

A Quantitative Approach to Geodesign Process Analysis

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Abstract: The paper proposes a new approach to Geodesign Process Analytics (GDPA) based on the use of geodesign workshop log-data gathered by web-based collaborative the Planning Support System Geodesignhub. As argued in the paper, the analysis and mining of PSS log-data enable the coordinator of a geodesign study to gain better insights into the evolution of design during the process as well as about the process dynamics. While the research is still in its early stage, first results show a huge potential for the practical application of GDPA in workshop coordination support, in gaining insights about past geodesign processes, and in understanding social behaviour in the design process dynamics.

Keywords: Geodesign, process analytics

1 Introduction

Geodesign can be thought of both as a verb and as a noun (STEINITZ 2012), or in other words as a process and as a product of that process. Thus, understanding geodesign, learning from past and on-going experiences, and assessing its value require dealing with the complexity of its twofold meaning, as both the quality of the product and of the unfolding of the process should be critically considered. Such an investigation may be useful both for learning from past case studies with the aim of improving future ones, and for monitoring ongoing processes dynamically. While the experience and the observation skills of those involved in the coordination of geodesign studies will always be critical, the actual availability of new digital cockpits monitoring the process and its product real-time may potentially add substantial value, especially in fast-paced intensive geodesign workshops.

Recent advances in Computer Aided Design (CAD), Building Information Modelling (BIM) and Planning Support Systems (PSS), are nowadays enabling collaboration within increasingly complex workflows in planning and design. Such technologies are currently able to store data about the evolution of the design product, as earlier technology (e. g., CAD, GIS and geo-databases), but also log-data about the interaction of multiple users collaborating in collective design endeavours with the supporting digital platform (REVIT 2019, SOLIDWORKS 2016). As such, log-data can be readily made available to coordinators to monitor the process, including the temporal sequence of activities and tasks, the user behaviour and productivity, and the evolution of the design in space and time. The opportunity of analysing this new type of data with digital dashboards may potentially enable the application of a sort of business intelligence perspective in real-time geodesign study coordination and management, and in retrospective or comparative studies, by mining what may be considered geodesign (processes) big-data. To date, early research in this direction was successfully undertaken in several close domains such as industrial design, architecture and construction engineering (BECATTINI et al. 2019, ZHANG et al. 2018, ZHANG & ASHURI 2018), but similar attempts in geodesign are still at a very early stage. The collaborative PSS Geodesignhub started to offer simple measure about ongoing geodesign workshops. However, a wider and

more robust Geodesign Process Analytics (GDPA) is needed to fulfil the potential offered by geodesign process log-data.

This contribution summarizes the results obtained so far in an ongoing research carried on by the authors (COCCO et al. 2019, COCCO et al. 2020) aiming at defining an operational analytical framework for analysing planning and design processes. The new source of data, that is log-data gathered digitally during geodesign workshops thanks to the functionalities of Geodesignhub, were used to operationally test the hypothesis. Specifically, the log-data were originated in a geodesign workshop carried on by the authors under the umbrella of the International Geodesign Collaboration (IGC) (ORLAND & STEINITZ 2019).

The results show how it is possible to apply descriptive and inferential statistics to monitor the process real-time through e-dashboards in which a variety of indicators is implemented considering the semantics macro-dimensions of log-data which include design, authorship, space, and time.

2 Towards a Geodesign Process Analysis

A major challenge in collaborative geodesign, and in spatial planning in general, is not only to reach consensus towards a final plan, but also to make the process transparent to all the users, including those who participate to the design process but also those who eventually will have to implement the plan or will be affected by the plan implementation. Transparency of the process is of utmost importance both to understand how to react in case of unexpected issues during the plan implementation, but also to acquire better knowledge of the dynamics underlying the process which may serve as experience for the future. In other words, understanding how the process dynamics (may) affect the design outcome (Figure 1) is a sensitive issue.

