Beyond Main-Terrain

ETH
Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich

NSL Netzwerk Stadt und Landschaft
Network City and Landscape

ETH Zürich
Chair of Being Alive

Chair of Being Alive

ETH Zürich
ONA J 26
Neunbrunnenstrasse 50
CH - 8050 Zürich
www.gali-izard.arch.ethz.ch

NSL Colloquium
Beyond Maintenance
Responsive Practices for
Changing Landscapes

26th–28th February, 2023

beyondmaintenance@arch.ethz.ch

Table of Contents

NSL Colloquium
Beyond Maintenance
Responsive Practices for Changing Landscapes

26th-28th February 2025 at ETH Zürich, Switzerland

The Colloquium is organized by members of the Chair of BEING ALIVE led by Prof. Teresa Galí-Izard at ETH Zürich

Responsive Practices for Changing Landscapes
Introduction

The current separation between landscape design and landscape maintenance is no longer tenable. Unpredictable weather patterns and dwindling water supplies intersect with cuts to municipal budgets and increasingly precarious conditions for landscape labourers. And yet entrenched project structures and practices limit opportunities for exchange and dialogue. Consequently, landscapes are simplified to facilitate repetitive, low-skilled maintenance, limiting their ecological complexity, resilience and aesthetic potential.

In light of this, the 2025 NSL colloquium investigates the relationship between the design and maintenance of living systems, seeking to cultivate practices, terminology, and theoretical insights into ways of maintaining otherwise. On the one hand, innovative management techniques can introduce a much-needed sensitivity and open-endedness to design practice. On the other hand, iterative design thinking can enliven routine maintenance patterns to make the most of limited resources. This intersection is a space of opportunity, both to question disciplinary boundaries—including the uneven distribution of prestige, precarity, and compensation that underlie them—and to move from attempting to control more-than-human nature towards a performative call and response.

Accordingly, Beyond Maintenance invites proposals spanning research, practice, and pedagogy that contribute experimental methodologies, theories, and concrete cases that support tending landscapes in crisis. Aiming to open up a conversation across disciplines, we encourage scholars and practitioners from landscape architecture, urban studies, horticulture, restoration ecology and related fields to submit to the open call.

Chair of Being Alive
ETH Zürich

Day 1

HIT Building, ETH Hönggerberg
Wednesday 26, February

09:30-10:00	**Registration and Coffee**
10:00-11:00	**Introduction to the Colloquium: Beyond Maintenance: Responsive Practices for Changing Landscapes** Teresa Galí-Izard and Organising Team ETH Zürich
11:00-11:30	**Coffee Break**
11:30-13:30	**Panel 1 Releasing Control** Presentations by Jessica Caporusso, Ludivine Gragy, Emily Knox, Beatriz Saladich Respondent: Prof. Dr. Jamie Lorimer, University of Oxford
13:30-15:00	**Lunch Break**
15:00-17:00	**Panel 2 Enhancing what Remains** Presentations by Thomas Cabai, Dr. Nicole de Lalouvière, Dr. Karin Reisinger, Dane Carlson Respondent: Prof. Dr. Andrew S. Mathews, University of California, Santa Cruz
17:00-17:30	**Coffee Break**
17:30-18:30	**Keynote** **Governing through Gaia: Modulating the Earth System to deliver Metabolic Repair** Pr. Dr. Jamie Lorimer, School of Geography and Environment and Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, University of Oxford
18:30	**Apéro**

Abstracts

Jessica Caporusso / jcapo@yorku.ca
Ph.D. Candidate (ABD), Department of Anthropology, York University, Toronto

Making Grow Otherwise: Attuning to Plant-People Relations

In the wake of declining sugar prices and rising climate concerns, agronomists and planters in Mauritius are strategizing new uses for colonial crops. The pivot from sugar-as-food to biofuel, as one maneuver, focuses on "recuperating" value from sugarcane by-products and invasive plants. Drawing on ethnographic research, this paper focuses on how new energy crops are persuaded to grow well, engineering ideal planting conditions in order to stimulate plants' "natural" abilities to propagate. Despite efforts to encourage greater yields, crops in field trials have stubbornly refused to grow at the insistence of human interventions. Similarly, I focus on small planters' maneuvers to weather a declining sugar industry—choosing where, how, and if they will invest into farming—by leasing out their lands, adopting precision agriculture techniques, or strategically leaving fields fallow. In this paper, I question the premise that all growth is good growth. I argue both plants' refusal to grow and planters' strategic abandonment attune us to the possibility of living otherwise in the shadow of the plantation (Tsing 2015). In so doing, I contemplate what resisting toxic growth does as an anti-colonial strategy, one that helps reframe agricultural practices while questioning the sustainability of certain forms of "green" energy.

