Contrasting Cultural Landscapes?
Commentaries on landscape architecture education, research and practice in Australia and Thailand

Public Lecture
Thursday 11th February 2010
4.30-6.00pm,
Rm 211 Faculty of Architecture,
Chulalongkorn University

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“The Thai concept of Wathanatham is more comprehensive than the Western concept of ‘culture’ in that it expresses a more dynamic concept of ‘The Way of Life’. And in Oriental, like in Heraclitian thinking ‘Way of Life’ is like a stream, or a road (Tao). It encompasses all aspects of life and is moreover open for change, and surprise, good or bad.” (Alting Von Geusau, 1989, p.1 as quoted by Aasen, 1998, p.7)

Source: Wat Saket mural (Sintusingha 03/01/09)
‘Landscapes’ – the nature frame

The romanticized Australian Bush
Outward orientation
Sun-lovers

Pa thoen The barbaric Thai jungle
Inward orientation
Sun-avoiders

(Graphic source: Adapted from Wikimapia 02/06/09)
‘Landscapes’ – the landcover frame

Source: Adapted from http://globalis.gvu.unu.edu/?839 07/02/10
‘Landscapes’ – the settlement frame

Source: Adapted from http://globalis.gvu.unu.edu/?840 07/02/10
‘Landscapes’ – the conflict frame: Human Impact 2002

Source: Adapted from http://globalis.gvu.unu.edu/?840 07/02/10
‘Landscapes’ – the sacred frame

The English Picturesque tradition imposed on the Aboriginal sacred landscapes.


Appearance in the public realm

Traditional narrative: spirits to be appeased

19th Century modernist narrative: Natural landscape to be tamed, cleared and controlled

Disappearance from the public realm

“‘Cultural’ landscapes… are simultaneously ‘real’ (hosting physical and ecological systems) and ‘imaginary’ (recognized by people through their collage of images)...” (Selman, 2006, P.3)
‘Landscapes’ – interpreted nature frame

“...Perhaps most importantly, modern theories of landscape represent it as a holistic entity within which natural and human processes merge, and where economic, social and ecological objectives can be balanced in the pursuit of sustainable development.” (Selman, p.1)
‘Landscapes’ - the built frame

Public and ecological infrastructure

Bounded fragments

Urban public realm and ecological network

Linear spaces

The private garden

Bounded places

Source: Sintusingha 2010
'Landscapes' - the 'designed' & built frame

Public and ecological infrastructure

Bounded fragments

Urban public realm and ecological network

The private garden

Source: Sintusingha photo collection
The landscape is wide – but can look directionless? No clear strengths? Who is the public (the client)?

The landscape is delimited – building on specific strengths, attributes and skills

Source: Bull 2002; TALA 2009
Regulated and prefabricated landscapes

Hand-made landscape artefacts

Source: Sintusingha photo collection
Education
Landscape and spatial planning

Process negotiators and space shapers: the ‘public’ as client

Form makers: Based on the tradition of architectural design rigor

Source: Sintusingha photo collection
Source: lower left L49 Landscape Architects
Towards ‘research-led’ education

Present-future orientation

(Source: New York Times 21/10/08)

Practice-led education

Present orientation

(Source: L49 Landscape Architects)
### Australian Thai

#### ‘The individual’ and society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualists</th>
<th>Bounded social capital – family &amp; social network</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public rights</td>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Informal rules and relationships</td>
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<td>Formal rules &amp; regulations, power structure</td>
<td>Informal social safety net</td>
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<td>Citizen policing</td>
<td>Uneven wealth distribution</td>
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<td>Welfare birth to death</td>
<td>19th Century master and servant</td>
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<td>Middle class</td>
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Judged as an individual

Judged as family, institutional and social network

Source: Sintusingha photo collection
‘The individual’ and society: political landscapes

Democratic and formalized economy

Australian

Federal
State
Council
PEOPLE

Developing democracy and mixed formal/informal economy

Thai

Monarchy/nobility
Judiciary
Army
'Elected' politician/businessmen/influential figures
Police
Urban middleclass
Rural and urban poor

Relatively small government

Source: Sintusingha 2009, 2010
‘The individual’ and society in greenwashed societies

Climate Change: opportunities in crises? A catalyst for change? Good PR for LA as the ‘steward of nature’?

**VIEWS ON GLOBAL WARMING**

An international poll conducted by the World Public Opinion and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in 2006 showed widespread agreement that climate change is a pressing problem.

This majority, however, is divided over whether the problem of global warming is urgent enough to require immediate, costly measures or whether more modest efforts are sufficient.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Effort Requred</th>
<th>Urgency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>69</td>
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<td>Israel</td>
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<td>China</td>
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<td>Argentina</td>
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<td>India</td>
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Until we are sure that it is really a problem, we should not take any steps that would have economic costs

... should be addressed, but its effects will be gradual, so we can deal with the problem gradually by taking steps that are low in cost

... a serious and pressing problem. We should begin taking steps now even if this involves significant costs.
The Challenges

Interiorscapes, **mallization** – imposition of alien spaces and the exodus from unpleasant exterior urban landscapes

Advocacy for the **systemic social and ecological spaces**

**SEA landscape identity** - culturally compounded by ‘sociology of absence’ and self-discrimination

Source: Sintusingha photo collection
The Challenges: Foodscapes, waterscapes, energyscapes...

Food Miles in Australia:
A preliminary study of Melbourne, Victoria.

Source: New York Times 25/12/07

Source: Sintusingha photo collection
‘The individual’ and society: Ecological Footprint (1999)

Source: http://globalis.gvu.unu.edu 07/02/10
Future ‘Landscapes’ – the conflict frame 2050

Source: http://globalis.gvu.unu.edu 07/02/10
The Challenges: Looking for salvation…

(Source: Economist 30/11/08)