restrictions and as a result personal international interaction slowly came to a standstill. Since then, people all over the world have been asked to stay at home. The majority followed the request of their governments or were obliged to do so as a result of severe national lockdowns.

To meet people in real life is not a smart thing to do at the moment. If you need to go out, the advice in the Netherlands is to keep a 'social distance' from other people. As far as it can be foreseen at the moment, this will be, as the Dutch Prime Minister said, the new normal. The Dutch '1.5-meter society'. At least until a vaccine is found.

As for our professional life, universities and large offices are closed at the moment. Luckily many of us can communicate online to keep in touch. Most of our work can also continue in the same way on the world wide web. Instead of taking a plane to visit a congress, all of a sudden, we welcome colleagues in our own living-room or work space at home. Education institutes have turned to online studies. At the same time online education asks for different teaching methods and needs to be developed quickly. The impact is huge, but there is also a positive side. Working from home saves time and we limit our environmental footprint by not commuting on a daily basis and not taking flights.

After meeting the acute challenges of the 1,5 m society in all aspects of our private and public life, the question for us as landscape architects is how this all will affect our field of work. In other words, what will the future use of outdoor space be? In the last two months we have observed that the public space is more intensely used, now that we don't have the prospect of travelling and are limited to staying behind our screens for longer hours. We see more children playing outdoor, all kinds of sport activities being carried out on our streets and many more pedestrians, joggers and cyclists on the roads. Will this be permanent? What are the new demands on the public space? And maybe, with future pandemics in mind, we need to think about how we can make spaces more adaptable to different use? For sure it will force us to rethink new concepts for our, up till now, ever densifying cities and densely used transportation systems.

At the moment of writing this note, we cannot foresee how the impact of the pandemic on society will develop in the future. Will the 'social distancing' last for months or for years? Uncertainties remain about how the theme discussed in this booklet, internationalisation, will develop in the future. Will the pandemic have a lasting impact on the inflow of international students? Will we travel less for professional purposes? Or will things quickly get back to 'before' the outbreak of Corona once a vaccine or treatment is developed?

Not only this pandemic crisis, but also the environmental crisis offers major challenges to our profession. As designers of inclusive spaces, we should take the initiative together with urbanists and planners to not waste this crisis but to actively help overcome its threats by coming up with new spatial concepts. Time for exchange of ideas. So, for all of you out there: stay healthy and don't stop talking.

Inge Bobbink  
Céline Janssen  
Danielle Niederer

**LET'S START TALKING**



# Internationalisation in landscape architecture

Inge Bobbink & Danielle Niederer

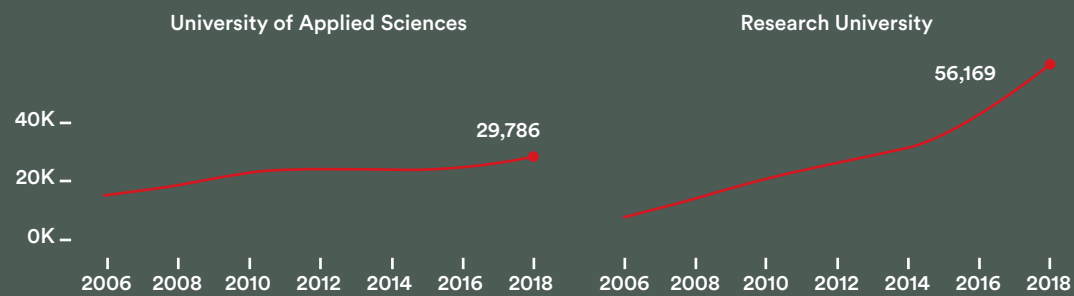
*For many within our field of expertise, being in contact with colleagues, students or clients with a different cultural background has become normality. The number of international students, teachers and PhD students at the Dutch institutions is increasing every year. More and more agencies and landscape architecture offices seek and find clients abroad, and the number of research projects in an international context is growing rapidly. In the study year of 2019-2020, 11,5% of all students in the Netherlands are from abroad.*

Internationalisation in higher education has a long tradition. *“In research-oriented education, internationalisation is most prominently expressed through the cross-border nature of research itself. In the applied sciences, internationalisation has more to do with the globalisation of the labour market that graduates end up in. Although internationalisation in the 1990s concentrated mostly on student exchanges and intercultural learning, attracting international students has become increasingly important for some study programmes since the turn of the century. This latest trend is a direct result of the rise of English as a language of instruction.”*<sup>1</sup> In recent years there has also been a public debate on the trend towards internationalisation in education. This debate focuses mainly on inflow of international degree students as it relates to the capacity and costs of higher education.

In addition to the growth in the number of international students, the Dutch education and research institutions in the field of landscape architecture have to deal with a rapidly changing context of the practice. Urgent topics such as climate change, food security, the growth of our cities and the energy transition are complex and increasingly interlinked. Steps can only be taken through cooperation, specialisation and the development of new knowledge and strategies. And given the global nature of the tasks, specialisation and collaboration goes beyond national borders.

In 2019, 85,955 foreign students from 170 countries have complete their studies in the Netherlands. This is 11.5% of the total number of students enrolled. The academic year before their share was 10.5%. More and more students from outside the European Economic Area are studying in the Netherlands. Over a period of two years, their share increased from 24.8% in 2016-'17 to 26.9% in 2018-'19.<sup>2</sup>

The share of international students in the master's programme is the highest. There are 25,669 international master's students enrolled at universities, which represents 23.6% of the total student population. Master's programmes at universities of applied sciences include 2,145 international students.<sup>2</sup>



Inflow students of all countries and all programmes in The Netherlands (source: DUO 2019)

PROGRAMME	YEAR >	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
	INFLOW						
Amsterdam Academy of Architecture	NL	9	9	6	8	14	7
	EU	1	3	2	3	8	3
	Non EU	2	0	1	0	0	4
	Total	12	12	9	11	22	14
Delft University of Technology (Master)	NL	4	4	6	4	9	7
	EU	4	6	7	5	6	3
	Non EU	6	11	15	22	37	11
	Total	14	21	28	31	52	21
Wageningen University (Master)	NL	23	24	21	10	14	10
	EU	3	1	8	2	2	1
	Non EU	9	9	3	6	12	10
	Total	35	34	32	18	28	21
VH Larenstein University of Applied Sciences (Bachelor)	NL	118	92	90	72	105	88
	EU	0	1	1	0	1	0
	Non EU	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	118	93	91	72	106	88
HAS University Den Bosch of Applied Sciences (Bachelor)	NL	28	22	29	57*	55*	74*
	EU	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non EU	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Total	28	24	29	57	55	88

Inflow students programmes landscape architecture 2013-2018 (Source: DSL)

\* Undivided: Management of the Living Environment programme, in the 2e year students choose a specializaton (Landscape Design is 1 of 3 options).

While dealing with more complex tasks of internationalisation and the growing inflow of students, institutions are also expected to improve the quality of education and to develop new knowledge constantly. All this is not an easy task. Therefore, the DSL organised the symposium 'Crossing Borders in Landscape Architecture' at TU Delft on the significance of internationalisation for the discipline of landscape architecture at the end of 2018. What does internationalisation mean for the practice and competences of (future) landscape architects who work abroad and vice versa? How does internationalisation change education and curricula? What is needed to become successful in international research projects?


A colourful group of people with various nationalities and professional backgrounds attended the symposium. A likewise international group of speakers, including keynote speaker Lisa Mackenzie of Edinburgh College of Art, addressed a wide range of sub-themes and experiences, approaches and related obstacles such as the field of intercultural communication and ethical dilemmas. Reflection from the attendees revealed blind spots in Dutch thinking, which were occasionally painful but also valuable. It confirmed the overall image that at times it is uneasy, and that there are many challenges and that shaping internationalisation is a quest.

In this booklet, the themes of the symposium are on display and deepened. Teachers, students, researchers, and designers – from a Dutch and non-Dutch background - share their experiences and sketch their perspective, both professionally and personally. Themes such as ethics, cooperation across borders, and dealing with cultural differences are discussed. But also: how do you guarantee quality in education, and how do you work on international positioning of Dutch landscape architecture? All contributions together outline where we stand as a professional group in 2019.

In recent years, the discussion in the media on increased inflow of students from abroad has regularly narrowed down to Anglicisation and displacement of Dutch students and costs. Recently, the government announced measures aiming at 'bringing more balance' regarding the growing numbers of international students. Proposed measures are for example revising the rules for non-Dutch-speaking education, increasing the minimum institutional tuition fees for non-EEA students, and introducing the possibility of a capacity limitation (numerus fixus) for foreign-language programmes.<sup>3</sup>

In these economic driven reports the most important question is often overlooked, namely how internationalisation can add value to the quality of higher education and research, without losing its existing quality. With this publication, the DSL hopes to contribute to the discussion. It is the responsibility of universities to commit themselves to the quality of internationalisation in the interests of students, lecturers, researchers, professionals and Dutch society as a whole. We hope to inspire you to start talking and above all to keep the discussion going.

1 Nuffic publication 'Internationalisering in beeld 2018'.  
 2 Nuffic online article 2019, March 29. 'Nuffic publishes new figures for international students'  
 3 www.rijksoverheid.nl, More balance in internationalisation of higher education, news item, 06-09-2019.



**Name:** Yvo Suijs  
**Age:** 26  
**Working at:** Hort Couture  
landscape architecture  
(2015-2018) and studying at  
the University of Cape Town  
(2018-2020) in South Africa  
**Is originally from:**  
the Netherlands  
**Has been abroad since:**  
December 2015

*“The picture shows the environment of a new landscape architectural project near Cape Town, that consisted of a wildfire-resilient and nature-inclusive cluster of five eco cabins in the Kogelberg Nature Reserve.”*

***Have you noticed differences between Netherlands and South Africa in the working culture at universities and/or companies and in the approach to landscape architecture?***

The potential for landscape architecture in South African spaces is huge and extremely exciting, since many places have had no previous input from landscape architectural practice. Some pressing issues in which landscape architects in South Africa are involved include affordable and safe housing in the context of rapid urbanisation and informality, the preservation and public interface of important archaeological sites, the commemoration of indigenous knowledge and culture, and tackling the legacies of spatial inequality caused by historical injustice. It is this dynamic and complex environment which makes landscape architecture in this country such a challenge, but also so unique.

***What were your expectations of the other country?*** Much of my time in South Africa I felt like a tourist. Everything was new, exciting and an opportunity to gain experience and understand the country better. It may sound a bit obvious, but what keeps me surprised is the beauty of the landscape. Spectacular scenery combined with intricate detail can be found everywhere, including encounters that appear to have increased color saturation (like Instagram filters!).

***What has surprised you the most in the other country?*** The proximity to relatively intact biodiversity, wildlife and landscape, with, for example, over 8200 (and counting) plant species on Table Mountain alone, is something that few other countries in the world can top. Here, Proteas, Ericas, Daisies and Aloes mark the seasons providing justice to the title of ‘The Floral Kingdom’. Consequently, what’s not surprising at all is the amount of love people have here for their plants. While well-visited events such as plant fairs pop up every month, an annual ‘rare plant sale’ attracts hordes of people looking for the one-and-only. Plants in Cape Town are fashion icons, conversation starters and pet friends.

***Has going abroad changed anything about you or your way of thinking?***

I have come to realise that the best way to learn and find your place in a foreign country is to let go of your own habits for a while and observe, listen and ask questions. South Africa has many different cultures and beliefs. It is important to take a step back and keep an open mind. There are many different truths and views to life and space in South Africa, many of which I was totally ignorant of when I first arrived. This diversity in philosophical paradigms has begun to reflect in the design of spaces in South Africa, but still has a way to go to reach a sense of inclusivity for all the people that live here.



Workshop on first Masterplan sketch in Accra, Ghana. FABRICations

# The ethics of working abroad

Interview with Eric Frijters and Peter Veenstra

Author: Joost Zonneveld

*What do Dutch landscape architects do abroad? And especially: what are their experiences in other cultures and political systems? It is not surprising that working abroad asks for rather diverse approaches. Working abroad also makes clear that the Netherlands is quite exceptional in certain design approaches. A conversation with Eric Frijters from FABRICations and Peter Veenstra from LOLA Landscape Architects about working on projects abroad.*

Both Frijters and Veenstra have been interested in working abroad from the start of their companies. Veenstra: "All three partners come from Wageningen and went to Rotterdam because of the international design culture. The composition of our office has always been very international. And the first competition that we won was a European competition for a location in Portugal." Frijters says that his office was put on the international track by winning the Prix de Rome in the Netherlands (in 2010) and not because the Netherlands suddenly became too small for the young company. "Dutch clients thought it was a bit scary. However, it turned out that there was much more appreciation for prize-winning companies abroad. And that was an advantage when it came to getting assignments."