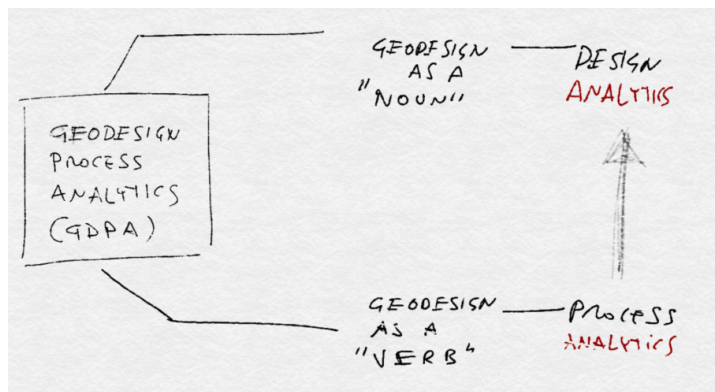


Fig. 1: General framework for a geodesign process analytics

In order to address the complexity of current planning processes, PSS log-data may offer a very useful aid. Such PSS as Geodesignhub, store a great quantity of data during the process, not only about the design products, but also about the process itself. Even in a single workshop, a rich database of log-data is generated and made available for analysis, during or after the workshop.

Two approaches are possible to analyses geodesign process log-data: the first is data-driven, the second theory-driven. Both approaches were tested by the authors, before applying GDPA to earn practical insights about a specific case-study. The former two approaches were used iteratively to get preliminary insights on the potential value of using log-data to understand geodesign process and their relationships with their outcome, that is the final design.

Following these preliminary results, a framework for geodesign process analytics was shaped by developing a series of indicators to measure and understand design dynamics (Figure 2). The analytics tool covers two types of measures: those linked to the actions of the participants which characterize the process (e. g., participants’ performance indicators, temporal indicators, indicators of design evolution), and those related to design aspects of the products (e. g., spatial indicators). For example, the first set of indicators allows the assessment of the achievement of certain performance (/participation) levels (e. g., number of times a participant used the sketching tool in a collaborative PSS, identify leading/lagging behind participants), and analysis of spatial relations (e. g., topology, proximity) between design alternatives proposed by different groups of stakeholders to easily identify areas of disagreement, which may help to reach consensus among planning stakeholders.

GDPA-PRODUCT

«Geodesign as a noun»

SPATIAL INDICATORS

- Topological similarity
- Positional similarity

GDPA-PROCESS

«Geodesign as a verb»

PARTICIPANTS' PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Top contributors
- Diagrams creation by system
- ...

TEMPORAL INDICATORS

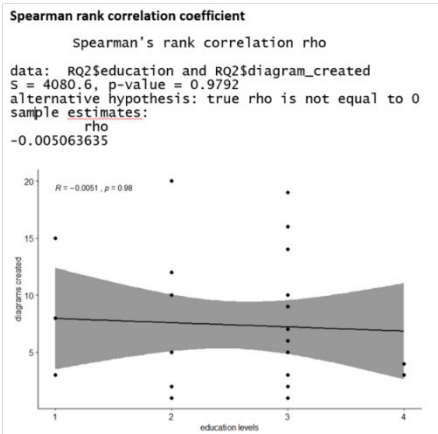
- Workshop steps duration
- Diagrams creation over time
- ...

INDICATORS OF DESIGN EVOLUTION

- Frequency of diagram selection
- Top influencer
- ...



Descriptive statistics – digital dashboards



Inferential statistics - reports

Fig. 2: Geodesign Process Analytics

Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to construct the indicators proposed in this study (Figure 2). Some of them are more suitable to support the coordinator in real-time, and some other to be used in a post-workshop de-briefing to analyze the design process in itself and in comparisons with other studies. It is argued, investigating these aspects can increase the coordinator understanding of the process, which may, in turn, lead to improve the design outcomes, as well as, future processes. In order to demonstrate the research assumptions, the web-based PSS Geodesignhub has been used since it allows stakeholders to effectively contribute in the last three models (i. e., change, impact and decision models) of a geodesign process (STEINITZ 2012), and it records log-data about the whole process with regards to design and to the actions of the involved actors.

2.1 The Data-Driven Approach

The data-driven approach starts with the exploratory analysis of geodesign workshops log-database. Geodesignhub grants full access to its log-data via API. Then, data can be arranged in a spatial-temporal database. Figure 3 shows the conceptual model of a Geodesignhub log-database.

Analysing the thematic, spatial and the temporal (along the process timeline) dimensions of design versions together with the user dimension is it possible to unfold the link between the process and its outcomes.

