

4x1: 4 km2 over 1 century

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Scales of Change

Book of abstracts

*Commemorating 50 years of
Landscape Architecture study programme
at University of Ljubljana*

University of Ljubljana



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Scales of Change

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Track 3: Teaching across scales

Chairs: Prof. Dr. Udo Weilacher,
Assist. Prof. Dr. Nadja Penko Seidl

Teaching across Scales – Learning from Research

Prof. Dr. Udo Weilacher
Technical University of Munich

If you want to solve complex problems, you have to have the courage to leave your comfort zone and cross several borders: borders of scale, of disciplines, of nations, of culture, borders of belief and theories etcetera. Cross border action can be extremely tiring and in some cases cause friction, slowing down the progress of complex projects. However, it also leads to the development of new ideas and to a much more founded view of complex problems, characterized by non-linearity, emergence and surprise. This insight was confirmed in an advanced research and teaching project between 2007 and 2020, a collaboration between regional planners, landscape architects, architects, urban designers, planning theorist and experts from many other neighbouring disciplines: the International Doctoral College (IDK) “Spatial Research Lab”.

When dealing with difficult spatial development tasks, it turned out that it is virtually impossible, to separate questions of scale from all other relevant questions in complex planning and design projects. Therefore, the IDK professors pursued an interdisciplinary understanding of planning, not differentiating any longer between categories like “landscape architecture” and “landscape planning”. The research approach was open to a variety of theories and methods as well as to alternative planning and design methods. The practical application of these methods was intended to solve concrete spatial problems and to generating knowledge – a new understanding of the space, of the actors in this space and the need for change. Methods beyond the applicable standardized, economized norms, such as of a creative-experimental nature, were to be developed and applied in order to grasp complex spatial phenomena that elude established academic approach methods. The IDK faced concrete planning tasks through interdisciplinary design and dialogue by holding discussions about spatial planning, city planning, architecture, regional development, landscape architecture and environmental planning, in addition to initiating cooperative, solution-oriented approaches.

The research lab was focused on the interrelations of science, society, technology and space, acknowledging that the spatial and social are inextricably intertwined. The ways the IDK worked, are also valid for teaching across scales:

- **empirical:** Whether the topic is urban restructuring, new forms of spatial appropriation, urban mobility, or energy transition—IDK researched empirically and also based its di-

alogue on empirical research. IDK pursued a broad concept of empiricism: statistics and space-related models as well as qualitative analyses of documents or observations, all play a part. What is crucial is that theoretically formulated assumptions lead to the systematic assessment, explanation, and examination of the research object. IDK was also open to inductive research strategies, gaining new theoretical knowledge from observations made in case studies.

- **inter- and transdisciplinary:** Whether planners, designers or researchers— IDK had an inter- and transdisciplinary approach that was based on empirical research and direct experiences from planning practice. The researchers were aware of the opportunities and challenges of collaborative research, publishing, and communicating together. A closer cooperation between architecture, landscape architecture, urban development, spatial planning, social sciences, and engineering, as well as scientists and practitioners, is of central importance for the solution of spatial and urban problems.
- **reflexive:** Whether the questions concern sustainable water management, landscape transformation or the effects of controversial technical knowledge—every object is of interest in both directions: What are the expected positive or negative consequences of this development? And what are the social conditions (e.g., cultural habits or political target conflicts) that contribute to shaping it? How do these transform space?

- **dialogical:** Whether in test planning, parametric design, or digital information transmission—IDK researchers engaged in dialogue in a suitable manner with the [doctoral] students as well as with the public, local experts, politicians, or companies, and employed dialogue to work through research-based potential solutions and strategies. The researchers made use of the whole variety of communication media.
- **multilocal:** Whether in Zurich or Berlin, Copenhagen or Munich, Vienna, Dortmund, or Karlsruhe— IDK researchers were aware of the diversity of social, economic, and ecological contexts and perceived the problems in their local specificity. However, they were also seeking patterns to be able to derive the general from individual cases (an inductive method). Knowledge gained in this way about rules of spatial development is intended to ensure the concrete ability to act in other locations and in different contexts.
- **space-related:** Whether the problems are on a large or small scale— what is crucial for the IDK research approach is the relevance for the development of concrete spatial systems and associated living environments. The material components play just as an important role as the subject-related and social components of a space.

Teaching across scales should follow the same set of approaches and give students a chance to grasp the essence of complex research beyond standardized procedures.

ID 91: 4x1: 4 km² over 1 century

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"4x1" is a semester-long exercise developed this year by students of the Landscape Architecture master degree studio at the University of Ferrara (Italy). We asked them to select and frame an area of 4 square kilometres (2 per 2 kilometres wide) from anywhere in the world. Two 1:2500 plans were required, representing the landscape context today and in a century from now. There were a few restrictions on the drawings: no raster images, use of greyscale only, no text. Moreover, the selected areas had to meet a building coverage ratio of less than 20%. The main request was to take into account documented forecasts on climate change effects, as well as concurrent social trends (tourism, depopulation, etc.) or actual plans for urban and infrastructure development. In contrast, they have been free to speculate about future configurations according to different attitudes (policies) towards the forces at play: ranging from strong anthropic responses to "do nothing" answers.

One purpose of the assignment was to challenge students' tendency to "overminig" design or analysis tasks: that is to take into account too general or generic topics, overestimating them, in the belief they can be transferred linearly from one scale to another. Throughout the research, they had to, and learnt to, continuously change the scale of their investigation, even in order to decide how to frame the chosen context. The final illustrations are a distilled outcome of a wider survey - on data and processes - which for the most part almost disappears during the journey. In the long run, the landscape we try to depict is always something that "withdraws" from our knowledge, perception or any attempt at fully describing it. But this is its fascination.

