Sociology of Professions: The Evolution of Landscape Architecture in the United States

C. Timothy Baird and Bonj Szczygiel

In mid- to late-nineteenth-century American history, there was a fairly uniform evolution of 'occupations' that developed into specialised 'professions'; the process of which has long been an area of study for sociologists. Acknowledged professions such as law and medicine were beneficiaries of this transition – being cited today as consummate authorities in their respective knowledge bases. Yet, landscape architecture, to date, has not achieved the same level of public understanding and approbation even in comparison to sister professions of planning and architecture. This paper uses the theoretical framework of the sociology of professions to understand the comparatively latent development of the profession of landscape architecture in achieving public recognition. Based on these theoretical standards, the findings of this study include possible reasons for landscape architecture's slower evolution in public recognition and acceptance, as well as a projection of its future through a review of recent accomplishments and events that indicate how public approbation and understanding of landscape architecture might be expanded. The paper concludes with reasons for optimism towards the future of the profession and discipline.

The research goal of this undertaking was to trace landscape architecture's trajectory from occupation to profession, beginning in the late nineteenth century, and to compare that path with other disciplines, such as planning and architecture, in order to determine the reasons for landscape architecture's slower journey toward public recognition and understanding.

This article frames the professional evolution of landscape architecture in the United States through a sociological lens of professional development. The study begins with a survey of the development of professions as a sociological phenomenon, and is placed in context by a literature review of scholarly journals, professional trade magazines and various studies of the profession. The authors summarise a positive future through interviews and electronic communication with contemporary educators and practitioners.

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INTRODUCTION

At the end of the nineteenth century there was widespread professionalisation of occupations in the United States. This era also revealed significant changes in cultural values. The exclusivity of social status based on family name or wealth that characterised mid-Victorian times was replaced by new status symbols that included advanced education, expert knowledge and the acquisition of standard credentials. Ultimately the period introduced a new concept of middle-class respectability that still lingers today. Landscape architecture was one of many

occupations that attempted to join the professional ranks, and yet throughout much of its history there has been a lack of general understanding of what it is that landscape architects do. In contrast to other occupations that professionalised at the same time – such as law, medicine or engineering – landscape architecture failed to develop a clear, concise public image.[1] Or perhaps worse, the public image that remains is of landscape architects as those who are particularly good with foundation plantings. This paper looks at the development of landscape architecture through a sociological theory of the professions; it compares landscape architecture's evolution to other well-recognised and valued professions in an attempt to understand why it developed along an alternative, dubious path. Then, using that theoretical framework, it will ask the questions: what has changed to date, and what can we expect in the future?

The birth of the profession of landscape architecture in the United States is associated with the convening of its national organisation, the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), in 1899. Landscape architecture was not alone in this formal transformation.[2] The mid- to late-nineteenth century witnessed a profusion of *occupations* transforming themselves into *professions*. The process, across disciplines, was roughly the same. First, there was the establishment of early training schools or apprentice opportunities. Those educational responsibilities then became codified and eventually adopted into university curricula. Second, local, then national, associations were established. Third, state licensures were established and internal codes of ethics were developed (Wilensky, 1964). Not all professions followed this linear path, but these were the necessary steps for legitimation – all taking place within the nineteenth to early twentieth century. The transformation occurred within the disciplines of medicine, law, architecture and engineering, to name a few. It is this seemingly unified process that raises the question of why the listed professions have come to hold quite clear identities in the public eye, yet landscape architecture has not? Given that landscape architects had been practising in the United States for some 40 years prior to the ASLA's formation, what was the impetus that drove its establishment? Why did it come to have a somewhat different public profile to other outwardly similar professions? To begin to understand the nuances of the professionalisation of landscape architecture, we can look first to the theoretical framework established by sociologists who study professions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – SOCIOLOGY OF PROFESSIONS

One must first ask the basic questions: what is a profession, how is it distinct from an occupation and what is it that makes one a professional? Are professions self-appointed, and are there identifiable characteristics that distinguish them from occupations? A sceptic might even ask, aren't professions just occupations that have adopted a change in semantics in order to deliberately elevate their social position? While this might sound plausible, we intuitively sense a difference in social hierarchy between, for example, the jobs of social workers and corporate attorneys. Most people would appreciate the societal value of the former over the

latter, yet still recognise a distinction in occupational and social status. The division is of relatively recent development. By the early twentieth century it seems that actions taken for the good of public welfare were no longer a sufficient measure of professionalism: '[T]he idea of professions as a status category has become increasingly disconnected from functions perceived to be central to the public welfare and more exclusively connected to the idea of "expert knowledge"' (Brint, 1994, p 8). One reaction to this shift in emphasis towards expertise as the defining feature was the creation of a secondary category of minor professions, such as social workers, teachers, nurses and journalists – to name a few. This category has experienced considerable tension as it has strived to gain public approbation as valued professionals, while simultaneously fighting for professional standards in pay, prestige and work conditions.[3] The struggle to get out of their secondary professional role is thwarted by the very accessibility of their education. Sociologist Harold Wilensky summarised:

> If the technical base of an occupation consists of a vocabulary that sounds familiar to everyone ... or if the base is scientific but so narrow that it can be learned as a set of rules by most people, then the occupation will have difficulty claiming a monopoly of skill or even a roughly exclusive jurisdiction (1964, p 148).

It is useful to understand why professions came into being at the turn of the nineteenth century and the social mechanics that were needed to assist their emergence. Much has been written about the development of professions in the new industry-based economy of the late 1800s (Abbott, 1988; Bledstein, 1976; Brint, 1994; Larson, 1977; Macdonald, 1995). Traditional views of this period rely on a Marxist interpretation – that is, professions naturally arose in response to the new economy, one now based on industry and competitive capitalism. With the new economy and new ways of production came a greater demand for specialised knowledge. Specialised knowledge requires specialised education. Not surprisingly then, we can trace the advance of specialisation and rational thinking as being representative of this period: both harbingers of the birth of modernism in popular American culture.