Emily Knox / elk0023@auburn.edu
Associate Professor and Graduate Program Chair, Auburn University

Making Landscapes is not only for Landscape Architects

Ranchers and foresters, amongst others, have long been making landscapes more effectively than landscape architects. These practitioners work differently than we do; they deploy a different set of tools and often with a divergent set of values. Their choreographic methods, though, include sustained conversation with the same landscape, making decisions responsive to shifting conditions as they are observed. These makers enact change by directly intervening in extant landscape processes - plant growth and seed dispersal, for example. This approach has much to offer our specification-obsessed discipline. I will make this argument by describing my work as a range rider for Alderspring Ranch. This practice of landscape-making involved gently shaping the trajectory of a cattle herd across vast, arid landscapes. Harnessing the generative potential of 400 non-human landscape actors, this choreography produces incremental and intentional change. Such an approach is simultaneously technical and poetic, requiring a deep understanding of the landscape at hand, while affording a sensitive response to its intricacies. Borrowing tools from these other landscape makers, who meddle in landscapes at much larger scales, and in ways more responsive than traditional landscape construction, have much to offer a discipline seeking novel, more adaptive working methods.

Beatriz Saladich / info@beatrizsaladich.eu
Architect and Landscape Architect, Barcelona

Founding an Interstage Nature:
The Case of Heathland Management in Sporting Estates

The word heathland refers here to those open landscapes dominated by heather (Calluna vulgaris), that are characteristic of the Scottish Highlands and Islands. Despite an apparent form of quiet wilderness, these treeless extensions are the result of a long deforestation process that replaced the domain of an ancient forest by a large concentration of landholdings, mainly set aside for British elites to hunt. In these Sporting Estates, the chase of a homogeneous heather cover to shelter game birds has prevailed over any other form of land management during the last 200 years. Hunters and shepherds have preserved and stabilized the heather communities through muirburn and rough grazing, preventing their natural succession into more wooded stages. However, an intensive and undifferentiated maintenance of this shrubland has led to the decline of other riparian and mire habitats, perturbing the ecological dynamics of this territory. Starting from these observations, this paper delves into the interstage condition of heathland, in which the balance of taming and laisser-faire has provided a specific assemblage of landscape features. Muirburn patterns, grips, enclosures and other hunting devices are reinterpreted here to suggest transversal practices and traces that could further reveal the intrinsic values of these upland areas.

Ludivine Gragy / studio@ludivinegragy.com
Landscape architect from France based in Berlin and Visiting Professor at the Institute for Landscape Architecture (TU) in Dresden.

Decay and Rebirth

In Japan, the practice of daily care on a small scale is not only a lifestyle but also a way of honouring the broader environment. During my time there, I deepened my understanding of this idea—beyond its relation to garden work, as a transformative force shaping the space around us.

In my initial years as a gardener and landscape architect, I have learned to let go of control, aiming to preserve the whole through an aesthetic of incompleteness and absence—ideas embodied by the concepts of wabi and sabi. This aesthetic invites participation and imagination, encouraging us to fill what is missing. It creates space for the unpredictable to unfold, allowing new species to take root and thrive.

In the projects I guide, themes of decay and hybridization meet the idea of rebirth. By incorporating natural dynamics into aesthetic experiences, we craft new narratives. Each season, I redefine my approach, transforming living materials and repurposing organic matter onsite. This process of slow metamorphosis creates opportunities for change, fostering new forms of coexistence, alliances, and stratification. It reimagines both the present and the potential for future landscapes.

Thomas Cabai / thomas.cabai@polimi.it
Architect and PhD candidate, Architectural Urban and Interior Design, Politecnico di Milano

Restoring Alienated Life:
Private Initiatives in Reviving Secondary Habitats in Italy

The Italian landscape was once characterized by the productive use of a heterogeneous combination of living systems—"secondary habitats" like bogs, swamps, and wetlands. With the industrialization of agriculture in the late 20th century, these labour-intensive habitats were abandoned, leading to small-scale ecological succession and a significant simplification of biodiversity. Today, the utilitarian value that sustained these habitats has nearly vanished, leaving their existence justified mainly on ethical grounds and reliant on public support. However, as seen in regions as Friuli-Venezia Giulia, even protected "biotopes" face mismanagement due to low economic incentives, lack of oversight, and limited expertise within small municipalities. In 2020, a retired expert in restoration ecology purchased and restored four hectares of abandoned bog. His experience over the past four years, which I observed as a collaborator, reveals valuable insights on high-level restoration and management without any public funds. Specifically, these insights address the relationship between spatial design and facilitation of management, the reuse of maintenance "waste" for site infrastructure, and the formation of supportive, non-market networks to sustain the site over time, each of these three mutually reinforcing each other.

