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**Newbies and Their Landscape Architecture Career Paths : The Situation in  
Thailand.**

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**Abstract**

Landscape architecture has played an important role in urban development worldwide. The blurring lines of educational and professional trajectory are merged and share a common fate and destiny. Especially, looking closely to the countries in Asia where the globalization and free trade agreement charge into the rapid urbanization. The boundary of the world service trading becomes one. Thailand has contributed to their own country as well as the landscape architecture career the qualified landscape architects for almost three decades, while the demands from the practitioners and the supplies have never met. The author will elaborate the situation of the landscape architecture education and the profession in Thailand. The threats and opportunities of the new enact of registered built environment architects regulation which covers four legs of professions; interior architects, architects, landscape architects, and urban designers under the same umbrella of Council of Architects (2000). New graduated Thai landscape architects have to choose their career path when a three-way intersection confronts with them right there.

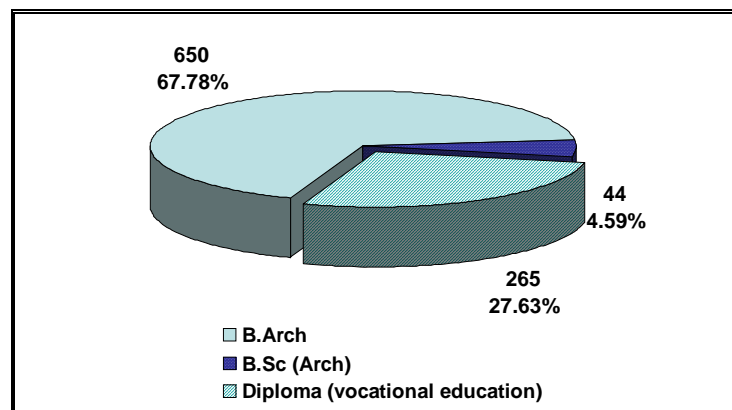
## Newbies and Their Landscape Architecture Career Paths : The Situation in Thailand.

Ariya Aruninta

### Introduction

Landscape architect in Thailand is one of the professions like medical doctor, attorney, accountant, architect and engineer which require both individual and firm to obtain professional licensure and have professional education in a certain level indicated as in the regulations. The Council of Architects (CoA) is the special type of private organization under The Ministry of Interior who is responsible on regularization and enforcement of four built environment related professions includes architecture, interior architecture/decoration, urban design, and landscape architecture. Before the establishment of CoA in the year 2000, The Ministry of Interior had the unit called the Regulation Board of Engineering Profession and Architecture Profession (RB-EP / RB-AP) which was a completely state agency. Even the landscape architecture has been recognized in Thailand since 1965 (Architects Act, 1965) and in 1972 was specified in TOR of Kasetsatr University campus planning project (World Bank, 1972), but RB-AP during that time has not yet included landscape architecture in any regulation.

The landscape architecture education in Thailand ages approximately three decades, started in 1977 after the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (B.LA) curriculum has been approved by The Ministry of University Affair and one year later Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University had the first B.LA admission and became the only university in Thailand teaching B.LA for 20s years, then Faculty of Agricultural Production, Maejo University and Faculty of Architecture, Kasetsatr University have started the B.LA programme. Now there are around 100 newly graduated landscape architects each year; they will be called 'newbies' in this article; which includes those from M.LA programme from Chulalongkorn University. While architecture has two vocational degrees (see Figure 1), which are eligible to apply for registration, landscape architecture industry has composed the other fields of professions as well. They are B.S. (Landscape Technology), B.S. (Horticulture) and diploma in landscape architecture (higher vocational certification).

