



ECLAS Online 2021 - Call for Abstracts

Deadline: February 1, 2021

These are extraordinary times for *Homo sapiens*. Our lives are longer, safer, and healthier than at any point in history. The granaries are bursting. Violence is rare, most disease—even in this Covid year—preventable or curable. The supercomputer in our pocket dwarfs the mightiest mid-century mainframe. We speed across cities, continents, oceans in comfort. Information, once the preserve of kings and priests, is now cheap and omnipresent. Our species is fed, networked, and in the know - about itself and about the world.

And yet we worry. Despite all our wealth and knowledge and technics, these are also confusing times, *scary* times. The dread has been there all along, of course, just below the shiny surface. But something seems different now. We feel unfit for this world we have made. We are richer but less equal, more tolerant yet more envious. Our leaders are technicians, tyrants, or worse. Money is unreal, the future of work itself uncertain. Opportunities for mutual understanding have never been greater, but more and more of us seek the old refuges of tribe and language. We dwell amid flickering images, ceding both private and public life to machines and algorithms we neither understand nor control. Through it all, a wound that will not close, seeps this realization: thread by thread, we are undoing the fabric of life on Earth. We grow accustomed to tidings of disaster, each one made worse by our knowing how to avert it. But we will not—we cannot—stop. Forget Pascal's 'thinking reed.' We are a thinking asteroid, hurtling toward ourselves and the biosphere.

Our brains, scenario makers, try to fathom it all. The fortunate among us manage to turn despair into action; others sink into guilt or paralysis. Mostly, though, we just turn away, aghast at our hubris and awaiting judgment. And even as we lie sleepless, asking the night if our children and their children will ever forgive us, in the morning we go downstairs, make the coffee, and go on. We have no choice.

Et tu, landscape architect? What do you say now? Your marketing text, academic conferences, and manifestoes are clear enough. You are 'uniquely positioned' to solve the 'complex social and ecological problems' bearing down on us, committed to meeting the 'challenge' of sea level rise, mass extinction, resource depletion, population migration, global

epidemics, political apathy, and social injustice (to name a few). ‘There is profound hope for the future,’ you assure your worried clients. It could hardly be otherwise. Yours is a modern profession, after all, its master narratives novelty, increase, progress. You could hardly argue your professional relevance, even existence, without them.

But - do you *believe*? What bottoms of despair does this picture—website-primed, Powerpoint-ready—gloss over? What heights of imagination lie outside its frame? How true is it to your own, your one life and labor? Is it good enough, or good?

And those who will wear your mantle? Like you, your students know their world is out of balance. Like you, they despair. But they are not resigned. On the contrary: they are impatient to act, to do the hard work of building a life that does not (to quote the film *Koyaanisqatsi*) ‘call for another way of living.’ They arrive in your classrooms expecting to find a home for their passion and a profession equal to their moment. They do not expect their learning to be easy, but they trust their fire will be safe in your care. Will it?

These are all variations on three questions:

What do you value?

How do you act?

What do you leave?

These questions are not easy. On the contrary: they are the hardest you will answer or not answer. In one form or another, you face them every day. Almost always, you face them alone, rushing from task to task, meeting to meeting, your eyes ever on the next class, the next deadline, the next meal. If you skirt them in conversation with colleagues, the tone grows hushed, the words strained lest someone expose a hint of doubt, any stray worry line under the professional mask.

Even more today than when this call went out a year ago, *we need a pause*. We need space and time to remove our masks and reveal our deepest values, hopes, and fears. We need to put aside all practical aims and ambitions and talk about what *really matters*—for ourselves, our children, our students, and our discipline. We need to recover the power of language, to call things by their proper names and hear ourselves saying out loud what we dare not utter elsewhere.

Now more than ever, we need a place to *stop and think*.

We have taken this phrase from the late writings of Hannah Arendt, where it appears as both verb and noun, both *actions* we can and must perform (‘stop and think’), and the specific situations where we perform them. These situations—spatial, temporal, social—are anything but innocent. They can be either more or less conducive to ‘thinking as such,’ or thinking detached from the ‘practical needs and aims’ that hold sway in most of our lives. For Arendt a true stop-and-think is always ‘out of order,’ suspending the routine, the habitual, the automatic. It ‘interrupts any doing, any ordinary activities, no matter what they happen to be’ and ‘inevitably has a destructive, undermining effect on all established criteria, value, [and] measurements.’ Situations like this, she knew, do not arise by themselves. They are willed into existence by people who value thought for its own sake. They must be envisioned, designed, planned. Ground must be cleared, then defended, for them.

That was our appeal a year ago, and it remains our appeal today. Once again, we invite your proposals for ‘stop-and-thinks’ on any aspect of landscape architecture. We have in mind the full range of questions, problems, experiences, and cases that animate or concern you right now, not only in your lives as educators and practitioners but also as colleagues, friends, parents, and citizens. No single list of topics or themes could ever capture or predict this diversity here, and we will not attempt to do so. As before, we particularly welcome proposals exploring questions of 1) uncertainty amid radical restructuring of human economic, social, and political relations, and mounting disruptions caused by global warming and environmental change; 2) methods, tools, and ethics in the landscape architecture profession; 3) the language and discourses of landscape architecture, both in the past and at this moment; 4) history and theory of the profession; and 5) the social dynamics of institutions where landscape architecture is taught and learned. To these we find that we must now add proposals exploring digital and networked modes of knowledge creation in landscape architecture. We are teaching, learning, and collaborating in ways, and using tools, scarcely conceivable a year ago. How has this changed our daily practices, and what are its implications—good or bad, near- or long-term—for landscape architecture as a discipline of place? We encourage you to modify, expand, or combine any of the above areas, or to suggest different avenues of exploration.

We look to *you* to define the scope and character of this, the first (and likely not the last) ECLAS to take place online. We are not prescribing any particular way to broach these questions. It is left entirely to you to design the digital ‘stop-and-think’ that is most appropriate for the experience you want to share, the questions you want to ask, and the learning you want to stage. In practical terms this means that you may choose any digital platform, and use that platform in any way, you wish. As before, the online submission system will accept proposals for academic papers; academic paper sessions; thematic roundtables or workshops; exhibitions or installations; performances or events; and excursions. You must choose one of these six types to submit your proposal, but we welcome hybrids and combinations of any sort. We encourage you to use the free-text areas to describe to the best of your ability the technical aspects (and constraints) of your proposal.

Please note that **if your proposal for ECLAS 2020 was accepted**, that acceptance is still valid and you do not need to take any action now. That said, you will surely want to think about how your proposal can (or must) change in response to changed circumstances, and how you will revise it for an online format. There is no requirement to submit new material to us, but if you wish you may insert revisions directly into your earlier proposal by logging into the [submission page](#). Of course, the more updated information we receive the better we will be able to plan the conference.

If you did not submit a proposal for ECLAS 2020 but wish to now, we strongly encourage you to do so. Although ECLAS is a landscape architecture educators conference, we welcome contributions from any discipline (or indeed non-discipline) concerned with issues of landscape, place, and the relationship between people and their biophysical environment.

Please submit new proposals here: <https://openconf.eclas.org/openconf.php>

If you have any further questions, please contact us: <https://conference.eclas.org/contact-us>

The deadline for proposal submission is **01 February 2021**.

The online conference will take place between **September 12 and 15, 2021**.

We look forward to receiving your ideas, and to joining you online to *stop and think*.

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