Nicole Lalouviere / lalouviere@arch.ethz.ch
Postdoc, Chair of the History and Theory of Urban Design, ETH Zurich

Caretaking for a Landscape Common: Maintenance Works in the Irrigation System of Canton Valais

In Switzerland's Canton Valais, an intricate network of irrigation channels (bisses/Suonen) first constructed in the late Middle Ages now forms an extensive infrastructural system. A period of state-financed modernization works in the 1920s saw the emergence of new materials and techniques. Reinforced concrete and underground pipes replaced channels built out of stone and timber; spray irrigation made parts of the gravitational irrigation system obsolete. In the 1950s, the decline of agriculture resulted in the abandonment of many bisses and the replacement of open channels with installation of spray irrigation. A period of renewal and reconstruction started in the 1980s, extending to the present day. In 2014, Canton Valais's O+ice des Améliorations Structurelles (Département de l'économie, de l'énergie et du territoire / Service de l'agriculture) issued a manual of sorts, entitled: Directive: Assainissement de bisses et remise en état périodique ('Guidelines for sanitation and periodic restoration of the bisses'). The guidelines serve to provide construction, renovation, and maintenance recommendations through photographs, sketches, and construction details. They offer a catalogue of possible building techniques, showcase 'exemplary' channels, and codify centuries-old communal, often tacit, knowledge. The guidelines are the first attempt to standardize hitherto localized and disconnected efforts to sustain a canton-wide irrigation system. Rather than adhering to the modernist approach of building 'robust' systems that resist deterioration and the forces of 'nature', the new guidelines promote the use of hybrid construction techniques, often instigating the reversal of earlier state-funded modernisation projects. The paper will discuss the degree to which these guidelines, and their implementation in Valais, have been successful in reinstating care work as the foundation of landscape stewardship in this particular context.

Karin Reisinger / k.reisinger@akbild.ac.at
Lecturer and researcher at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna

Extractivism and Iteration: More-than-Human Literacies of Restoring and Maintaining Extracted Environments

Who takes on the care work in extracted landscapes, and under what conditions? To broaden the scope of ecological care work, this contribution collates examples of research in crises-torn mining towns in Sábme/Sweden (Malmberget – meaning 'iron mountain') and Austria (Eisenerz – meaning 'iron ore'). It reflects iterative and long-lasting processes of extractivism and care using examples from eight years of research. The processes and agencies show the entangled literacies of local more-than-human actors who preserve, maintain or restore their environments during or after the large-scale extraction of iron ore with many impacts on various scales. Human inhabitants feed birds in mining areas, while birds occupy and inhabit fenced-off zones. An artist walks ancestral paths again and again to save areas from extractivism. The Indigenous Sámi cultivate the landscape with their reindeer. Activists gather knowledge on species that need to be protected, while swamps are expected to restore toxic tailing ponds. This diverse, multi-species and counter-extractive enactment of maintaining landscapes and their bio and cultural diversities is based on local and situated knowledges, complex, precarious and passed from generation to generation and maintained in gatherings, exchanges and iterated enactment. The collected and shared practices create collective imaginaries for liveable futures for extractive environments, dealing with loss and contributing to the contingencies of life.

Dane Carlson / danegcarlson@gmail.com
Landscape designer and Assistant Professor at Principia College, Illinois

Making Space: Autonomy and Retreat Labor in the Himalayas

Landscape architecture can't simply embrace maintenance by shoving it under the disciplinary umbrella. Instead, we should consider how we engage with maintenance being done beyond disciplinary boundaries. In many non-disciplinary landscape practices across the world, design, making, and maintenance are indivisible. Yet our current engagements with such practices are still rooted in fetishization and the extraction of spatial toolkits to be copied and pasted elsewhere. This talk examines a practice that takes shape through an alternative engagement: landscape architecture as making space for people and communities to do the entangled work of landscape design, making, and maintenance on their own terms. This work takes place in the Himalayan village of Lubra, Nepal. As increasingly extreme floods drive the village to slowly retreat uphill, Lubra's people cultivate emergent landscape practices of design, making, and maintenance. Flood debris is used to build protective walls for fields, protective gabion walls are laid out and built with tractors, and new ritual sites are built to maintain ancient traditions. Collective design in Lubra frames retreat as the aggregation of everyday landscape design, making, and maintenance across time.

Prof. Dr. Jamie Lorimer / jamie.lorimer@ouce.ox.ac.uk
School of Geography and Environment and Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, University of Oxford

Governing through Gaia: Modulating the Earth System to deliver Metabolic Repair

There is a growing scientific and practical interest in deploying microbes, plants and animals to repair dysfunctional metabolic cycles within the earth system. Species like beaver, salmon, cattle, pine trees and legumes are enrolled as nonhuman ecosystem engineers, capable of biogeochemical transformation across diverse scales. These interventions – commonly termed Nature-based Solutions – put life to work to modulate the distribution and dynamics of key elements – including carbon, nitrogen, phosphorous and water. This paper traces the intellectual origins of this mode of conceiving life and outlines how it shapes a novel approach to managing the life-earth nexus. It then identifies three challenges that it faces, relating to questions of social justice, animal ethics and the risk of hubris. It provides examples of the proactive deployment of ecosystem engineers for metabolic modulation from across disparate domains of science and policy. It offers an overview of varied experiments and a critical, comparative analysis to establish priorities for future research to develop the potential of Nature-based Solutions.

