

Nurturing greater support, understanding and stewardship for landscapes of the recent future

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INTRODUCTION

As an introduction to the conference theme and to place the papers within a context, the background and status of the conservation of landscapes of the recent past was introduced. For this purpose a number of observations made during the process of compiling the doctoral research on 'Identifying key problems regarding the conservation of designed landscapes: Landscapes of the recent past' (Haenraets, 2010) were illustrated. From the research it became clear that a number of general trends and developments occurred since the 1980s within the field of the conservation of architecture and landscape architecture of the mid and late Twentieth Century. A brief summary overview of these main trends is given hereafter, roughly following a chronological outline. It must be kept in mind that these headings and summary notes present an overly simplified version of what occurred over these past decades and the reality is of course more layered and complex. More detail about this subject can be found in the full thesis on 'Identifying key problems regarding the conservation of designed landscapes: Landscapes of the recent past'.

A GRADUAL CHANGE OF ATTITUDE TO THE RECENT PAST IN THE 1980S

Changes in listing and legislation

A first trend that was highlighted was the gradual change of attitude towards heritage from the post war period that occurred in the early 1980s. Changes in listing and legislation occurred with the recognition that '... history does not stop...' (Powers, 2008). For instance English Heritage adopted a 'thirty-year rolling rule' for its listing programme (Page, 1992).

New recommendations & listing initiatives

Towards the late 1980s also various new recommendations were put forward, this by independent authors and key conservation organisations. The example was given of the founding of the International Working Party for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement (DOCOMOMO International) in 1988 and the preparation by DOCOMOMO International of the Eindhoven Statement in 1990 (Docomomo International, 1990). These organisations also initiated various new efforts towards documenting and identification of key heritage from this era. This can be illustrated with the Eindhoven Statement DOCOMOMO, which set out its main mission under six themes:

1. Bring the significance of the modern movement to the attention of the public, the authorities, the

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professions and the educational community concerned with the built environment.

2. Identify and promote recording of works of the modern movement, including a register, drawings, photographs, archives and other documents.
3. Foster the development of appropriate techniques and methods of conservation and disseminate this knowledge throughout the professions.
4. Oppose destruction and disfigurement of significant works of the modern movement.
5. Identify and attract funding for documentation and conservation.
6. Explore and develop the knowledge of the modern movement.

Other mentioned initiatives include the Council of Europe's Recommendation on the Protection of the Twentieth-Century Architectural Heritage (Council of Europe, 1995), and the ICOMOS General Recommendations on the Protection of Twentieth Century Heritage (ICOMOS, 1995).

Increasing awareness

Within this context some first initiatives were also undertaken to increase awareness amongst the wider public. An example given

was the exhibition by English Heritage on 'The Age of Optimism: Post-war Architecture in England 1945-70' (Saint, 1994), and the 1996 brochures on 'Something Worth Keeping? Post War Architecture in England' (Harwood, 1996). (Figure 1), A conclusion was that by 1995 a whole series of initiatives had been undertaken with an emphasis on post war architecture, but that none of these activities and resources had a special focus on landscapes (Figure 2).

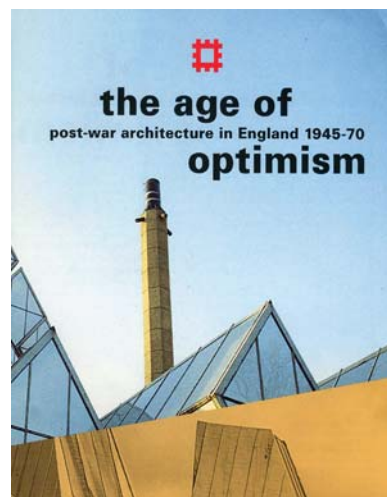


Fig. 1: The English Heritage exhibition on 'The Age of Optimism: Post-war Architecture in England 1945-70' with on the poster cover the Leicester University Engineering Building by Stirling and Gowan (1953-63) and the Elephant and Rhinoceros Pavilion at London Zoo, by Casson, Condor and Partners (1962-65) (Saint, 1994).



Fig. 2: Cover of the English Heritage brochure of 1996 on 'Something Worth Keeping? Post War Architecture in England'. Illustrating the Severn Bridge, Avon, by Freeman, Fox and Partners (1961-66), the Epidaurus, St Ives, Cornwall, by Barbara Hepworth (1961), and Crescent House, Golden Lane Estate, City of London, by Chamberlain, Powell and Bon (1958-61) (Harwood, 1996).