## **Abroad starts at the border**

Fabrications even opened a second office in Lille, France, as there was a great deal of interest in an office that does not present itself as a purely landscape architecture firm. Frijters: "We want to promote healthy urban ecosystems through our research and design. That can be done through architecture, urban design or landscape. That broad view on the city caught on in France, until the economic crisis really struck there too." "We were particularly enthusiastic about the substantive involvement of the French. There were long meetings, but it was always about whether the final image suited the story we wanted to create. Sometimes much in detail. We were not used to such involvement and that was very refreshing compared to the Dutch approach."

Like Frijters in France, Veenstra has work experience in a foreign country relatively close to the Netherlands. "You would think of Belgium as a 'Holland South plus', but it is a completely different world that you end up in. In the Netherlands, for example, we are used to making agreements



View across the main promenade, Forest Sports Park, Guang Ming, Shenzhen. LOLA Landscape Architects, TALLER Architects en Land+Civilization Compositions

and making decisions during meetings. In Flanders we noticed that things are often less structured and influential figures can reverse decisions at any given moment. Sometimes, it happened that a plan was repeated five times because there was another director who did not agree with it.”

“But there is also something in return,” says Veenstra, “more design freedom in Belgium. In the center of Torhout we wanted to make the city green around a central square. That greenery should not only be a counterpart to the square, but also something ‘of the people’. We then proposed to turn it into seven separate gardens that refer to the seven deadly sins: laziness, lust, gluttony, et cetera. That idea was immediately embraced. And the mayor enthusiastically promoted it during the public presentation. In the Netherlands, something like this had never chance of realisation.”

#### Adjust to other mores

LOLA and FABRICations have also done projects in countries far beyond Europe. Frijters: “Even though our fees do not fit in with the daily practice of Ghana, for example, we also like to do assignments in such countries. It sometimes requires a different way of working, but it usually provides new insights. In the Netherlands we are so over-organised that we sometimes forget how we can easily solve problems. For example, when it comes to circularity, the kind of projects like in Ghana are a revelation for us. We include that approach in other projects.”

Frijters indicates that, after the French period, FABRICations has so far mainly carried out research and consultancy assignments abroad. “We recently decided that we also want to implement projects abroad, but that means that you end up in a different world. It really means investing and getting to know the mores of a country.” He cites the example of Semarang, in Indonesia, where a preliminary study by Frijters and his colleagues has already been done and where various water-related problems have prompted ‘the city to be a healthy organised system’. “You can focus on the content, but the diplomatic side is just as important to get something done. That also applies to all other countries, from Africa to North America and Asia. The question is always: who is ultimately the boss and with whom do you have to work together to achieve something?” In short: it is not uncommon to see an opaque world of formal and non-formal hierarchical relationships and decision-making processes.

However, according to Veenstra, the opposite may also be the case. “In China, production is all-important, so you simply have to be involved.” That sometimes leads to complex issues. For example, Veenstra sees a great deal of waste of material in projects, which leads to the necessary questions based on the sustainability principles of his office. The same applies to an example of a project in which Veenstra wanted to do more than just build a beautiful park by also connecting with local associations and knowledge institutions. “Because the pressure to deliver a park is so great, other elements in a plan have no priority. It is extremely difficult to influence such processes. We might have been able to do that in the Netherlands, but in a country like China that is not easy, certainly not as a foreigner.”



Final Masterplan, Accra, Ghana. FABRICations

While working abroad can be complicated because of other working methods and decision-making processes, it also leads to insights into how things should not be done. Frijters: “We have done a project in São Paulo, where the industrial heart and important access roads of the city lie in a low-lying area. Very often, this leads to the biggest problems when it has rained hard. In the Netherlands we can hardly imagine this, because we are so used to careful planning.” Still, according to Veenstra, things can be much better in the Netherlands. He cites China as an example of a country where the ‘sponge city’ idea, in which a sustainable water system comes first, is implemented in every aspect of a project. “All parties involved in project development accept that as an important condition in a project. That is not only necessary, but really very special.”

Another example is the directness between what Veenstra calls ‘design and reality’. “Design proposals are plotted in the field, of which you receive a drone video a day after you have supplied an autocad drawing. And of almost all design components, a few meters are made for a first viewing. So as a designer, you can still make changes if necessary. We should do the same in the Netherlands.”

#### Everyone has the right to clean water

Despite bumps and lessons, working abroad also means that ethical issues come into play. How do Frijters and Veenstra deal with the political circumstances in which they end up? Both seem to think in a nuanced way. Veenstra: “We found it interesting to do a project in Israel and in the Gaza Strip at the same time. This resulted in interesting conversations with both clients. Ultimately, we take the position that we design for citizens who are not responsible for the policies of a country. We did, however, run an assignment for the Saudi state once. But it is often difficult: you read the newspaper and try to form an opinion. And once you work on a project in a country, you will get much more inside information. That sometimes makes you doubt, certainly. However it is too late by then, because you have to stick to contracts.” Frijters expresses himself in similar words. “In Bangladesh, we were driven around with an armed column because of the political situation. This provides a special atmosphere during the site visit. That was not very pleasant. However, once we could speak directly with residents during meetings, the distance created was broken, and we noticed that they were very interested. Regardless of the political context, all people have the right to clean drinking water and a healthy living environment. That interest plays a role in every situation for us.”

Yet Frijters indicates that an assignment in North Korea is not an obvious choice. “And it depends on the type of assignment. Although I find the bunker typology interesting, I would not like to design an underground bunker for a dictator.” Moreover, it is difficult to properly assess a political situation. Frijters cites Albania as an example where a new ambitious and young generation wants to move forward. “But what if those new rulers suddenly start to behave differently in ten or twenty years? Can we foresee that?”



Community meeting in Accra, Ghana. FABRICations



Bird's eye view of the regeneration of unused quarry in Be'er Sheva, Israel. LOLA Landscape Architects, Scape, Topotek1, Moria-Sekely.

### Plans that work

According to Frijters, it is “arrogant to think that we have a role in such political issues.” He does think that there are not many countries in the world where the space around us is handled with such care as in the Netherlands. According to him, this knowledge is a good export product. “If we can contribute to this in the local political context, then that’s fine. But I think we should not go so far as to impose our principles on other countries.” Veenstra thinks so too, even though he thinks that, despite the strong Dutch tradition of landscape architecture, it is grossly exaggerated that we, for example in the field of water, are able to help the rest of the world with our knowledge and insights. “Dutch agencies understand the way to bring different stakeholders together in order to realise an integral plan. But abroad there are often not the conditions to subsequently implement these types of plans.” According to Veenstra, it comes down to convincing plans, something that characterises Dutch landscape architecture: clear in design, simple, conceptual and powerful in appearance. Frijters: “My image is that Dutch design practices are successful because they are able to translate complex plans into simple spatial principles. As a result, these designs not only look good, but they also deliver the performance that we expect. These are plans that work.”





Students of the master track LA of TU Delft during fieldwork at a quarry in south Limburg

# Daily education in landscape architecture at TU Delft

Inge Bobbink (Delft University of Technology)

*Since the master track Landscape Architecture at the TU Delft was founded in September 2010, it has attracted an increasing number of applications from international students. Inge Bobbink, co-founder and coordinator of the master track, reflects on the impact of this development for the daily affairs in the education, addressing both gains and challenges.*

The master track of Landscape Architecture is quite young. However, the tradition of teaching landscape architecture at TU Delft has been a part of the faculty's curriculum since the 1940s when Jan Bijhouwer filled a lectureship. Landscape architecture was later expanded and formalised as a specialisation within the Faculty of Architecture, led for nearly 20 years by Frans Maas as a professor. In the late 20th and early 21st century, the chair of Landscape Architecture made great strides under the leadership of professor Clemens Steenbergen.

The group published several internationally recognised books on the fundamentals of the profession<sup>1</sup>. This work finally led to the decision of the University to offer a complete master track of landscape architecture, which started in September 2010, shortly after the retirement of Steenbergen, who was followed by professor Dirk Sijmons.

Within the faculty today, called the faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, the track is one of the five master programs which holds a keen interest and expertise on spatial design. Unexpectedly and despite no advertising, the significant interest in the LA track came from international students instead of attracting students from our broad bachelor of architecture program.

During the years, the number of internationals has increased, and therefore the selection of the portfolio needed to become stricter. Today, we are overwhelmed by the number of applicants and understand that we have to find a way to balance the number of students according to their national background to be able to learn from one another.

Students come from Austria, Brazil, Bulgari, China, Costa Rica, Ecuador, England, Ethiopia, Greece, India, Italy, Peru, Russia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Taiwan, Thailand, and more. I am sure that I forget a few countries. They are all different. If we want to learn from each other, we need to take time to understand each other's cultural background, study goals, and interests. To do so we need more contact-time and that implies a limitation on the numbers of international students. At the same time, we, the staff, need to realise the impact of our education on the students and the spin-off of it throughout the world.



Graduation exhibition opened by Dirk Sijmons

As part of the portfolio that is required in the application process, students need to argue why they like to come to the Netherlands. One of the quotes we gladly read is: *'We come to the Netherlands to learn about the Dutch/Delft approach<sup>2</sup>. The landscape of the Netherlands is explicit, and the design approaches are interesting and developing.'* That is why, within the program, we strictly offer Dutch sites for all our design courses during the first year.

Since our discipline relates to the specific characteristics of a place, we believe that, in addition to the help from the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the site, visiting the site regularly is fundamental to understanding the site specifics. Moreover, next to teaching theory and methods, we invite Dutch landscape architects to discuss their work. Especially the topic of water management and the change in which the stakeholders start to understand the importance of including design concepts like adaptive approaches or building by nature, is of great interest for our students and strongly appreciated.

In the second year of the master track, the graduation year, we start to learn from the students. Most of them formulate an assignment in their home country in which they like to test their knowledge gained. To understand these new contexts, we (the mentors) need to be informed very well by the students. Questions like, how do people spend their day, what is the climate like, how does the area smell, what kind of plants and other elements are indigenous etcetera need to be illustrated by drawings as well as verbally explained. Getting to know the context is essential, a phase in which we all learn immensely. A great start to do a good project! After graduation most of the internationals stay for one year, some for a few years, to work in practices, depending on the possibility of getting a visa. As time passes by our graduates and of course our PhD students become part of our international network. To keep in touch with Alumni is part of our educational system.

Not only the relationship between teachers and students is vital, moreover, students learn from each other. A few years ago, I guided a student from Taiwan and a student from China during their master thesis. As part of the work, we discussed different lifestyles and the possibilities of people, for whom we design, to ventilate their ideas of the public space. The discussion turned into a political debate, which felt a bit uncomfortable. Eventually these two students became friends, even though they sharply disagreed on specific topics and have still the same view. Students say: *'We now have friends all over the world.'* During the summer break, they travel a lot and visit one another. Inviting each other to see and experience the most exciting landscapes and projects in their home country. By building-up this network, they help each other to find jobs and share knowledge.

Not all students feel happy in Delft; for some, the culture difference is notable, for example very direct tutors or tutors who wait for them to come up with ideas. Not every student can cope with the freedom they get mainly in the second year; they are not used to this approach.



Barbara Prezelj, student of the LA mastertrack, wins the second prize of Archiprix 2018

Luckily students help one another. That is possible because of the size of the group of students in one study-year, which is preferably around 30 students. This allows them to get to know one another very well.

Attracting so many young talented students from all over the world holds an enormous responsibility for all universities. If we are cautious about it, on the intellectual and psychological level, we can contribute making the world a little bit more open-minded to achieve changes for the better which lies in the core of our discipline. Therefore, we need to keep on exchanging thoughts and discuss ideas, in more detail, not only within our faculty but among all universities.

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Local workshop as part of the design study City of the Future, described by Mathias Lehner and Gertjan Jobse as a 'typical Dutch approach'. Picture taken by BNA.

# Collaborating internationally in the professional practice

Interview with Gertjan Jobse and Mathias Lehner

Author: Hedwig van der Linden

*What is the role of internationalisation in the professional practice? In this interview, Gertjan Jobse, delegate of the NVTL<sup>1</sup> at the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA)<sup>2</sup> and Mathias Lehner, program manager International at BNA<sup>3</sup> and active within the Architects' Council Europe (ACE) share their perspectives on internationalisation in landscape architecture and architecture. What effects and challenges do they observe?*

You are both representatives of professional associations on the topic of internationalisation within the professional practice of landscape architecture, Gertjan, and architecture, Mathias. Naturally, the topic of internationalisation is part of your job. What does internationalisation in architecture and landscape architecture mean to you?

**Mathias Lehner:** Today internationalisation in both landscape architecture and architecture is about international exchange. But internationalisation can also help to spread risks, to discover where you can add value and to professionalize your practice. For many offices working abroad is also a way to sharpen their profile and brand themselves. They work abroad since it contributes to their reputation, in the eyes of both Dutch and international clients. And finally, some offices experience the so-called 'war on talent': they need to be attractive in order to attract qualified staff.