Day 2

Alumni Pavilion, ETH Zentrum
Thursday 27, February

09:30-10:00	**Registration and Coffee**
10:00-11:00	**Keynote** **How Noticing Leads to Obligation: Tree Care and Landscape Burning in Italy** Prof. Dr. Andrew Matthews, University of California, Santa Cruz
11:00-11:30	**Coffee Break**
11:30-13:30	**Keynote** **Jardineros** Prof. Michelle Franco, Ohio State University **Panel Session 3 Landscapes of Labour** Presentations by Leah Kahler, Dr. Julian Raxworthy Respondent: Jenny Jones, Teremoto, CA
13:30-15:00	**Lunch Break**
15:00-17:00	**Panel 4 Commoning Maintenance** Presentations by Aron Chang, Carolina Acevedo, Malú Cayetano, Dr. Sara Jacobs Respondent: Prof. Michelle Franco
17:00-17:30	**Coffee Break**
17:30-18:30	**Keynote** **Terremoto: Labor, Care, and Radical Gardens of Love and Interconnectedness** Jenny Jones, Terremoto, CA
18:30	**Dinner for Presenters**

Abstracts

Prof. Dr. Andrew Matthews / amathews@ucsc.edu
University of California, Santa Cruz

How Noticing Leads to Obligation:
Tree Care and Landscape Burning in Italy

Relationships between people, plants, animals, and soil have reshaped the form of Mediterranean landscapes. Farmers and pastoralists are intensely committed to noticing and responding to plants, animals, and soil, and have maintained choreographies of trees, soil, drainage systems, and fire for many centuries. This kind of landscape care is both a sensory engagement with more than human temporalities and a form of coming under obligation. Turning to encounters with burning landscapes, I ask how we can notice and become obligated to disturbance and to landscape histories. Fires create landscape-scale patterns of burned and unburned grasslands and woodlands. Shifting between sensing ecological details, large-scale patterns, and long-term histories, we can become attuned and obligated to disturbances and landscape dramas.

Prof. Michelle Franco / franco.88@osu.edu
Ohio State University

Jardineros

In landscape architecture, an invisible body of workers conducts the manual labour of construction and maintenance. Operating at both a social and spatial distance from the professionals who intellectually craft the landscape, these workers are typically excluded from the visualization, knowledge production, and care of landscape architecture as a discipline. In the United States, Latine immigrants comprise a significant proportion of landscape labourers. My previous scholarship has examined the race- and class-based stratification at play in the production of contemporary landscapes; the social and visual representation of immigrant labourers in landscape architecture; and feminist theories of care as a framework for cultivating sustainable human-to-human relations in landscape work. This project, Jardineros, aims to catalyze social and cultural changes within the disciplinary structures and daily habits of landscape work, centred directly on the cultivation of care for immigrant landscape labourers. Short films documenting the applied research will be screened as in-progress work at the Beyond Maintenance Colloquium. Partnering with U.S.-based landscape architecture firms Reed Hilderbrand and Terremoto, Jardineros positions care for landscape labourers as a critical site for the practice of design. The films document our experimental modifications to established means and methods within professional practice, which aim to create a bridge between the divided worlds of designers and labourers. Beyond centring the importance of physical labour and immigrant workers' skill in the production of contemporary landscapes, we critically examine and evolve our own labours as designers and scholars. This project wields the capacities of scholarly research by embedding it into real-world labour practices—changing institutionalized dynamics toward social justice and recognition for immigrant landscape labourers. The short films reveal entanglements of political ecology and economy, identity and lived experience within systems of capitalist production, and the racial stratification of knowledge and embodiment in contemporary landscape work—in addition to the joys and pleasures of the work itself. The landscape and those people who define, design, and construct it are the related roots of these inquiries. With Jardineros, I claim that the cultivation—the gardening—of these relations is imperative and urgent to landscape architecture as a discipline.

Leah Kahler / kahlerl@design.upenn.edu
McHarg Fellow in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania

Hot Work for Cool Shade: Who Grows Your Trees?

It's a familiar scene: A tree arrives to the construction site, swaddled in burlap and wrapped in twine on the bed of an eighteen-wheeler that travelled thousands of refrigerated miles to get there. The landscape designer works with the landscape crew to carefully place the tree into place, just so. At last, shade has found its way to the project site for the benefit of "all." But what sweltering work led to this plant's arrival on site? What uneven and shifting geographies of heat were necessary for this tree to be grown? This paper attends to an oft-overlooked agent in the supply chain of constructed landscapes and the diverse maintenance practices that support the production of shade, installed elsewhere. For the living plants used in built landscape architecture, maintenance begins the moment a seed is germinated or a cutting is made, often in highly controlled and rapidly shifting climates. Based on fieldwork with nurseries and alternative plant sourcers in the Northeast, the Gulf South, and the Pacific Northwest, this paper traces evolving cycles of labour with a focus on the seasonal nature of nursery work and an uneven distribution of temperature. Ultimately, the talk probes alternatives to the imagined and spatial disjuncture between the labour of production at the nursery and landscape architecture projects. I argue that nurseries, and the people who cultivate and source plants, should be brought into the fold of the contemporary conversation around the maintenance of landscapes in order to imagine alternative planting practices beyond the relegation of the nursery to the periphery. Who grows your trees?