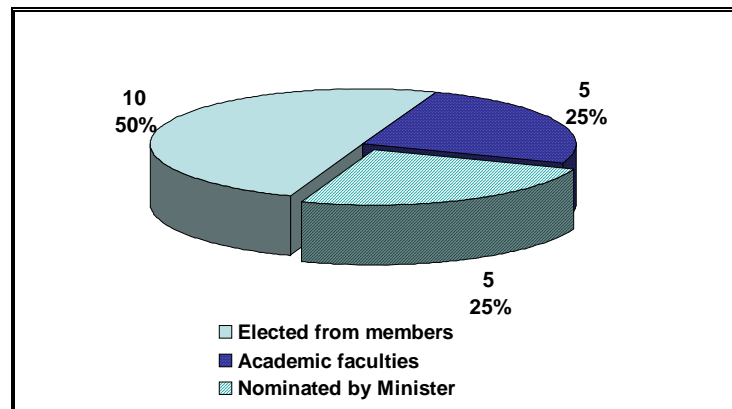


**Figure 1 :** Registration architects examinees by education (2006)

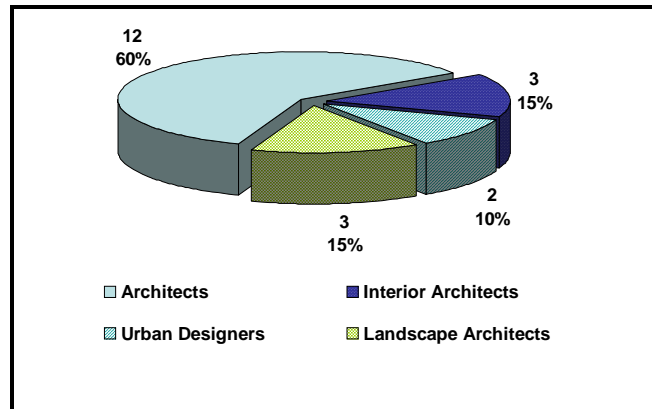
Developing country like Thailand and mega city like Bangkok with its vicinity, where resides the ten millions population (estimation includes off-recorded immigrants), this has generated a large amount demand of landscape architecture profession employments. Boonkham (1995) figured out that Thailand needs up to 100 landscape architects each year to fill the market demand in both private and public sector. There are 30 local landscape architecture firms mostly based in Bangkok and around 80 freelance landscape architects and those in small firms to supply the demands. The ‘newbies’ seem not to satisfy with the situation, the preferences of firms where Chulalongkorn University 4<sup>th</sup> year B.LA students choose for their Practical Training go to the international firms abroad and after their graduation, up to one third intend to have their extended training in other countries: Singapore, Hongkong, Australia, China, and USA. This evidence raises up two questions to the author: ‘*What would be the pro and con of being new graduated landscape architects start their career in Thailand?*’, and ‘*How the future of landscape architecture in Thailand would be under this circumstance?*’

### **Under the umbrella of Council of Architects**

The Architects Act (2000) describes four majors legs of built environment professions and calls them all ‘architects’ under the act. These fours legs are including : architecture, interior architecture and interior decoration, landscape architecture, and urban design. Each leg has representatives elected from individual council members, professional associations and academic faculties, in addition to the nomination by The Interior Minister. The combinations of the 20 board members are shown in Figure 2 : By Architects Act (2000) and Figure 3 : 2004-2006 Board by professions

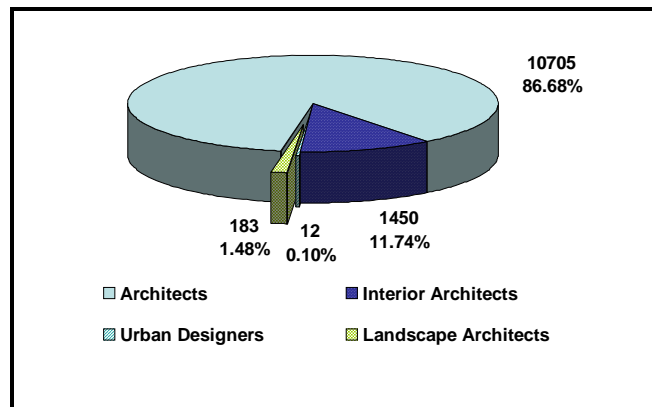


**Figure 2 :** Combination of CoA board by Architects Act (2000)



**Figure 3 :** Combination of CoA board (2004-2006) by professions

Besides CoA, Thai Association of Landscape Architects (TALA) plays an important role of professional body. Briefly, it aims to gather amongst members to share professional knowledge, to develop the acceptable professional standard of landscape architecture, and to collaborate involved actors in landscape architecture industry with landscape architects. TALA is a private assembly, was founded in 1987. The latest numbers reported presently in 2006 is 468 memberships in all categories<sup>1</sup>, while the CoA has acquired approximately one third of TALA members only in the membership list (2005)<sup>2</sup> and only 83 members have registered licenses. Figure 4 shows the proportion of the 183 CoA members in landscape architecture (1.48%) compared to other three fields: the largest portion is architects (86.68%), and the smallest is Urban designers (0.10%).