**Gertjan Jobse:** The NVTL is an open association that welcomes all professionals with a keen interest in landscape architecture. IFLA is the worldwide federation of landscape architects, representing 77 national associations. Our shared focus is to develop and promote the landscape architecture profession and its role in society, in partnership with related disciplines. As delegates, together with Niek Hazendonk, we represent our association and its members. It is a voluntary job, but a very rewarding one. We exchange experiences of landscape planning and design within an international network.

**What is the impact of internationalisation on the disciplines of architecture and landscape architecture?**

**Mathias Lehner:** In the Netherlands we can see that those offices that were really committed to work internationally had a big boost. However, in terms of turnovers, only 4-6% of the revenues from our members derives from international work. These numbers correspond with other



Practical Training College Sangha, Mali. LEVS Architects

European countries. But if you would only consider data of the larger offices, these figures look differently. During the crisis, there were larger offices who had 98% of their revenues from abroad. Therefore it needs quite some experience to develop an International Program that is attractive to such a heterogeneous group. We emphasise to our members that working internationally takes time; building up a relation with one's client and realising a project is a process of years.

**Gertjan Jobse:** The profession of landscape architecture is developing rapidly worldwide, and internationalisation is visible in many ways; in the increased collaboration and mobility, in the exchange of knowledge and skills and in international leadership. Working internationally makes you aware of the challenges our world faces and your own influence on it. Think of climate change adaptation or inclusive urbanisation. The work of Dutch landscape architects is appreciated internationally, especially in water management, regional planning and green liveable cities. Internationalisation enables Dutch landscape architects to extend their portfolio while their clients benefit from their experience and skills. As an association and through IFLA World, we contribute by developing international standards of education and professional practice. In Europe, we are working on the recognition of the profession of landscape architecture across the European Union, something that architects already enjoy. This will enable landscape architects to work in different European countries as well.

**Mathias Lehner:** We distinguish different approaches when looking at architectural offices; offices that focus on the concept and the design are not so much involved in the later stages of the building process. They deliver a very strong idea or concept, often with a typically Dutch approach.

#### **What does a Dutch approach mean and what is the difference with approaches they have abroad?**

**Gertjan Jobse:** The strength of the Dutch approach is its focus on the broader context, understanding the local circumstances and the processes shaping the landscape. The Netherlands has a long tradition in designing and transforming land. You may call that a Dutch approach, but it is actually just good practice.

**Mathias Lehner:** I think we can speak of a Dutch approach, which has evolved out of very fundamental circumstances and characteristics of the Netherlands. We learned to protect ourselves and build dykes together. There is a culture of approaching the other and looking for a common denominator. Secondly, in the Netherlands there is a tradition of trust when it comes to design. Trust in designers, architects, landscape architects, who can collectively make a difference.



IFLA Europe exhibition on European landscape architecture in Ostrava and Krakow, Poland

**Gertjan Jobse:** There is a large trust in both our professions in the Netherlands and we respect each other's skills and both professions have their own merit and knowledge. For successful collaboration mutual recognition is key. You may call working on an egalitarian basis in interdisciplinary teams, 'the Dutch approach'. This is an asset we promote, and it is good to see this approach is increasingly recognised and valued internationally.

**The BNA and the NVTL initiated the 'research by design studies' City of the Future and Region of the Future. Are these kind of studies part of the Dutch approach?**

**Gertjan Jobse:** The project Regions of the Future is a good example of regional design for policy development. The project is initiated by the professional associations BNSP and NVTL. Landscape architects in collaboration with other disciplines and domains worked on regional perspectives for four regions, using design research and imagination to come to grips with the regional impact of policy choices at a national level. It shows an example of the strong tradition and role of landscape architects in these processes in The Netherlands.

**Mathias Lehner:** On our publication about the 'City of the Future', which we also published in English because of its wider relevance, we received very positive feedback from our European partners. At the same time we hear that this way of collaboration in research between architects, stakeholders and potential clients is rather unique. We think that these studies are important since they can inform both the design and the entrepreneurial process. For BNA, one of the core topics is entrepreneurship; architecture offices being economically healthy and therefore are able to deliver high quality. But this search for quality also requires clients, that recognise value and are able to assess it.

**Is there a reason that clients of 'research by design studies' are hard to find abroad?**

**Mathias Lehner:** Maybe this is partly related to the cultural context of leadership. There is leadership style that requires having a clear vision of where you want to go; right from the start you have all details in mind in order to instruct people carefully. And on the other hand there is leadership style that allows doubt and has space for getting informed.

**Gertjan Jobse:** Research by design thrives in an open culture and good governance setting. In the Netherlands, clients understand its role and importance. Landscape and urban planning and design are getting increasingly complex and this complexity cannot be unraveled in a traditional manner, so there is a need to look for different and non-conventional solutions. Research by design can be used to explore different alternative options and scenarios. The use of sketches, maps



and models also stimulates collaboration between various disciplines and smoothens communication.

Regional design does exist abroad, for example in Germany, France, Belgium and Spain, but only a few countries practice research by design. In some of the Nordic countries it is used to explore and analyze a certain situation or problem for a plan, and not just as a research method by itself. In North America and some countries in Asia-Pacific like China regional design is performed by students in their thesis, while it is less common in their practice.

**Mathias Lehner:** About the challenge of finding solutions for complex questions: in some European countries design competitions are a very important instrument for a client to see different kinds of possible answers. This is an instrument which also generates solutions. But from an entrepreneurial perspective, I think it is questionable if an open and unpaid design competition is a good model taking into account the amount of time invested without remuneration.

**We can conclude that the way of commissioning and approaching architecture and landscape architecture projects is culturally defined. Let's move to the differences in outcome of the projects. Gertjan, you organized an exhibition on European Landscape architecture. Could you tell more about it and what you learned from this project?**

**Gertjan Jobse:** This is the first European wide exhibition of landscape architecture. The aim of the exhibition is to show the work of landscape architects to professionals and the public. We asked the professional associations within IFLA Europe, to send their best executed projects of the past 5 years. As a result, we collected 61 projects from 24 European countries. From this rich harvest, we learned that the way the profession is practiced is culturally dependent and projects differ per country. Some take an ecological approach of park design and landscaping, while others show state-of-the-art design of public space and there are several large-scale regional plans for rivers and urban fringes.

**To conclude, what are the challenges of internationalisation?**

**Gertjan Jobse:** At the IFLA World Congress in Oslo in September 2019, the topics on the agenda were related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as climate change, community participation, health and food security. These topics are becoming part of the curriculum of landscape architects. But not one single discipline can deal with these questions alone; this requires collaboration. Research by design can facilitate collaboration and help exploring these goals and the possible impact.


Another challenge is intercultural communication, between different cultures but also between disciplines. Internationalisation in our disciplines, is about people being exposed to other cultures and dealing

with those differences. The challenge for both our professions is to remain inclusive and have an open attitude.

**Mathias Lehner:** I wouldn't frame this situation as a challenge, but rather as an opportunity. Many global challenges cannot be solved if you don't work together. In international collaboration for example, you get many different perspectives. After all, I think you only arrive at innovative solutions if things are complex and you are open to confront yourself with something different, something new.

**Gertjan Jobse:** International collaboration is necessary and can be very hard at times but is always rewarding and enriching in the end. My advice is to have an explorative mind and be willing to learn from others. Thus, international collaboration helps you to grow not only as a professional, but also as a human.

1 The Netherlands Association for Garden- and landscape architecture  
2 International Federation of Landscape Architects  
3 The Royal Institute of Dutch Architects, uniting almost 1100 offices or 2/3 of all Dutch architects



**Name:** Ola Gabrys

**Age:** 30

**Working at:** ECHO Urban Design  
in Rotterdam

**Is originally from:** Poland

**Is currently working in:**

The Netherlands

**Has been abroad:** since 2013

*“Climbing is my hobby. Most of the time I do it indoors, but climbing outside is always way more fun. The Blok op Zuid in Rotterdam is the closest to outdoor bouldering experience in the city (although artificial).”*

**What are the differences between the Netherlands and Poland in the approach to landscape architecture?**

If it comes to the approach to design it has always been obvious to me that Polish landscape architecture mostly focuses on private gardens rather than on public space and big scale landscape works. I'm hoping to see a shift in the way of thinking about landscape architecture in Poland in the near future. Projects like Vistula Boulevards in Warsaw realized in 2017 or Pocket Parks in Cracow from 2019 are a proof that the change is coming. Finally, I hope for the realisation that public space is there for the people to use and not only to pass through.

**What has surprised you the most in the other country?**

I struggled with the bureaucracy and how strict everything was. I was expecting the Netherlands to be more flexible.

**Has going abroad changed anything about you or your way of thinking?**

Looking back, I see that pretty much everything about me has changed since I moved to the Netherlands. But moving wasn't the only factor. I just grew up, started my independent life here. Living abroad has shaped me in a way Poland or any other country could never do. I've soaked in certain values and experiences and that has made me more critical of my home country. And that in return makes it possible to do things right in many aspects of everyday life.

**What do you recommend to students who are considering to go abroad for work?**

I would say, before you make the move, visit the place you want to settle in as many times as you can. Get to know the culture and people. See if you are going to be happy to fit in. Take a beginners language course and try to make friends.

EDUCATION



Field visit to the project area, in Pune, India

# A case study on sustainable urban agriculture in India

Author: Adrian Noortman  
(Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences)

*Is it worthwhile to embark on projects far outside Europe? The answer is yes, according to the experience of staff and students of the Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences. The case study on sustainable urban agriculture that they conducted in Pune in India has, despite several challenges, been a tremendously enriching experience, according to all involved.*

## Introduction; looking beyond Europe

The landscape, as well as the field of Garden- and landscape architecture, extends far beyond national borders. In fact, it is impossible to understand the origins of the profession without being familiar with the history of garden architecture in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

Probably in every bachelor and master program in garden and landscape architecture in Europe, attention is paid to exemplary projects and good practices in other countries. Thanks to the European Erasmus Programme, student and staff exchange between European countries has become much easier, after it was first implemented in 1987. Because of the Erasmus programme, students from all over Europe go abroad for internships or an Erasmus Exchange period.

Over the past decades students and staff of the Garden and Landscape Design programme at Van Hall Larenstein (VHL) were only occasionally involved in projects outside Europe. However, this might change in the near future. One reason for this is that VHL focusses more on international cooperation, especially with a number of *focus countries* (inside as well as) outside Europe, such as the United States, Indonesia, India and China. Professorships in a range of different fields of study were started, which generate research projects all over the world, also offering new opportunities for students in the Garden and Landscape Design programme.

So, should we broaden our scope and look beyond Europe more often? And if so, what will this mean for the content and focus of the curriculum? Maybe the best way to answer this question, is to actually engage in such projects, as we did in 2015-2016, when students and staff of the Garden and Landscape Design Programme at VHL took part in a project in Pune, India. By taking a closer look at this project, we try to find some guidelines for future choices.



Nanded City



College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences in Baramati

### Nanded City Urban Farm

The Nanded City Urban Farm project was initiated by the professorship ‘Sustainable agribusiness in metropolitan areas’, under the responsibility of VHL-lector Rik Eweg. The department of Garden and Landscape Design at VHL was asked to contribute to the project by making a master plan for a strip of land on the edge of a river. The project area was part of an extensive new urban development in the outskirts of the city of Pune (Poona), India. The project involved the design of a multifunctional urban agriculture area, developing a profitable business model, mapping ecological values and coming up with proposals for circular systems for the use and treatment of nutrients, waste, energy and water.

In Nanded City, an astonishing amount of 25,000 apartments will be built, providing housing for about 140,000 people and work areas for another 50,000 people. In phase two alone the amount of apartments adds up to about 90 high-rise buildings of 22 floors each. The project area consists of a narrow strip of 86 acres (about 35 hectares), along the river Mutha, reserved for urban agriculture, recreation and nature purposes.

Four Dutch (forth year) students from different programmes at VHL participated in the project, as well as four (second year) students from our local partner institute, the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences in Baramati. After a period of preparation in the Netherlands, the Dutch students stayed in Nanded City for six weeks. After this they finished the project in the Netherlands. During their stay, they went on field visits, worked on the project and had meetings with the local project team, responsible for the whole development. During weekly meetings the students presented their progress on the project. Professors were only around during the second and fifth week.

### ‘Another world’

Compared to the Netherlands, India is ‘another world’, especially when you come from a farm and haven’t travelled outside Europe before, as was the case for one of the students. Much knowledge that is acquired by the students at home, does not apply in India. Think of landscape geology and landscape types, plant and animal species, climate, agriculture systems and crops, etc. The problems are also different, as well as the landscape policy and planning system. In an article related to the Nanded City project lector Rik Eweg describes the planning system in Maharashtra, the sub-state to which Pune belongs, as follows:

“There is no such thing as a specific landscape policy in Maharashtra. The spatial policy of the state is dominated by the enormous task of facilitating the housing, infrastructure and activities of the rapidly growing cities of millions. Area development is in private hands and is driven by the market, whereby the government sees it as its task to realise favourable conditions for this. Landscape development is also seen as a private task.”<sup>1</sup>



During the project, the developer dumped tons of topsoil from the adjacent building sites in large parts of the project area, burying the trunks of existing trees up to two meters or more in displaced soil.