But the Marxist interpretation limits our understanding of cultural nuances. A pivotal moment in the history of the sociological study of professionalisation came in 1963 when Everett C. Hughes repositioned the analytical focus. He suggested that instead of trying to determine parameters of what makes an occupation accepted as a profession, the question to be asked was: 'what are the circumstances in which people in an occupation attempt to turn it into a profession and themselves into professional people?' (Macdonald, 1995, p 6) This breakthrough in sociological study allowed issues of self-interest and power to permeate future analyses. Instead of professionalisation being largely a capitalist function, it could now be understood through the more complex context of late-nineteenth-century social norms. Positions of analysis could now include the male middle-class desire for power, class relations, gender relations, as well as ethnocentrism in America

at the turn of the century. These permutations led to richer and more insightful explorations of the cultural significance of this phenomenon.

An example of such an alternative theoretical framework is the use of gender. Ann Witz, in her 1992 seminal work, *Professions and Patriarchy*, combines feminist ideas with mainstream sociological studies. She argues that by adopting credentialist standards (licensure predicated on an accredited university education) male cultural norms were protected from the threat of women's activism. Indeed, after the Civil War, women's public activism in a wide array of municipal areas – education, child labour, urban improvement and public health – grew in numbers and was of astounding proportions at the turn of the century.[4] As women assumed more visible and vocal public roles – albeit non-paid – the adoption of criteria, such as a university education and licensure, was still either prohibited to them or prohibitive within normative values. While the number of co-educational universities rose during the Progressive era, women were still largely prohibited from licensure because it was a state-based institution, and throughout the nineteenth century only a very few states recognised women as political entities. 'It was within these institutional arenas of civil society and the state that professional closure was secured historically' (Witz, 1995, p 66).

To the degree that the need for standardised credentials kept those who were socially marginalised from professional rank, their adoption as the basis for entry to a profession can be understood as an acquisition of social power:

> Professionalization is thus an attempt to translate one order of scarce resources – special knowledge and skills – into another – social and economic rewards. To maintain scarcity implies a tendency to monopoly: monopoly of expertise in the market, monopoly of status in a system of stratification (Larson, 1977, p xvii).

Social stratification leads to social closure, and a significant component that facilitates this is credentialism. With the claim of superior knowledge came the disciplinary acquisition of an identifiable, and defensible market. By keeping the 'irregulars' out of competition (for example, midwives and homeopaths in medicine; women and amateur gardeners in landscape architecture),[5] a controlled base of operation could be delineated, and power firmly established over not only the market, but also over production of future professionals. Summed up by Larson, 'professions are occupations with special power and prestige' (p x). It was a man's world.

The emerging profession needed more than credentialist standards to give it legitimacy. An ability to perform skilled acts and a claim of cognitive ownership does not alone bestow professional jurisdiction. The critical legitimating feature then, and now, lies within public opinion. Sociologist Andrew Abbott, in his 1988 text, *The System of Professions*, stresses that the most critical aspect to professional identification is the essential need for public approbation: 'In claiming jurisdiction, a profession asks society to recognize its cognitive structure through exclusive rights; jurisdiction has not only a culture, but also a social structure' (p 59). The other forms of claiming jurisdiction – within the legal system and through state

regulation – are also necessary, but without public buy-in to the exclusive rights of a particular profession's area of expertise, they are, perhaps, meaningless. Public opinion must support the profession's claim for ultimate authority in their chosen area. There is compelling evidence that while professionals may attempt to control the market, it is ultimately the public who will determine what has market value: a phenomenon that will particularly resonate with landscape architecture.

In part, public valuing of professions derives from need – the more intrusive the need in one's personal life, the greater the pressure to seek professional advice. But aside from the obvious situations that demand such professional erudition (a lawyer if one is being sued, or an oncologist if one is diagnosed with cancer), Abbott identifies public education as a less crisis-laden process for forming public opinion:

> Claiming public jurisdiction of tasks is a pervasive activity. The advice columns of newspapers and magazines are familiar vectors of these claims, as are the perennial 'what laymen need to know about the law' (or medicine or taxes) handbooks published by or for professional associations. By revealing to the public some of its professional terminology and insights, a professional attracts public sympathy to its own definition of tasks and its own approach to solving them (p 60).

Public claims to jurisdiction develop over a period of a decade or more and, once established, do not change quickly. For example, the public image of lawyers is that they spend much of their time in a courtroom in front of a judge and that physicians can mainly be found in hospitals tending to the sick – these are the images that tenaciously cling to the American psyche and are reinforced through television and film. Additionally, if a profession can claim an ancient past, all the better to claim ultimate and final jurisdiction, as with medicine and law. The functional importance of those professions explains their historical continuity – the end results have strong reciprocity with their clients (Larson, 1977). But it is equally important to note that knowledge is not static and, of necessity, must respond to evolving societal and political realities – the profession that can do this best has the greatest chance of survival and relevance. Macdonald (1995) has observed:

> Although a profession may be granted or may secure for itself a monopoly, it still must strive in the arena or compete in the market place against others who can provide similar or substitute or complementary services. It must, therefore, at the least defend and probably enlarge the scope of its activities (p 34).

EARLY EFFORTS FOR PROFESSIONALISATION OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

As previously indicated, the scholarship of professionalisation includes words and concepts one might not immediately equate with the early history of landscape architecture: authority; exclusive expertise over a subject matter so complex that it is not easily or readily accessible; and wide public approbation, particularly

reinforced by a long, accepted history. Other concepts do sound familiar in terms of landscape architecture's steps toward professional status: licensure, exclusivity of higher education, and reliance on the state. What follows is not meant to be an exhaustive catalogue of landscape architecture's evolution. Rather, we offer an analysis, based on the sociological framework described above, of those three critical concepts for professional legitimacy: to what degree did landscape architects claim expert knowledge, particularly that which was not readily accessible to the public? When and how did landscape architects adopt credentialist standards (controlled university curricula and state licensure)? And was the profession able to obtain public approbation, either through public relations and/or a recognised, long-established history of disciplinary jurisdiction? To understand the profession's emergence, we rely on early publications of the ASLA and, particularly, early editions of *Landscape Architecture* magazine, as well as independent scholarship.