Julian Raxworthy / julian.raxworthy@canberra.edu.au
julian.raxworthy@gmail.com
Associate Professor and Discipline Lead in Landscape Architecture at the University of Canberra

The Viridic: Unveiling the Political Economy of Landscape Maintenance

We have all seen this drawing or a version of it. A figure stands over a plant or drives a tractor— both shown in line work, like an airplane safety card—cutting plants, with zoomed-in details of cuts and plant organs. Bored by plans, this image has become ubiquitous. It has replaced conventional documentation, signalling "action." Yet, who holds the secateurs in this drawing? Who pays them? What is the "back story" of the protagonist that enables this craft? And, under capitalism, what of the land where these plants grow?

Landscape architectural designers and theorists are moving "beyond" maintenance. They are developing a design language of care that focuses on techniques and tools attuned to plant botany. I term this approach "the viridic" in my book Overgrown. This method encourages novel plant growth. Yet it demands ongoing labour, linking it to institutional and organizational structures. Labour is money, is politics, and unfolds within systems of land ownership. After unpacking the institutional assumptions in this drawing trope, I extend the language of the viridic. I examine the institutions of maintenance implied by these instruments, placing them within neoliberal and colonial economies. Through case studies in Australia and the United States, I argue that maintenance is always political. It is shaped by the economic structures on which it depends.

Aron Chang / aron.y.chang@gmail.com
Urban designer and educator, Santa Cruz, CA, and New Orleans, LA

Three Explorations: Building Community Stewardship of Green Infrastructure in New Orleans / Bulbancha

In the sinking delta city of New Orleans, Louisiana, public agencies, nonprofits, and activists are working to reshape the urban landscape in response to persistent flooding, subsidence, climate change, and public health concerns. These efforts range from small scale green infrastructure projects to a regional water plan. These projects challenge long-held assumptions and practices that have governed the stewardship of waterways, waterfronts, public open spaces, and stormwater across the city. Drawing on a decade of urban water projects, I would like to share practices from 1) a public workshop on the long-term maintenance of a public "resilience" project; 2) a community-constructed and -maintained urban meadow and rain garden; and 3) a community-driven design process for transforming a drainage canal. These efforts illuminate challenges as well as possibilities for shifting current paradigms for the design and stewardship of this city's water landscapes.

Carolina Acevedo / carolina.beingalive@gmail.com
Ph.D. candidate and researcher based in Chile

The Garden of the XXI Century in Tiltil: A Collaborative Landscape Project in Chile

Tiltil, located 40 kilometres north of Santiago de Chile, has been experiencing a significant increase in drought over the last 15 years. It is here that the 21st Century Garden is being developed, an initiative that started in the Being Alive Research Center of ETHZ. The project consists of a series of simple practices; it is a process that responds to the temporary conditions of the climate, soil, and the local inhabitants. The Garden is collaborative; it could not be built without the participation of a number of different actors, each of which has a specific role to play. The community and the local team in charge of the project are the coordinators of this work. The translation of the design rules of the Garden into accessible and user-friendly language has made it possible for the local inhabitants to have all the necessary information so that in the future, they can take on these caregiving tasks. The Garden is an open-ended project, and it provides an alternative for transformation in a context as complex as that of Tiltil.

Malú Cayetano / malu@la-pa.es
Landscape Architect and Forest Engineer based in Madrid

Zonas Amarillas Sensibles Sostenibles (Zass) – Project

ZONAS AMARILLAS SENSIBLES SOSTENIBLES (ZASS) is a community project that seeks to experiment with new models of gardening in public spaces. Places that aim to be more adaptive towards the climate change scenario in which we live and that contribute to the improvement of urban biodiversity. The project is developed in collaboration with the social fabric of the district of Villaverde (Madrid) and has been underway since autumn 2021. It involves the creation of a diverse and open learning community around experimental gardening plots and the use of citizen science for its activation and for the democratisation of the generation and dissemination of knowledge. We want to reframe the vision on the current aesthetics, design, and management of green yellowish-green spaces and green brownish-brown infrastructure, exploring and empowering the use of innovative community gardening practices in and from our neighbourhoods. ZASS is promoted in collaboration with Alberto Peralta from Ciudad Huerto, Alba Gutiérrez Girón and Guillermo Amo de Paz, researchers at the Complutense University of Madrid and members of the Biodiversia Cooperative, the Afandice occupational centre in Villaverde, and numerous agents (human and more-than-human) from Villaverde.