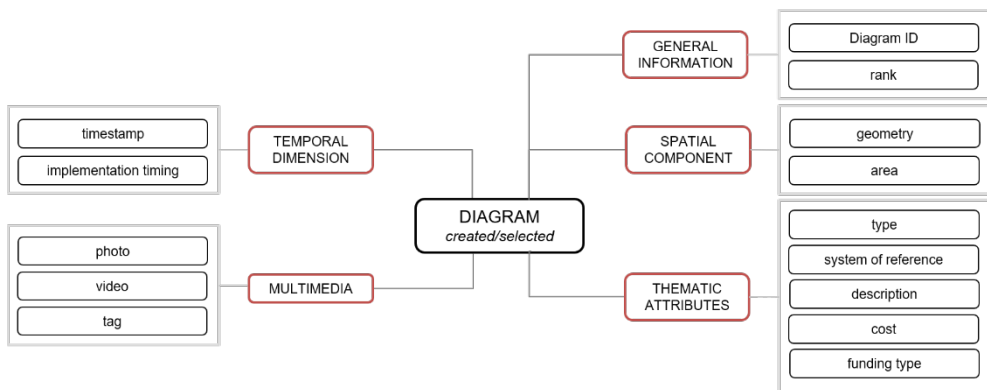


Fig. 3: Conceptual model of a Geodesignhub log-database

The example in Figure 4 shows an example of a dynamic e-dashboard which allows monitoring the performance of the participants during a geodesign workshop. The indicators presented in the e-dashboard in figure 3 are just an example of measures of a typical geodesign process that can be calculated and visualized real-time to support the workshop coordinator in assisting the participants and make informed decisions as are needed to improve the current process. These and other indicators can be used also to analyse different workshops in ex-post process evaluation and comparative analysis. The value of the single indicator in general should be contextualized by the coordinator in the face of the process dynamics at hand. In visualizing the indicators in an e-dashboard, there is potential for providing useful tools for design process log-data mining, providing a sort of design process intelligence, much like business intelligence is proficiently applied in industry (VAN DER AALST 2011, VAN DER AALST et al. 2012, COCCO et al. 2020).

