



## ECOTONE THINKING IN THE LANDSCAPE FIELD: A model for collaboration in theory and practice

PhD course with Andrea Kahn, Gunilla Lindholm, Cecil Konijnendijk van den Bosch

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**SYNOPSIS:** With demands ever increasing for inter- and transdisciplinary research, developing effective processes for working between and across historically separate knowledge areas has become ever more urgent. This course explores how PhD researchers in the landscape field co-operate and communicate with colleagues whose working methods, disciplinary frameworks, theories and value sets differ from their own. During the course, participants will be exposed to, and given opportunity to test out tools and techniques aimed at supporting collaborative team work and knowledge production.

Course responsible:

Andrea Kahn, Dept. of Landscape Architecture, Planning and Management, SLU

Teachers:

Cecil Konijnendijk van den Bosch, University of British Columbia, Canada

Andrea Kahn, Columbia University, New York/ LAPM, SLU Alnarp

Gunilla Lindholm, Dept. of Urban and Rural Development, SLU Uppsala

Examiner:

Gunilla Lindholm, Dept. of Urban and Rural Development, SLU Uppsala

Higher education credits: 7.5 ECTS

Subject area: Landscape Planning/Landscape Architecture/Urban Forestry

Language: English

**Prerequisites:** Registered PhD students pursuing projects related to landscape architecture and/or planning, urban design and/or urban forestry. MSc or MA in landscape architecture, urban forestry, urban design landscape /urban planning and landscape /urban management, or adjacent fields required. Master-students in final phase of their studies can be considered. Applicants should have a project plan for their PhD studies (or a project plan for the master's thesis when applicable). The aim is to attract both PhD students with scientific methods and PhD students using design-methods. A prioritization of applicants will be made, if possible, in order to attain a good balance.

**Learning outcomes:** After completing this course, the student shall be able to:

- write a "rhetorical précis" and use it as a reading tool when studying theoretical texts
- recognize the values / assumptions underlying different landscape research methods
- analyze an actual urban landscape as a construct open to diverse interpretations
- devise a synthetic process to manage divergent interpretations of a single landscape
- communicate a collaborative working process to other researchers
- foster transdisciplinary awareness

**APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:** Applicants should submit i) a letter of interest (1 page max) and ii) a ½ page summary of their PhD project to [Gunilla.Lindholm@slu.se](mailto:Gunilla.Lindholm@slu.se), by MAY 15 2016. The letter should state why you want to join the course, information on your current working method, what you want to contribute to the discussion on collaboration, and what you hope this course will contribute to their PhD studies.

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### **Course aim**

Combining theoretical and practical investigations, the course aims to strengthen the PhD students' ability to use collaboration as a means to evolve and sharpen their individual, independent research practice and line of thought. It intends to investigate landscape as a field with inherent capacity for transdisciplinary knowledge production. Participants will engage in analytic readings of, and reflective dialogue about theoretical texts, while concurrently undertaking a hands-on field-study from a transdisciplinary perspective. The course provides participants an occasion to test new ways of teaming with individuals whose research method differs from their own; and to use that collaborative engagement as an opportunity to reflect on their own research values and methods.

### **Course structure**

The course involves three parts: Individual preparatory work; 1 intensive workshop week [3-7 October, 2016] at SLU's Alnarp campus with professors from Urban Forestry (Cecil Konijnendijk), Landscape Planning (Gunilla Lindholm), and Urban Design (Andrea Kahn); and a 1-2 day follow-up session to discuss student papers produced following the workshop week (December, 2016).

#### **PART 1**

##### **Pre-workshop**

preparations: Students to read required and recommended papers in advance of the workshop; familiarize themselves with the "rhetorical précis" format; research the locations to be visited during the workshop, and arrive with a pre-prepared research question they want to ask when visiting those places. (estimated time, 80 hrs)

#### **PART 2**

##### **Workshop**

Format: (3) lectures and 3 related 1/2 day seminars on topical readings: Each faculty member delivers one (1) lecture and leads one (1) seminar session discussing topics focused on two (2) required readings. To establish a transdisciplinary working environment all faculty will be present for all lectures, and contribute to all seminar session discussions. Every student will prepare a 'rhetorical précis' for each required reading, and will present these at the start of the seminar sessions, to initiate discussion. Lectures and seminars will be complemented by a hands-on case-study "Reading urban landscape". During this 'living-lab' experiment in collaborative field studies and work processes, pre-arranged groups of 2- 3 participants will jointly visit and develop a collaborative presentation about one (1) of three pre-selected treed green urban-scapes in the Malmo region: Alnarp Campus; Östra Kyrkogården; Gamla Kyrkogården / Slottsparken/ Kungsparken. Presentations will be delivered and discussed on the last day of the workshop. (estimated time, 40 hrs)