Sara Jacobs / sjacobs@sala.ubc.ca
Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of British Columbia

Willful Care: Pedagogical Reflections on Care Beyond Maintenance

Care challenges and fractures hegemonic ways of knowing landscape, meaning that ways of living that emerge through an ethos of care remake power relations upon which existing structures of white supremacy, patriarchy, and extractive capitalism depend. Our shared future depends on the removal of these intersecting structures of oppression, making radical approaches to care necessary and urgent for bringing futures that value life into existence. This paper proposes how socio-ecological care centring collaboration, mutuality, and interdependence can counter practices of landscape maintenance predicated on the harm, violence, or suppression of living systems. Through pedagogical reflection drawn from teaching seminars and studios about care at the University of British Columbia and the University of Virginia, I speculate how three dimensions of care work inform landscape relations: the politics of care (who and what is implicated by care), practices of care (land-based action), and the possibilities of care (queer ecological futures). These approaches unsettle the agency of design and of time by attending to and critiquing how status quo landscape maintenance often smooths or holds still the diversity and friction of ecological relations. I connect this pedagogical work with emerging ideas of 'ecological reparation' and 'infrastructural repair' to argue for care that is willful: relational, dynamic, and defiant futures that emerge in opposition to practices that hold life and land in stasis.

Jenny Jones / jenny@terremoto.la
Terremoto, CA

Terremoto:
Labor, Care, and Radical Gardens of Love and Interconnectedness

Terremoto is a landscape architecture firm in California practising in densely populated, richly biodiverse, and environmentally precarious landscapes. Our work draws from the history of gardens and landscapes but also challenges the established conventions of the design and landscape industry. We seek to co-create gardens that encourage humans and nonhumans alike to exist in beautiful webs of relationships of care.
Terremoto's internal Land & Labor working group explores issues related to landscape labour, studying the exploitation that gardeners and landscape workers endure in the United States, and advocating for greater acknowledgement and rights for labourers. We seek to elevate labour and care to a higher, deserved position in our society.

Terremoto explores stewardship through Test Plot, which is an ongoing experiment in community land care. Established in 2019 in Los Angeles, Test Plot celebrates labour and revitalizes our public parklands through communal, informal maintenance work, rather than top-down design. Test Plot has grown to 15 plots across California, and will continue to push for low-tech, low-cost solutions to our cultural and environmental crises.

Day 3

Alumni Pavilion, ETH Zentrum
Friday 28, February

09:30-10:00	**Registration and Coffee**
10:00-11:00	**Keynote** **Art of Garden or Art of Gardening?** Veronique Facheur, atelier le balto, Berlin
11:00-11:30	**Coffee Break**
11:30-13:30	**Panel 5 Experimental Landscapes** Dr. Zihao Zhang, Mark Krieger, Gabi Lerch, Dr. Christoph Kueffer, Michael Geffel, Khyati Saraf Respondent: Julian Raxworthy, Associate Professor and Discipline Lead in Landscape Architecture at the University of Canberra
13:30-15:00	**Lunch Break**
15:00-17:00	**Panel 6 Bridging Disciplines** 51N4E, Plantenhoutgoed, Sylvie Viollier, Adrienne Heflich, Jonah Goldstein Respondent: Véronique Faucheur, atelier le balto
17:00-17:30	**Coffee Break**
17:30-18:30	**Concluding Round Table**

Abstracts

Véronique Faucheur / atelier@lebalto.de
atelier le balto, Berlin

Art of Garden or Art of Gardening?
The art of the garden is still alive, not only because it is made of the biological world, plants, minerals, animals and humans, but also because it has always depended on sociological constellations, weather conditions and affinities between individuals. A garden is the result of a 'human adventure', subject to the vagaries of what is beyond the human world. Drawing on examples that illustrate the practices of atelier le balto (Residencies as tool of Understanding, The drawing at work, Working with the inhabitants, Soles-Protection-Strategies, Planting Density in accordance to the sociability of the plants and Gardening), we present here three theses for improving the current state of the open spaces as elements of our towns and cities (parks, gardens, interstices, alleyways, avenues, terraces, etc.): 1) Designing the project by combining "Poetics of space" and "Inventive economy"; 2) Getting involved as Designer and gardener over several months or years; and 3) (re)placing the gardener at the centre of care practices. Dreaming of the sky while keeping our feet on the ground.

Zihao Zhang / zzhang@ccny.cuny.edu
Assistant Professor and Director of Landscape Architecture Program, Spitzer School of Architecture, City College of New York | CUNY.

Do Machines Care?

In this theoretical research, I consider a juxtaposition of two parallel advancements in the field of landscape architecture: the first is a technological integration of machine intelligence, such as AI systems, in managing landscape processes beyond mere optimization and automation; the second is an ethical shift that introduces the feminist theory of care into landscape discourse, thereby framing landscape maintenance within the realm of ethics (Figure 1). This juxtaposition invites us to ask a critical question: Do machines care? In 1950, when AI research was in its infancy, Alan Turing challenged us to reconsider the boundary of intelligence by proposing the question, "Can machines think?" The question was a technical one. Today, the challenge is to rethink the extent of the ethics of care when machines are no longer merely tools that extend human actions but co-conspirators and "co-caretakers" of the landscapes. Using examples in AI-related research (Figures 2 and 3), I introduce the notion of AI alignment: Is what we want also what AI wants? Using ideas from cybernetics, autopoiesis, and posthumanist philosophy, I will build a technological framework for understanding the role of intelligent machines and AI in landscape maintenance and care.

