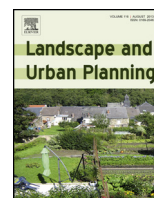




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Research Paper

## Public tendering and green procurement as potential drivers for sustainable urban development: Implications for landscape architecture and other urban design professions

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- French green public procurements encourage multidisciplinary in urban design.
- The tendering process favours single disciplinary teams, consisting mainly of architects.
- Green public procurements do not promote the landscape architecture profession in France.
- Environmental experts may constitute competition for landscape architects.
- Architects are almost invariably the lead consultants in urban design.

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines whether green public procurements are potential drivers for the development of a landscape architecture professional field in urban design. It proposes an analysis based on the nature of professional skill sets requested and selected by the public tendering process in France. To conduct this research, an analysis of 196 public ‘calls for tender’ and their results are undertaken. Depending on the consideration of ecological concerns, two types of projects are identified: traditional projects and green projects. We examine the impact that ecological issues assert on the position of landscape architecture within the requested skills and within the winning design team. Our main results show that the emergence of green public procurements in France has a significant impact on the demand for new types of professional ‘competencies’ and disciplinary collaborations but not on the results after the selection process.

It appears that clients request more multidisciplinary collaborations to address green criteria. In addition, the landscape architect is always associated with multidisciplinary teams in the requirements of the public call for tender. However, the emergence of new professional skills in the environmental field challenges the expertise of landscape architects and constitutes a competitive field. Counter to the ‘call for tender’ requirements, the selection process favours monodisciplinary teams, often the architect, who is also the favourite for the lead-consultant role. Finally, we discuss how the recognition of landscape architecture as an academic discipline can influence landscape education and how a strong professional body can protect a professional title.

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## 1. Introduction

It is widely recognized that we are entering what has been called the “*first urban century*” with a majority of people living in city-regions (Steiner, 2011). By 2050, nearly 70% of the world’s population is projected to be living in urban areas (OECD, 2012). Both public and private actors are forced to consider the relationship between urbanization and environmental problems. Thus, the invention of a new urban development pattern is a major issue for policy-makers and city stakeholders. The main stakes are to

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provide a satisfactory supply of housing and to reduce the ecological impacts of cities. This new urban model, so-called sustainable, requires the building up of an efficient synergy between economic, social and environmental policies.

Urban policy making has gradually evolved to incorporate ecological concerns. According to a recent report of the European Commission, “there is an increasing awareness of the fact that sustainability goals can be promoted by including environmental considerations in the daily activities of government.” (Renda et al., 2012). Procurement is used increasingly as a political and corporate instrument to stimulate the environmental performance of products and services (European Commission, 2004; Marron, 2003). To reach these goals, the European Commission has developed green public procurement (hereafter GPP) criteria, inviting national and local authorities to include these criteria into their tendering procedures (Renda et al., 2012). This orientation concerns urban policies amongst others. Green public procurements create an institutional setting that provides incentives for designers to develop skills and practices that contribute to a more sustainable built environment (Sporrong & Bröchner, 2009) and may constitute an effective way to spur the development of some professional fields. In this paper, we focus on the role of green public procurements as potential drivers of the development of professional expertise in sustainable urban design projects.

The emergence of the ecological dimension in urban policy making has greatly influenced professionals in the field of urban design (Reimer, 2010), leading to new practices and skills.

The traditional distinction placing the architect at the centre of urban design is disturbed by the emergence of a new green expertise engendering a re-distribution of professional skills. The ecological shift has brought landscape matters to the forefront of urban design. In this context, our paper attempts to contribute to the field of professionalism in landscape architecture, analysing its position and role in sustainable urban design, and its articulation to other professional fields, such as architecture, urbanism or environmental expertise.