#### **PART 3**

##### **Paper writing**

and review: Individuals work on papers linking outcomes from collaborative workshop discussions and activities to their ongoing thesis projects, for discussion at concluding paper seminar (December, TBD) (estimated time, 80 hrs)

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**Time table**

*15 March 2016*

Course information available; registration open

*1 June 2016*

Last day of registration

*22 June 2016*

Participants notified; course information with detailed PhD course schedule, participant list and assignments distributed

*1 September 2016*

Final course information updates sent around, including meeting room information, updated literature list, workshop daily schedule, final participant list and assignments

*3 – 7 October 2016*

PhD workshop at SLU Alnarp. Preliminary workshop schedule as follows:

*3 October*

09.00-12.00 Course Introduction, Presentation of participant goals, teachers, scope and contents of workshop session

13.00-17.00 "Reading Urban Landscape" Field visit 1 (Student teams)

Optional: dinner with teachers and participants in Malmo (TBD)

*4 October*

09.00-12.00 Lecture and Seminar 1: Ecotone Thinking – a model for collaboration in landscape (A. Kahn, Lecturer and discussion moderator)

13.00-17.00 Lecture and Seminar 2: From government to governance in urban forestry (C. Konijnendijk, Lecturer and discussion moderator)

*5 October*

09.00-12.00 Lecture and Seminar 3: Landscape perspectives in urban planning (G. Lindholm, Lecturer and discussion moderator)

13.00-17.00 "Reading Urban Landscape" Field Visit/ Case study work

*6 October*

09.00-17.00 "Reading Urban Landscape" Field Visit/ Case study development  
Collaborative Presentation Preparation

*7 October*

09.00-15.00 Case presentations and discussions/paper direction

15.00-17.00 Wrap-up discussion, next steps overview

*1-2 December (TBC)*

09.00-17.00 Final paper discussion session

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### **Course content**

Today we live in an urbanizing world, and our society faces serious environmental challenges. In this period of rapid change the European Research Council has cited a need for transformative research modes that can generate a new way of seeing things, a methodological or instrumental advance. Today, researchers must strive to do more than prove theories true; they must aim to produce working knowledges that can be applied to wicked problems in an era of uncertainty (Nowotny, 2005).

Landscape researchers concentrating on urban issues need to tap into their field's inbuilt trans-disciplinarity by developing tools and techniques to navigate across traditionally separated, but practically intertwined, knowledge areas such as landscape planning, landscape design, and landscape science. Historically, landscape researchers have adopted *either* natural science, social science, humanities *or* design-based research methods, depending on the project at hand. For those interested in framing relevant research questions for today, collaboration suggests a potentially fruitful path by offering ways to integrate previously isolated knowledge resources.

This course 'rehearses' transdisciplinary collaboration through various means. Coming together in a research environment with professors from Urban Forestry, Landscape Planning and Urban Design, PhD students working on landscape research questions from natural science, social science, and design perspectives will engage in a week-long, hands-on experiment in collaborative landscape research addressing written materials and constructed environments. This joint effort will combine theoretical and practical modes of investigation.

Lectures and seminar sessions will involve analyzing, assessing and communicating observations about theoretical texts exploring knowledge creation in interface zones -- "epistemological ecotones" between disciplines or between practice-theory (Davoudi 2015 Hillier & Metzger 2015, Ploger 2010, Nowotny 2005). Participants will utilize the "rhetorical précis" method of synopsis readings assembled from multiple sources - planning theory, design theory, urban forestry, landscape architecture, systems design and social theory. [Clear instructions on how to write a "rhetorical précis" will be provided to course participants in advance.] This tool for recording and understanding the essential elements of a text has a tightly structured format. It focuses reader attention on the relation between *what* a piece of writing says (its content), and *how* that message gets conveyed (its form). In a short, four-sentence paragraph, précis-writers present the author and genre of a text, explain its discursive context, synopsise the major assertion or thesis, mode of argumentation, stated and/or apparent purpose, and define the relationship between author and audience. More analytical and less neutral than a simple summary, rhetorical précis-writing builds analytic and critical reading skills, by exposing value frameworks at work in the development of arguments by paper authors and their readers/interpreters. The three seminar sessions during the workshop week will begin with students sharing their pre-prepared rhetorical précis with the group as a collective contribution to lively discussion on how to converse about and negotiate between various interpretations of a text.

