



Perspective Essay

Opportunities for design approaches in landscape planning



Christina von Haaren^{a,*}, Bartlett Warren-Kretschmar^b, Christina Milos^c,
Christian Werthmann^c

^a Institute for Environmental Planning, Leibniz University Hannover, Herrenhaeuser Str. 2, 30419 Hannover, Germany

^b Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning, Utah State University, Logan, UT, United States

^c Institute for Landscape Architecture, Leibniz University, Hannover, Germany

HIGHLIGHTS

- Landscape planning and landscape design approaches share substantive and process values.
- Landscape planning and design characteristics are identified and explained in the context of different tasks and application situations.
- A framework for identifying design opportunities in landscape planning is proposed.
- Integrating design approaches can enrich landscape planning solutions and its communicative power.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 19 June 2013

Received in revised form 16 June 2014

Accepted 23 June 2014

Available online 16 August 2014

Keywords:

Landscape planning

Landscape design

Landscape architecture

Theory

Values

Approaches

ABSTRACT

In the discipline of landscape architecture (LA) a divergence of the “planning” and the “design” cultures is not a new phenomenon. This divergence of planning and design may potentially expand the range of possible methodological and ethical approaches in LA. However, theory is lacking about the nature of these approaches and how to apply and merge them in planning situations. Thus the objective of this investigation was to better understand these cultures and the reasons for different approaches in order to identify possibilities for extending the methodological approach of landscape planning. The findings are based on an analysis of the theoretical and methodological literature of planning and design.

The findings indicate that the distinction between the terms landscape architecture, design and planning are increasingly blurred. However, different contexts and tasks as well as the dominance of specific characteristics of values, methods and processes in the two cultures are obvious. Different tasks and application contexts apparently lead to different planning and design cultures. Nevertheless, within the planning context we can identify design opportunities that have the characteristics of a design situation. These design situations could be the starting point for using design approaches in planning more systematically. The expected added value of integrating design culture into planning may be improved communication and understanding of the fundamental planning objectives. Whether these expectations will be fulfilled must be pursued in future research.

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1. Introduction

As faculty in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning, we are often confronted with questions from students about the divide of planning and design within the discipline, which they perceive during their education. Their comments echo the long-standing debate about how planning and design are related and

question the tendency to gravitate or specialize in one area or the other. In this discussion, planning usually represents the more scientific, environmentally-focused and policy-based approaches in their course work and design stands for the artistic, creative experience (e.g. Höfer, 2002; Ogrin, 2010: 63). Richard Stiles (1994) stated that “landscape design and landscape planning are, at least superficially, very different in nature, dealing not just with different scales of landscape and different types of intervention, but often with different types of client with different motivations and even apparently stressing different methodological approaches”. This divergence is also reflected in many universities (Marušič, 2002) where two separate programmes for the Bachelor are offered. The discussion of this dichotomy is not new, regardless of the terms

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +49 511 762 2652; fax: +49 511 762 3791.

E-mail addresses: haaren@umwelt.uni-hannover.de (C. von Haaren), barty.warren@usu.edu (B. Warren-Kretschmar), milos@ila.uni-hannover.de (C. Milos), werthmann@ila.uni-hannover.de (C. Werthmann).

used to describe the two sides (Gobster & Xiang, 2012: 290). Even if this discussion may have focused on the European situation (Drozdov, 2007; Höfer, 2002; Marušič, 2002; Ogrin, 1994, 2010; Stiles, 1994), it remains relevant to students and to the discipline also in other parts of the world. Furthermore, the discussion hinges on the theory and the conceptual base of the landscape design and planning profession. Even in countries like the US, where the term design is used in a much broader sense (Gobster & Xiang, 2012) and design approaches appear to be present in planning (Nassauer & Opdam, 2008), there is little theory about the nature and relationship of landscape design and planning approaches and when and how they can be integrated. In fact some authors, such as Steinitz (2012), are merging planning and design techniques. Also in practice a distinction of two approaches may not be discernable, and many landscape architects may intuitively use different approaches. However, a method or systematic framework for deciding when and how different approaches are appropriate in a planning context is missing. A framework for identifying such situations could expand the methodological approaches of the planning process. The purpose for landscape planning would be to reduce a stated implementation deficit in planning (Lütz & Bastian, 2002; Richards, White, & Carter, 2008) by an improved communication of the objectives. Whether such expected effects of design features in planning will occur, cannot be answered in this paper but remains an issue of further research.

