

Thursday 13 March 2014 - Session Two - Paper Four

### 'Recognition and Documentation of Modern Movement Landscapes in Asia'

by Jan Haenraets, PhD (Landscape Architect and Heritage Specialist, Atelier Anonymous, Vancouver)

#### ABSTRACT

The paper reflects on landscapes of the modern movement and their documentation, inventorisation and recognition, given that the theme for next year's DOCOMOMO International conference in Seoul in 2014 is 'Expansion and Conflict', with 'Landscapes and Urbanism' and 'Conservation' being important sub-themes. During the rapid expansion in the twentieth century in Asia, conflict not only occurred between new imported methods and local traditions, but also between the expansion of our cities and local landscape. With at present many efforts occurring in Asia to address the urban development shortcomings, the significance of documenting and inventorisation, and understanding the values of the modern movement landscapes and their possible contributions towards increasing the lifestyle quality is needed. Examples from Korea that will be given include the Cheonggyecheon River rehabilitation and the creation of Seonyudo Park, both located in Seoul.

Designed landscapes are a significant part of the modern movement but nevertheless receive limited attention, this not only in ongoing efforts to improve cities' lifestyle quality, but also within activities by DOCOMOMO International and its national working groups. The paper highlights the importance of such landscapes and makes suggestions for actions that could be undertaken by DOCOMOMO, to help increase the understanding and awareness in Asia of the values of these landscapes. A suggestion that is highlighted is systematic identification and the preparation of inventories of modern movement landscapes in Asia.

#### RECOGNISING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ASIAN MODERN MOVEMENT LANDSCAPES

The importance of safeguarding significant heritage of the recent past, including of the modern movement, within the spirit of recognized international conservation principles has in recent decades slowly gained attention and acceptance. DOCOMOMO International and its national working groups have made a major contribution towards this evolution. Similarly, at first glance it appears that also designed landscapes from the recent past have gained increased recognition as significant heritage. This, at least, is the impression one gets when seeing for instance the new books that started to become available on the subject of modern movement gardens, parks and other designed landscapes, and their designers. Similar publications became available in Asia and many popular books have been translated and re-published for the Asian markets.

Nevertheless we see that many significant modern movement and recent past designed landscapes are being demolished, are condemned or endangered. More in-depth investigations show that in general landscapes of the recent past have gained much less attention than architecture of this era, and similarly, also within DOCOMOMO's activities the subject of landscapes continues to receive limited attention and appears much overlooked [2]. The DOCOMOMO International Specialist Committee on Urbanism and Landscape (ISC/U+L) modestly attempts to raise the profile of landscapes within DOCOMOMO, but with limited landscape specialists actively engaged in DOCOMOMO, such efforts continue to stutter.

A well-known example in the United Kingdom of a designed landscape of the recent past, which was damaged, has been Sir Frederick Gibberd's Water Gardens in Harlow New Town (Figure 1). It received much attention as the Gardens were dismantled and relocated even though many conservation agencies and charities campaigned against this, and while the site featured on English Heritage's Register of Historic Gardens and Parks of Interest in England [3]. Similar cases of damaged or destroyed sites can be found across the world, including in Asia.

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Figure 1. The relocated Water Gardens, Harlow New Town. Image courtesy of Jan Haenraets, 2006.

#### THE ROLE OF MODERN MOVEMENT LANDSCAPES TOWARDS IMPROVING LIFESTYLE QUALITY IN ASIAN CITIES

Under the theme of 'Expansion and Conflict' the DOCOMOMO International Conference in Seoul in 2014 will explore how modernism '...has extended and taken root in various cultures and generations as well as how there has been conflict, if any, during this process...' [1]. The programme for the 2014 International Conference also includes the sub-themes of 'Landscape and Urbanism' and 'Conservation', and it is therefore hoped that the conference can make a contribution towards the recognition of landscapes in DOCOMOMO and beyond. It also should not be forgotten that DOCOMOMO stands for DOcumentation and COnservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods. Landscapes and their documentation and inventorisation should therefore ideally be an integral part of DOCOMOMO's international activities, including within the Asian national working groups' activities.

The sub-theme of 'Landscape and Urbanism' is therefore of particular relevance within the overarching theme of 'Expansion and Conflict' at the 2014 conference in Seoul. The 2014 conference bid documentation clarified this as follows:

'...As the fires of wars in the first half of the twentieth century create urban tabulae rasae all over Asia, reconstruction and planning underwent

three phases. The first phase of the city's rebirth began with the basic needs of housing, education and medical facilities. The second phase continued with projects that aimed to connect: infrastructure and communication technology. These two phases were the most profound in their foreign influence, support and design. In the third and most current phase, a policy to improve the citizens' lifestyle quality sparked the embedment of cultural and civic icons within a generous policy of public space and green parks....' [4].