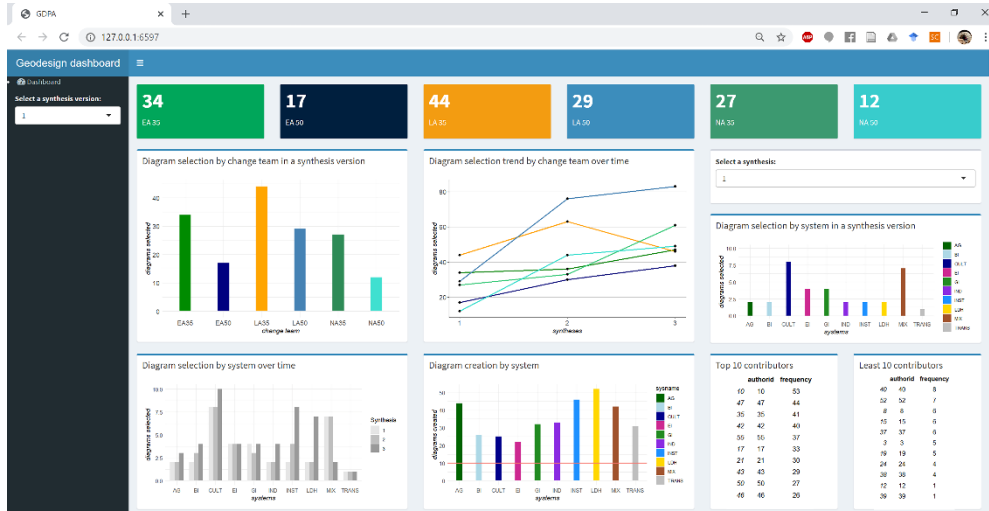


Fig. 4: Geodesign Process analytics: example of e-dashboard

2.2 The Theory-driven Approach

Unlike the log-data-driven approach, which relies mostly on descriptive statistic in an exploratory way, the theory-driven approach may use inferential statistics to validate theoretical assumptions or construct. COCCO et al. (2019) applied inferential statistic to test the value of using log-data as a complementary source of information, to more traditional process recording methods (e. g., notes, video recordings, interviews, etc.) in the application of the Enhanced Adaptive Structuration Theory (EAST2) by JANKOWSKI and NYERGES (2001). EAST2 was used as theoretical framework to guide the identification of interesting dynamics to be investigated in comparative studies. A series of hypotheses were formulated and tested to explore the dynamics of participation and interaction among stakeholders involved in a computer-mediated collaborative planning and design process. The ‘ways of designing’ may differ among groups and individuals, and with varying scale and size of the area. Therefore, breaking down the digital workflow and using quantitative measures to identify recurrent patterns in participants’ behaviours and design evolution may help better design and manage future geodesign processes, as required by the meta-planning approach.

2.3 The Mixed Applied Approach

The mixed-applied approach was used by the authors to investigate the relationships between the green infrastructure and the other territorial systems design in a geodesign workshop. Of particular interest is the contribution of the spatial indicators which allow to easily identify possible conflicts of interest. The proposed methodology involved the use of traditional spatial analysis techniques, together with the design topology analysis developed with Extract Transform Load (ETL) software as proposed by FREITAS and MOURA (2018), and of other GDPA techniques developed by the authors. The study provided a systematic and quantitative demonstration of how geodesign techniques and PSS log-data analysis can be successfully used to integrate the green infrastructure design within broader in scope strategic comprehensive territorial planning. The use of spatial and statistical analysis allowed to measure

quantitatively several aspects of the design process highlighting the fundamental relationship between green infrastructure and the other territorial development systems and dynamics.

3 Discussion

This paper summarizes the effort undertaken to improve our understanding of design processes and develop a methodology to analyze geodesign studies by exploiting the data automatically recorded by a web-based collaborative PSS. The opportunities offered by current PSS are unprecedented, not only for applying a system approach and coordinating involved actors, but also for tracking the evolution of the design options toward the final plan. The availability of process log-data in Geodesignhub opens new paths to the understanding of design dynamics. With the aim of making the value of the new data source, the analytical process towards GDPA is proposed from log-data extraction and pre-processing methods and tools, to the development of the set of spatial, temporal, user performance and design evolution indicators.

It is demonstrated how the proposed measures are suitable to be displayed in a dynamic dashboard making available a real-time process analysis tool to the workshop conductor, thus supporting their core role of facilitating the process. While the indicators have not yet been tested in a real-time case study, an *ex-post* implementation of the geodesign analytics has been explored using the log-data recorded in the Cagliari geodesign study developed within the IGC project.

Additionally, inferential statistical techniques were applied to log-data of past geodesign studies to elicit and reveal relationships and patterns in participant behaviour and in the evolution of the design, ultimately aiming at better understanding, assessment, design and management of past/future processes.

Finally, the use of geodesign and geodesign process analytics are respectively proposed as a holistic and systematic approach and as a user-friendly analytical tool to support integrate and collaborative green infrastructures planning. Their implementation in digital dashboard provides an efficient tool for understanding how systems mutually influence each other in rapid real-time design iterations.

4 Conclusion and Outlook

Early findings suggest a huge potential for making value of available log-data for earning new insights about the collaborative design generation and about the social and behavioural aspects of design process dynamics. On the basis of the experimental findings, it is possible to confirm that the use of current digital tools, compared to traditional ways of recording or tracking the process workflow (i. e., video recordings, surveys), makes available for analysis a greater number of aspects and dimensions, thus contributing to the grasping of many facets of the complex design dynamics in a systematic fashion. Further research is definitely needed to define a robust geodesign process analytics, possibly leading to a better understating of general patterns and behaviours in planning and design processes. Nevertheless, the proposed analytical framework offers the possibility in the short-medium term, not only to make past process more transparent, but also to monitor ongoing processes real-time assembling pro-

cess performance indicators in digital dashboards. If this approach yields the expected fruits, it may eventually contribute to gathering new knowledge useful for the design of future collaborative planning and design initiatives through metapanning (CAMPAGNA 2016).

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The Journal of Digital Landscape Architecture addresses all aspects of digital technologies, applications, information, and knowledge pertaining to landscape architecture research, education, practice, and related fields. The journal publishes original papers in English that address theoretical and practical issues, innovative developments, methods, applications, findings, and case studies that are drawn primarily from work presented at the annual international Digital Landscape Architecture conference. Its intent is to encourage the broad dissemination of these ideas, innovations, and practices.