The motivation of this paper is to better understand the relationship between landscape design and planning and to provide insight into the potential of landscape planning and design approaches to support each other. More specifically, the objective is to systematically review the literature of design and planning theory in search of approaches that hold potential to supplement the planning tool kit, but are underrepresented in planning theory. The aim is to understand the prerequisites for using these approaches in landscape planning and to build a framework of opportunities for using design approaches that can help planners better integrate such approaches in the planning process. It is not our objective to produce stereotypes of planning and design as two separate entities. Our aim is to understand the spectrum of different approaches in the theoretical literature, and to identify those approaches that are underrepresented in the planning process in order to make them available to the planner.

Recommendations made in this paper focus primarily on landscape planning. This was motivated by observations that landscape planning theory does not include design approaches (e.g. Höfer, 2002; Stokman & v. Haaren, 2011) and the intention of the principle authors, who are planners, to address the planning realm first. That said, opportunities to incorporate planning approaches into design have already been identified by Ann Winston Spirn in 1986: “The theories, methods and techniques of landscape planning are applicable to the design of the city” (Spirn, 1986: 433). Nevertheless, a systematic guide about when and how to use planning approaches in design is also missing.

To this end the article starts with a description of the method, followed by a section in which we explore how “landscape design” (LD) and “landscape planning” (LP) can be characterised and differentiated based on a review of literature about landscape planning and design. After identifying typical tasks and situation-related characteristics of LD and LP, we present a framework for identifying situations in LP that could benefit from a design approach and give examples of such situations.

2. Method

Methodologically, the paper draws on a literature review of landscape design and planning theory. The literature analysis was

structured by the following question: which characteristics of LP and LD are mentioned in the literature with respect to: context (task, application, and implementation) and culture (underlying values and processes)? (proposed by Levin-Keitel & Sondermann, 2014).

The analysis identified characteristic properties that were found predominantly in either LD or LP but not in both. The purpose was to identify approaches that were absent in each culture and to understand the context in which they are used. In order to recognise design approaches that can enrich LP, we must understand these approaches in their basic form (see Kant cited in Thurnherr, 2004: 35; Knight, 1948). Furthermore, we need to recognise the kind of application situation they have emerged from and whether these situations are different than ones found in a typical planning context. The differences between LP and LD in practice are not the focus of the analysis in this paper. Rather we consider the terms landscape design and landscape planning to represent two ends of the spectrum of professional activities in landscape architecture that in practice may include a wide range of cases and professional attitudes.

In the literature review, a selection of 68 articles and books on LD and 117 on LP (plus 4 articles about spatial planning theory that obviously influenced LP) was analysed. They were selected from an internet search that included Science Direct, Web of Science and LUP. For the search we used the terms ‘landscape design’, ‘landscape planning’, and as synonyms ‘landscape architecture’ and ‘environmental planning’, all with and without the addition of the term ‘theory’. Both the abstracts as well as the texts were searched for the core terms. Then papers were selected in which the search terms and descriptions of either **context** (tasks and application context), **culture** (values or process) were found. As there were few findings for ‘**results**’ (also proposed by Levin-Keitel & Sondermann, 2014) in the theoretical literature we covered this aspect in the task section. Our selection of papers was reviewed by colleagues from LD as well as LP. We did not perform a quantitative analysis of the citations with respect to specific opinions because some of the articles were in fact summaries, which would have distorted the results. Furthermore, authors often referred to the same seminal publications. The characteristics of LD and LP in the literature were identified by codifying information (abstracting and classifying meaning) about context (task/application context) and culture (values and process). The results were reviewed first by a planner, and then the core design literature was also scanned by a co-authoring colleague with insight in both planning and design. The comparison of the content led to the identification and extraction of different principles (method inspired by Levin-Keitel & Sondermann, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Suddaby, 2006).

In addition to the literature review, ten faculty members of other European landscape architecture programmes completed a short questionnaire at the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools (ECLAS) conference 2011, where initial results have been presented. Eight other colleagues gave their opinion in personal discussions, which helped to clarify misunderstandings about our analytical approach. Although the landscape planners were underrepresented in this group, they were included in additional discussions.

In the literature review, it became apparent that especially in US-influenced literature, the term landscape design is occasionally used in a very broad sense that also includes typical planning approaches (e.g. in Nassauer & Opdam, 2008), or it is reserved for the final solution or construction phase of the planning process (trias of planning, design and management Ahern, 1995; Desouza & Flanery, 2013; Drozdov, 2007). Also the term landscape architecture (LA), which is used in this article for the overarching discipline which includes LP and LD approaches (e.g. EFLA, 2011; Rodiek, 2006), is sometimes used synonymously with LD and explicitly

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