**Figure 4 :** CoA members divided by fields (2005)

The key role of CoA involves the enacting of ministerial regulations and enforcement of other legislations and rules regarding the built environment design and planning. The CoA is responsible in issuance the licenses for those registered architects in the four related fields. The licensure examination has been used for architects, and tends to apply to landscape architects in the very near future. The three 'E's concept formulates the CoA consideration. These are the followings;

<sup>1</sup> 468 members; 98 Members, 220 Associate, 145 Affiliate, and 5 Honorable members (2006)

<sup>2</sup> 183 members; 31 Fellow/Senior, 15 Associate, 38 Amateur, 99 non-licensed

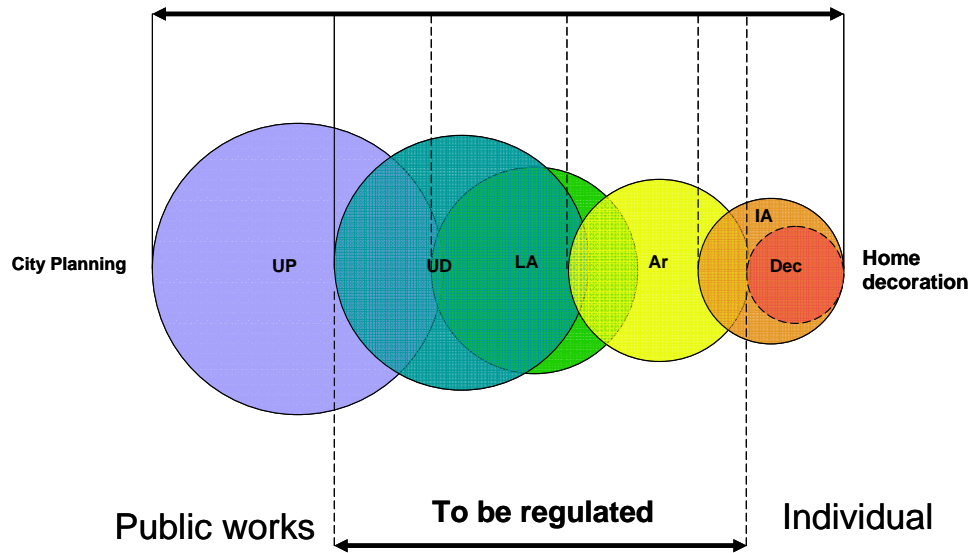
1. **E-Education** – the certain level and degree must be accredited by CoA for all registered architects
2. **E-Experience** – the prove of certain continuous period of practice must be achieved, with a number of built projects must be done by all registered architects
3. **E-Examination** – the interview and writing examinations are required for new entry of all registered architects

In addition to the 3Es, there are two intensive profession development strategies applied; attending of the professional and academic symposium / conference each year, and having training reports of the certain hours from an accredited firm; these will be considered as well in the coming years. For the time being, application package for a registered landscape architect requires only the portfolio contains total of one to three built projects in Thailand, and transcript certified that the applicant completed B.LA from an accredited university. As being explained above, applying for a licensure in landscape architecture is not as competitive as in the field of architecture.

### **The blurring line of built environment design and planning industry in Thailand**

After 2000, the situation of construction industrial and urban development projects in Thailand has grown rapidly and more steadily compared to during 1990s. The lessons learned from 1997 economic crisis guided the national development policy to the more cautious projects planning along with the long term planning. The mega projects initiated by the public sector such as highways, mass transit system, new airport, and large scaled land redevelopment projects have been proposed especially during Thaksin Shinawatra's cabinet (2001-2006). The large scaled projects such as Royal Flora Expo in Chiangmai, Suvarnabhumi Bangkok International Airport / the proposal of Suvarnabhumi Aeroptropolis, Chiangmai Night Safari Zoological Park are the examples of landscape architecture and urban development projects in Thailand during that time. Unfortunately, due to some unknown reasons, the landscape architecture firms seemed not to involve in the projects in the full range. Eventually, project consultant firms were leaded by architects and engineers with only one or few landscape architects in the teams. This follows my first two questions: *'What's wrong with landscape architecture career?'*

The ministerial regulation formulated by the CoA on the reserved professions of built environmental design and planning (2006) indicated that planning of a public space larger than 1000 sq.m. is reserved for registered landscape architect(s). The author and 150 landscape architects signed up and argued the CoA that the regulation is not practical and would interfere citizen right by the constitution (Bangkokbiznews, 2006). The conceptual diagram of reserved projects for each filed of architects should be as in Figure 5. The boundary of each field can be overlapped and categorized by *'type of project'* instead of *'area in sq.m.'* as actually presented in the 2006 ministerial regulation (see also Table 1).