INITIAL INITIATIVES ON LANDSCAPES OF THE RECENT PAST SINCE 1995

Key initiatives in the United States

It took until the 1990s for the first significant literature and initiatives on the subject of landscapes of the recent past to emerge. The first key initiatives occurred outside the United Kingdom. In 1995 several activities took place in the United States on landscape architecture of the recent past, including the 'Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture Conference' in Wave Hill, New York in 1995. Charles Birnbaum formulated at the conference some of the first overarching recommendations for improvements in the protection of modern landscapes (Birnbaum, 1999). ctions by DOCOMOMO

New international landscape initiatives around the mid-1990s occurred within the context of DOCOMOMO. While the

occasional paper on landscapes was delivered at the DOCOMOMO bi-annual international conferences and the founding of an International Specialist Committee on Gardens and Landscapes (Panzini, 1996). The Committee later became the Specialist Committee on Urbanism and Landscapes.

A slow start in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, very little efforts were noted in the mid 1990s on the subject of the protection of recent landscapes. For instance, by 1997 the English Heritage Post-War Listing Steering Group for buildings suggested that they would be available to liaise with the Gardens Register Team at English Heritage on designations of post war gardens and landscapes (Harwood, 1997). A first Twentieth Century conference in the United Kingdom on the theory of post war gardens and landscapes took place in March 1998 at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and was attended by about 200 delegates. The Twentieth Century Society and the Garden History Society collaborated to organise this event, with proceedings published in 2000 in the Garden History Journal (Woudstra and Ratti, 2000)(Figure 3).

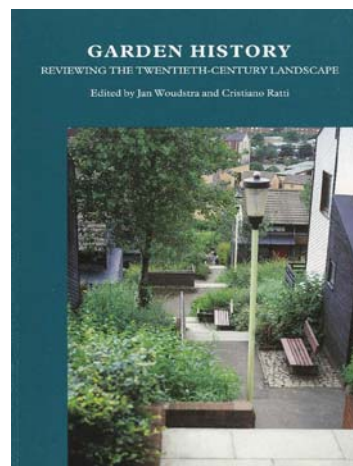


Fig. 3: Papers of the first Twentieth Century conference in the United Kingdom in the Garden History Journal, with the pedestrian walkways at Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne (Woudstra and Ratti, 2000).

EMPHASIS ON MATERIAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF BUILDINGS OF THE RECENT PAST

In the same period from 1995 to 2000 several authors and events had started to address the building related questions about the material and technological challenges of recent past heritage. Again a number of important initiatives occurred in the United States. The National Park Service published by 1993 a special themed journal on the recent past (Shiffer, 1993). By 1995 a book by Thomas Jester of the National Park Service became ‘...the first in-depth survey of important construction materials used since 1900...’ (Jester, 1995). The Preserving the Recent Past conferences in the United States from 1995 (Slaton et. al., 1995) and 2000 (Slaton and Foulks, 2000) also had a key focus on technologies. In the United Kingdom English Heritage held a ‘Modern Matters’ conference (English Heritage, 1995), and the ‘Preserving post-war heritage’ conference around the same time (English Heritage, 1998). Again most of these initiatives focussed on architectural challenges and were not developed from a designed landscapes perspective.

INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES ON LANDSCAPES OF THE RECENT PAST SINCE 2000

In 2000 a period of heightened activity commenced with the mentioned follow-up conference on Preserving the Recent Past and the preparation of the ICOMOS Montreal Action Plan in 2001 (Bumbaru, 2001). The second Preserving Modern

Landscape Architecture Conference also took place in 2002 (Birnbaum et. al., 2004). Key areas for action still included the identification of significant structures, their documentation and evaluation, the understanding of their aesthetics and technology, and the development of methods for their repair and conservation. The Council of Europe had launched in 1995 its ‘Recommendation on the integrated conservation of cultural landscape areas as part of landscape policies’ (Council of Europe, 1995). More important was that the Council launched the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000). State parties sign up to the Convention’s five specific measures which mirror many of the other recommendations including awareness raising, training and education, identification and assessment, landscape quality objectives, and implementation. Most importantly the European Landscape Convention specifically states that it does not just apply to remarkable landscapes but also to ‘...ordinary everyday landscapes and blighted areas...’ (Council of Europe, 2000). Therefore it also applies to those of the recent past. Similarly the Montreal Action Plan of ICOMOS calls for an understanding of the full diversity of Twentieth Century heritage and all of the issues related to its recognition and conservation, and a promotion of this heritage (Bumbaru, 2001). Of importance was also the 2002 follow-up conference on the Preservation of Modern Landscape Architecture and the Wave Hill Charter that was agreed at the event, and became the first charter on the Preservation of Modern Landscape Architecture (Birnbaum et. al., 2004)(Figure 4).