Mark Krieger, Gabi Lerch, Christoph Kueffer / kueffer@env.ethz.ch
Ecology and Planting Design Group, Institute of Landscape and Open Space, OST Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences, Rapperswil, Switzerland

Caring through Participation. The Living Lab at OST Campus Rapperswil

The over 50-year-old campus of the OST Rapperswil has a long history of changing landscape architectural designs and uses. It hosts a plant collection of several thousand species and varieties and has been awarded the biodiversity label of 'Natur und Wirtschaft'. For the past 15 years we have developed the green and open spaces of the campus as a living lab for research and teaching. One main motivation for this was to address the challenge of dwindling finances for maintenance. At the center of our practices are: experimentation, designing with the processes of nature, rewilding, and encouraging participation of students and staff in the maintenance. Exemplary projects including: arts-based and activist design studios on the campus, a Miyawaki forest cared for by successive student cohorts, maintaining dying and dead trees and dead wood in the landscape, composting on site, planting designs with ruderals, and unsealing sealed surfaces. A large meadow in the centre of the campus illustrates the interplay of design and natural succession: The microtopography has been designed, the meadow is mown in sequences, some plants have been purposefully introduced, while other charismatic tree and animal species – such as a threatened fern species, resprouting willows, a fox or snipes during bird migration – have discovered the meadow by themselves. Beyond such creative interventions, however, communication at very different levels and very practical organizational solutions are pivotal to the success of our living lab. We co-finance low maintenance of a highly ambitious green space design by integrating it into the curriculum in landscape architecture, and we work on a daily base closely with the facility management staff of the university.

Michael Geffel / mgeffel@lndlab.com
PLA, is principal of LND LAB

LND LAB / Case Studies in the Establishment of an Experimental Landscape

In preparation for the 2022 World Athletics Championships, the City of Eugene invested in several infrastructure improvements along the Willamette River. Unfortunately, construction disturbance significantly impacted the site and early revegetation efforts failed. Having already built trust with University of Oregon Campus Planning & Facilities Management through a multi-year maintenance experiment, the principal design team adopted six acres of riverfront to trial an alternative approach to "soil & erosion control." Their response to construction disturbance centred on creative fieldwork, land care, and the aesthetics of thrift during the establishment period, leading to flexible, incremental innovation. Through this process, the identity and culture of the Fuller Initiative Land Lab (FILL) was established, which continues to operate as an experimental landscape, outdoor instructional area, and demonstration garden. This paper describes the theory, inspiration, and pragmatism that gave rise to the "Oregon Experience Laboratory" exhibition and led to the founding of the FILL. The lab serves as proof of concept, demonstrating the generative capacity of "design through maintenance" in the transformation of brownfields, landscapes of infrastructure, and other vague terrain. Case studies illustrate how the approach translates practical concerns into novel designs and conclude with operational guidelines for replicating the model.

Khyati Saraf / khyatisaraf89@gmail.com
Michael Van Valkenburgh and Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Decolonizing Delhi - Reinventing the Urban Park

In 2009 a citizen-led initiative transformed a 400-acre former quarry in New Delhi into a novel urban park with native plant communities of the Tropical Thorn Forest endemic to the semi-arid region. A native landscape that reflects the dry and wet seasons of Delhi – a defoliated display of browns and ochres in the dry season and verdant greens in the wet. This is unusual for Delhi's urban parks that are always "green", i.e. heavily irrigated, with expansive lawns, low hedges and high canopy trees. A Victorian approach to park-making that has lasted well beyond the British colonial government and the means to support intensive maintenance and irrigation regimes in a burgeoning metropolitan region with a perennial water crisis.

A movement to "rewild" urban landscapes has been growing in the semi-arid cities of North India as pressure on land and natural resources increase and harsher summers along with erratic monsoons continue to impact livability in Indian cities. This proposal seeks to highlight and juxtapose the following – the methodology, practical considerations, partnership with local organizations and maintenance regimes established to realize such projects that do not have conventional design and engineering execution practice. It also seeks to highlight the deep cultural impact of colonial cultural constructs and how such rewilding practices reframe notions of "green" and "parkness" and the role such landscapes play in educating and challenging aesthetic dogmas.

51N4E + Plantenhoutgoed / sotiria@51n4e.com,
jeroen@plantenhoutgoed.be, laradeschutter@51n4e.com,
aymeric@plantenhoutgoed.be

Synthetic Reflections from Practice

Urban landscapes are dynamic, evolving encounters of human activity, ecological systems, and infrastructure. They offer a valuable opportunity to rethink the relationship between these elements and their coexistence.