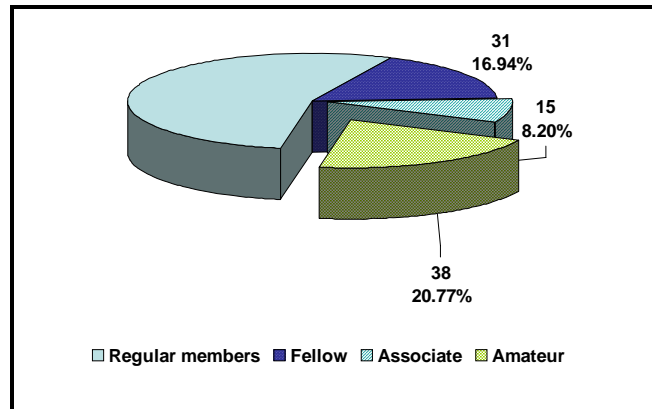


**Figure 5 : CoA members divided by fields (2005)**

**Table 1 : Minimum size of regulated design and planning projects (Ministerial Regulation, 2006)**

Interior Architecture	Architecture		Landscape Architecture	Urban Design
500 sq.m. (public bldg)	150 sq.m.	400 sq.m. (Agri)	1,000 sq.m. (public space)	30,000 sq.m (bldg complex)

Focus on the landscape architecture project, the minimum size to be regulated is 1,000 sq.m. of any planning of public space project. The regulation has been found not practical. That means almost every playground, football field, a sidewalk, department store plaza, parking, subway station, etc in the country require to have licensed landscape architect to design as the result of the 2006 Ministerial Regulation. In fact, according to CoA annual report (2006), among 183 members(see Figure 6), there have been only 84 registered landscape architects or less than half of the members hold the licensure, the rest are regular members who are ineligible to work under the regulation. In addition, there is no other authorized state agency to monitor whether the project has been designed by licensed landscape architects or not, thus there have been a number of projects larger than 1,000 sq.m. simply done without landscape architect.



**Figure 6 : CoA members divided by licensure (2006)**

In the US., landscape architects, architects, and urban ‘planners’ institutional bodies are separated. Landscape architects have ASLA-American Society of Landscape Architects and CLARB-Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards, while architects have AIA-American Institute of Architects, NCARB - the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, and two professional associations called SARA - The Society of American Registered Architects and NOMA - The National Organization of Minority Architects. Planners have APA - American Planning Association, and AICP - The American Institute of Certified Planners.

Looking back to Asia, the neighboring country ; the Republic of Singapore ; SILA – Singapore Institute of Landscape Architects represents a professional body of qualified landscape architects with the aim of advancing the art of landscape architecture and civic design in the Singapore environment. It also hopes to promote research and education in landscape architecture as well as to create and maintain a high standard of professional qualification. Members of SILA work under the professional codes of conduct of its own institute.

It is interesting that the conceptual framework of landscape architecture practice varies from one country to another, but it is the fact that the US has a longer history of landscape architecture than Thailand and Singapore formulated their SILA in 1985 just two years before Thailand. The fourth and fifth question come in mind: ‘*Should we integrate Landscape Architecture regulation body with Architecture?*’, and ‘*Should we require licensure in order to practice or no need regulation at this point?*’.

## Conclusion

Department of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University will celebrate their three decades anniversary in February 2007. We have produced approximately 700 qualified landscape architects into the market, along with 200 landscape architects from the other two universities. Simply calculate the number of landscape architects in Thailand, there should be around 900. Thus, the five questions are waiting for the answers in the silence!

- *What would be the pro and con of being new graduated landscape architects start their career in Thailand?*

- *How the future of landscape architecture in Thailand would be under this circumstance?*
- *What's wrong with landscape architecture career?*
- *Should we integrate Landscape Architecture regulation body with Architecture?*
- *Should we require licensure in order to practice or no need regulation at this point?*

The newbies have to choose their career path when a three-way intersection confronts them: a) work in Thailand under the pressure of Architects Act and impractical ministerial regulation in order to establish a firm career path in their mother land, b) work abroad in the neighboring countries in order to gain more experiences and earn twice the size salary, c) work in the western countries under the high competitiveness and find the opportunity to have higher education abroad.

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