To what degree did landscape architects claim expert knowledge? In the decades prior to the establishment of the ASLA there was something of an occupational free-for-all occurring in America. For example, the life and work of HWS Cleveland epitomised the tension between the newly developing professions of forestry and landscape architecture, as seen in his 1873 book, *Landscape Architecture as Applied to the Wants of the West; with an Essay on Forest Planting on the Great Plains.* In the introduction to the 2002 reprint, Daniel Nadenicek and Lance Neckar sum up Cleveland's mindset: while he claimed landscape architecture as his field of expertise, he was not above dipping into the emerging field of forestry as a backup. The authors described the book – with its appended proposal to reforest the Great Plains states – as 'a search for work along multiple paths' (p xii). Along those blurred disciplinary lines, it was as equally possible for Frederick Law Olmsted to be engaged in earnest conversations about urban design with medical physicians as with planners (Szczygiel and Hewitt, 2000). But the disciplinary free-for-all was about to come to an end. More and more, opinion leaders, such as the City Beautiful advocate and journalist Charles Mulford Robinson, diminish the multitude of nationwide civic improvement accomplishments by women's clubs, and instead call for the intervention of experts. Experts, he reasoned in his influential 1901 publication, *Improvement of Towns and Cities*, were properly trained and qualified; this was no longer deemed appropriate territory for women's volunteerism (Szczygiel, 2003). This is the first of many attempts to adopt a specialised body of knowledge (and credentialism) as a reason for professional legitimacy. Simo (2003) described this period, and that which was to follow, as a time when 'special tools and new words allowed people to discuss increasingly finer distinctions among increasingly fewer people. The sum of human knowledge around the globe vastly increased. But what of human wisdom?' (p xii)

The establishment of the national organisation for landscape architecture in 1899 would seemingly have put an end to any speculation as to what landscape architecture was – according to the ASLA it was first and foremost an art. But a glance at the very first constitution written by the ASLA in 1899, one detects diffusion of identity: 'A landscape architect, *or landscape gardener* [emphasis added]

... is one who practices the art of arranging the land and landscape for use and enjoyment' (p 10). In 1907, the landscape gardener reference was dropped and there was action taken to establish an 'authoritative library' on landscape architecture – the ASLA's attempt to claim a history of their own through reprints of the writings of Humphrey Repton and Thomas Whately (presumably his 1770 *Observations on Modern Gardening*) (p 26). The creation of *Landscape Architecture* magazine in October 1910, and its subsequent issues, provides an understanding of some of the challenges facing the young profession. In that first issue, Harvard President Emeritus Charles Eliot gives a clear, if rather long, definition of what it means to be a landscape architect. After referencing the profession as being very practical and of wide scope (but nonetheless, an art), he undertook to list the various types of projects the public 'needs to be taught' as comprising the profession (p 40). Very early on turf wars were evident, especially with architects. In the second issue, January 1911, the Head of Harvard's Landscape Architecture programme explained that a good education would go a long way toward educating professionals who will not be led astray by 'jealousies and conflicts between Landscape Architecture and its sister professions' (pp 69–70). In subsequent issues, leaders in the field such as Olmsted Jr. (January 1912), Warren Manning (April 1912) and Charles Downing Lay (July 1912) lecture their audiences on how architects, especially, need to learn to collaborate with landscape architects.

A speech given by ASLA president Arthur Shurtleff to the American Institute of Architects and Allied Arts, entitled 'Remarks on Cooperation' (printed in the July 1927 issue), attempts to pacify the audience by explaining, in odd gardenesque terms, that landscape architecture was a 'young plant' and not a mere graft on her allies, nor suckers springing from their trunks, but rather a profession that simply shares their soil. He then talked of egos overriding a sense of mutual respect and asks the crowd if 'we' are dilettantes or wise men who know their limitations (p 318–321). This defensive stance continues. Below is a 1930 quote from Olmsted Jr., in a fairly painful attempt to describe what it means to be a landscape architect, printed in the magazine's twentieth anniversary issue. He admonishes the reader not to squabble over semantics, 'for such elasticity is the very nature of our language' (p 288), although he admits that the term had become so abstract as to mean different things:

> [T]he future holds a great opportunity for productive and satisfying effort by artists, and especially by artists who are strong not only in the first of the basic ideas implied in the term 'landscape architecture,' – that element of delight which is common to all the Arts – but in the second of those ideas, involving wide spatial extension of unified esthetic interest, a thing by no means exclusive to landscape architecture but peculiarly emphasized therein (1930, pp 290–291).

In that same issue, editor Henry Vincent Hubbard stated the magazine itself shares in the fate of the profession in that engineers think of landscape architects as planting flowers or making sketches to hand over to them; architects think landscape

architects are ill trained and simply interfere with the 'inviolability' of their designs (pp 263–269). The lament regarding the profession's identity crisis continues in a January 1950 article by Bremer Pond, in which he complains that landscape architects' work could be considered as both engineering and architecture, but is recognised as neither: 'A definite clarification of the entire matter ... is badly needed throughout the country at the present time' (p 66). If a profession is unable to clearly establish legitimacy as experts within well-defined parameters among its ranks, it remains paralysed to do so with outside professions or the public. This was the fate of landscape architecture from the very first day of organisation.

