



*Drawing Time. The Representation and Change and Dynamics in Dutch Landscape and Architectural Practice After 1985.*

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## Summary

### **Drawing Time. The representation of growth, change and dynamics in Dutch landscape architectural practice after 1985**

Landscape architects employ drawings to explore and communicate interventions in landscape. Over time, the nature of such drawings and their role in design processes changed considerably. Nevertheless, up to today drawings are crucial in the production of and the debate on new landscape. Such drawings are representations. They refer to landscapes not existing yet. As representations they generally fit in the taxonomic system for representations as developed in architecture - see Perez-Gomez, Hewitt or Fraser/Henmi. The core of this taxonomic system consists of orthographic projections such as the elevation, section and plan, the elevation being secondary in landscape architecture. During the ages visualizations, models, collages and diagrams were added.

Landscape has a strong time dimension - archaeologist Barbara Bender speaks about landscape as 'time materializing'. We can distinguish cyclical patterns related to seasons and human usage, but also less predictable phenomena - think of water peaks. At the same time we can observe progressive patterns such as the growth of trees and plants, but just as much of entire cities, and on a more abstract level the organization of plan processes in phases and stages. Historian Eviatar Zerubavel provides a categorization of aspects of time, as is also done by urban theoretician Kevin Lynch. We may state that buildings are less influenced by temporal patterns. Architectural representation reflects the assumed solidness of buildings, and pays minor attention to the issue of time. Rooted in architectural drawing, also landscape architectural drawing leaves the issue of time aside. That, at least, was the situation for the past century.

In the making of gardens and parks, as designed landscapes one of the roots of landscape architecture, before roughly 1850 drawings did not have an important role - at least they often were not archived. Gardens often were made in situ, with help of handbooks, as described in Erik de Jong's *Landscape and Imagination*. Eighteenth century handbooks for gardening reveal a remarkable attention for time issues. Texts by formative 'early landscape architects' Humphry Repton and Frederick Law Olmsted confirm this attention. In the twentieth century the profession of landscape architecture formally emerged as a discipline in which thinking and making were connected, from the small scale of a garden up to the large scale of landscape. The already known techniques for architectural drawings were adopted by the young discipline of landscape architecture. However, the architectural approach of representation did not accommodate time issues, and the changing and ephemeral character of landscape not fitted in very well in the dominant Modernist discourse of the last century. That could be an explanation for the lack of explicit attention for issues of time in landscape architectural theory, and the ambiguity in landscape architectural practice. The work of for example C. Th. Sørensen shows a great awareness of time, but that is not displayed in drawings.

The emergence of landscape architecture as a discipline also came with new forms of professional practice, in which the office became the major working unit. Dana Cuff describes the office as a complex social web of trained people with ideals, abilities and needs - an ethnographic perspective. In the outer world, the office responds to demands made by clients, and communicates with a larger public on its designs. Landscape architectural educational programs train young designers to fit into professional practice -see Donald Schön-

and hand over the theoretical dimensions of landscape architecture and its drawing.

Dutch landscape architecture after World War 2 developed step by step towards a mature design discipline, and 'jumped' to a new level of operation after about 1985. This jump comprises an expansion towards urbanist problems, the conquest of the large scale and the adoption of an artistic approach of representation, as also happened in architecture: drawings more than only supporting the making operate also in an own domain. Berger, Mitchel and Lipstadt describe how drawings are given meaning and become part of a lively visual culture. For its specific history, Dutch landscape architecture up to today has its own character, as becomes manifest in the 'making' of nature as seen in the iconic Plan Ooievaar. At the same time the questions put forward in this research are not tied to a national culture. Questions of time and representation address landscape architecture internationally. Therefore, a northwestern European perspective is taken into account.