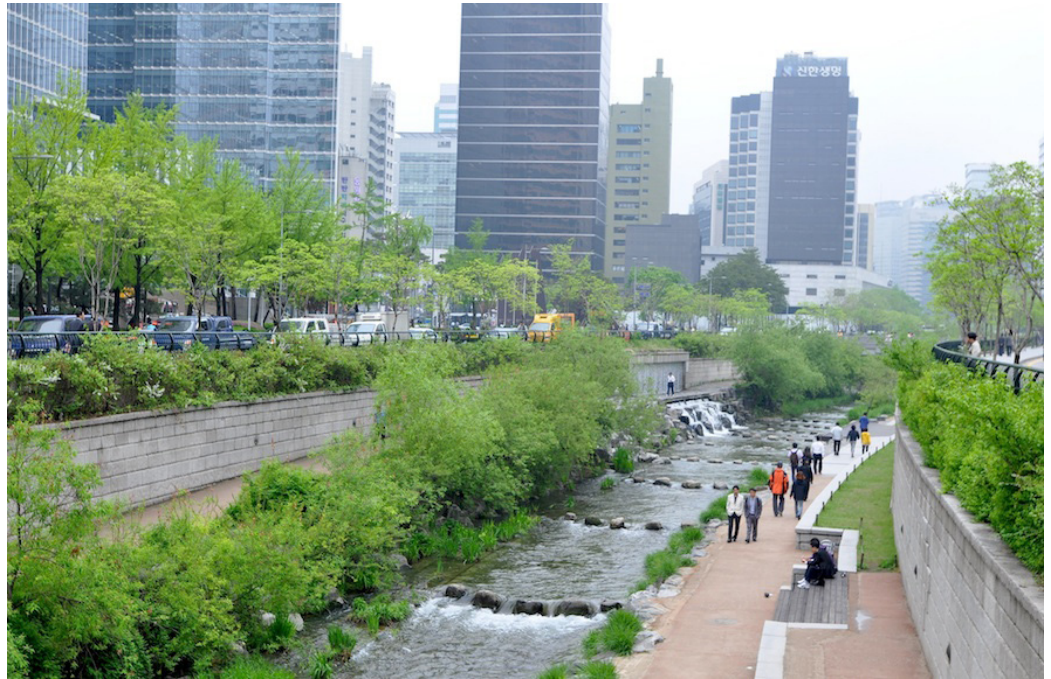
The first two phases often resulted in densely built urban settlements and neighbourhoods with qualitative public space lacking or threatened. It could be said that during the rapid expansion in the twentieth century in Asia, conflict not only occurred between newly imported methods and local traditions, but high levels of conflict also occurred between the expansion of the cities and the local landscape. During the third phase, which could be defined as still ongoing, efforts have started to rectify such urban development shortcomings and to improve lifestyle quality in cities, with public space and green parks playing a key role. Two good examples of such projects can be found in Seoul and are the restoration (by 2005) of Cheonggyecheon River (Figure 2) in the centre of the city, which had been covered in stages and was built over by a freeway by 1971; and secondly, the creation (by 2002) of Seonyudo Park (Figure 3) on Seonyudo

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Figure 2. The Cheonggyecheon River after restoration. Image courtesy of Jan Haenraets, 2013.



Island in the Han River, at a decommissioned sewage water treatment plant that had been constructed in 1978. This new ecological park, the first in Korea, by the Seoahn Total Landscape firm illustrates how recent past heritage can be incorporated into contemporary and sustainable urban space.

There is however a high risk that during the ongoing rapid developments of our urban areas, and even in the current efforts '...to improve the citizens' lifestyle quality...' and develop '...a generous policy of public space and green parks....' [5], the important landscape heritage from the modern movement will get damaged or even lost all together. Similar challenges exist across the world, or as Richard Longstreth said within the context of the United States: '...landscapes of the recent past are, too often, the last considered and the most threatened. As nearly the last things we have done, they are often the first things we believe must be done again....' [6]. With this in mind the Asian DOCOMOMO national working groups can make a major contribution towards enabling the safeguarding and incorporation of the significant landscapes of the modern movement during these 'third phase' urban improvement processes.

However, a questions that arises from this is which exemplary landscapes were developed during the modern movement, or which landscapes can be seen as the most important and successful designs from this era, or have most successfully managed to

retain parts of the local landscape and genius loci during this period of expansion. A further question that should be answered through new research, documentation and inventory work is which of these landscapes have survived and what state they are now in. Documentation and inventorisation initiatives can therefore make significant contributions towards understanding the role of landscapes in the modern movement in Asia and how expansion affected the local landscape and created the above-mentioned instances of conflict. Without clearly knowing which landscape sites are significant, protection and conservation of these landscapes remains difficult.