Social conventions are also different, such as the interaction between students and professors. Whereas in the Netherlands professors and students are used to personal contact and engage in direct interaction, in India the interaction between students and their professors is much more formal.<sup>2</sup> We teach our students to be pro-active and take initiative, whereas in India, students are more reserved and wait for the professor to tell them what to do.

#### **Working on a real project**

Since bachelor education (at VHL) is mainly directed towards appropriation of 'applied knowledge and skills', we like to work on real projects. For students, this is very interesting, but also much more challenging than working on a fictive assignment in the studio.

That a real project can offer unexpected challenges became clear only minutes after arriving at the project office in Nanded City. Without even having seen the site, project engineers asked the students to draw up a proposal for the positioning of a sewage treatment plant and a solid waste treatment plant in the project area. Later that day, during the field visit, another challenge was encountered; it became clear that the developer dumped tons of topsoil from the adjacent building sites in large parts of the project area, burying the trunks of existing trees up to two meters or more in displaced soil. During their stay in Nanded City, this situation continuously changed, making it almost impossible for the students to map the existing situation, let alone come up with a plan for the site.

#### **Reflection on the students learning experience**

Despite the fact that many things were new to them, the students proved to be quite able to adapt to the new circumstances and deal with the specific demands of the project. For the students, working on a real project, in an international context and in an interdisciplinary team, made the learning experience very intensive. The fact that they were on their own for almost six weeks, and had to perform presentations before the project team, made them aware that they needed to plan their work carefully and take initiative and responsibility for the project.

The students discovered that the Nanded City project involved many design problems, that were quite similar to the ones they have to deal with in the Netherlands. Many smart solutions regarding circular systems and sustainability were already applied in the project, which made the discussion about these topics educational for all the parties involved. It showed that learning in these kind of projects goes both ways. Working on the project also enriched the students' experience in other ways, through connecting with another culture and discovering exotic landscapes and ecosystems, thus expanding their view and understanding of the world.



Working on the project also enriched the students' experience through connecting with another culture.

### Some conclusions

So, was it worthwhile for students and staff to embark on this projects far outside Europe? We certainly think that it was! The project in India has been a tremendously enriching experience, for all involved. The contribution to the project in India has been quite large and may lead to the actual realisation of an innovative sustainable urban agriculture project in India, that can serve as an example for other projects.

Of course not all experiences with the project were positive. Before the project started, it seemed an ideal opportunity to explore the possibilities of cooperation with our Indian partner institute. Differences in didactic approach however, as well as the difference in the students' study progress and the limited time that could be spent together on the project made it difficult for the Indian and Dutch students to work closely together on the project. Also other issues had to be solved, like the problem that the landscape design students weren't able to finish the site design within their study course. This meant that a substantially larger input was needed from the responsible staff, which involved rescheduling other tasks in order to be able to finish the work on time.

The answer to the question if we should broaden our scope outside Europe was positively confirmed by this project, as it also was by another project that we previously did in Kenia and a project that we are currently doing in Rwanda. But taking on projects such as these, should always be considered carefully. Before starting it should be assessed what we have to offer to our foreign partners and think about the potential learning effect and meaning that a project can have. Organisational matters, such as project planning and management, staffing and of course financing of the project, should be solved and well organised to ensure that the project can have a positive impact for all parties involved.

1 Eweg, R. (2016). India's stadslandbouw is commercieel en zakelijk. Landwerk #5/6, 2016.

2 This example refers in the first place to the situation at Baramati College, our partner institute in India.

# EDUCATION



Excursion of master students TU Delft in Copenhagen, Denmark



# Studying landscape architecture in the Netherlands

## A bicycle ride with ups and downs

Authors: Catalina Rey Hernández & Rapa Surajaras

*Obtaining your master's degree means more than studying - especially if you come from abroad. Two recent graduates from the mastertrack Landscape Architecture at Delft University of Technology share their experiences of a two-year study program, where they were challenged with hills in a flat country.*

It is well known that the international scenario of an increasingly globalized world has led to subsequent knowledge exchange in higher education. This situation creates new expectations and opportunities for students looking for quality education and new learning experiences. Consequently, studying abroad and getting international experience has become vital in the development of academic research and in the build-up of knowledge in almost all disciplines, including landscape architecture.

In this context, it felt natural for us as students to follow an educational program abroad after finishing undergraduate studies in our home countries. Therefore, the following reflection aims to share a mutual experience of studying landscape architecture in the Netherlands from the perspective of an international student.

### Feeling the border

Moving abroad feels like riding a bicycle: The road is not always easy because, along the pleasant moments, there are also muddy paths and hills to climb.

As with any new experience, starting a study program comes with much excitement and expectation of a new environment and in this case, of a complete strange atmosphere to meet and explore.

These explorations started with a full immersion into the Dutch Landscape through our master studies of Landscape Architecture at Delft University of Technology, where the first approach to the discipline was to get out of the studio to experience this landscape by ourselves. With these field trips, we were able to comprehend the particular Dutch vision about land and water management and how this directly affects the way people perceive the landscape and how they relate to their own environment, creating a strong feeling of identity with their surroundings.

This practical educational approach helped us to get a better grip on what we were starting to learn and also contributed to a better understanding



Excursion of master students TU Delft in Copenhagen, Denmark

of our new hosting country and its culture. In that sense, this complete immersion in the Dutch Landscape illustrated the differences between the Netherlands and our own home countries.

We realized that coming from different contexts meant limitation in relating this specific landscape to our own situations and backgrounds. In this regard, the Dutch and European context created a substantial border to our study. It required more time to fully understand the character of the landscape and the involvement of people in maintaining the landscape. Moreover, this also led to the difficulty we found in linking these new insights back to our own landscape conditions.

However, the learning process of understanding an unfamiliar environment contributed to the development of interaction skills between our new classmates and mentors. Consequently, we did not only gain knowledge academically, but we also learned to interrelate in a situation of different opinions where interconnecting knowledge, discussion, and exchange of ideas enrich the design exploration and contribute to creating meaningful proposals.

Being constantly exposed to an international environment where everything is unknown pushes us to confront different world visions and perspectives. In that sense, studying abroad not only puts contrasting people together, but it encourages an exchange of culture and opinions, creating stronger critical thinking. Particularly, we had the privilege of meeting and connecting with people from all over the world, which helped us to establish an international network not only in the academic field but also on a personal level.

However, the development of personal connections also led us to discover a hidden border that was covered by the excitement of the first experiences.

As we started to create new human interactions, we confronted a strong obstacle to communication and mutual understanding. To be able to study abroad, we all came with a relatively good academic level of English. Nonetheless, English is not our first language, not for us, and not for our host country. We managed to express our opinions and ideas regarding projects and academic matters in a clear way, but as humans, we also need to interact and express our personal feelings. In that regard, language became an essential barrier in expressing ourselves profoundly (to speak our minds truly).

With these language limitations, we started to face a border we had not expected.

#### Facing the border

Coming from a car-oriented city, where our body is used to a controlled environment and more extended periods (amount) of daylight, the Dutch



Presentation by Catalina during her study

weather and lifestyle affected us in ways we were not expecting. In a matter of no time, the sun has disappeared from our day time, and it has been replaced by rain and wind. As newcomers, we tried to adjust to the Dutch routine, but regularly cycling against these unfamiliar climate conditions revealed our physical body limitations. A climate barrier blocked us from productivity, and we experienced a period where our brain could not function according to our academic tasks.

Along with the consciousness of the knowledge and language borders, this uphill ride worked as a wake-up call to realize that the boundaries are there, and in order to properly adapt ourselves, we needed to face and cross them.

#### **Crossing the border**

After the first winter, we started to rise above the borders and gradually adapted to the obstacles. The realization of our limitations has shown us that the biggest border is our perspective towards the new things we are encountering.

Confronted by this situation we can choose to go against it or just try to ride over it. This can be reflected in how our perspective changed throughout the way we studied landscape architecture.

Before coming to the Netherlands, we all had different expectations of the knowledge we could gain from the study program. Some of us were looking to develop research skills and abilities, while others craved for practical experiences of creative design. In that sense, the landscape architecture track offered us to look at this matter from a completely different perspective where the essential part of landscape design might be the process rather than the design outcome itself.

Without being aware of it, we have developed a thinking process through a trial and error method under the concept of research by design. During this learning path, our perspective progressively changed from an individual design interest towards a more collective way of interaction where the research process has derived from a number of different academic papers and studies from all over the world. The design process has been discussed and experimented, together with professors, and ideas have been exchanged between our international classmates.

The outcome may end up the same or totally different from what we expected at the very beginning. However, the whole process has broadened our perspective and provided us a stronger argument for our landscape design.

#### **Ending the journey**

After the ups and downs in our bicycle ride, we are finally reaching a flat route, where there will be more hills waiting ahead, but thanks to this first

journey, we already have the skills and tools to cross borders. We believe that internationalization in landscape architecture education is the key to the learning process because it is not only about studying; it is more about the life experiences and the process of gaining skills to adapt ourselves to a new environment. Furthermore, landscape architecture is a growing discipline that still needs to be explored in different dimensions, and a more international approach is necessary for the upcoming challenges such as climate change.

Finally, the conceptualization of borders can be seen not as a physical barrier, but as a milestone marking a path towards an unknown territory.



**Name:** Sven Vogelaar  
**Age:** 22  
**Studying at:** HAS Den Bosch University of Applied Sciences  
**Is originally from:** the Netherlands  
**Has been on an exchange:** to Finland during January until May 2019

*“This picture is taken in Koli Finland, a beautiful nature reserve 40 km away from the university city.”*

**Have you noticed differences between Netherlands and Finland in the working culture on universities, in the way of teaching and in the approach to landscape architecture?**

The biggest difference in culture is that Dutch people are far more direct and straight to the point. If we think something we will say it directly. The Finnish people have the tendency to wait until someone asks them what they think. I think that their approach towards landscape architecture is a bit less developed or complicated than here in the Netherlands. The reason for this is that the Netherlands is far denser populated than Finland is. This means that every meter has to be used in an efficient way. Finland still has an abundance of space that isn't being used next to space used for forest development. Therefore there is no reason or pressure to put as much functions and efficiency into the development of the public space.

**What were your expectations of Finland? What has surprised you the most in the other country?**

A lot of people told me that the Finnish people are extremely introvert and obsessed with sauna 's. Both of these stereotypes are kind of true. The Finnish people are indeed a lot less extrovert than the Dutch are, until you put some alcohol in them. Then you end up singing Sweet home Alabama at the karaoke around six in the morning (true story).

**Has going abroad changed anything about you?**

It surely changed a lot. During my time in Finland I was working and hanging out with people of several different nationalities. I learned a lot about the situations in other countries, their views on politics and point of view on many more topics. Hearing certain things by person, instead of through the news, changes the way you think.

What has changed about myself is that I'm less scared of things I have never done before.

**What do you recommend to students who are considering to go abroad for an exchange?**

I definitely recommend other students to go abroad for a few months. I find that stepping out of your comfort zone is good for your personal development. Since you are on your own in the beginning you are basically forced to do everything on your own. By doing this you become an independent person. At the end of your stay you will probably have made friends from all over the world. So if you ever need a cheap location for your vacation, you can always call them.



The state of the park in Sarhan at the time when this article was written (November 2019)

# Strengthening communities in Jordan through the design of public space

Interview with  
Marie-Laure Hoedemakers

Author: Céline Janssen

*How can design of the public space contribute to social objectives such as strengthening communities and creating opportunities for local inhabitants? And how do you design in a context with completely different resources, structures and traditions? Marie-Laure Hoedemakers, partner of LODEWIJK BALJON landscape architects, talks about her experiences in her work in Jordan.*

About the projects: As a landscape architect, Marie-Laure Hoedemakers works on the design of public spaces in six different projects in four Jordanian towns of Amman, Azraq, Umm Qais and Sarhan. The aim of the projects is bipartite: on the one hand, they are about managing water, strengthening ecological structures through planting and designing public space in a sustainable way. On the other hand, the projects incorporate a social aspect that is about community-building en creating opportunities for local inhabitants, that are often refugees from the war in Syria. The projects are part of the programme 'Improvement of Green Infrastructure in Jordan through Labor-Intensive Measures', commissioned by an NGO in Germany – GIZ (German Society for International Cooperation), and include work-experience programmes in which unemployed Jordanians and Syrian refugees can sign up to participate. If they are selected, they will work on the execution of the design for the public space. Among the selected people, 20% has to be female.