Our study is limited to the French context where the field of landscape architecture is largely influenced by public procurements. As reported by the French Federation for Landscape Architecture, public procurements represent approximately 90% of the activity of landscape architects (Seguin, 2009). Thus, France is a particularly relevant place to study the evolution of the landscape architects’ professional field through the analysis of public procurement (Oueslati, Salanié, & Garnier, 2011). However, no study currently and directly addresses their impacts on the evolution of the profession of landscape architecture. To address this gap, the paper proposes an analysis based on the nature of professional skill sets requested and selected by the public tendering process in France. The objective is to understand whether green public procurements are potential drivers of the development of a landscape architecture professional field.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows, in four sections: We first describe the context of the study and the research questions, we secondly present the data in support of our empirical study. We then discuss the results and main tendencies and finally present a discussion of the key findings of our research. The last section concludes the paper.

## 2. The study context

### 2.1. Urban actors

According to Childs (2010), “Urban design is an overarching term for a school of professions and disciplines that focus on the physical design of our settlements and their component pieces”. As urban

design combines different disciplines and professions, it is important to understand the meanings of these terms, and define their interactions. Disciplinarity describes the way scholarly endeavour has evolved into specialisms, constituting a convenient demarcation of a field of knowledge with their research methodologies, standard methods and specific jargon (Fry, 2001). The boundaries between disciplinary knowledge domains in academia correspond often to the boundaries between professional fields. Furthermore, a “profession” is “an occupation requiring considerable training and specialized study” (American Heritage, 1996, p. 1446). It requires a shared body of knowledge or practices, licensure, continued study, commitment to high standards of achievement and conduct, collegiality and peer-review (Freidson, 1986). Professional skills are the practical assets of the disciplinary fields and constitute an operational corpus, a series of practices, techniques, processes and specific methods undertaken to operationalize this knowledge. In this paper, we consider professions that are acknowledged by a professional body or the public authorities as a panel of skills, eventually certified with a professional title.

Traditionally, architecture constitutes the basic framework for urban design and incorporates the concerns of other professions (Kashef, 2008). Architects tend generally to be the lead consultant for public projects in France. Engineers complement the implementation of the project from the technical aspect. Landscape architects have uneven positions, sometimes being lead consultants for projects that ensure the health, safety and welfare of the public, and sometimes being added towards the end of the project for a “green guaranty” (Desvigne, 2012). But this chain-like organization is changing with the emergence of new environmental values in urbanism. Architects provide a disappointing uptake in sustainable urban design because of lack of knowledge required (Heylighen, 2008). The ecological shift in urban design has brought landscape matters to the forefront of the urban design professions. Combining a design and a green expertise, “a creative and a scientific approach” (Gazvoda, 2002), landscape architects are evolving to address new environmental challenges (Calkins, 2005; Masbouni, 2002; Musacchio, Ozdenerol, Bryant, & Evans, 2005). Professional discourse, such as *landscape urbanism* (Corner, 2006; Waldheim, 2006b), promotes landscape architects as “integrating ecological sciences at the very centre of the urban design” (McHarg, 1969; Waldheim, 2006a). The nature of landscape design is well established, with a subject matter, design techniques and “specific knowledge” (Gazvoda, 2002), conferring on it a clear identity among the design professions (Ogrin, 1994). Despite these considerations, the title of landscape architect is not yet protected in several countries around the world (e.g. France). In this context, the emergence of green procurements could constitute a spur for the development of landscape architecture. Lately, a significant number of “green experts” have emerged simultaneously in response to the ecological shift in urban design, such as environmental experts or ecologists. Not always organized in professional bodies, they combine a scientific green expertise with a technical expertise. Used to working in pluridisciplinary team, they could constitute a competitive field for the landscape architects.

Boundaries between fields of urban design are blurring and see the need for co-operation (Jannié & Pousin, 2007; Tress, Tress, Décamps, & d’Hauteserre, 2001): architectural, urbanism, landscape or ecological design practices are often complementary, particularly in an attempt to create sustainable schemes. This approach can take several forms: multidisciplinary, juxtaposing disciplines in an independent fashion (Ramadier, 2004); interdisciplinary, constructing a common disciplinary model; and transdisciplinarity, integrating the perspectives of multiple fields by confronting disciplines (Fry, 2001; Naveh, 2001; Tress et al., 2001). These disciplinary collaborations can take place between single disciplinary professional firms that are associated to work

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