The sub-themes of 'Landscape and Urbanism' and 'Conservation' at the International conference in 2014 can be seen as a platform to explore these challenges and spark debate and dialogue. The conference bid documentation described the challenge of conservation as follows:

'... The rapidly changing city is the stage for repeated collisions between societal and economic desires and historically-valued ideologies. It is with this context of conflict that the heritage of the modern movement must now expand. Unfortunately, changing social and economic demands lead to frequent instances when the value of preserving a modern building is not recognized....' [7].

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Figure 3. The awarded Seonyudo Park in Seoul. Image courtesy of Jan Haenraets, 2013.

The use of 'the value of preserving buildings' in the above quote is again an example of how DOCOMOMO is still perceived, even by many of its members, as a buildings-focussed organisation. It illustrates how too often landscapes overlooked, while as mentioned, DOCOMOMO presents itself as an organisation for 'buildings, sites and neighbourhoods'. It is therefore hoped that the conference participants will grab the opportunity to interpret the theme of 'Expansion and Conflict' and the sub-themes in a wider context inclusive of designed landscapes.

#### POTENTIAL LANDSCAPE ACTION BY ASIAN DOCOMOMO NATIONAL WORKING GROUPS

To illustrate potential actions that could be undertaken by the Asian DOCOMOMO national working groups, it is useful to take a look at the suggestions by the ISC/U+L. Several recommendations for activities that can contribute towards enhancing documentation, inventorisation, protection and increasing awareness of significant designed landscapes from the modern movement, and to improve DOCOMOMO's own focus on landscapes, have been developed by the ISC/U+L. At the 2012 DOCOMOMO International Conference in Espoo, Finland, a proposal for a DOCOMOMO Landscape Action Plan was tabled [8], which recommended that DOCOMOMO should undertake more initiatives towards the documentation, inventorisation and conservation of landscape sites.

A DOCOMOMO-wide implementation of this Landscape Action Plan has not yet occurred, but nevertheless the recommendations could already inspire initiatives for the Asian national working groups. Examples of such initiatives include:

1. Asian national working groups could prepare systematic identification, documentation and inventories of landscape sites, including surveys and evaluation of sites, and add them to their National Registers. Publications can also be developed that highlight significant landscape sites, similar to the DOCOMOMO book from 2000 with selections from the DOCOMOMO Registers [9].
2. Technology Dossiers about landscape planting, soft and hard landscaping materials used in Asian landscapes of the modern movement can be prepared to improve the understanding of technological and material challenges for conservation.
3. Asian DOCOMOMO working parties can be more active as watchdogs and have at risk lists for landscapes of the recent past to help raise awareness and to encourage in Asia the use of current and established conservation and documentation standards, methods and principles. It should not be forgotten that general conservation methods and principles are also applicable to landscapes of the modern movement and are

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essential to avoid inappropriate treatments of significant sites.

4. Asian DOCOMOMO national working groups should aim to get more landscape experts involved in their activities and raise membership of landscape specialists. Objectives of Asian working groups should be to also organise landscape related initiatives such as lectures, workshops, site visits, landscape design competitions and awards. The seminar by ISC/U+L in April 2011 at the Edinburgh College of Art on 'Landscapes of the Future' is an example that could inspire similar initiative in Asia [10].
5. Asian DOCOMOMO working groups should also encourage local organisations and governmental bodies to take up their responsibilities to safeguard, document and inventorize significant landscapes from the modern movement. To achieve such influence, Asian DOCOMOMO working parties should first of all aim to set the example within their own activities.

#### PREPARING SYSTEMATIC IDENTIFICATION, DOCUMENTATION AND INVENTORIES OF LANDSCAPE SITES

As mentioned above, in order to incorporate landscapes of the modern movement into the process of improving the quality of life in Asian cities, there is an urgent need to enhance the understanding of what sites exist and their values. To achieve this, the preparation of systematic identification, documentation and inventories of landscape sites from the modern movement and wider recent past must take place. As we know, inventories are essential in assisting us with our understanding of what sites exist, what their authenticity status and value is and what is worthy of safeguarding and conserving. In addition, many inventories fulfil a role in the legal protection of sites. Therefore, the status of inventory work can give an idea of other documentation and conservation work needs to be done, including through the work of DOCOMOMO's working groups in Asia.