The second criterion for professional legitimation – state credentials and curriculum control – also had a long and somewhat tortured path. The first minimum educational requirements were adopted in June 1928, and revised over the years. Drafted by the ASLA, in conjunction with the National Council of Instructors in Landscape Architecture (NCILA), precursor to Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture, (CELA), they were advisory only. The first code of professional ethics was adopted by the ASLA a year earlier, in 1927. The profession seemed to be off to a good start. But then there was a lull in professionalisation activities. State recognition as a separate profession did not happen until 1953, with California being the first state to adopt a Registration Act specific to landscape architects, according to the October 1953 issue of *Landscape Architecture*. This is fairly late for a profession that organised 54 years prior, particularly in comparison to architecture's history.[6] However, early on, there was clear indication that registration was seen as an unwanted burden for the profession. The January 1930 issue of *Landscape Architecture* contained a report from the Committee on Professional Registration, with most of the comments based on the question of whether landscape architects should have to be registered as engineers or architects when engaged in that type of work. While the official word from the National Council of State Boards in Engineering was that they must, landscape architects did not see the need. More interesting was a discussion regarding whether licensure was even needed in landscape architecture. The topic was reported to have been 'threshed out so thoroughly' two years earlier and the answer was still no (p 145). In *Transactions of the ASLA, 1922–1927* one can understand the rationalisation: 'Landscape architects are primarily artists, and no restrictive legislation can make of them better artists' (p 83). What followed was an explanation that registration has the additional drawback of allowing the less talented to be of the same 'rank' as the more skilled. This reluctance to embrace a technically oriented understanding of landscape architecture, and perhaps an overcommitment to the notion of the profession as, first and foremost, an art, would certainly explain the late move towards an overall state licensure. Control of university curricula was also late; the National Accrediting Commission recognising the ASLA as the professional accrediting agency in spring 1959.

The final criterion of public approbation had a similar tale of misguided development. Very early on, the need to educate the public about what landscape architects did was expressed by luminaries in the field. However, the ASLA did

not step up to a role as the national voice for the new profession. This is not surprising. A profession that had such difficulties in distinguishing itself from its sister professions could hardly be expected to produce a convincing public relations programme. Again, lack of vision confused the issue. In the January 1929 article 'Shall the ASLA Undertake Publicity', it was admitted that the organisation did not have the financial resources for a successful campaign. This is understandable, but it also revealed a short-sightedness. The Chair of the Publicity Committee wrote that publicity works well for those offering a tangible service or single commodity, such as a florist. In contrast, 'our main claim for professional existence is "artistic perception"'(p 127). Therefore, could a successful publicity campaign even be possible? Furthermore - the rationalisation went - when clients hire landscape architects it is not to save money, but to spend. How can anyone, the report posited, sell that? As was typical, future action on the matter was slow to materialise. A similar refrain was heard almost 30 years later, in the 1955 annual report by ASLA President Leon Zach (July 1956). His report, entitled 'Toward a Wider Understanding', echoes the earlier refrain that the ASLA did not have the assets to support an expensive public relations programme, and retreated to the argument that public relations must be handled through individual action. In fact, the relationship with the public had consistently been tenuous, with one scholar suggesting that it was only when the nation was in crisis during the Great Depression that the profession considered the importance of the landscape for Americans at large (Nadenicek, 1996).

The Past Sixty Years

If it took the Great Depression to focus public attention on the American landscape in the 1930s, it was the increase in postwar wealth and leisure time that once again turned America's eyes to its landscape in the 1950s. The burgeoning economy and returning military personnel fuelled a housing boom that helped to create a new market for landscape architects - the residential garden - that generated enormous public exposure (Harris, 2002) for a profession that sorely needed it. The ability of a profession to gain new knowledge and adapt to social change and new political conditions is imperative for its survival. Just as this notion was integral to the profession's success in the nineteenth century, so too it proved critical to the profession in the last half of the twentieth century.

Posts on the Landscape Architecture Electronic Forum (larch-l@listserv.syr.edu) and articles and letters to the editor in *Landscape Architecture* are an indication of the anxiety, even today, within the ranks of landscape architects in terms of their feelings towards requirements of necessary expert knowledge, credentialed standards, and public acknowledgement. There is a continual uneasiness about professional definition, interdisciplinary competition and public perception. One recent thread in the discussion on the listserv pertained to stopping engineers from encroaching on the design and evaluation of open spaces - landscape architecture's traditional areas of expertise. The battle to retain or obtain licensure, usually with contractors, engineers and horticulturists, is also a recurring theme, most recently

in *Landscape Architecture*. Finn's (2004) *New York Times* article referring to Peter Walker as a 'landscaper' only adds to this anxiety and the perception that the profession, in general, is still misunderstood and under-appreciated in both the public arena and by its allied professions.

Albert Fein's 'Report on the Profession of Landscape Architecture' (1969–72), commonly known as the Fein Report, was the first attempt in recent times by the profession to address these issues. Renaming the profession was thought to be one of the potential solutions to the problem of public misunderstanding. After much debate, a better, more descriptive name was never adopted. The perceived problem with the title 'landscape architect' also plagued even the earliest professionals; Olmsted senior was never thoroughly convinced of its efficacy (Fein, 1972; Simo, 2000; Olin, 2005). Hideo Sasaki's concern is evident in the unpublished paper he wrote while a student at the University of Illinois in the 1940s entitled 'The Inferiority Complex of Landscape Architects' (Walker & Simo, 1994). Perhaps the title landscape architect did, and still does, contribute to the confusion of the lay public. Artist Stacy Levy suggested that the public never gets beyond the word 'landscape' to the word 'architect' in the title. And since the word 'landscape' conjures up such a variety of personal images and definitions, it is no wonder that the layperson has no clue what to think about the profession (Korostoff, 2005).[7]

Are there reasons, other than the initial failure to adopt the three criteria for professional legitimacy, for this continued lack of public understanding of the landscape architect's role in society? What follows is a look at the evolution of the profession over the past 60 years, from modernism and postmodernism to the present, in an attempt to answer two questions: has significant change occurred in the way the profession is represented and perceived during the past 60 years, and are there reasons for optimism regarding the future of landscape architecture as a profession respected, understood and appreciated by both the public and its allied disciplines? The discussion is based upon a summary overview of events and selected personalities that have had an impact on the development of the discipline and profession in the recent past. It is not intended to be a complete modern history of the profession.

The Postwar Years: 1940 to 1960

The modern revolution in landscape architecture in the US, led by Dan Kiley, Garret Eckbo and James Rose at Harvard, and Thomas Church in California, is well documented. This group capitalised on their coverage in the popular press, including *House & Garden*, *Sunset* and *House Beautiful*, to advance their careers. An added benefit was that this publicity placed the profession of landscape architecture clearly into public consciousness, albeit from the limited perspective of garden design. It is ironic that garden design was rarely mentioned during the 1950s in the profession's own journal, *Landscape Architecture Quarterly*, which reflected the development emphasis of the profession at that time. The exception was, of course, in California where the garden remained a staple of the landscape architect's repertoire throughout the decade (Hilderbrand, 1999).