**What was your personal motivation to be involved in those projects in Jordan?**

A few years ago, I was involved with the Municipality of Amsterdam and the VNGI (Vereniging Nederlandse Gemeenten Internationaal) in a project about the urban planning and public space of the Za'atari refugee camp north of Jordan and in this way I became familiar with the situation of refugees in Jordan. Once I had been in Jordan, had worked on a refugee camp and had seen the war and refugees from close by, I felt that the necessity to improve people's conditions was very high. The lives of many people have changed drastically because of the Syrian war: families are separated, people are traumatised. I find it very special to be able to do this work in this exceptional situation and to be able to contribute,



Design meeting at the Municipality of Sarhan, Jordan, with the mayor as chairman

albeit a little, to people's lives. At the same time, our office works on projects in India, South-Korea and several European countries. Working in different countries and working with people in different contexts is always very interesting.

**Have you experienced your role as a landscape architect in Jordan differently than in the Netherlands?**

I would say that the possibilities of a landscape architect are different in Jordan, and that you have to design with a different mindset. In Jordan, we are working with the principle of 'labour-intensive measures', which means that we want to design interventions that create employment opportunities for local inhabitants. In the Netherlands, labour force is usually relatively expensive and materials are relatively cheap, whereas in Jordan it is the other way round: we have to be economical on the materials but are supposed to enlarge the labour intensiveness with our design. As a result, we can do completely different things than in the Netherlands. We can ask people to carpenter benches, to weld things together, to weave beautiful canvasses, to create stacking walls. This makes you look at your design in a completely different way: you have to know how things are being constructed in order to design them. Although we, as designers at LODEWIJK BALJON landscape architects, find craftsmanship very important in all the work, we particularly need it in the projects in Jordan.

**Can you see differences between the Netherlands and Jordan in the vision on what 'good' landscape architecture is?**

In Jordan, except for streets, you can find few spaces that are truly 'public'. I have noticed that people in Jordan sometimes find it a bit scary to create public space, people are used to surround spaces with fences. Some local governments are anxious for being responsible for incidents that may occur in the public space. It takes a lot of effort to convince local governments that it will be all right, that the result is going to look nice.





Design of the park in Sarhan as a meeting place, including sport and play facilities

**How would you describe the relationship between the government and citizens in Jordan? Is community participation an established concept?**

As far as I have experienced it, participation in the design process is a completely new thing in Jordan. For our commissioner of the projects, the German NGO GIZ, community participation is an integral part of the design process. For the Jordan municipalities, this is new. Some find it interesting, some difficult. In the Netherlands, we have developed formal instruments to guide participatory processes, but those don't exist in Jordan. So how our participatory approach is being responded to, depends a lot on the local mayor. I have experienced situations in which the mayor in one city thinks community participation is fantastic, but the mayor in the other city responds in a way like "what on earth is happening here?". In the cases where the mayor had a defensive attitude, we saw that citizens waited for the mayor to respond at first and copied his ideas. But we have also experienced very pleasant situations in which the mayor had a facilitating attitude and in which we held lively discussions with a diverse group of citizens.

**Have you experienced situations in which you were convinced of a good design yourself, but that the design was appreciated totally differently by the local people?**

Not so much in the design itself, but rather in the usage of the design. In Jordan, people are used to the fact that separate places exist for women. We oppose to this idea: we design a park and this park is for everybody. Yet, I have not figured out yet what is the best way of acting. There are two ways of looking at this issue. If you design a separate place for women, women are not allowed to be in the other places of the park. On the other hand, if you decide to not design that place, women might not come to the park at all. I find this a very difficult dilemma.

Another example: in the Islamic tradition, water must be free. Consequently, we see that dealing with water in a careful way is not in line with the Jordanian tradition. If we want to design in a sustainable way, you would wish that people have a hydrometer at home and have to pay a price per liter, especially in a country where water is scarce. But this is just not the way it goes. These kind of cultural differences really matter when designing in another country.



Simple but effective sport- and play facilities in the park of Sarhan

**I imagine that there is an ethical aspect involved when working on projects in another country. Do you sometimes end up in situations in which you feel like: “I have an opinion about this, but who am I to decide?”**

This is a quest each time. In Za’atari, the refugee camp on which I had been working before, a female soccer team was established at some point. The girls play soccer on a separate field that is shielded with canvasses. I am quite sure that we, as formal designers, could never have come up with the idea and said: “this piece of land is going to be a soccer place for girls”. Apparently, however, some people in the camp shared the opinion that girls should be able to play as well and have somehow been able to realise it.

This is the dilemma: on the one hand, you want to show a sense of respect for local cultures and habits, but on the other hand, you have a desire to show people other possibilities. In all of our designs, we question ourselves: how can we stretch the range of possibilities for all inhabitants? In one of the projects we are going to construct simple, concrete tables to play table tennis: a game that is easily accessible for both boys and girls. In this way we hope to the enlargement of possibilities for girls in Jordan.

**You work on projects in Jordan while you are based in the Netherlands yourself. How do you see the role of the ‘outsider’ in this international collaboration?**

As an outsider, you have a good position on providing examples of how things can be done in a different way. Since you are well-familiar with your own context, which is less familiar to local people, you have some kind of authority on this knowledge. You have a possibility to say: “In the Netherlands we do it like this, and we can see that it works.” This is particularly relevant for knowledge on water management, because the Netherlands has developed a positive image of its profession in water management. Nevertheless, if you look into the history of Jordan, you can see that water was managed in a very clever way in the past. Cisterns were built, topography was taken into account and people held water tanks underneath their house. So in the project, we are looking at old techniques that were used in the past in order to see if we can apply them again and to inspire Jordanians to re-apply these techniques.



Sarhan, a village at the border of Jordan and Syria that shelters a high number of refugees

**What have you learnt about your work in Jordan that we can apply in the Dutch context?**

I like the labour-intensive aspect in the projects a lot. Having the opportunity to construct the things that you design yourself, makes the project unique and specific to the context. However, this way of working is not easy in the Netherlands: a design quickly becomes expensive if you decide to make your own production. Another aspect that I find valuable and that we can learn from in the Netherlands, is the way of collaboration. I have learnt that it is very important to listen well before forming an opinion, whereas Dutch people usually form opinions quickly. Working in groups in an international environment, I have noticed that language proficiency can be a barrier for people to speak openly in groups, although they certainly have an opinion. In these situations, I learnt to approach people after the meeting in person with a cup of coffee and to continue the conversation in a more personal setting. In fact, the same situations occur in Dutch projects without language barriers: some people feel more comfortable to speak in groups than others. Yet, you have to make sure that you have heard everyone's ideas, because their input might be really important for the project. Listening well to others ideas before developing your own opinion, will make the project more successful.

# EDUCATION



Open air classes on plant science in the botanical garden of Meise for students landscape architecture of Erasmushogeschool Brussel

# The missing link between landscape architectural education of Belgium and the Netherlands

Interview with Steven Goossens  
and Jorryt Braaksma

Authors: Charlotte Roebbers & Céline Janssen

*In Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, master education in landscape architecture is missing – the result is that many Belgian students move to the Netherlands to follow a master’s study. How well connected are the education programs in the two countries with each other? How can we improve the connection through more international collaboration in education?*

Although there are several professional bachelor degree programs in landscape architecture in Belgium, for a master’s degree students have to study further abroad. Many students who want to continue with their master education go to Germany, Denmark, England and – because of the Dutch language – of course also to the Netherlands. Jorryt Braaksma, partner at LAMA Architects, has followed that path: after his bachelor’s degree in Belgium, he finished his master’s in landscape architecture at the Academy of Architecture in Amsterdam. Meanwhile, he has multiple years of experience as a landscape architect in both Belgium and the Netherlands. Steven Goossens is director of landscape architecture course at the Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences and Arts, where Jorryt studied. While he is a strong proponent for a Belgian master’s degree of landscape architecture in Flanders, he also has the ambition to strengthen the collaboration between landscape architecture education in Flanders and the Netherlands in order to offer students the best opportunities for starting a master’s in landscape architecture.

**What is the reason that there is no master’s degree in landscape architecture in Belgium at the moment?**

**Steven:** There has never been a master’s degree in landscape architecture in Flanders. In the past, there have been several attempts but because of decretal and political problems, these attempts have always failed. The main issue is that the Belgian government does not allow University’s of Applied Sciences in Belgium to organise a master’s program. This is a huge loss, because in Flanders all bachelor’s degrees of landscape architecture are at University’s of Applied Sciences; there is no University in Flanders that has a bachelor’s in landscape architecture.

**How does this affect the students? What do they miss in their education?**

**Steven:** Well, even though we have two very good bachelor programs in Flanders, they cannot compete with the academic competences of a master's degree. The field of work and the practice of a landscape architect has become a lot more complex. In the past, it was more common to work within your own discipline and be more independent, but nowadays, it is necessary to work more interdisciplinary. As a landscape architect you are the link between architects, engineers, urban planners, biologists... But as the ones with a bachelor's degree only, they cannot operate on the same level.

**Jorryt, you have studied landscape architecture in Belgium and in the Netherlands. What was your motivation to get a master's degree?**

**Jorryt:** At the end of my bachelor's degree, I did an internship at Vista in Amsterdam. During that internship I realised that I was not ready for the professional world. It was a confirmation that I was just getting started... The difference between me when I finished my bachelor's and after I graduated from the Academy of Architecture for my landscape architecture master's degree, is a difference of day and night. I have to say though that a part of the learning process was also about getting older and more mature and seeing things differently. But in terms of education, some competences, for example making a sharp analysis and not just an inventory, were not fully developed after my bachelor's. Besides, after my bachelor's degree I didn't know what sort of designer I was and what my strengths were; these are things that I found out during the master's.

**Steven:** The bachelor's degree in Flanders is a very broad education, because we do not have specialisation options after the bachelor graduation as in the Netherlands. Students learn the tools for making an overall inventory but as Jorryt says, the deeper aspects of an analysis are important features of a master's degree and those elements are missing. It is extremely fascinating what can happen in a master's degree. It is also a huge loss for Belgium, because we lose some important knowledge and expertise in our Flemish context. In an ideal situation, we would eventually have our own master's degree in landscape architecture, apart from all the other options in collaborations with the Netherlands and other countries. In the meantime, I wish to improve the connection between the education in the Netherlands and Belgium and to collaborate more closely in our education programs.

**What could be improved in the collaboration between the Netherlands and Belgium?**

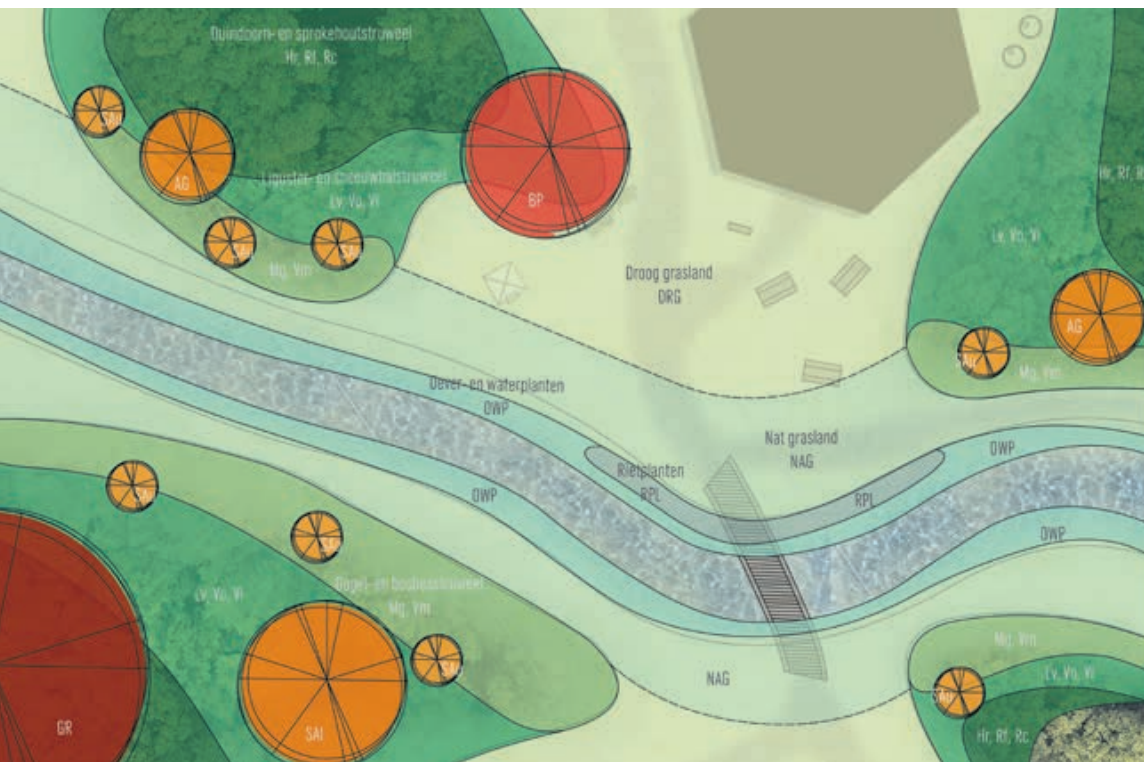
**Steven:** Most of our students who go to the Netherlands for a master's degree go to the Academy of Architecture in Amsterdam, because we have a close collaboration and students are qualified to apply directly for their master's degree. Currently we don't have those connections with other master programs in the Netherlands, such as Delft or Wageningen university. It would be interesting to have more options to apply to master's programs in Delft or Wageningen, based on students portfolio's for example. Another good idea would be to go on an Erasmus exchange during the bachelor's degree, to get to know other study's in the Netherlands and maybe have a better chance to continue a master's degree at a University. These little improvements in getting to know each other, could be a huge improvement in making the transition for Belgium students to other Dutch master programs easier. We have never explicitly researched these options, but it is definitely worth looking into those topics to make the connection stronger. Besides, there are lots of ways to work together on projects of short duration. We have often had intensive programs with Germany, Turkey and other European countries, but for the last 15 years we haven't had a collaboration program with Dutch students – a bit strange because the context is more obvious to work together.

