

THE URBAN LANDSCAPE AND THE LANDSCAPE URBAN CULTURE

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Abstract. *The industrialized society succeeds to apply to the architecture and urbanism sciences the label “for consume”, or “a rewarding affair”, without any consciences problems. This manner of advertising leaded, since longtime, to a manner of “work” which has disastrous consequences: huge urban polluted areas named “megalopolis”, degraded build areas and degraded natural areas, ecological catastrophes, social destructuralization, stress and many form of psychic diseases, racism and aggressivity, greed and poverty, etc. The respect for the nature constituted in the past and constitutes nowadays one of the major factors which could to diminish, cure and prevent such disastrous consequences. The nature is the “weapon” or the instrument of the science called “landscape architecture”. The esthetic researches guided the scientists to define the art of gardens as “esthetic action over the nature”. They observed that the history and the time “mélange the culture into the nature, adapting some particular aspects of the nature to the style of a specific culture”. Starting from these ideas, we can redefine the landscape architecture science, as a process where “the culture became content of the nature”.*

Rezumat. *Societatea industrializată a reușit să aplice arhitecturii și urbanismului eticheta „de consum”, sau „afacere profitabilă”, fără probleme de conștiință. Acest stil de publicitate a condus de mult timp la o manieră de „creație” având consecințe dezastruoase: uriașa poluare urbană din ariile numite „megalopolis-uri”, degradarea zonelor construite și a celor naturale, catastrofe ecologice, destructurare socială, stres și multe forme de boli psihice, rasism și agresivitate, lăcomie și sărăcie, etc. Respectul pentru natură a constituit în trecut și constituie și azi unul din factorii majori care ar putea să diminueze, să vindece și să prevină aceste consecințe dezastruoase. Natura constituie „arma” sau instrumentul științei numită „arhitectură peisageră”. Cercetările estetice au condus oamenii de știință să definească arta grădinilor ca „acțiune estetică asupra naturii”. Ei au observat că istoria și timpul „contopesc cultura cu natura, adaptând aspectele particulare ale naturii la specificul culturii”. Plecând de la aceste idei, am putea redefini știința arhitecturii peisagere drept „cultură devenită conținut al naturii”.*

INTRODUCTION

The nowadays society succeed to apply to the architecture and urbanism sciences the label “for consume”, or “a rewarding affair”, without any consciences problems. This manner of advertising leaded, since logtime, to a manner of “work” which has disastrous consequences: huge urban polluted areas named “megalopolis”, degraded build areas and degraded natural areas, ecological catastrophes, social destructuralization, stress and many form of psychic diseases, racism and aggressivity, greed and poverty, etc.

The respect for the nature constituted in the past and constitutes nowadays one of the major factors which could to diminish, cure and prevent such disastrous consequences. The nature is the “weapon” or the instrument of the science called “landscape architecture”.

Over the time, the natural environment action over the human beings constitutes a stimulant and a challenge. As a reaction to the nature provocation the man builds human settlements, which became, after a long evolution, very complex artificial ecosystems.

From their appearance and their development, until nowadays, every element of the human settlements reveals different kind of attitude. Unfortunately, the human intervention into the natural environment shows and proves the involution of the understanding and respect for the nature. We can tell that just this misunderstanding generated the missing of respect for the nature.

The human attitude versus the nature was different in time and suffers an interesting transformation. At the beginning the nature was respected and worshiped. The pragmatism estranges the mankind from the universal essence of the nature. As a consequences of this pragmatism the man enter into the illusion of his separation from the nature. From this moment we can distinguish three different attitudes versus nature, developed in time and space:

- one attitude tries to continue the respectful and harmonious integration into the nature;
- another attitude tries to speculate the usefulness of the natural elements;
- a third attitude was to look at the nature with hostility and fear; this attitude generated human settlements isolated from the nature.

The history of human settlements reveals these three human attitude through many examples.

In the beginning period, the human settlements were in harmony with the natural elements. Over the time, the relationships between human beings became aggressive. The mankind began to have fear and suspicion, and this reaction explains the creation of defensives walls around the cities in antiquity and medieval times. These walls were also a border towards the surrounding nature - the town was isolated from the nature.

Either at the beginning of human settlements, but also in antiquity and medieval times, the nature penetrates into the body of cities through individual gardens and cultivated terrains. In the Renaissance époque it is obvious the human need to express the nature through very simple landscape architectural works in the public spaces, or through artistic arrangements of the aristocratic gardens. Baroque, classicism and romantics periods increase the attention paid to the natural elements into the urban individual and public space. Finally, in the XIX, XX and XXI centuries, the industrialization process and the pollution phenomenon brought again the nature into the attention of town’s inhabitants. And these are the times of a big fight against the pragmatic attitude which destroy the green urban spaces in order to build huge edifices. It seems that all the destructions created by the pollution until now it’s not enough at all.