In addition to this new-found public awareness of the profession, Dan Kiley was gaining respect through his many collaborations with some of the best-known Modernist architects of the period, including Louis Kahn, Eero Saarinen and Oskar Stonorov. So deep was this respect and professional admiration that Saarinen and Kahn served as Kiley's references when he obtained his architecture licence (Kiley and Amidon, 1999), a few years before a landscape architecture licence was even a possibility.

Hideo Sasaki, who opened his first office in 1953 in Boston, allowed this practice to evolve according to the model of large corporate architecture firms, such as SOM, and Perkins and Will. Other landscape architecture firms followed, including JJ and R, and WMRT. These larger, multidisciplinary offices were organised to handle much larger and more complex projects, especially in collaboration with the major architects of that time (Walker & Simo, 1994).

Late 1960s and Early 1970s

Ian McHarg, Angus Hills and Philip Lewis' ecological planning methods of the 1960s and early 1970s (Belknap and Furtado, 1967) increased public awareness due to new found interest in environmental protection issues and the advent of environmental regulations. McHarg's strong presence at the forefront of Earth Day in Philadelphia and his work and writing garnered media coverage that focused attention on landscape architecture surpassing that afforded by the Modernists in the 1950s. By the 1970s his appearances on the *Today* and *Tonight* shows and the profiles of him in *Time*, *Life* and other publications, covered his involvement in the environmental movement and the creation of the National Environmental Policy Act, and thrust the profession into the mainstream spotlight as never before.

The ASLA and the NCILA funded the Fein Report, which began in January 1969. The study included Gallup Survey results from public and private practitioners, academics, land developers, corporate executives, government users and government employers. The results indicated strong support for the aesthetics of landscape architecture, the need for greater attention to ecological issues as central to practice, and the need to expand practice with respect to societal benefits rather than the comfort and pleasure of the individual. The report then was framed around two scenarios for the future of the profession: professional boundary expansion and boundary maintenance. Practitioners preferred boundary maintenance while educators and those outside the profession wished to expand landscape architects' work into new types of projects, such as regional resource planning. Fein was prophetic when he pointed out that the academy's efforts to expand professional boundaries into larger-scale natural resource planning, in which practitioners had little interest, would result in a schism.

Not surprisingly, the Gallup Survey results revealed the lack of understanding of the profession and the lack of a perceived need for the services of landscape architects in the private sector. Conversely, the public sector foresaw an increase in their need for those same services. The allied professions of architecture, engineering and planning indicated the need for landscape architectural services

only in the area of park and recreation design. These allied professionals ranked other project types – including commercial, industrial, business, residential and community – low in the perceived need for services. One of the key indicators of respect and understanding of any profession is the fee that consumers are willing to pay for that profession's services. At the time of the study, landscape architects' salaries were the lowest among the allied professions.[8]

The study concluded that the need for boundary expansion was urgent but not at the expense of losing the profession's identity as 'a design-oriented profession whose special province is natural materials'. Fein summarised study consultants Robert Gutman and James Marston Fitch:

> the landscape architect must accelerate and enlarge upon his abilities to design with natural materials ... if landscape architecture is going to have reason to continue as a separate profession in the years ahead, it can only be because it has special areas of competence that are not so much emphasized by the other design professions ... this special competence should involve knowledge of the materials and processes which constitute the natural environment – i.e., plants, trees, streams, soils (p 39).

The study cautioned that this emphasis on natural process was not meant to alter the fundamental contribution of the landscape architect as one who gives physical form to a whole range of projects – from the individual garden and site plan to the new town or region. Perhaps the authors were visionary in their thinking that landscape architects, whose primary role was considered to be form making, should expand their body of expert knowledge and begin to frame their form-making endeavours within the context of, and founded on, ecological principles.

Late 1970s and the 1980s

In the mid 1970s, Peter Walker left the corporate firm that he formed with Hideo Sasaki, Sasaki Walker Associates (now SWA Group), for a smaller atelier where he could explore an art-based design approach. Walker's credibility as a seasoned practitioner with a large body of built work enabled him to make such a transition with relative ease. At the same time, he became Chair of the Landscape Architecture Department at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, where he began to reintroduce design as the foundation of landscape architecture. He exposed his students to the art world, especially to the minimalists who were so influential in his later work. Walker promoted the idea of making the landscape visible, so that it stood on its own merits rather than being subservient to architecture, ecology or the picturesque. The schism predicted by Fein became a reality with the birth of the art camp (those seen to privilege designed form over environmental values) which developed in opposition to the ecology camp (those who gravitated to natural resource planning and were seen to privilege environmental values over designed form) (Jewell, 1990; Meyer, 2000; Simo, 1990; Treib, 1999).

The corporate model of practice that Peter Walker and others were instrumental in developing, and which he left behind for the smaller, less-constrained design

studio model, was better equipped to carry out a full range of work: from site design to regional planning to construction documents. In fact, these firms may well have the greatest public understanding and interdisciplinary respect, not only because of their ability to provide the broadest range of services to the greatest variety of clients, including corporate investors, developers and public agencies, but also because they are the social peers of these clients (Olin, 2005).

The trend toward broadening the scope of services of the profession may have exacerbated the problem of public perception. Rather than elevating the status of landscape architects in the public eye – through work in large-scale planning and policy decisions, which is perhaps perceived by the public as having greater societal value – it likely added to their confusion by further complicating the profession's definition. While the premise that the diversion of focus away from design as the most likely cause of eroded public understanding may be questioned, it is true that this diversion has increased the burden in academia to teach an enlarged knowledge base. This pressure on the limited time available has resulted in many programmes reducing emphasis on design in order to incorporate all of the material seen as relevant to an expanding professional boundary, such as ecology, social sciences, cultural landscape studies, historic preservation, visual resource assessment and regional analysis and planning. Corner (1997) describes the problem:

> Whereas ecology has changed and enriched the field of landscape architecture substantially, it has also displaced some of landscape architecture's more traditional aspects and prompted a somewhat ambiguous and estranged disciplinary identity (the oft-asked question: 'Is it art or science?'). A number of schools of landscape architecture, for example, now teach little visual art, design theory, or history, focusing instead upon natural science, environmental management, and techniques of ecological restoration. Although these aspects of landscape study are important, one cannot help but feel a concern for the loss of foundational traditions, especially landscape architecture's agency as a representational and productive art, as a cultural project (p 85).