**What are the differences in the working method and vision on landscape architecture between Belgium and the Netherlands?**

**Jorryt:** I think that the origin of the discipline of landscape architecture in the Netherlands is very different to that in Belgium. In Belgium, landscape architecture originates from the horticulture and the garden architecture, while in the Netherlands there is a stronger connection with planning and the other side of the discipline. This is also reflected in the education and in practice. In Belgium, landscape architecture has more emphasis on the craft of 'making' and design of the public space. In the Netherlands, concept thinking, vision forming, design-based research and thinking in systems are further developed. The demand for good 'system designers', with a strong vision for landscape is growing more and more in Flanders, but the education does not meet this demand at the moment. I totally agree with Steven that a Flemish master's degree is urgently needed. A master's degree in Flanders would probably have another accent than in the Netherlands.



Open air classes on plant science in the botanical garden of Meise for students landscape architecture of Erasmushogeschool Brussel



Planting scheme designed by student Nele Otto

**Jorryt, after you graduated and worked in the Netherlands for a while you went back to Belgium. What challenges did you come across in practice?**

**Jorryt:** After I graduated from the Academy of Architecture in Amsterdam, I worked for a few Dutch offices so I had a pretty good idea about the Dutch office culture and the role of the landscape architect in this culture. What struck me in Belgium, and kind of disappointed me, was that the discipline of landscape architecture still has to go through some sort of emancipation. As a landscape architect in Flanders, we noticed, you are seen as the person who, next to the architect, designs the outside space. Or as the person who chooses the plantation types. But a landscape architect that has a steering role and who guides processes, is a role that we really had to conquer.

**Steven:** The exposure of the discipline of landscape architecture is extremely important and I think that Belgium is really behind in this. The Netherlands has a strong professional association, with the DSL linked to it, and a lot of supporting elements in policies. Although we are catching up on these elements in Flanders, shaping the role of the landscape architect needed in practice is going too slow. Again, this is because of that missing master's degree: there are not enough people who can operate on that higher level and fulfil that role.

**In conclusion: what would you like to see in the future?**

**Steven:** We always return to the same thing; we have to have our own master's program. An alternative would be the creation of a Dutch-Flemish master's degree, because University's of Applied Sciences are not allowed to organise a master's degree in Belgium. I think that the DSL has an interesting network with broader connections to explore this option. The Netherlands has a long tradition in the education of landscape architecture, so starting a conversation with each other would already help a lot.

# PRACTICE





# International collaboration in the borderland of the Achterhoek

Author: Fay van der Wall

*Internationalisation is not only about projects in countries far away from here. In the east of the Netherlands, landscape architects have crossed the border in favor of the landscape surrounding the river the Oude IJssel, that has been a connecting factor between places, people and countries. In this interview, Nico Wissing (Studio Nico Wissing) shares his experiences about the collaboration between the Netherlands and Germany.*

It is not hard to notice that Nico Wissing feels at home as he drives his Tesla through the fields, farmlands and small villages in the area of the Achterhoek surrounding Megchelen. These roads have no secrets for him, and his strong connection to the land is apparent in the passionate way he speaks about it. This is the borderland between the Netherlands and Germany just below Doetinchem. A half hour drive passes from one country into the other numerous times. No physical border remains in this united Europe, but the road surface, architecture of the villages and the signs are subtle hints of having crossed it. Nature, of course, does not care about the lines on the map, making international collaboration indispensable in the large-scale plans to improve this landscape.

## Dialogue with nature

A strong mission is at the center of Wissing's work as a landscape architect: "I want to bring people and society closer to nature, through design but also through storytelling and events. But not in a 'preachy' or conservative way. To me progress and luxury can go hand in hand with working in dialogue with nature." His office, built entirely of eco-friendly materials and surrounded by beautiful gardens is an outstanding display for this vision. In recent years the scale of the projects Wissing's bureau takes on has been growing. One of the current assignments is a grand development of the landscape of the river basins of Gelderland between Engbergen and Anholt; precisely the area of his own home. The aim of this development is to bring back qualities of the landscape that were lost in the course of time under the influence of large-scale agriculture and industry. As Wissing explains, restoring the landscape could bring about many advantages: resilience to climate change, attractiveness for recreation and tourism and a higher quality of life for the inhabitants of the Achterhoek and their neighbours on the other side of the border.



Meeting of the Berkelproject. Nico Wissing

### Oude IJssel

During the 1960's the natural courses of the rivers were canalised and straightened. The landscape was evened out, dam walls, river dunes and thickets were removed from sight and land was consolidated to make room for monoculture agriculture. Wissing: "It destroyed the elements you need to experience the beauty of the landscape, not only for visitors, but also for the inhabitants of the area." Currently, Wissing is working on a preliminary study for restoring the lost qualities in the landscape. Central in this assignment is the area surrounding the Oude IJssel river, running from Doesburg to Bocholt. The task at hand crosses the border, causing the governments of both sides to come together with the goal of bringing the Oude IJssel back to life. After being involved indirectly in the development of the Engbergen nature reserve, Wissing is currently working on the expansion of the works across the border.

The urgency to rearrange the landscape to be more resilient to the influence of climate change was shown a few years ago. Heavy rainfalls caused the water levels in the Oude IJssel to rise. Flooding could mean the A12 highway, one of the main traffic arteries of Europe, would need to be closed down. Wissing: "On the Dutch side of the border the dykes were strong and ready for the challenge. But on the German side, the dykes were not up to it and flooding occurred. With emergency measures, evacuations and water pumps they managed to avert a crisis. Within a few kilometres distance of each other, that situation showed a major difference between the countries."

Besides the resilience to rising water, there is an ecological component to the assignment of the Oude IJssel. The specific area is a missing link between other green corridors that are assigned on a European level. Developing the area into a more friendly environment towards wildlife and nature is an opportunity to connect those corridors. Wissing: "In many ways it becomes clear that the restructuring of the river basins and the surrounding land reinforces the resilience to rising water levels and enhances the quality of life in the surrounding land."

### Collaborating next door

Being a native of the area, Wissing is very familiar with his German neighbours and speaks the local language of Nedersaksisch. On a professional level, Wissing has noticed that there are some important cultural differences to take into account. "Compared to the Netherlands, there is a much bigger emphasis on hierarchy in the workplace. A degree or title is highly regarded and automatically gives authority. Whereas in the Netherlands, the attitude is more egalitarian. Entire teams, from seniors to interns, get around a table and discuss a project and everyone's ideas count. I've seen that differences have led to clashes and misunderstandings in collaborations. But I've also seen growing interest from German collaborators in our approach."



Project Engbergen-Isselborg mini golf Lohr Voorst-Anholt. Gemeente Oude IJsselstreek

Structures of government also differ on side of the border. “A mayor, for instance, has a ceremonial position in Germany, while in the Netherlands he or she has more executive power.” Wissing continues to explain that legal frameworks are not only different, but are also applied stricter. “There are four times as many law firms in Germany, if that indicates anything.” Therefore, approaching laws and regulations concerning issues such as water management on a European level could have great advantages in streamlining processes, according to Wissing.

#### Progress

While collaborating with his German colleagues, Wissing places an emphasis on conversation. To him it is vital to stay in close communication with all parties involved to prevent misunderstandings. Sometimes that means a process takes longer. “I’ve noticed in the past, working on other projects abroad, that I needed to account for more time talking to people. But I do not mind putting in the effort to convince people while also respecting their possible objections. Most differences between Germany and the Netherlands do not have to be a problem. As long as it does not stand in the way of progress, we can all work in our own preferred way.”

While the development of the area is still very much in progress, Wissing sees, slowly but surely, the Oude IJssel become a connecting factor between the different positive developments taking place. An old iron foundry in Ulft was transformed into a cultural hub for the area and historical estates on both sides of the border draw visitors. On a sunny October morning, families and joggers take leisurely strolls in nature between reed collars and trees changing color. Wissing: “This landscape connects economical, recreative and innovative opportunities for the area. We need new models and designs to develop those. In harmony and collaboration with nature and each other, of course!”

**Name:** Pierre Oskam

**Age:** 28

**Working as:** a PhD student in Design for Strategy & Sustainability at the University of Aveiro and the University of Porto in Portugal

**Is originally from:** the Netherlands

**Has been abroad:** since 2016

*“De Kleine Zaag is a ‘summerpolder’ – a polder that is flooded when the water level is extremely high – that was excavated in 1935 for the purpose of sand extraction. The resulting large hole was filled up again after 1945 with rubble and clay and sprayed on with a layer of sand. After that, a willow forest on the northern side emerged where various birds breed, such as the great spotted woodpecker and the long-eared owl.”*

**Has your experience abroad influenced your PhD-trajectory?**

Going abroad meant, I had to discover a new way of speaking, working and living in another culture. Now, I am very glad that I took this step, because I have learnt that each culture, university, place and person has its own approach; so mine could be valid as the rest. I am freed from thinking that there is one perfect goal or even one way. It is a coming-of-age story for becoming an autonomous, critical thinker.

**What have you learnt during your stay in Portugal?**

One of the things that I have learnt is that everything is always context-driven. In research, as everything else in life, we are nothing but part of our environment, and we need to acknowledge how much that influences us. I couldn't change Portugal: she would change me. This insight has made me realise that I cannot claim anything being really 'from me': everything belongs to a context. We are 'dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants' so please let us share our work, difficulties and findings.

**What would you recommend to recent graduates who consider starting a PhD in a new country?**

Do it for yourself. Realise that you gain by giving, not receiving. For perseverance you need to find your intrinsic motivation. Often it is closer to yourself than you think. Your intrinsic motivation is related to the things you already are doing now, not to those you say you will do. Find pleasure in doing the small things that add up to something big.



# EDUCATION



Representatives of the partner organisations of the EU Land21 project photographed during the summerschool in Vilnius

# The birth of a trans-European bachelor in landscape architecture

Authors: Jeroen de Vries (LE:NOTRE Institute) & Jack Martin (Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences)

*How do we evaluate the competences of landscape architecture students, and how can we equalize teaching standards in different countries? Researchers from the international EULand21<sup>1</sup> project present a framework that supports the development of trans-European education in landscape architecture.*

## An updated framework for education in landscape architecture

Thanks to the EULand21 project, educators and education developers can make use of a well-elaborated framework to develop and update their teaching programmes. A set of learning-lines for the subject-specific competences of landscape architecture form a detailed and flexible framework that contains a bounty of information for developing modules and courses.

### *Collaborative learning*

The learning lines describe the learning outcomes according to the principle of bridging the Zone of Proximal Development first developed by Vygotsky<sup>2</sup> and later elaborated in collaborative learning by Chan<sup>3</sup>, and Watts & Golding<sup>4</sup>. According to this principle a learner makes small steps in the learning process, and is guided by a tutor and supported by peers. In the EULAND21 project four levels of competence are defined: basic, intermediate, advanced (for bachelor), and master. These specify what is covered for each competence level and what needs to be mastered before a next step can be taken. The four levels are differentiated in role, products, actions, context, complexity, support, orientation towards the profession, and their relation to the subject-specific competences. They make transparent both for teachers and students how the learning can be developed.

