

An international symposium focusing on the emerging relationship that landscape and infrastructure has currently taken on, evidenced by the development of major public works in big cities worldwide. Guest speakers will present emerging paradigms, practices and technologies that are reshaping the contemporary urban landscape to reposition planners and designers vis-à-vis the reclamation of urban infrastructure as a critical territory for intervention.

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George Baird University of Toronto
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Julia Czerniak Syracuse University
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Kristina Hill University of Virginia
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Alissa North University of Toronto
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Mason White University of Toronto
Jane Wolff University of Toronto
Robert Wright University of Toronto

The symposium is paired with an exhibit titled *Living Systems: Innovative Materials and Technologies for Landscape Architecture*, featuring a new publication co-authored by Liat Margolis and Alexander Robinson. Funding for this event is generously provided by the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, the University of Toronto Connaught Fund, the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, the Landscape Architecture Canada Foundation, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council and National Research Council Canada.

Saturday October 25 2008

Daniels Landscape Infrastructures

Emerging practices, paradigms & technologies reshaping the contemporary urban landscape

John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design | University of Toronto | 230 College Street Toronto Canada | Lecture Hall (103) | 9-6pm

Cities are sustained by infrastructure. Highways, airports, power plants and landfills largely figure as the dominant effigies of contemporary urbanism. The sheer size of these elements renders their understanding as a single system practically impossible, yet their operations depend precisely on their continuity to support urban and industrial economies. Often found underground, or on the periphery of cities, the presence of infrastructure remains largely invisible until the precise moment at which it breaks down or fails. Floods, blackouts and shortages serve as a few reminders of the limited capacity and fragility of this large operating system that unilaterally depends on technical knowledge and hierarchical control for its sustenance. Made evident during the 20th century, a massive transformation of the urban landscape occurred as a result of mass industrialization and mass mobility.

In North America, large scale infrastructure projects were undertaken throughout the continent premised on water supply, drainage control, food production, specialized transport, centralized energy and continental defence to support an array of functions unilaterally premised on Fordist and Taylorist dogmas of productivity, management and speed. The military–industrial complex that Eisenhower so vehemently warned of, simultaneously led to nationalized economies largely dependent on the extraction of coal, the distribution of oil and the production of steel.

These projects irreversibly generated a system of industrialized landscapes which, with the prominence of civil engineering as the most influential disciplines in the 20th century, relied on the centralization of control and the specialization of knowledge. The long term effects of singularly engineered structures and industrial systems were rendered visible in the latter half of the 20th century by evidence of decay, resource exhaustion, ground contamination and air pollution. With increasing rates of urbanization and mobile populations worldwide, the capacity of conventional, centralized infrastructures is reaching a tipping point, and is therefore being re-questioned.

From an ecological perspective, the generic, technological apparatus of modern infrastructure has largely overshadowed the pre-eminence of the biophysical system that underlies it. Due to their magnitude and their complexity, hydrological, geological, biological and climatic agents that make up this system are often overlooked, yet they unequivocally support urban and industrial development, in parallel with global economic forces. Today, these new challenges are generating alternative strategies that combine the demands for urban infrastructure with underlying biophysical systems. Systems of mobility, freshwater provision or sewage support for example, can no longer be designed without the regional understanding of hydrological systems. Food production or energy generation can no longer be planned without considering the cascade of waste streams and resource inputs.

Signalling a departure from centralized forms of urban development and the predominance of civil engineering in the design of cities, more flexible forms of infrastructure and design practices have begun to emerge during the past decade as a response to the increasing demand for renewable and integrative forms of urban development. Strategies that combine landscape ecological principles with urban infrastructure are now rapidly becoming the dominant order of infrastructural development for industries as well as cities.

Foregrounding the reciprocity between landscape and infrastructure, this one-day symposium gathers a series of influential thinkers and practitioners from around the world to discuss emerging practices, paradigms and technologies that are reshaping the contemporary urban landscape. Re-examining the historically divisive, technocratic nature of engineered infrastructure, the symposium will aim at formulating a more synthetic vision of urban infrastructure as a landscape that combines ecological and economic imperatives of big cities. The penultimate objective of the symposium is to reposition the agency of landscape architects, urban designers and architects vis-à-vis the design of urban infrastructures for the new economy of the 21st century.

Schedule & Location

The symposium will be held at the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape & Design, University of Toronto on Saturday, October 25th, 2008 in the main lecture hall (Room 103) from 9am to 6pm. The symposium is organized by the Centre for Landscape Research and the Programs of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Toronto (www.daniels.utoronto.ca). Funding for the symposium is generously provided by the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, the University of Toronto Connaught Fund, the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, the Landscape Architecture Canada Foundation, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council and National Research Council Canada. The event is open to the public and attendance is free of charge.