



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Developing Transdisciplinary Understandings of Landscape in Disaster Risk Reduction Research

Citation for published version:

MacKenzie, L 2019, Developing Transdisciplinary Understandings of Landscape in Disaster Risk Reduction Research: The mediatory role and potential of the Landscape Architect. in *IFLA World Congress 2019: Common Ground_Book of Abstracts*. Oslo, pp. 285.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Published In:

IFLA World Congress 2019

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.





COMMON GROUND

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

OSLO KONGRESSENTER 18-20 SEPT, 2019

Landscape Architecture Fieldwork

This paper will address a surprisingly large gap in the literature by demonstrating how fieldwork inspires and informs landscape architecture innovations. Using case studies to describe forms of fieldwork especially pertinent for landscape architecture and borrowing from anthropology and other disciplines, the paper will demonstrate that fieldwork is more than a method: it has the potential to unearth novel design challenges, illuminate robust design solutions, and generate new knowledge and theories of site.

In recent years, landscape architecture has been rediscovering its long roots in fieldwork—extending back to the origins of the profession. The teaching of fieldwork was particularly strong at the University of Pennsylvania under Ian McHarg’s leadership in the 1970s and 1980s, but this period is not well-documented because scholars have generally preferred to foreground McHarg’s environmental credentials over his anthropological interests. This paper will begin by exploring this historical ground with the intention of centring fieldwork, in practice and education, within a larger disciplinary context.

Fieldwork means different things to different professions. Anthropologists, for example, will typically spend at least a year in the field, living among a community, building trust, learning language and codes and patterns of behaviour, and carefully and methodically noting details not only of peoples’ daily lives but also aspects of their objects and environment. Usually the goal is to understand various phenomena through their study in situ. Through fieldwork, anthropologists begin to understand patterns and unearth relationships that might have gone unnoticed before. Such in-depth analysis is what has come to be understood as “thick description,” a term coined by Gilbert Ryle and popularized by Clifford Geertz in his seminal book, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973).