The 1990s

A new generation of practitioners, many of whom were as confident as Olmsted and other early professionals that landscape architecture was an art, began to create landscapes that were at once artful and ecologically sensitive. A cadre of writers, including Anita Berrizbeitia, James Corner, Catherine Howett, Bart Lootsma, Sebastian Marot, Elizabeth Meyer, Laurie Olin, Marc Treib and Charles Waldheim, were exploring the theoretical foundations of the field and, in the words of Corner (1999), 'recovering landscape', or at least acknowledging 'its reappearance in the cultural sphere after years of relative neglect and indifference' (p 1). Sustainable landscape design was entering the world of landscape as art, and grounding design further in the principles of ecological and cultural processes. The landscape was becoming the mediator between art and ecology with a developing theory that situated landscape architecture as operating within the spaces between culture–

nature, architecture–landscape and aesthetics–science binaries (Meyer, 2005). The art–ecology dichotomy was fading away at last (Corner, 1999, p 17; Meyer, 2000, pp 187, 242; Sasaki, 1989, p 31).

Engineers gained control of large infrastructure projects during the days of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), even though landscape architects had earlier worked at this scale from the time of Olmsted's Muddy River Plan. Sanitation and public-health issues were at the forefront of these projects, and they provided credibility for practitioners in the eyes of both allied professions and the public (Reed, 2006). These infrastructural projects also allowed landscape architects like Olmsted and his peers to play a lead role in the formation of cities and they increased their control of open-space design. This loss of control by landscape architects to engineers during the WPA period coincides with the split between landscape architecture and city planning in education and practice (Walker & Gillette, 2005). Landscape urbanists are now at the leading edge in re-establishing this link to larger infrastructural projects through their work, which is largely driven by ecological performance.

The Twenty-First Century and Beyond

Arguably the most significant occurrence of the new century for public approbation of landscape architecture was the New York Museum of Modern Art's recent exhibition and symposium, 'Groundswell: Constructing the Contemporary Landscape'. Although the museum published Elizabeth Kassler's *Modern Gardens and the Landscape* in 1964, with an expanded edition in 1984, and organised the symposium 'Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century' in 1988, this was the first time in the 76 years of the institution that landscape architecture had been featured in an exhibition (Hales, 2005). The built and speculative works shown were cogent examples of the need for innovative interventions in scarred, neglected and contested sites. The symposium also offered evidence of disciplinary boundary dissolution, as well as positive professional boundary expansion, as architects and landscape architects spoke eloquently of the necessity for collaboration in the construction of the contemporary landscape. Cheryl Barton summed up perhaps the most important outcome of the exhibition: 'For me the best part (since I had seen most of the work previously) was hearing people say over and over, "I didn't realize that THAT is landscape architecture"' (2005).

Steiner's article 'What Architects Say' in *Landscape Architecture* makes the case that at least some prominent American architects, such as Michael Dennis, Merrill Elam and Susan Maxman, have high regard for landscape architects and their work. Unfortunately, Peter Eisenman's comments in the article reveal his diminution of the scope of landscape architecture to planting design (Steiner, 2004), a belief, or self-serving strategy, still held by too many architects.[9]

Although there is no survey comparable to the Fein Report that ascertains current public opinions about landscape architecture, there is ample evidence that the discipline and profession is in a much-improved state. In 1998, the ASLA initiated a Gallup Survey of the general public, which brought both good and bad news.

It indicated a positive reflection of the public's understanding of the role of the profession in that 82% of respondents thought a landscape architect could plan a town or city, and 77% said that landscape architects could lay out plans for a large office complex. However, significant percentages of the respondents (64%, 64%, and 91% respectively) felt that designing gardens, planting and caring for trees, and historic park restoration were within the domain of landscape architects, possibly reflecting more vernacular and less professional expertise (Sherno and Welsh, 1999). The public perception that landscape architects are primarily garden designers may be reinforced by the fact that small firms (less than ten employees) foresaw their primary growth in the single-family residential market in the Practice Survey of 1997. This perception, however, was offset somewhat by the projection of firms larger than ten employees that their primary growth area would be in city park and public recreation design (Maynard, 1997).

Contrary to the opinions expressed in Hohmann and Langhorst's (2004) 'Apocalyptic Manifesto' or Diana Balmori's overly pessimistic view of the profession's future in a *Landscape Architecture* interview (Hines, 2004), there is a large and serious body of work and theory that is garnering public attention. A dramatic, positive shift in interest in landscape architecture as an art and design discipline of significance is underway. A substantial part of this is the move toward sustainable design and the reclamation of derelict and abused sites. This not only strengthens the profession in the eyes of the public as being necessary for the protection of their health, safety and welfare, it also bodes well for the future in terms of increased potential for new work (Beardsley, 2000). Landscape architects bring to such projects the creative ability to manipulate the palette of Fein and Gutman's so-called 'natural materials' with a technical acumen that engenders public confidence; this combination positions the innovators of the profession and discipline to continue in leadership roles in these areas, as already shown through the work of Alexandre Chemetoff, James Corner, Michel Desvigne, Herbert Dreiseitl, Carol Franklin, Colin Franklin, Adriaan Geuze, Kathryn Gustafson, Richard Haag, George Hargreaves, Peter Latz, Robert Murase, Chris Reed, Leslie Sauer, Rolf Sauer, Mario Schetjnan, Michael Van Valkenburgh and William Wenk. These designers have accomplished the recommendation of the Fein Report by creating landscapes that engage the public with natural processes, are ecologically regenerative and possess the power to evoke compelling emotional responses in users. By embracing sustainable design in the context of public health, safety and welfare – the primary basis for licensure of design professionals – landscape architects will not only secure a position of respect in the environmental design field but they will also be able to gain the public's trust (Howett, 1998).[10] Landscape architectural expertise can establish itself as a necessity rather than a luxury through responding to public concerns: interventions, such as the design of open spaces, parks and walkable communities, that respond to issues like obesity; or creating performative landscapes to remediate soil toxicity in response to diagnoses of cancer in residents bordering toxic sites. Design for play that reconnects children to elements of nature can be instrumental in the prevention of nature-deficit disorder