In the concurrent living-lab experiment in collaborative field studies, "Reading urban landscapes" students will visit, analyze, document, and present a landscape field-study on one (1) of three treed urban landscapes, field-study locations carefully chosen for the multiple interpretations they each invite. The selected urban landscapes are open to multiple understandings, evaluation methods and

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reference frameworks – for example, as functional hybrids (e.g. Campus-Lab Park-Cemetery); regional locations (rural/peri-urban/center-city); landscape ideas (place of refuge, learning, cultivation, etc.); cultural products (of design, planning, science, power, etc.), to name just a few. The rich variety of potential readings will require participants to openly communicate to one another about their working methods, assumptions, and value sets, and to reflect collectively on how to develop and present the findings from a collaborative landscape study to others.

During the intensive workshop, participants will be expected to test new ways of teaming with individuals whose research method differs from their own; and to use that engagement as an opportunity to reflect on their own research values and methods. The course aims to strengthen the PhD students' ability to use collaboration as a tool to evolve and sharpen their individual, independent research practice and line of thought.

The course investigates landscape as a field with inherent capacity for transdisciplinary knowledge production; so doing, it forms part of the on-going initiative "SLU Landscape", an institutional effort to discover new ways to mesh knowledge regimes. Understood as an experiment in collaboration and reflective research practice, it intends to highlight challenges associated with developing research methods able to respond to, respect and accommodate heterogeneous methods, perspectives and value sets. Participants can benefit from developing collaborative skills in a double sense: by making clear their disciplinary contributions to today's societal challenges and research agendas, and by co-operating with others, creating a common project-specific effect-logic.

### **Results and requirements**

Course participants are expected to

- read recommended and required course literature
- prepare six "rhetorical précis" following an assigned format
- attend all lectures and seminars, and actively contribute to the discussions
- take part in a joint field-study visit to an assigned location, with team members
- collaboratively prepare and deliver a PPT presentation (about the field study location)
- hand in a paper at the end of the course

To pass the course, the student will have

- written, presented and critically discussed their "rhetorical précis"
- actively taken part in critically framing and discussing methodological issues raised by assigned readings
- collaborated in developing and pursuing a fieldwork study method, applicable to treed urban landscapes, that accommodates different team members' perspectives and values
- explained how a collaborative experience impacts her/his own working method in a short (2500-3000 word) final paper relating coursework to individual PhD project

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**Course literature**

REQUIRED READINGS:

Bandolin G & Gora M (2014), *How much for a Tree?* Makadam förlag. All students must purchase a copy and read in advance. Book can be ordered on line from:

<http://www.adlibris.com/se/bok/how-much-for-a-tree-9789170611612>

<http://www.bokus.com/bok/9789170611612/how-much-for-a-tree/>

Davoudi S. (2015) Planning as practice of knowing. *Planning Theory* Vol 14:3, 316-331

Hillier J. (2015) If Schrödinger's cat miaows in the suburbs, will anyone hear? If Schrödinger's cat miaows in the suburbs, will anyone hear? *Planning Theory*, Vol 14:4, 425–443

Müller D., Tjallingii S. & Canters K.J. (2005) A transdisciplinary learning approach to foster convergence of design, science and deliberation in Urban and Regional Planning. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, Vol 22,193-208.

Nowotny, H. (2000) Transgressive Competence: The Narrative of Expertise, *European Journal of Social Theory* 3 :1, 5-21

Williams D. R., (2014) Making sense of 'place': Reflections on pluralism and positionality in place research, *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 131, 74-82

RECOMMENDED READING:

Kahn A (2005) Defining Urban Sites, In Burns C & Kahn A (eds) *Site Matters: Design Concepts, Histories and Strategies*, 281-296

Konijnendijk van den Bosch C.C. (2014), From Government to Governance, Contribution to the Political, Ecology of Urban Forestry, *Urban Forests* (print-proof)

Lindholm G (2012) Visible gestures – on urban landscape perspectives in planning. *Planning Theory* Vol 11:1, 5-19

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