Proposals for guest editors, topics, and contributions for special issues are welcome.

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Cover Picture

Synthetic Menagerie, a rendering of the Tidmarsh Sensory Landscape, © 2018 Responsive Environments Group, MIT Media Lab, realized by Donald Derek Haddad, Gershon Dublon, Brian Mayton, Spencer Russell, Prof. Joe Paradiso. Cover image is a montage overlay, showing two 'creature states' from two separate frames of the animation, that illustrates mapping real-time sensor data to the morphology of virtual animals. Original video at: <https://vimeo.com/240548776>. Courtesy of Glorianna Davenport, MIT Media Lab.

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Introduction

The cover of the fifth issue of the Journal of Digital Landscape Architecture JoDLA 5-2020 is called a “Synthetic Menagerie”. In the video source <https://vimeo.com/240548776> the creatures respond to the sensor signals from the site, i. e. if raining their coats get wet, etc. The image is provided in a MIT Master’s Thesis by Donald Haddad.

As the DLA 2020 is organized by the Graduate School of Design at Harvard, Cambridge, USA, choosing a thesis work from the neighbor university in Cambridge stands for the long term exchange of both schools in research on digital landscape architecture, and it stands for the exciting research of our young digital colleagues.

Stephen Ervin, the local chair of the 2020 DLA, suggested the main theme for this year’s DLA and it is also the main focus of JoDLA 2020:

Cybernetic Ground: Information, Imagination, and Impact

In addition to the main theme we have provided a number of other possible areas for submitting papers on current research or outstanding practice in digital landscape architecture. We received 118 extended abstracts and can now present the result of a rigid two-phase double-blind review process.

The fifth issue of the Journal of Digital Landscape Architecture 5-2020 covers 66 contributions on the following 12 current areas of research and prototype applications in digital landscape architecture:

- Cybernetic Ground: Information, Imagination, and Impact
- Algorithmic Design and Analysis Landscapes
- Mobile Devices, Internet-of-Things and ‘Smart’ Systems in the Landscape
- Data Science and Landscape Information Modelling
- Drone/UAV Imagery and Uses
- Visualization and Animation of Landscapes
- Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR) and Immersive Environments
- Geodesign Approaches, Technologies, and Case Studies
- Digital Landscape Architectural Response to Climate Changes
- Social Media in Landscape Architecture
- Teaching Digital Landscape Architecture
- Digital Landscape Architecture in Practice

We hope you will appreciate the fifth edition. The printed copies will be sent out to all participants before the “All-Virtual Online DLA Conference June 3-4, 2020”. You will find all the contributions online as open access publications at the [gis.Point](http://gis.point.de/jodla.html) and [gis.Open](http://gis.openplatforms.de/wichmann) platforms of Wichmann <http://gispoint.de/jodla.html>.

We would also like to invite you to the next DLA conference. The 22nd international conference on information technology in landscape architecture, Digital Landscape Architecture DLA 2021, will be held from May 26 to 28, 2021 at the Dessau Campus of Anhalt University in the neighborhood of the Bauhaus Dessau and the German Environment Agency (UBA).

The Journal of Digital Landscape Architecture invites you to submit ideas for special issues and topics. Please follow our continuously updated announcements and call for papers and posters at www.digital-la.de. Here you will also find the complete documentation of the DLA beginning from the year 2000.

*Erich Buhmann, Stephen Ervin, Sigrid Hehl-Lange, James Palmer,
and Hope H. Hasbrouck*