The partners have adjusted the competences in the ECLAS Guidance in four ways. First of all, a learning line has been added to the ECLAS competences that relates to 'Landscape architecture foundation, background and supporting competences' (see learning line G1 in the table below). This additional learning line covers subjects such as the foundations of geoscience and ecology (hydrology, ecology, soil science, geology, etcetera) which a student needs to know even though not specifically related to landscape architecture. Secondly, the research competence has been further elaborated for 'Theory and methodology' (A1) because many programmes need to integrate research into the learning process and especially for landscape architecture the design research competences are relatively new. Thirdly, the competence of

TYPE OF COMPETENCE	LEARNING LINE	
Basic	G1	Landscape architecture foundation, background and supporting competences
Theory	A1	Theory and Methodology in landscape architecture & Research
Process of Planning, Design & Management	B1	Landscape Design
	B2	Landscape Planning
	B3	Landscape Management
Categories of projects	C1	Urban Open Space Planning (and Policy)
	C2	Interpretation and Conservation/Management of Cultural Landscapes
	C3	Conservation/Management of Parks and Gardens
	C4	Planning/Design for Infrastructure Projects (and Landscape Impacts)
Vegetation & Materials	D1	Materials and Construction Techniques
	D2	Vegetation Establishment and Plant Materials
Tools	E1	Information Technology in landscape architecture
Practice	F1	Professional Practice of landscape architecture & Entrepreneurship

Figure 1. The twelve subject-specific competences for landscape architecture (ECLAS 2010) with an additional one for the foundations of geoscience and ecology

## PROGRAMME

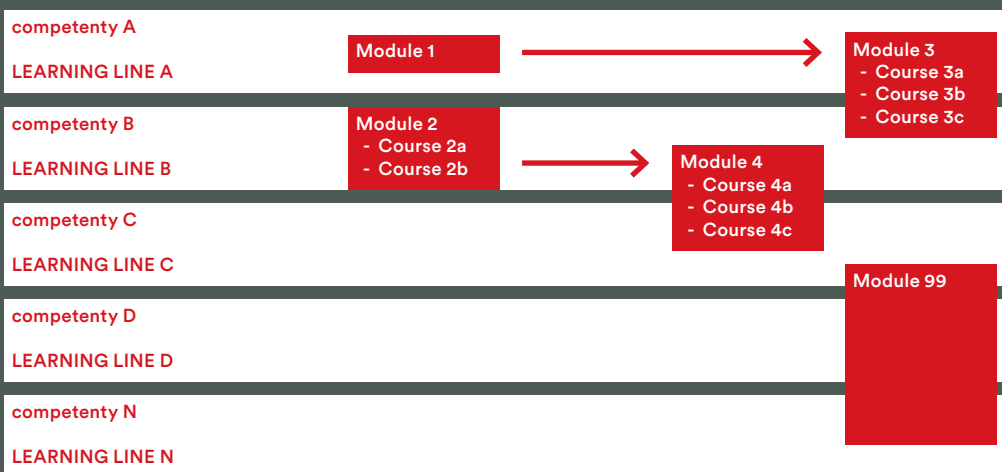


Figure 2. The relation between the study programme, learning lines, modules, and teaching courses.

entrepreneurship has been added to 'Professional Practice' (F1) in line with the European strategies for sustainable and social entrepreneurship.

Lastly, the content of each competence is updated, for instance by adding the Geodesign approach that was developed by Carl Steinitz to 'Information Technology in landscape architecture'. Current challenges in society such as climate change, flooding, and loss of biodiversity call for a thematic integration in all learning lines, and these are included in the learning outcomes.

### How can the framework be applied in study programmes?

The relation between a study programme, learning lines and modules is shown in figure 2. The learning lines form trajectories that continue in several years of the programme, sometimes starting at the beginning of the programme, sometimes later in the process. The actual teaching, learning and assessment takes place in modules. Modules can consist of a set of courses such as a series of lectures, a study trip and a studio. Depending on the context and the philosophy of the course and its focus on certain aspects of landscape architecture, the modules may vary. Some focus more on connection with architecture and urban planning, others focus on the landscape systems and ecological aspects. However, a landscape architecture graduate should master the learning outcomes and competences of all learning lines at a basic level.

### Assessment strategy

Another way of applying the learning lines, is through assessment of study programmes. The main report presents a set of guidelines that form a feasible assessment strategy for landscape architecture. Programme assessment is both formative and summative, and takes place in a variety of formats, including examinations (written essays, oral examination) and peer assessment. As drafted in the ECLAS Guidance of 2010 the assessment focuses on core, subject-specific and generic competences. Student's progress is also monitored on the basis of continuous assessment. While the form of assessment may vary, it is linked to clearly defined goals and anticipated learning outcomes in the modules. The various assessment modes relate to the teaching modes, such as studios and case studies, that a programme can define, with the various ways of assessment ranging from assessing multi-media-presentations to student's logbooks and posters.

### Box of bricks

And there is more. To provide teachers with ready-made building blocks, a set of 26 modules were developed. In these modules not only the aim, learning outcomes and competences are described, but one can also find the learning activities, the results that learners have to produce and the criteria for assessment. The modules cover all the main subjects in the learning lines and range from a landscape architecture research project and green infrastructure design, to landscape management and vegetation development.



Group discussion about the EULAND21 project in Krakow

### **Impact and bigger plan**

A concrete impact of the EULand21 project is the start of a landscape architecture bachelor in Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (Lithuania). The accreditation process is running, and the programme will start in September 2020. The bigger plan is to extend the project to a Common Education Platform for landscape architecture that delivers programmes where students can travel and study all over Europe.

### **References and European policies**

The main report consists of two pages (31 and 32) with the key references for each learning line. A set of cutting-edge literature is provided for each learning line as well as an overview of the relevant European policies up to the year 2018. For vegetation and plant materials these consist of 'The dynamic landscape. Design, Ecology and Management of Naturalistic Urban Planting'(Dunnet, N. & J. Hitchmough 2014), 'the planting design handbook' (Robinson 2016), 'Trees in the Urban Landscape: Site Assessment, Design and Installation'(Trowbridge & Bassuk 2004) and 'Trees for Architecture and Landscape' (Zion1994). Of course these are just examples, but it is recommended to check the key literature for your own subject area.

The reports of the project can be found on the repository of the EU: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/2016-1-LT01-KA203-023219>.

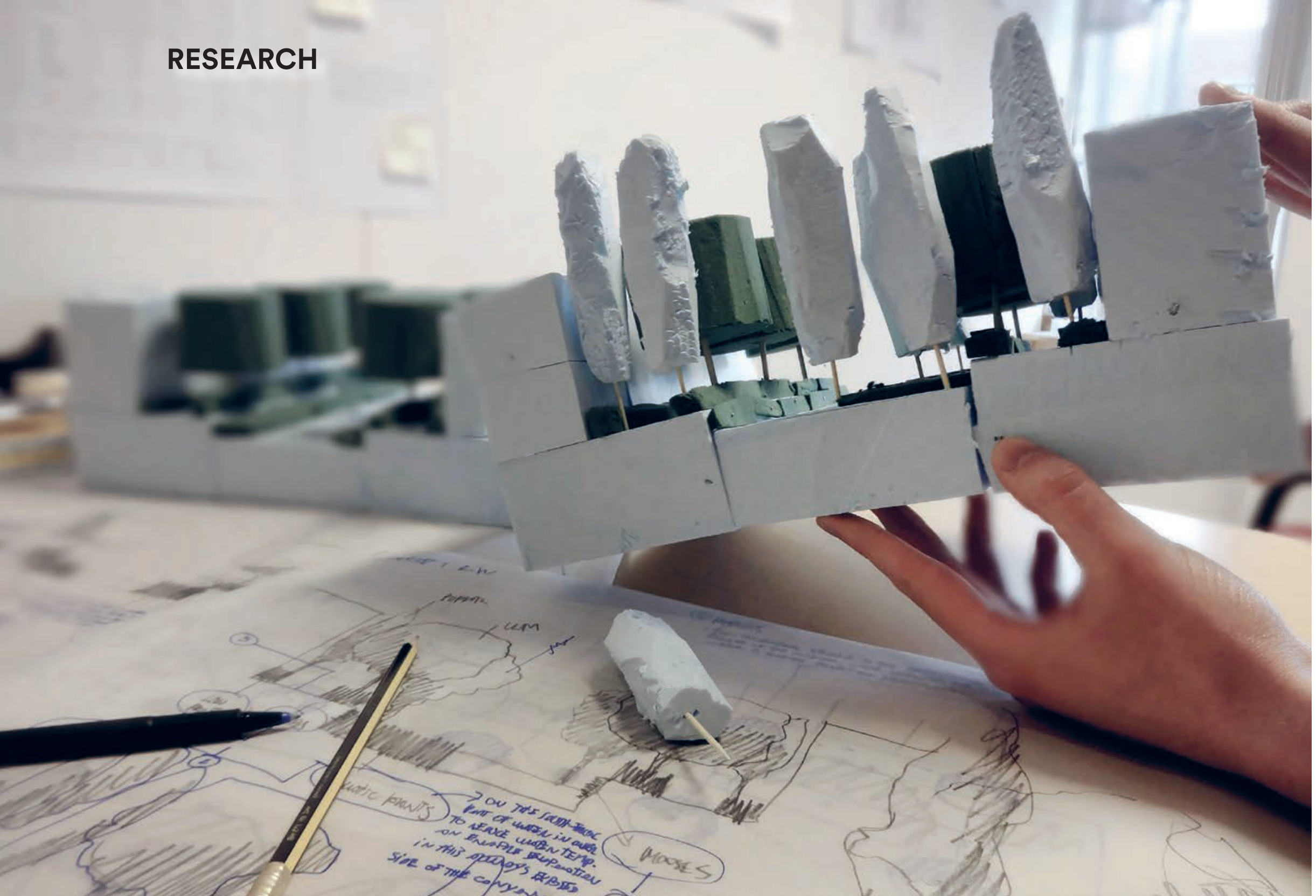
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# RESEARCH



The REALCOOL design workshops engaged researchers and practitioners in the development of the prototypes

# Bridging research and practice for a prompt action on climate-resilience

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*Many of world's nowadays' challenges are global issues and reach beyond the borders of single countries – such is the climate question. The REALCOOL project demonstrates how creating abstract urban environments contributes to addressing the issue and how combining research and practice prompt action on solving it.*

The climate conditions faced by the world gives unprecedented challenges to the way urban areas are thought and built. Urban areas worldwide need to become more resilient to weather extremes such as flooding or urban heat. This is a challenge landscape professionals can most certainly address. Especially when working with scientists, landscape architects play key roles as “integrators, facilitators, visualizers, visionaries, and creators”<sup>1</sup> and can, thus, prompt action on climate adaptation. In order to do so, designers need to know how to create more resilient urban climates.

Urban designers need to be provided with evidence-based guidelines on climate-responsive design that they can easily apply in practice. Effective guidelines should be rooted not only on evidence from academia but from experience in practice too. This links to the idea that “the integration of multiple issues into the design process, and the reflections on actual practices of urban design as sources of emergent theory” are two fundamental aspects of city-making.<sup>2</sup> Bridging research and practice on climate-responsive urban design can play a vital role here.

Let us explore these ideas through the “Really cooling water bodies in cities” (REALCOOL) project, a Research Through Design (RTD) held at Wageningen University and the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. REALCOOL checked out the cooling effects of small urban water bodies like ponds or canals, and of combining shading, natural ventilation and water vaporisation (water fountains or mist) around water. In line with previous research on larger urban water bodies,<sup>3</sup> REALCOOL showed that the cooling effects of small water bodies on air temperature are quite limited and that urban design can do little to reduce water temperature enough as to make it cool down its surroundings.

But REALCOOL also showed that it is possible to create cooler urban water environments during warm periods by increasing shade with trees near the water, by allowing wind to flow throughout the whole space, and by introducing water fountains and mist sprayers in the water. This echoes the results of previous research on the combination of shading, ventilation and vaporisation around urban water bodies.<sup>4</sup>



BEFORE The type of urban water bodies REALCOOL worked with. Image credits: Lenné3D



AFTER A virtual cooler urban water environment illustrating the REALCOOL findings. Image credits: Lenné3D

To assist design professionals with creating these cooler urban water environments, REALCOOL proposed sixteen design prototypes. The prototypes are 3D animations embodying design guidelines defined throughout the RTD process. The guidelines communicate optimal combinations of shading, vaporisation and ventilation around water, brought together with parameters commonly encountered in practice: aesthetics, functionality, costs, maintenance and health effects. Basic spatial configurations and dimensions, as well as the expected cooling effects, are provided.

The prototypes work as conceptual design frameworks, and not as prefab solutions. It is up to designers to creatively translate the design guidelines into end-designs<sup>5</sup> according to local circumstances and their own design 'signature'. The prototypes are freely accessible at [climatelier.net](http://climatelier.net).

The prototypes were created by alternating design and test stages along six RTD iterations. The design stages developed several design solutions that eventually led to the final prototypes. Typical design activities such as sketching, 3D rendering or physical scale models were employed.

The test stages assessed the design solutions through quantitative and qualitative methods: experts judgements and software simulations on cooling effects; four design workshops with different stakeholders for assessing the feasibility of design solutions; an online visual inquiry to gather the opinions of a broad public; and a 'reality check' for testing the applicability of the prototypes to practice.