As part of his doctoral thesis, the author studied international examples of inventory work and the status of such initiatives [11]. The studied samples illustrate progress and challenges in those countries, and can give a clearer idea about the challenges that

lay ahead for inventory work for landscapes of the recent past in Asia. Some findings from that research will briefly be illustrated next, including DOCOMOMO's inventorisation efforts.

The DOCOMOMO Eindhoven Statement from 1990 is an early example of a recommendation that set out goals to '...identify and promote the recording of the works of the modern movement, including a register, drawings, photographs, archives and other documents...' [12]. By 2008 the DOCOMOMO International Selection included about 800 sites, which were mainly buildings [13]. Similarly the DOCOMOMO United Kingdom Register had 443 sites on its post war list in 2008, also being mostly buildings. The Register of the DOCOMOMO Scottish National Group also has mainly buildings, but members of the Scottish working groups started together with the ISC/U+L a DOCOMOMO pilot project for Urban Register fiches, which resulted by 2008 in eighty-eight fiches [14]. However, none of the fiches were specifically for landscapes and were based on buildings or clusters of buildings. The Asian DOCOMOMO national working groups have also some registers but it appears that similar trends can be noted. Landscapes seem hardly included and information is not easily available to know which of the registered sites include significant modernist landscaping elements.

DOCOMOMO's Registers also helped to inform the inclusion of heritage of the recent past in the UNESCO World Heritage List. A list of one hundred buildings and sites was submitted to ICOMOS as part of the advisory report on the Modern Movement and the World Heritage List [15]. The few modernist sites that since have received UNESCO status are again mainly buildings or urban identities, with the occasional exception of a modern movement landscape, such as Skogskyrkogården in Stockholm, or the landscaping elements that are part of sites such as the Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas, Venezuela, or the capital city Brasilia, in Brazil [16].

If we look at various examples of inventories by governmental bodies in the United Kingdom and the United States similar trends can be observed. The Register of Historic Places by the Department of the Interior in the United States included 88,887 sites by 2008, with about 2500 sites that had been listed under Criteria G for evaluating and nominating properties that achieved significance within the past

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fifty years [17]. It is however not clear how many sites are landscapes of the modern movement, but numbers appear again low. The Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of the Scottish government included 386 sites by 2007 [18], of which only five sites were post-1945 creations or had key features from that period, which is only 1,30% of the sites. The Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest by English Heritage included by August 2008 about 1597 sites, of which fourteen post-1945 sites, or only about 0,9% of all Register sites [19]. However, twentieth century heritage was in recent years identified as one of the priorities in English Heritage's National Heritage Protection Plan (NHPP). As a result the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest achieved positive progress with the identification of recent past sites. The Register now includes 50 notable designed landscapes from the 1945 to 1980 period, or 3% of all Register entries. In addition, some sites are also listed rather than registered by English Heritage and some late twentieth century designed landscapes are part of conservation areas [20]. While these examples illustrate that inventorisation work for landscapes of the modern movement has progressed slow, the work by English Heritage should be seen as an example that can inspire DOCOMOMO and its Asian working groups to improve their efforts.

#### END NOTE

In conclusion it is important to reiterate that DOCOMOMO has over the years accomplished remarkable achievements and continues to play a key role in campaigning for the recognition and safeguarding of modern movement sites. DOCOMOMO should nevertheless not stand still and must acknowledge gaps in its activities, such as in relation to the documentation, inventorisation and conservation of landscape sites. The sub-theme of 'Landscape and Urbanism' and 'Conservation' are therefore most important within the aims of the DOCOMOMO 2014 conference on 'Expansion and Conflict'. There is an opportunity at the conference and for the Asian DOCOMOMO national working groups to embrace the importance of landscapes and to develop activities that incorporate the subject of landscapes of the modern movement. By doing so, it is hoped that the ongoing urban development phases in Asia towards improving cities' lifestyle quality through improved public space and green parks can benefit from the safeguarding and

incorporation of significant landscape heritage of the modern movement.

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#### EDITORIAL NOTE:

This paper was adapted and republished for the Proceedings of the Conference on Inventorisation of Modern Heritage: Urbanism and Landscape, 13 March 2014, DOCOMOMO International and Edinburgh College of Art (Edinburgh). The text was adapted from the paper by Jan Haenraets on 'Increasing Recognition of Modern Movement Landscapes in Asia and their role in Asian Cities' Lifestyle Quality', Proceedings of the International Conference for DOCOMOMO Korea's 10th Anniversary, Expansion & Conflict: Modern in Asia, Seoul Museum of History, Seoul, South Korea, 10 June 2013, DOCOMOMO Korea (Seoul): 96-103.

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## INVENTORISATION OF MODERN HERITAGE: URBANISM AND LANDSCAPE

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