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Starting from the moment of antiquity, until the XVIII century, we can say that the urban culture express itself, in space and time, by an “apparent exclusion” of the nature from the build urban space, and that because of the presence of the big defensives walls around the towns. We say “apparent” because this situation hides a real “urban permeability”: it looks like absorption of natural elements by the urban organism, despites the walls.

Until today, despites the effort of our cities to became more and more artificial, Mother Nature permeate, more or less visible, into the urban structures.

Beyond the walls, the urban life of our cities had an important element which influenced over the time inhabitants life - and this element was in the past and still is today the CULTURE.

Related to the walls history there is also an ironical aspect of a kind of their function transformation. In the past of mankind the cities walls had as one function to border and protect towns from the invasion of the “wild surrounding nature”. The irony consists in the fact that nowadays, the function of some walls inside our towns is to protect the nature from the “wild agresivity” of the inhabitants.

If we search carefully, history will help us to discover how the culture, through models and traditions, influenced architecture, urbanism and also landscape architecture. The urban culture can be considered as a reality with two fundamental dimensions, space and time, related through a proper rhythm and structure. The “body” of the cultural history and the sign of the urban evolution are represented by the build environment.

In this context, we can say that the city build step by step, through different ways, a proper “landscape culture”, which was transmitted and enriched from a generation to another. It can be related the urban evolution and the importance of landscape architectural creation into the towns, with the ways and manners of creation of the urban culture and of the cultural models circulation.

Over the time, the human spirit was generally influenced by the manner of intervention in the natural environment, or by the human attitude versus the nature and the landscape architectural creations. As an example, the ways of the town’s evolution and development, or the manner of compositions and details of historical gardens, constitute different human attitudes of intervention in the natural environment. But also, all these things constitute different forms of specific cultural behavior, subject to interpretation as cultural practice or as human sensibility forms. The culture has the quality to be transmissible, means not to be the attribute of a single person but the attribute of each member of a group and finally of the entire collectivity.

There is another quality of the culture which is very important: it can be “learned”. The most accessible ways to assimilate the culture seems to be, over all times, the observation, the listening and the interaction.

These manners of assimilation succeed to give common experiences to different social category of urban inhabitants, experiences which was transmissible. The transmission of the cultural information can be done in the “body” of the cities, means in the urban spaces. These urban spaces, being streets and plaza, constituted proper places for human interaction and assimilation of cultural knowledge and models, through meetings and communication. So, it is obvious that the most efficient way to transmit the cultural models was “oral”, by words.

We can suppose that the information about garden art, about landscape urban culture, was transmits mostly in oral manner, from a civilization to another, or into the same civilization.

An important relationship between the urban culture and the landscape architecture science resides in the landscape arrangements of these urban places. The manner and the style of these arrangements educated many generations of inhabitants, influenced their meetings and helped the communication between different people, belonging to different classes or to different countries, religions or cultures. In this context, now, we can talk about the landscape urban culture.

Here resides an important quality of the landscape urban culture: the power to unify the inhabitants over all differences, the power to give them the sense of collectivity, to make them feel that they are part and parcel of the town body and, beyond that, part and parcel of the same universe.

Analyzing the cultural models in the history, we observe that their circulation, disappearance and return, hide deep meanings and tendencies, bearing deep significances and symbols. At the beginning of XX century, through the “Theory of transcultural archetypes” the scientist Carl Gustav Jung explained that through our genetic heritage we keep deep inside a subtle memory of the all mankind past. Due to this deep memory we can detect and understand all the subtle symbols and significances, cultural or not. This subtle memory gives us “archetypal creative impulses”, which are very spontaneous. Through these impulses the humanity creates, all a long the time, the most famous monuments, paintings, sculptures, scientific discovers or literature masterpiece.

Also, due to these “archetypal creative impulses”, the human beings create beautiful gardens and other landscape architectural arrangements, since the antiquity till nowadays. Thus, we can explain the differences between the specific traits of oriental and occidental gardens.

This theory helps us to understand the deep meanings or symbols of some landscape creation of very ancient times - described by historians, but doesn't exist anymore – spontaneous or conceived, with organic or geometric shapes. These ancient creations could constitute sacred “formula”, initiating and inspiring many generations, until today. These “formula” was taken over and “processed” by many landscape creators. In these creations we can easily discover the “gold rule” elements, a beautiful harmony and equilibrium.