Over the past decade, Plant&Houtgoed and 51N4E have explored these environments from different perspectives—ecology, design, implementation, and systems thinking—leading to a shared working culture. In an era where urban transformation projects often emphasize predictability and control, we advocate for an approach that embraces complexity and ambiguity. This means working with living systems, guiding but also allowing for surprises, shifting between temporalities, and negotiating space for interaction and change.

No single project holds all the answers, but each serves as a testing ground to explore alternative approaches to research, design, and realization. A key aspect of our work is redefining maintenance—not as preservation but as a form of guidance that fosters ecological complexity and resilience. Our projects, spanning from large-scale infrastructure to urban soil research, reposition maintenance as a central design logic rather than a reactive task at the end of a project.

Our contribution will explore the following questions:
How do new urban landscapes emerge when maintenance is a design driver? What opportunities exist for responsive, landscape-sensitive maintenance within current planning models, and how can we navigate their limitations? What alternative frameworks or instruments could support a project culture that fosters biodiverse, dynamic urban landscapes?

We propose a critical retrospective on our evolving perspective on maintenance, drawing on projects such as Skanderbeg Square (designing with/through maintenance and setting up local learning trajectories), Ringpark Zuid (challenges and opportunities in large-scale urban landscape design), and Asiat Darse/NatuurWeefselPlanning (experimentation with a new governmental local maintenance plan).

Sylvie Viollier / s.viollier@paysage-environnement.ch
Bureau Paysage&Environnement

A Changing Agricultural Landscape and School Spaces: More than 10 Years of Practice in the Canton of Vaud

The development and implementation of the ecological infrastructures La Frontière et Espaces Vivants, encompassing more than 800 achievements, is an exciting landscape adventure—a vast project with complex accomplishments. Located in an agricultural landscape spanning 2,500 hectares, as well as in school spaces of the canton of Vaud, between the Jura foothills and Lake Geneva, this ambitious project was initiated over ten years ago. At the heart of this territory, a landscape once dominated by standardized urbanization and intensive agriculture has gradually given way to an enriched environment. The objective? To reintroduce spontaneous landscape designs adapted to various uses and interests. The goal is to create a fascinating landscape heritage rooted in the poetry of nature, while promoting biodiversity, sustainable agriculture, knowledge, and the conservation of natural ecosystems, as well as the well-being of its inhabitants. This is a living proposal—a field laboratory where plantations and sowing have been considered in the context of landscape, ecological, agricultural, and educational needs. The challenge has been to rethink the territory as a whole, reintroducing structuring elements that are diverse and adapted to local conditions, aligned with maintenance practices and consistent with Swiss biodiversity policies. Here's what has been achieved so far: sowing and revitalizing over 300 hectares of rare meadow environments (dry meadows, wetlands, extensive species-rich pastures), planting thousands of trees, often organized as tree-lined avenues and landmark trees, creating rural wooded groves, kilometres of hedgerows, fruit-bearing hedges, bramble thickets, and rocky habitats. It also includes the revitalization of bocage elements, the planting of high-stem orchards, chestnut groves, walnut groves, and more. The visible results: a subtle shift in perception, from the ideal of neat and orderly nature to an acceptance of living nature and new maintenance practices. This project is continuing its adventure, on its own, as a functional organ. Each year, it is enriched by numerous new realizations. How can we promote landscape projects and landscape maintenance as complex, rich, living, adaptable and evolving spaces? Maintenance remains a constant challenge and guides its achievements.

Adrienne Heflich / aheflich@mvvainc.com
Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc.
Jonah Goldstein / jgoldstein@bbp.nyc
Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation

Observations from Practice at Brooklyn Bridge Park

We bring synthetic observations from practice and represent larger teams with a long history of collaboration and knowledge-sharing through their work at Brooklyn Bridge Park (BBP) in Brooklyn, NY. Using narratives, images, and drawings, we will describe how the landscape architects of Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates and BBP's horticulturists bring value and positive changes to the park that extend beyond their expected responsibilities regarding design and plant care, respectively. Of particular importance to illustrate and elevate are the efforts of BBP's horticultural team: as visitor ambassadors, as decision-makers adjusting maintenance practices to support wildlife and living systems, and as interpreters of design intent in response to changing local and climatic conditions. We will reflect on how the park's responsiveness to local conditions through evolving maintenance practices can be instructive for other parks in development, especially those that are smaller or with fewer resources. Reconsidering the roles and responsibilities of landscape architects and gardeners through the lens of recent scholarship on maintenance and repair can better capture the full value of our time, ideas, and labour, and shape the development of public spaces that are more dynamic and resilient through their incorporation and support of living systems.

Chair of Being Alive

ETH Zürich
ONA J 26
Neunbrunnenstrasse 50
CH - 8050 Zürich
www.gali-izard.arch.ethz.ch

Cover Illustration: *Matthias Wyler, 2025.*