

# The concept of time in architecture



Time is a very important factor for the design process of a park. Time is perceived differently, every person apprehends time differently. The issue of time always preoccupies the landscape architects, and regardless their intentions, their design will be surely affected by time, or from natural processes or from human interventions, a park has continuity, whereas in architecture time can be totally excluded.

Time is located in landscapes in different ways. We see time in the growing of plants and trees; we see also time in their season changing. The movement of the human through a park also symbolizes time. Time in a space, like an urban park, is like a movie, snapshots showing the movement and the behavior of the people in it, while the light changes gradually. One can see the passage of time in a park through the social, political and cultural changes. For example Victoria Park, the biggest park of East London (1845) was created after a big demand of the East Londoners because of lack of green spaces in the area and as a way of reducing the big number of annual deaths and diseases at that time, corollary of an industrial and densely populated area. As expected "people's park" very quickly had a big impact to the people and became the centre for social and political informal gatherings and talks. In the more recent past and today the park is famous for hosting the biggest music festivals of the city, since the social face of East London has changed dramatically and the area has become quite fashionable. + + + +

### **Time as a design tool**

The designer cannot be fully aware of the future of the park that he designs, the development of a park is affected by time, which time is an instable

factor in this process. What a designer should know is that time will tell if the design will be successful and that it will be loved and enjoyed by people. There is a true difficulty in the impact of time. We appreciate time in different ways, so every landscape architect approaches time in his mind and designs in another way and this way of seeing affect sometimes the solutions itself. Some designer make solutions where the park is evolving and changing slowly, whereas some others, want to have direct results and want the park to look like the park in the drawings, that could mean planting big trees and that results more expenses, or even could affect the choice of the trees he will use, instead of using sycamore trees that need time to mature, he could use the fast growing 'honey locust' trees.

A landscape architect that his designs were really affected by time was Roberto Burle Marx (Brazil, 1909-1994), he once stated: "The garden is always a problem of time. Time completes the idea." Time and its instability became an important framework in his work and an eternal concern throughout his career. He was really aware of the importance of time in the development of his projects. After completing a project, he never thought of it being over for good and all, this was only the beginning, the starting point, the places he designs seem that they never have an end, someone could say that they are characterized by 'timelessness'. His projects were continually changing through the years, he kept on visiting them and do changes on site (mostly with vegetation), in a point that some of his landscapes are very different from his original plans. He had the habit to do changes on site, without transferring



like my 'inside clock' is getting affected, It stresses me, on the other side when I stare the city farm and the Victorian buildings my pulses are reducing. The image of this side of the park is like frozen on time. In a way this contrast is quite interesting, cause the future image gives value to the old image and a poeting meaning and dimension to its pure side.

## **The presence of the past**

Landscapes are changing through time, this is a natural process. Speaking in general this is something that has to be done, we have to evolve, this is the essence of life. What we have to do is to decide what we want to keep from the past if there is anything important that has to be kept. Strict preservation of a place would be a life denial movement. This crucial and very important process of the selection of the past elements has to be made after a very careful analysis and survey, since it seems like forever people were very attached to the past. We have seen that when a place changes suddenly and with a high speed people are getting disorientated and they don't know how to behave, because there is no doubt, that the environment that surround us and we live in, affects us emotionally. Especially when change of landscape comes to a community level its like breaking a link of the continuity of the community itself. Our bonding with the past doesn't come only through familiarity, we would also get annoyed by the destruction of a symbolic and historic location, although we are talking about a clearly touristic place that we could have possibly never visit. The survival of these even unknown places makes us feel secure by having this sense of continuity that balances us. Kevin Lynch said that: " A portion of the past has been saved as being good , and this promises that the future will so save the present" and he

continues: “ We have the sense that we and our works will also reach uninterrupted old age” otherwise we would feel lost in a strangers world. Lynch also notices that there are big differences in mood and behavior of groups of people that have a valued past, in which they feel rooted and in a way balanced, and in groups that are living in an isolated present.

To return to my previous thoughts, the idea of preserving everything is quite nihilistic or for a designer could mean that he run out of ideas and inspiration. Nietzsche said: “ Man must have the strength to break up the past”. The difficulty of judging and evaluating the past is, however, not only a matter of the past itself, but also of the present. The designers must be able to explain their decisions, so they have fully understand why something has to be saved and they have to wonder about the importance of this past objects and connect them with the past and their meaning of existence towards the future. In every design project the reasons of preserving things may be quite different. In some cases we may decide to save things because they are related with historic persons or events, or because they keep important meanings or symbols for another group, or in most cases a designer gets to keep what he thing as best and important according to his aesthetics and judge, without saying if this is politically correct. For some people, new landscapes and environments are often being seen as escapes from old usual places, even if they are totally new to them without any memories.

## Future

There are different ways of seeing the future. Some people see future as one hour ahead, some see it as one week ahead and some other as one generation ahead.

The future may seem something ahead of us that we could either face with optimism and hope, or with fear and concern as a 'vehicle of time' that runs towards without our control. In that case it seems that worrying about the future could deter enjoying living the present. Our future actions may be affected by past experience. It seems that future, present and past are interconnected between them, we all have this idea of shifting times but each of us carries it with different analogies. And of course these analogies have to do with our experiences during the passage of time. If our past has been disappointing or indifferent, we will try to delete this image of the past in the future. And sometimes, if our past has been compulsive and precious with the combination of a dull present, this image will visit our minds more often. " Since past and future are present concepts, built in similar ways out of present data and attitudes, their correspondence is not surprising." Kevin Lynch notices. The past is made of a plethora of experiences, and is brought to our minds by triggers of the present found in our environment. Wanting to create a mental future image, we have to imagine the results of our present actions driven by our emotions.

A landscape architect has to query this interconnection of layers of time. In order to see how landscape represents past, present and future we have to look to ourselves and see how are bodies experience time, how time is '

fitted' inside us. We have to find a balance between the time inside us to the outside time.

Looking in landscapes we can find an image of time, that could be strengthen depending on the allocation of objects and events in space and time. We experience landscapes inside the framework of 'space-time'. When we design a landscape we want to enrich it with both temporal and spatial qualities.

Hence, also a temporal dimension: transporting the past into present, blurring past and present, recreating the past. Vision of landscape has a temporal dimension and thus brings the temporal dimension into the spatial dimension. The landscape perspective foregrounds time. p. 3/landscapes of memory and experience