Related with the historic evolution of the landscape architecture science and art, we should approach the details of this important aspect of the urban landscape culture: the power of the culture of being symbolic.

The symbolic character of some masterpieces gardens should be related with the psycho-emotional human side, which is opposite to the pragmatic human tendencies. Thus, in the history of the gardens we find that, over the time, appeared a differentiation of the functions: some gardens were sacred, other was decorative, other was useful, etc.

In his studies *Community and Environment*, about human settlements relation with the environment, the scientist E. Gutkind underlines: “In Occident, the interaction between the man and the environment is perceived in an abstract way, as a relation Ego-Object. In Orient, it is conceived as a real and direct relation Me-You. The occidental man fight against nature, the oriental man adapts himself to the nature and, as consequence, the nature adjusts to the man”.

Another scientist, Cristopher Tunnard, explain in his book *Gardens in the modern landscape* that: “Since centuries...the occidental man imagines himself opposite to the nature. But, in fact, his so call proclaimed individuality is an illusion, because the truth is ... that his identity is not separated from the nature, but together with nature”. These wise observations explain very clear and understandable the differences between Orient and Occident landscape culture, between the oriental and occidental attitude versus the landscape and the different type of interventions in the natural environment, over the time. These attitudes are deep related with the urban landscape culture of each area or region, culture which can exist in different forms - pure or spoiled, or doesn't exist at all. In the case, where the urban landscape culture doesn't exist at all or was spoiled, the creator can transmit and educate the inhabitants, and here resides the powerful and responsible role of the landscape architect.

Despite the fundamental cultural differences, if we compare these two types of gardens – the occidental and the oriental one – it is obvious the fact that the general structure operates with the same morphologic landscape elements. It is obvious also that the composition rules and the manner of processing these elements are different.

In the occidental garden, for example in classicism, we feel strongly from the landscape composition that the human “dry” reason try to opposite to the nature, try to “became master of nature” and submit into geometrical shapes. The trees were cut, the grass was mowed, and the perspectives were controlled till the horizon. The free nature was excluded from the composition, beyond the walls of the gardens and parks.

Looking to the oriental garden, in Japan for example, all the elements of the composition were created related with the human scale and the natural environment. As a result, this garden seems to be an extension of the nature. The human landscape arrangements integrate harmonious into the natural landscape.

Certainly, not all the oriental gardens are conceived in free natural style and here we should underline the archetypal impulse combined with the transmission of the landscape culture over the borders. The gardens of the oriental pearl, Indian Taj Mahal from the XVII century, constitutes the best illustration of the existence of an oriental geometrical royal style.

The study of the cultural models transmission shows that in the areas where a style had a very deep influence, there is possible to find the existence of appreciation and even adoption of other cultural models. For example, the oriental garden seduced the occidental creators in the XVIII century. The first “oriental adoptions” was in England and later, the processed free oriental style became a beautiful original European free style.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the time, the balance between geometrical and free style shows the balance between different kinds of human personalities. In the XV century, the renaissance architect Alberti named the landscape arrangements “invented landscape”, due to the fact that the landscape composition was submit to strict esthetical architectural rules.

The esthetician Roberto Assunto defines better another two landscape cultural aspects: the balance between the “Horizon of Orpheus” and the “Horizon of Prometheus”. The Horizon of Orpheus means the respectful attitude for the Mother Nature which creates an urban landscape harmonious integrated in the natural environment. The Horizon of Prometheus means the pragmatic attitude versus the nature which creates the utilitarian and polluted urban landscape.

Another cultural comparison of Roberto Assunto is related to the “amphionic attitude”, having roots in the antique legend of Amphion which had powers to raise walls and cities only by playing with his lyre. His sacred music was inspired from the power of Mother Nature and gave to these cities harmony and integration with the natural elements.

Despite the fact that the “architectural objects”, means buildings and walls, conquered the urban space of our towns, the landscape architecture has the power, through its creation, to integrate these constructions into the nature. The landscape architecture still has the power to repair, to protect and to rehabilitate the urban space, can create a proper relation between these objects and the surrounding space, can give a new life and a new meaning for the “spatial emptiness” of the “super build” areas.

The esthetic researches of Roberto Assunto guided him to define the art of gardens as “esthetic action over the nature”. He observed that the history and the time “mélange the culture into the nature, adapting some particular aspects of the nature to the style of a specific culture”.

Starting from these ideas, we can redefine the landscape architecture science, as a process where ***“the culture became content of the nature”***.

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