Table of Contents

Introduction	VII
Introducing the Online DLA2020 Virtual Conference	IX
Editorial	XI
Cybernetic Ground: Information, Imagination, and Impact	1
<i>Stephen M. Ervin</i>	
A Brief History and Tentative Taxonomy of Digital Landscape Architecture	2
<i>Jörg Rekitke</i>	
Convergent Digitality for Design Action in Obstructed Landscapes.....	12
<i>Joseph Claghorn</i>	
Using Spatial Network Analysis to Recover England’s and Wales’ Lost Footpaths and Rights of Way	23
<i>Zihao Zhang</i>	
Cybernetic Environment: A Historical Reflection on System, Design, and Machine Intelligence	33
<i>Adam Mekies, Daniel Tal</i>	
Three Cases of Re-configuring Scope, Agency, and Innovation for Landscape Architecture	41
<i>Hans-Georg Schwarz-v.Raumer, Katja Schulze</i>	
Development and Application of Circuitscape Based Metrics for Urban Ecological Permeability Assessment	51
<i>James Melsom</i>	
Multi-scalar Geo-landscape Models: Interfacing Geological Models with Landscape Surface Data	59
Algorithmic Design and Analysis of Landscapes	71
<i>Agnès Patuano, Ata Tara</i>	
Fractal Geometry for Landscape Architecture: Review of Methodologies and Interpretations	72
<i>Shao Yuhan, Xue Zhenying, Liu Yulong</i>	
Research on Algorithm-based Urban Design: A Case Study in Chefoo Bay	81
<i>Florian Zwangleitner</i>	
Form Follows Comfort: An Evidence-based Approach to Enhancing Streetscapes	94

<i>Gabriela Arevalo Alvear</i> New Technologies + Algorithmic Plant Communities: Parametric/Agent-based Workflows to Support Planting Design Documentation and Representation of Living Systems	103
<i>Daniele Cannatella, Steffen Nijhuis</i> Assessing Urban Landscape Composition and Configuration in the Pearl River Delta (China) over Time.....	111
<i>Siqing Chen, Zhizhen Wang</i> Noise Mapping in an Urban Environment: Comparing GIS-based Spatial Modelling and Parametric Approaches	122
<i>Ilmar Hurkxkens, Benedikt Kowalewski, Christophe Giroi</i> Informing Topology: Performative Landscapes with Rapid Mass Movement Simulation.....	130
Mobile Devices, Internet-of-Things, and ‘Smart’ Systems in the Landscape	139
<i>Micah Taylor, Brian Orland, Jingxian Li, Stephen Berry, Meredith Welch-Devine</i> Crowdsourcing Environmental Narratives of Coastal Georgia using Mobile Augmented Reality and Data Collection	140
<i>Anna Calissano, Paola Sturla, Paola Pucci, Valeria Fedeli, Simone Vantini</i> Going Beyond the Euclidean Setting in the Statistical Analysis of Human Movement in Urban Landscape	150
<i>Mintai Kim, Soyoung Han, Yoonku Kwon</i> How Does the Brain Engage with Daytime and Night-time Sceneries?.....	158
<i>Suat Batuhan Esirger, Muhammed Ali Örneke</i> Recycled Plastic to Performative Urban Furniture	166
<i>Mandana Moshrefzadeh, Thomas Machl, David Gackstetter, Andreas Donaubaue, Thomas H. Kolbe</i> Towards a Distributed Digital Twin of the Agricultural Landscape.....	173
Data Science and Landscape Information Modelling	187
<i>Michael G. White, M. Hank Haeusler, Yannis Zavoleas</i> Simulation of Plant-Agent Interactions in a Landscape Information Model	188
<i>Steven Velegrinis</i> Plus Urbanism: Using Digital Tools to Realise Urban Landscapes that Create More than They Consume	198

<i>Le Zhang, Brian Deal</i> Ecosystem Services, Smart Technologies, Planning Support Systems, and Landscape Design: A Framework for Optimizing the Benefits of Urban Green Space Using Smart Technologies.....	208
<i>Nastaran Tebyanian</i> Application of Machine Learning for Urban Landscape Design: A Primer for Landscape Architects.....	217
<i>Kian Wee Chen, Forrest Meggers</i> Modelling the Built Environment in 3D to Visualize Data from Different Disciplines: The Princeton University Campus	227
<i>Philip Belesky, Mariusz Hermansdorfer, Kane Borg</i> Sandscape and Datascape: Augmenting the Augmented Reality Sandbox.....	235
Drone/UAV Imagery and Uses.....	245
<i>Benjamin H. George, Keunhyun Park</i> Flying High: A Case Study of the Integration of Drones into a Landscape Architecture Curriculum	246
<i>Jozef Sedláček, Radim Klepárník, Iveta Kopřivová</i> When Does the Point Cloud Become a Real Tool for a Landscape Architect? Teaching Experience with Bachelor and Master Student Programmes in Landscape Architecture	254
<i>Keunhyun Park, Sungmin Lee, Dong-ah Choi</i> Empty Parks: An Observational and Correlational Study Using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)	262
<i>Ahmet Cilek, Suha Berberoglu, Cenk Donmez, Muge Unal Cilek</i> Generation of High-Resolution 3-D Maps for Landscape Planning and Design Using UAV Technologies.....	275
Visualization and Animation of Landscapes	285
<i>James Palmer, Robert Sullivan</i> Visual Prominence as Perceived in Photographs and In-Situ	286
<i>Jens Fischer, Ulrike Wissen Hayek, Marcelo Galleguillos Torres, Bettina Weibel, Adrienne Grêt-Regamey</i> Investigating Effects of Animated 3D Point Cloud Simulations on Emotional Responses	295
<i>Mohammed Almahmood, Hans Skov-Petersen</i> Public Space Public Life 2.0: Agent-based Pedestrian Simulation as a Dynamic Visualisation of Social Life in Urban Spaces	305