In this research 28 offices from the Netherlands and surrounding countries were interviewed on time, representation, professional practice and the development of the discipline. The research is not restricted to drawings, but also explores the thinking behind drawings by qualitative interviews. Swaffield and Deming, in their seminal description of landscape architectural theory, noted already that very different theoretical realms influence the developing landscape architectural theory. In this case ethnography, but also art history, framing a theoretical approach of drawings as autonomous objects. Some 500 drawings were collected to illustrate the interviews. Within this group of drawings, several examples of time-based representations were found. These are categorized and evaluated to understand how they operate in actual design processes. Interviews registered why offices made them, and for what reasons they were not made in other cases - as interviews shown, both a lack of examples and ideas on the role of clients are influential in this.

A framework of landscape architectural theory and history enables to put these examples of drawing time in today's practice in perspective. It also allows speculating on gaps in this theory, such as a landscape architectural perspective on types of representation. A new direction is given by Lawrence Halprin. In his 1969 pamphlet on *The RSVP Cycles*, inspired by choreography, Halprin puts forward the score as a new type of representation in landscape architecture. As the dimension of time drives the drawing of scores, this was taken as a theoretical concept and tested out in a number of 'drawing experiments' with students of different schools. Such experiments and examples collected from other disciplines - cartography shows promising drawings in which the aspect of time is effectively displayed - indicate new roads to take. The conclusion is that the representation of time is very well possible - there is no technical or theoretical justification for not representing time. It also leads to a theoretical proposition with important consequences for landscape architectural education. The proposition is to introduce a new header that is especially useful for landscape architecture: temporal representations, next to spatial representations. The latter comprises plan, section and visualizations; the temporal category includes score, timeline, and film. As approaches of representation these have been practised and described in theory. In between the spatial and temporal representations is the diagram, a type capable of displaying both spatial (what, where) and temporal aspects (who, when). Also in between are series in which traditional types of representation can become a temporal representation if they are given a precise time tag, such as T=1, T=10, T=50. Edward Tufte coined small multiples.

This research invites critical rethinking of the fundamentals of landscape architectural representation. This cannot be done without critically rethinking landscape architecture itself, for the relations of landscape with

time. Aspects of time can only be drawn when aware of the different time-based mechanisms at work. It potentially implies a new approach of landscape architecture, in which time aspects come to the front of design reasoning. There is a dialectal relation between new landscape architectural approaches, and rethinking the theory of representation. A new approach can be seen in the written work of James Corner. His 1992 essay 'Representation and Landscape. Drawing and making in the landscape medium' is a key source. Landscape is explicitly formulated as a time-based medium. This is applied in landscape urbanism, but it is also acknowledged in the thinking of a range of theoreticians from other domains, such as anthropologist Tim Ingold. His work, and that of Leatherbarrow and Hunt, places the findings in a broader intellectual context. The concept of actuality is interesting in this, as a focus on what a designed landscape is now. Such new approaches may ask for other types of drawings, and other ways of drawing.

The research was given a time frame that is relevant for the Netherlands: 1985-now. Induced by the economic crisis, this era seems to have ended. The drawing of time may have better chances in the era that is about to emerge. In that sense this research is very timely, but it is also timeless, as it reflects on the centuries old theory of representation. It is proposed to re-order the taxonomy in a set of spatial representations and a set of temporal representations. Temporal representations challenge the conventions of presentation in architecture. Therefore, this also gives an impulse to the renewal of presentation forms. A change in the education of young landscape architects is inevitable with regard to representation and presentation. The nature of professional practice does not stimulate the drawing of time for itself. It is in landscape architectural education that the foundations for this must be laid. This research lays bare a fundamental ambiguity in landscape architectural theory with regard to time, drawing and the nature of landscape. This also forces to rethink professional history, the role of Modernism and the position of earlier professionals, such as Repton and Olmsted, and garden theory. Recent publications like those of Mertens, Amoroso, Balmori and Treib show a growing interest in landscape architectural drawing, and first examples of actually drawing time. This research provides a stronger theoretical basis to further develop this strand.