(Louv, 2005). Taking the lead in areas of design expertise that directly protect the public will not only enhance the profession's credibility but will also go a long way towards stopping the ever-present sunset attacks on professional licensure. The recent work in the emerging area of landscape urbanism is addressing some of the same issues while developing a disciplinary hybrid by overlapping the fields of landscape architecture, urban design, architecture and city planning, fulfilling yet another recommendation of the Fein Report.[11]

Recent events that have contributed to the validation and recognition of landscape architecture abound and offer ample reason for optimism. *New York Times* and *Washington Post* coverage of the profession since 2003 has increased dramatically with the *Times* even producing a feature in its magazine (*New York Times*, 2004). Outstanding conferences, symposia and exhibitions in the past ten years have highlighted current trends, exposed Americans to European work, and brought together academics and practitioners from around the world to both recount the past and create a vision for the future.[12] The launching of Spacemaker Press, *Journal of Landscape Architecture*, *Topos* and *Land Forum* was instrumental in providing new avenues for a more critical appraisal of contemporary landscape architecture. Finalists in the invited design competition for the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site in New York had landscape architects as design-team members; three of the five finalist teams in the Flight 93 National Memorial International Design Competition were predominantly landscape architects. And finally, the US Department of Labor projects that 'employment of landscape architects is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2012' (US Department of Labor, 2004).

Regardless of progress made in recent years relative to boundary expansion and allied professional respect, increased public understanding may never be complete. In fact, the issue of public confusion and misunderstanding may be the result of semantics as well as any missing component of the sociological theory of the professions. The term landscape is so fraught with varied meanings and personal interpretations that common understanding may be impossible (Korostoff, 2005; Nadenicek, 2005; Reynolds, 2005). To some, it is the bird bath and gazing globe in the front yard; to others it is the sum total of natural and cultural processes acting on the land over time. Olin (2005) aptly described the problem when he stated: 'Ninety percent of all Americans think landscape is a verb meaning to plant shrubs in a median of a suburban mall, or to plant birch trees by a garage door and install pavers around a pool.' Corner recently echoed the same problem of semantics at the Groundswell symposium with his mention of the 'pick-up truck syndrome' in landscape architecture. The semantics problem is further exacerbated by the commonly held notion that landscapes are neither complex nor difficult to design and construct. While only a few would have the confidence to design and build their personal dwelling, many more are at ease with planting shrubs or building a patio around that same dwelling. This familiarity with the 'landscape', however simplistic, impedes the public in its full understanding of the landscape architect's expertise and role in society.

However, with so much visible improvement in clarifying public understanding and improving disciplinary relationships, so much exciting and innovative work being produced, and so many outstanding opportunities available, one wonders whether landscape architects shouldn't be more optimistic about their futures?

CONCLUSION

The premise of this essay is that landscape architecture's public approbation and interdisciplinary respect over time has suffered from the dubious and arduous process by which it metamorphosed from occupation to profession. It has also been speculated that semantics and some types of boundary expansion contribute to the public confusion about landscape architecture. While it has been a long time in coming, the profession has fulfilled two of three requirements mandated for complete professionalisation: credentialist standards and skilled acts claiming cognitive ownership; and is well on its way to fulfilling the third: public approbation. It is possible that public understanding and acceptance has been elevated more in the beginning years of the new millennium than in the previous century.

The recommendation to expand the boundaries of the profession put forth in the Fein Report has been problematic in some of the choices made but, nonetheless, expansion into sustainable and ecologically performative design is proving to be an expedient move.[13] The need for greater attention to ecological issues, strong support for the aesthetics of landscape architecture, and the need to expand practice with respect to societal benefit over that of the individual, are issues raised by the study that are being rigorously addressed today. However, much additional study of the profession is needed at this point in time in order to fully explore some of the issues raised here and elsewhere. This article is obviously limited in its distinct focus on the evolution of the profession in the United States. Further study of the profession's evolution in other parts of the world, relative to the United States, would provide the necessary global picture of the shift from the industrial age to the information age and its effect on how landscape architecture will be practised in the future.

Swaffield has suggested that an ethnography of the profession be undertaken in order to determine whether a common culture of landscape architecture exists today. As markets diversify, professionals increasingly diversify into more and more specialised roles of practice. One potential danger of this diversity of roles is the loss of common ground among the larger body of landscape architects, which could lead to further fragmentation of the profession and a decrease in public understanding (Swaffield, 2002). The Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB) has recommended specialisation in even undergraduate curricula as a response to the increasing diversity in practice. Miller's (1997) proposed adoption of a medical model of generalist and specialist education and practice reinforces the desire for specialisation within the field. A possible solution to the problem of fragmentation would be to adapt licensure into a system of competency levels in areas of specialisation similar to that used in the United Kingdom. Their system categorises the field into three divisions: design (landscape architects), management

(landscape managers), and science (landscape planners). Peter Walker fears that such diversity could be problematic if the profession is defined by its limits rather than its core beliefs and skills. He prefers to focus on the starting point of the profession with generalist training as common ground and then allow landscape architects to follow their desired directions into specialisations if they so choose (Miller, 1998).

Ethnic diversity in the field continues to be a concern, while gender balance in university enrolments remains constant, with 32% women in undergraduate programmes, and an increase of women in graduate programmes from 49% in 1985 to 58% in 2004. The same cannot be said for people of colour, and both academia and the profession continue to seek ways to recruit ethnic minorities into landscape architecture. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are not enough graduates to fill available entry-level positions in practice in recent years. Several universities are in the process of comparing recruiting methods in an effort to frame a strategy that will increase enrolment numbers with better-qualified students who are representative of society's cultural and ethnic diversity in their respective degree programmes.

