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The education of a landscape architect is a complex process and full of contradictions. On one hand, the professional landscape architect should always ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the public, on the other hand designers are expected to be innovative and creative where we tackle difficult issues and speculate fearlessly. Now, as a teacher, I realised that these aspects of the discipline are not necessarily in conflict, but merely reinforce my commitment to landscape architecture as a material practice grounded in messy contexts, multiple scales, and difficult locales.

The discipline of landscape architecture is complex, much of the information can only be found in the nuances of the physical environment and interaction with people. Every project is unique and it is impossible to teach students with a 'standard' scenario. Experiential learning then is a critical component of my teaching as each 'real-life' project allows students to recognise complexity, synthesise, and respond in tangible ways. Extensive fieldwork exposes students to discrepancies and contradictions between data collected remotely and realities on the ground, necessitating skillful information gathering and decision-making. This prepares students to enter into the profession with discernment, conviction, and confidence to take design risks.

My teaching strives to create a safe learning environment for students to experiment with difficult problems, so they may build confidence in the knowledge they have gained and its application to real issues. While it is important to set students up for success in the classroom, I believe that unsuccessful attempts are equally rewarding. Perhaps students should not be evaluated by the success of their final projects, but rather the process in which they set up the problems and execute solutions. Even if the ultimate experiment fails, students learn through identifying why the project did not work. The University is the last safe place for students to innovate and experiment before they enter into practice.