#### **REALCOOL bridged research and practice mainly through the design workshops and the reality check**

The design workshops gathered researchers, representatives from urban design and landscape architecture offices, municipalities and consultants in hydrology and public health. This transdisciplinary group judged design solutions at the end of each iteration. Participants were engaged in active discussions on the applicability of the evidence-based design solutions at hand. Feedback was documented and translated to principles for improving the prototypes.

The discussions were largely based on sketching, making notes onto 2D and 3D drawings, or on playing around with the physical scale models. This bridged communication gaps between the different disciplines. The design workshops worked as co-creation moments, when designers and non-designers worked together in the development of the prototypes.

The reality check implemented the prototypes into real projects. The aim was to check their real applicability to practice. The projects were proposed by the partner design offices and municipalities and dealt with ongoing new build or retrofitting operations around water.

Researchers and practitioners worked together to find the best fit between the REALCOOL guidelines, the assignments, and the designers' vision for the projects. Both parties communicated openly. This allowed lining up expectations and achieving a common understanding on each



In urban areas, water can be used in multiple ways: by direct physical contact, by looking at it, or enjoying its aesthetical qualities.

other's 'language', methods and needs. The researchers explained the guidelines and expected cooling effects. The designers provided feedback on their applicability to the project. This feedback originated principles for improving the prototypes.

**REALCOOL addressed a global issue by working with and creating abstracted urban environments**

The prototypes were developed over averaged spatial layouts of typical Dutch urban water bodies. These were termed 'testbeds' and allowed creating prototypes comprising replicable design guidelines. The prototypes are suitable for use across The Netherlands and in other comparable contexts because they were built upon spatial configurations which do not refer to any particular situation or location.

The prototypes can be used in new or retrofitting projects dealing with cooler urban water environments, as to counter urban heat problems, provided that:

- the climatic context is similar to The Netherlands
- the site is in an heat-prone urban area
- the site has similar spatial characteristic to the prototypes
- the water body presents similar characteristics to the prototypes
- the expected functions are similar to the ones comprised in the prototypes

- the prototypes are applied before the detailed design stage  
 These aspects are fundamental for ensuring the suitability of the REALCOOL prototypes to different locations, in particular outside The Netherlands. The prototypes are meant to be informative but it is fundamental that designers make the necessary adjustments to local circumstances. Each case is unique and, thus, a 'copy paste' reasoning does not ensure success. When possible, further work with scientists can help defining the best solution for a specific site.

**Bridging research and practice can prompt action on the climate-resilience of urban areas**

As far as the REALCOOL experiences suggest, there is a significant potential in bridging research and practice as to address the global design issue of climate-resilience because: (1) researchers can direct design knowledge more insightfully towards application in practice; and (2) practitioners get robust know how on climate-responsive design from the source. This can prompt action on the climate adaptation of urban areas.

The potential is dependent on a few challenges that future joint works between researchers and practitioners should tackle and further explore:

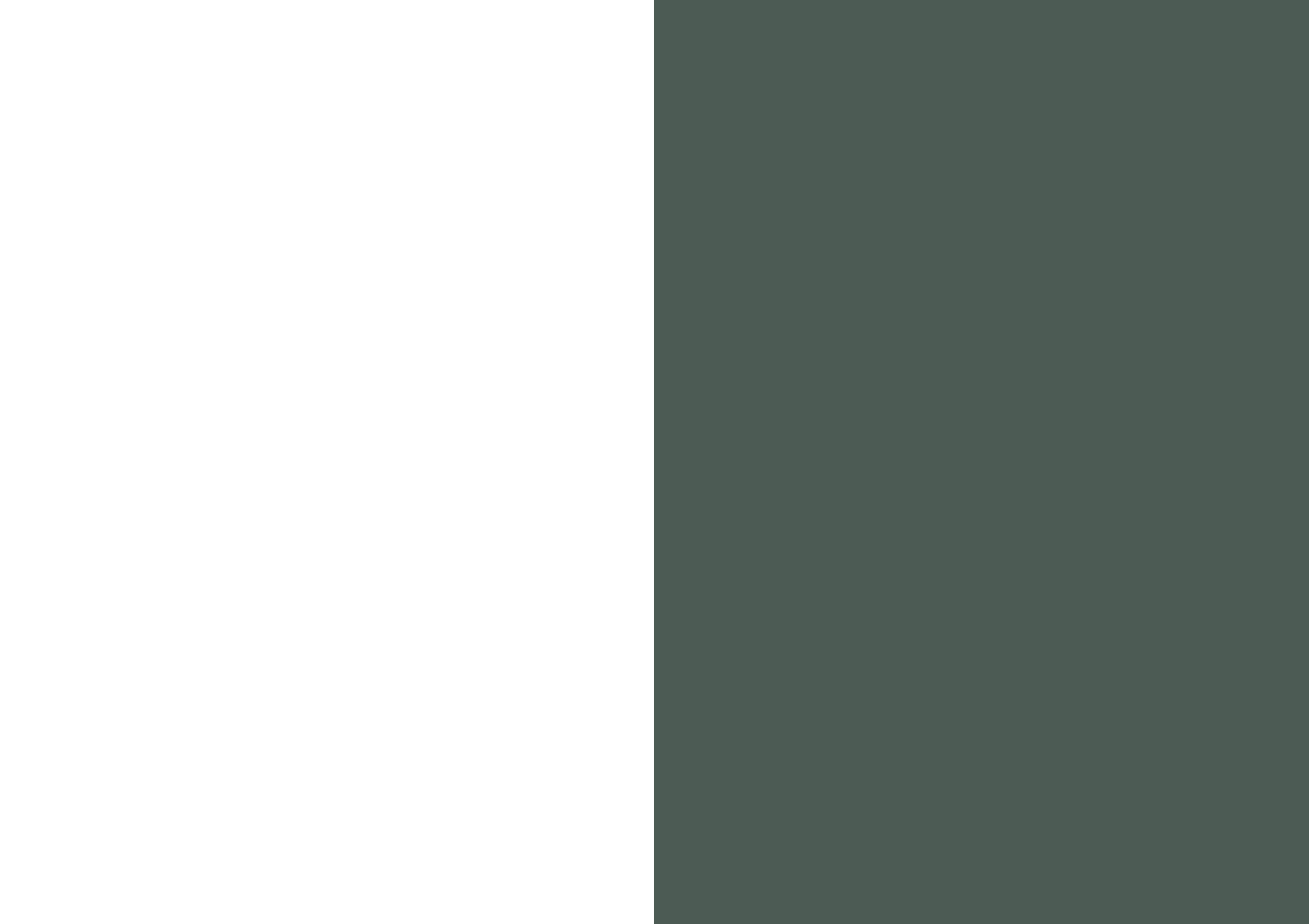
- holding discussions where researchers and practitioners are at the same level
- mutually valorising contributions and ensuring their actual implementation
- developing design guidelines that do not refer to any specific situation
- gauging site-specificity and abstraction so that guidelines are not deterministic but also not too abstract

By applying these principles, both REALCOOL design workshops and reality checks were win-win situations that boosted bilateral engagement and enthusiasm with the research. It was vital that the researchers included the feedback of the practitioners in the RTD process and that, in turn, the practitioners were open to the methods, outcomes and advices of the researchers.

When academia and practice work together, the key role that landscape professionals play in prompting action on climate adaptation can be triggered. By developing more, new and truly engaging cooperation models, we will be joining forces for tackling a prominent global issue placed not only to urban design, but to civilised life as we know it.

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# Points of attention

*The discipline of landscape architecture is evolving fast and is recognised to offer concepts and design-tools, which help facing today's challenges of climate adaptation. These challenges need to be addressed at various scales and ask for spatial implementation. Internationalisation of the discipline plays a large role in succeeding to transform the earth in a more sustainable and well-designed planet, striving for a better balance of people, flora, fauna and the environment.*

We collected the following recommendations:

## **Collaboration in research**

- 1 Before or while working together make sure that you understand each other in terms of language, goals and interests.
- 2 Show interest in the person's background and knowledge. Take time to get to know each other.
- 3 Look for and acknowledge each other's strengths. A basic attitude of curiosity and wanting to learn from each other is key to successful collaboration.
- 4 Listen well to what has been said before forming an opinion.
- 5 Language proficiency and the cultural background can be a barrier for people to speak openly in groups, despite having relevant and valuable opinion. Approaching people in person after a meeting or class in a more personal setting to continue the conversation can be valuable.
- 6 Using drawings to communicate is very helpful.
- 7 Along the way, reserve time for an intercultural dialogue and reflection.

### **Teaching**

- 1 All the points mentioned above apply here as well.
- 2 The ethical code of a faculty needs to be transparent and actively addressed to all students and lecturers.
- 3 Teaching staff need to realise the impact of their education on students and the spin-off of their knowledge throughout the world.
- 4 Organise discussions and exchange of thoughts within your faculty, but also among universities.
- 5 Keep in touch with your alumni. They are ambassadors and bridge builders, and can open doors to network opportunities and access to know-how.

### **Business and the running of a practice**

- 1 Internationalisation can help to spread risks, to discover where you can add value and to professionalise your practice. It can help in specifying your practice's profile and branding.
- 2 An international profile can help to attract qualified colleagues.
- 3 Dutch landscape architecture is valued by foreign contractors because it is clear in design, simple, conceptual, not over-materialised and powerful in appearance.
- 4 Working in an open culture, governance setting, on an egalitarian basis in interdisciplinary teams is very Dutch and different from the way things are abroad. It's important to analyse the specific working environment of a country when (considering) starting work over there. Building a relation with a client abroad and realising a project is a process of years.
- 5 When doing business abroad it is not uncommon to see an opaque world of formal and informal hierarchical relationships and decision-making processes. Things will not always be decided on content and in meetings. Get an understanding of the diplomatic side and mores of a country. Find out first with whom you have to work together to achieve something.
- 6 Be conscious of leadership styles.



Interviewees:



Jorryt Braaksma – Partner at LAMA landscape architects



Eric Frijters – Landscape architect and founder / director at FABRICations



Ola Gabrys – Landscape architect at ECHO Urban Design



Steven Goossens – Head of education of landscape architecture at the Erasmus Brussels University of Applied Sciences and Arts



Gertjan Jobse – Landscape architect and delegate of the Netherlands Association for Garden and landscape architecture at the umbrella organization International Federation of Landscape Architects



Marie-Laure Hoedemakers – Landscape architect and member of the management team at LODEWIJK BALJON landscape architects



Mathias Lehner – Program manager International at the Royal Institute of Dutch Architects



Pierre Oskam – PhD candidate in Design for Strategy & Sustainability at the University of Aveiro and the University of Porto in Portugal



Yvo Suijs – Student at the University of Cape Town in South Africa



Peter Veenstra – Landscape architect and partner at LOLA landscape architects



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# About DSL

The Dutch School of Landscape Architecture (DSL) is a foundation brought to life for the purpose of collaboration between the Netherlands Association for Garden and Landscape Architecture and all existing education and research institutes for garden and landscape architecture in the Netherlands: Wageningen University & Research, Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, Amsterdam Academy of Architecture, Delft University of Technology and HAS Den Bosch University of Applied Sciences.

## Mission

The mission of the DSL is to maintain the strong national and international position of Dutch professional practice and research, and of training programmes in garden and landscape architecture. The DSL pursues this mission with the following activities:

- offering a platform to improve quality
- contributing to the development and sharing of expertise
- contributing to a research agenda
- promoting a national and international network in the area of landscape architecture for practitioners and students
- supporting its partners in the field of research and development
- initiating joint projects.

The DSL distinguishes itself from other bodies through its integral approach to the profession in the Netherlands, an approach that unites professional practice, education and research. The DSL was established in 2010.

## The current board of DSL exists of:

**Madeleine Maaskant** (Director Amsterdam Academy of Architecture)

**Marlies Brinkhuijsen** (Assistant Professor Landscape Architecture, Wageningen University)

**Steffen Nijhuis** (Associate Professor Landscape Architecture Delft University of Technology)

**Adrian Noortman** (Lecturer & Researcher Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences in Velp)

**Joeri de Bekker** (Lecturer Management of the Built Environment at HAS Den Bosch University of Applied Sciences)

**Ben Kuipers**, Chairman Netherlands Association for Garden and Landscape Architecture)

More information: [www.d-s-l.info](http://www.d-s-l.info)



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**Internationalisation is felt everywhere: more and more professional practices seek clients abroad, and the number of international researchers, teachers and students in higher education is increasing. While observing, responding and anticipating to these trends, the most important question is overlooked: how can internationalisation add value to the quality of higher education, research and professional practice?**

**In this booklet, teachers, students, researchers and landscape architect designers – from a Dutch and a non-Dutch background – share their experiences and sketch their perspective, both professionally and personally. What does internationalisation mean for the practice and competences of (future) landscape architects who work abroad and vice versa? How does internationalisation change schools and curricula? How do we guarantee quality in education? How do we work on international positioning of Dutch landscape architecture? And last but not least how do we deal with our core topic: operating site-specific? Let's start talking!**