In addition to recruitment issues, universities are continually adapting their curricula to meet the needs of the profession. The Landscape Architecture Body of Knowledge (LABOK) Study attempts to answer two pertinent questions for the future of the profession: what are the core competencies that define the profession, and what is the fundamental body of knowledge expected from graduates of accredited landscape architecture programmes? A third question arises from answering these two: what knowledge and skill should be the responsibility of practice after graduates enter the profession? This endeavour, while much needed, is akin to attempting to hit a moving target; by the time a survey is complete, many more variables will be added to the equation. The rapid rate of technological innovation makes it extremely difficult for the academy and the profession to keep pace because of the steep learning curve and costs. However, the potential for innovation and the elevation of design quality, especially in the arena of digital media, would seem to far outweigh the cost.

Artist Robert Smithson clearly understood Frederick Law Olmsted's chosen field as one of contradiction: landscape architects do not, or cannot, separate themselves from the physical world while dealing with many issues which have no right or wrong answer. The understanding of the sometimes overpowering contradictions of human need and the needs of the landscapes that humans inhabit, along with the creativity with which landscape architects address these issues, situates the profession and discipline in a position of leadership and increasing power to make positive change (Van Valkenburgh, 2005). The most memorable designed landscapes are those that confront those contradictions inherent in a site's particular circumstance in the most innovative and creative ways possible. The knowledge of these sites and those who will use them comes from a landscape architect's ability to gather and synthesise this information in order to create landscapes that are ecologically sensitive, possibly regenerative,

visually and spatially compelling, conceptually rich and culturally responsive.

Much like the characteristics of ecosystems described in the current non-equilibrium theory of ecology, the discipline and profession of landscape architecture must become resilient and flexible. In order to expand the relevance and influence of the profession, landscape architecture must adapt to future conditions of globalisation, recurring political change, the continued development of a consumer culture, the reordering of world economies and their impacts on environmental quality, land-development practices and social equity. As we look to a most promising future in both the discipline and profession of landscape architecture, Beardsley (2000) sums up the prospects best: 'I wish to make an extreme statement, if only to make an emphatic one: landscape architecture will prove the most consequential art of our time' (p 5).

NOTES

1 At the time this article was written, the infamous Iowa State 'Apocalyptic Manifesto' surfaced, and the question became more rhetorical. See Hohmann and Langhorst, 2004.

2 Wilensky (1964) documents that in America, 16 professions (of which he had designated as either established or in the process of establishing) formed their first national professional associations between 1847 and 1897. Landscape architecture was not included in the study.

3 Brint explains that the moral side of professionalism came to be seen as being too intrusive, too genteel and subjective. Expert knowledge, though, was considered to be ultimately objective, and has therefore enjoyed 'virtually unlimited legitimacy in American culture' (p 8).

4 The literature of women's nineteenth-century activism and the public role they embraced is extensive. See Blair, 1980; Scott, 1993; Spain, 2001, and Szczygiel, 2003.

5 The history of nineteenth-century medicine is well documented: see Duffy (1992). Regarding this history of landscape architecture and gender issues, see Komara, 2000 and Szczygiel, 2003.

6 The American Institute of Architects formed in 1857 and had its first state licensing law passed in 1897. Their first accreditation body, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, formed in 1912. Adherence was voluntary based on tacit agreement to follow the minimum standards. The National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) formed in 1940.

7 It should be noted that the lack of a clear definition of landscape architecture was not confined to the United States alone (Treib, 2002, p viii).

8 This has changed dramatically in recent years with landscape architects' salaries rising above that of architects for the first time (ASLA Salary Survey).

9 Landscape architects would do well to disavow the decorator's role as architects have been advised to by Robert Gutman in his book, Architectural Practice: A Critical View: 'The willingness of many practitioners to accede to the preference of clients that the architect should limit his or her work to decorating the shed, poses a threat to the profession's competitive edge' (1988, p 68).

10 See both Hill's and Steingraber's chapters in Ecology and Design for more on landscape architecture and health issues, as well as Ulrich's (1984) research on the physiological healing properties of landscapes, published in Science.

11 One of the Fein Report's recommendations was to consider amalgamation with the professions of city and regional planning, thus reconnecting with one of the disciplines, city planning, that began as a part of landscape architecture.

12 The symposium organised by Marc Treib at the University of California at Berkeley in October 1989, 'Modern Landscape Architecture (Re)Evaluated,' was one of the first attempts to critically explore modern landscape architecture. It inspired and energised the field to move forward and it was the precursor to future gatherings: 'Designed Landscape Forum' in San Francisco, November 1996, which resulted in a book of the same name; the 'Eco-Revelatory Design' exhibit and *Landscape Journal* Special Issue, 1998; 'Revelatory Landscapes' exhibition by San Francisco MoMA, 2001; Harvard's 'Large Parks,' 'Territories,' and 'Manufactured Sites' symposia; the University of Pennsylvania's 'Contemporary French Landscape Architecture' exhibition and symposium, 2003; Carnegie Mellon University's 'No Stone Unturned' symposium, 2005; and New York MoMA's 'Groundswell Symposium,' 2005.

13 Gutman (1988) describes architecture's foray into planning (and the eventual reversal of that trend) as a possible cause of public confusion as to the role of that profession. Olin (2005) also indicates that public misunderstanding of landscape architecture has not been improved by the expansion into regional resource planning. Further, he states that this expansion has resulted in a denigration of the act of design, the desired end product of planning, and has turned young people away from the physicality of making. The earlier alliance of landscape architecture with city planning had provided public access and overview that translated into a greater voice in larger urban infrastructure and open space projects and possibly greater public awareness of the profession's seriousness of purpose and importance to the greater good of society. The development of ecological planning, and landscape architecture's acceptance of it, did nothing to recover those losses engendered by the split (Walker and Gillette, 2005; Walker, 2006).

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