<i>Joshua Brook-Lawson, Sophie Holz</i> CFD Comparison Project for Wind Simulation in Landscape Architecture	318
<i>Xi Lu, Sigrid Hehl-Lange, Eckart Lange</i> Landscape Visualisation and Visitor Perception in the Guangzhou Urban Planning Exhibition Hall	330
<i>Wei Zhang, Mengqi Yang, Yuxing Zhou</i> Assessing Urban Park Open Space by Semantic Segmentation of Geo-tagged Panoramic Images.....	339
Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and Immersive Environments	353
<i>Mariusz Hermansdorfer, Hans Skov-Petersen, Pia Fricker, Kane Borg, Philip Belesky</i> Bridging Tangible and Virtual Realities: Computational Procedures for Data-Informed Participatory Processes.....	354
<i>Adam Tomkins, Eckart Lange</i> Bridging the Analog-Digital Divide: Enhancing Urban Models with Augmented Reality.....	366
<i>Gideon Spanjar, Frank Suurenbroek</i> Eye-Tracking the City: Matching the Design of Streetscapes in High-Rise Environments with Users' Visual Experiences.....	374
<i>Travis Flohr, Dolores Sirek, Ross Tredinnick</i> Creating Virtual Environments in Support of On-line Problem-based Learning.....	386
<i>Guoping Huang</i> Digital Visualization in Web 3.0: A Case Study of Virtual Central Grounds Project	395
<i>Anthony J. DePriest, Tim D. Keane, Brent C. Chamberlain, Mark Lindquist</i> Visualization Tools for Visual Impact Assessments: A Study of Existing Technologies.....	404
<i>Xun Liu</i> The Third Simulation: Augmented Reality Fluvial Modeling Tool	413
<i>Hyunji Je, Yumi Lee</i> Therapeutic Effects of Interactive Experiences in Virtual Gardens: Physiological Approach Using Electroencephalograms.....	422
Geodesign Approaches, Technologies, and Case Studies	431
<i>Chiara Cocco, Michele Campagna</i> A Quantitative Approach to Geodesign Process Analysis.....	432

