
Introducing the Online DLA2020 Virtual Conference

In early January 2020, the distributed worldwide Digital Landscape Architecture community was hard at work preparing or reviewing over 100 submitted papers, project reports, and research articles in eager anticipation of the upcoming 21st birthday of the DLA organization and conference, to be held at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. The excitement over this coming of age anniversary (as 21 years old is a commonly accepted marker of adulthood) was fitting, as was the planned venue at the GSD, arguably a home to some of the early developments in digital landscape architecture.

By the end of February 2020, online registrations were flowing in; a host of logistical arrangements were underway; the world was already aware of the emerging dimensions of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic. By early March, Harvard University was among many schools and organizations shutting buildings and resorting to all-on-line classes and remote work, with faculty, staff, and students in isolation at home, and observing strict social-distancing protocols, all in the hopes of slowing the relentless spread of contagion (“flattening the epidemic curve”). **By the middle of March, with much regret, the planned on-site DLA2020 conference was formally canceled by announcement on the conference website.**

As of this writing, plans are underway for an all virtual, online conference in summer 2020, assisted by video-conferencing and other digital sharing technologies. History will surely mark the spring of 2020 as a turning point in many dimensions of global community, culture, technology, and public health awareness and protocols. The cancellation of a relatively small conference pales in significance to the other global death and disruption left in the wake of COVID-19. Nonetheless the cancellation was a severe disappointment to our convivial and passionate community of digital landscape architects and affiliates.

As we write, the world-wide rate of infection is still growing rapidly in most countries, with variously dramatic impacts on social and economic welfare. Even as every region acts locally, we are aware more than ever that the entire planet is connected, and convinced more than ever that the tools and techniques of digital landscape architecture are vital to the planning and implementation of global environmental health and well-being.

Our hopes are high that the all-virtual DLA2020 V-Conf will be a valuable, informative, and engaging event. Some trace of that event may yet be on-line at <http://2020.dla-conference.com>

We know that the world will be changed in coming years. We would like to thank and give our greatest respect to all who are serving to save lives during this world crisis. We will continue to contribute to exploring the digital dimensions of environmentally related disciplines, and the international exchange of ideas with our engaged colleagues. And we will all look forward to in-person gathering again, as fortune allows – in Dessau in 2021, and the following years in one of the many other participating schools or organizations hosting the Digital Landscape Architecture conference in the future. Perhaps even at the Harvard GSD someday.

The documentation of the past and future DLA conferences are found at <http://dla-conference.com>

Here we will also merge all earlier DLA conferences which are documented at www.digital-la.de

You will find all contributions since 2013 as open access publications at the gis.Point and gis.Open platforms of Wichmann <http://gispoint.de/jodla.htm> or by simply using jodla.info.

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The Editors