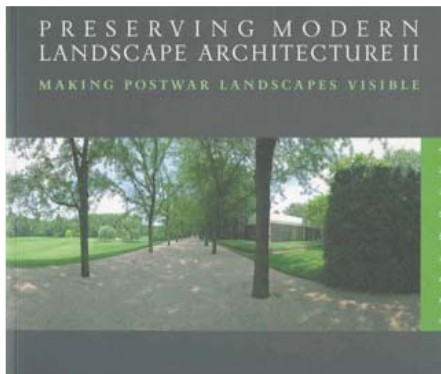


Fig. 4: Proceedings of the Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture Conference II, 2002, on the theme of Making Postwar Landscapes Visible, showing the Miller Garden, Columbus, Indiana, designed by Dan Kiley in 1955 (Birnbaum et al., 2004).

The charter is very brief and specifically applicable to the United States, but nevertheless remains of importance, as it is to date still the only specific charter on landscape architecture of this period.

Significant for the landscape context was also that Charles Birnbaum took in 1998, in the wake of the Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture conferences, the initiative to set up the Cultural Landscape Foundation (2008) in the United States.

INCREASED FOCUS ON LANDSCAPES OF THE RECENT PAST IN THE UNITED KINGDOM SINCE 2000

The proposed relocation of Gibberd's Water Gardens at Harlow New Town in 2001 became a watershed in the United Kingdom in its recognition of the importance of conservation of landscapes of the recent past (English Heritage, 2007) (Figure 5). The case of the Water Gardens contributed to increased attention paid by several organisations



Fig. 5: Sir Frederick Gibberd's Water Gardens at Harlow New Town in 2006 after relocation for retail development (Author's photograph, 2006).

to the subject and meant that the theme stayed for several years prominently on the English Heritage agenda with new initiatives such as a post-1945 landscapes typology (Duterloo-Morgan, 2002) and some theme studies being developed (English Heritage, 2003). The case of the Water Gardens is not unique and many other examples of damaged or demolished sites can be found internationally. For example, the Cultural Landscape Foundation's (2008) online initiative 'Landslides - Landscapes at Risk' illustrates several cases. Other initiatives in the United Kingdom worth mentioning include the work towards establishing a more specific Urban Register by the DOCOMOMO Scottish National Group (Haenraets, 2003). The Garden History Society's (2003) in the meantime started an online collaborative research effort on post war Gardens. The Landscape Design Trust (2008) also started to publish a series of monographs on eminent practitioners in landscape architecture. In general more publications on landscape design from the

recent past came out but most of these still looked at iconic sites and designers, rather than at the conservation of such sites.

THE MOMENTUM STAGNATES AND THE CONTINUING DESTRUCTION AND DISFIGUREMENT OF SIGNIFICANT SITES

By about 2002 the interest in, and awareness of modern landscape architecture and its preservation appeared to have increased much, but there remained much work to do and a feeling surfaced that the momentum stagnated. Important is also that by 2003 still only fourteen of the 1450 sites on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens were post war sites with Gibberd's Water Gardens being de-listed (Conway, 2003).

In reality, serious threats to significant sites from the recent past remain an ongoing concern. Impacts and threats can take numerous shapes, and a simplified way to look at some examples is by grouping cases in the following three general levels of impacts:

- Physical neglect and poor maintenance of sites
- Inappropriate disfigurements of sites
- Destruction of sites

CONCLUSION

Of importance is to acknowledge that existing conservation methodologies are available and that several recommendations have been prepared by key organisations to

point out the need to follow existing methods and implement proper conservation and management of significant sites of the recent past. Similarly it is clear that good and bad practices of conservation can be found. Progress has been made since the 1980s, but it remains obvious that conservation of landscapes of the recent past must improve and that more actions and efforts to achieve this are required. The lack of recognition for the recent past remains an underlying threat to the safeguarding of these landscapes.

A conclusion from the examples given is also that if even at these better-known and significant sites worrying conservation occurs, than this must mean that for lesser-known sites conservation will potentially be even worse or more problematic.

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