<i>Matthew Kuniholm</i>	
Evaluating Participatory and Technological Integration in Geodesign Practice.....	439
<i>Luwei Wang, Timothy Murtha, Madeline Brown</i>	
Park Suitability Index: Developing a Landscape Metric for Analyzing Settlement Patterns in the Context of a Rapidly Urbanizing Area in Central Florida, USA	447
<i>Ata Tara, Yazid Ninsalam, Niloo Tarakemeh, Vishwa Muni</i>	
Designing with Nature-based Solutions to Mitigate Flooding in Mataniko River Catchment, Honiara	457
<i>Yexuan Gu, Brian Deal, Brian Orland, Michele Campagna</i>	
Evaluating Practical Implementation of Geodesign and its Impacts on Resilience	467
<i>Werner Rolf, David Geoffrey Peters</i>	
Algorithmic Landscapes Meet Geodesign for Effective Green Infrastructure Planning: Ideas and Perspectives	476
<i>Tijana Dabović</i>	
Geodesign Meets Its Institutional Design in the Cybernetic Loop	486
Digital Landscape Architectural Responses to Climate Change	497
<i>Aidan Ackerman, Yao Wang, Margaret Bryant</i>	
Animation of High Wind-Speed Coastal Storm Events with Computational Fluid Dynamics: Digital Simulation of Protective Barrier Dunes.....	498
<i>Galen Newman, Youjung Kim, Karishma Joshi, Jiali Liu</i>	
Integrating Prediction and Performance Models into Scenario-based Resilient Community Design.....	510
<i>Yannis Zavoleas, M. Hank Haeusler, Kate Dunn, Melanie Bishop, Katherine Dafforn, Nina Schaefer, Francisco Sedano, K. Daniel Yu</i>	
Designing Bio-Shelters: Improving Water Quality and Biodiversity in the Bays Precinct through Dynamic Data-Driven Approaches	521
<i>Colin Chadderton</i>	
Sensors in the Landscape: A Peatland Perspective.....	533
Social Media in Landscape Architecture.....	541
<i>Madeline Brown, Timothy Murtha, Luwei Wang, Yan Wang</i>	
Mapping Landscape Values with Social Media.....	542
<i>Mahsa Adib, Hong Wu</i>	
Fostering Community-Engaged Green Stormwater Infrastructure Through the Use of Participatory Geographic Information Systems (PGIS)	549

<i>Olaf Schroth, Linda Mertelmeyer</i> Telling the Story of a Landscape Plan Online	558
<i>Michaela F. Prescott, Diego Ramirez-Lovering, Andreas Hamacher</i> RISE Planetary Health Data Platform: Applied Challenges in the Development of an Interdisciplinary Data Visualisation Platform	567
Teaching Digital Landscape Architecture	575
<i>Howard Hahn, Brent Chamberlain</i> A Pedagogical Retrospective: Gamifying the Konza Prairie through an Interdisciplinary Studio	576
<i>Melanie Piser, Sebastian Wöllmann, Roland Zink</i> Adolescents in Spatial Planning – A Digital Participation Platform for Smart Environmental and Democratic Education in Schools.....	584
<i>David E. Goldberg, Lacey K. Goldberg</i> Robots in Paradise	592
<i>Daniel Meehan, Lisa DuRussel</i> Under The Eye: Using an Ecosystem of Digital Tools to Analyze and Solve Land Use Planning Issues	604
Digital Landscape Architecture in Practice	613
<i>Ata Tara, Nerida Thomas, Alan Chenoweth, Gerard McCormick, Alison Davis, Deborah Chow</i> Growing by Place: Identifying Building Height Limits Using Skyline Thresholds	614
<i>Wendy Walls, Jillian Walliss</i> Digital Modelling as Interdisciplinary Design Practice: A Focus on Microclimate Simulation.....	626
<i>Mei Liu, Steffen Nijhuis</i> Digital Methods for Mapping Landscape Spaces in Landscape Design.....	634
<i>Danelle Briscoe</i> Living Wall: Digital Design and Implementation.....	646
Acknowledgements	655
Early Conference Announcement & Call for Papers for the Inter- national Conference “Digital Landscape Architecture DLA 2021”	665

The Journal of Digital Landscape Architecture addresses all aspects of digital technologies, applications, information, and knowledge pertaining to landscape architecture research, education, practice, and related fields. The journal publishes original papers in English that address theoretical and practical issues, innovative developments, methods, applications, findings, and case studies that are drawn primarily from work presented at the annual international Digital Landscape Architecture conference. Its intent is to encourage the broad dissemination of these ideas, innovations, and practices.

This issue of the Journal of Digital Landscape Architecture, 5-2020, presents contributions from the 21th annual conference at Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, Cambridge Mass, USA, (June 3 to June 4, 2020), covering 12 broad topics:

- Cybernetic Ground: Information, Imagination, and Impact
- Algorithmic Design and Analysis of Landscapes
- Mobile Devices, Internet-of-Things, and 'Smart' Systems in the Landscape
- Data Science and Landscape Information Modelling
- Drone/UAV Imagery and Uses
- Visualization and Animation of Landscapes
- Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and Immersive Environments
- Geodesign Approaches, Technologies, and Case Studies
- Digital Landscape Architectural Responses to Climate Change
- Social Media in Landscape Architecture
- Teaching Digital Landscape Architecture
- Digital Landscape Architecture in Practice