The Emergence of Collective Dreams
An exploration of community development based collaborative landscape design

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This paper explores the nature of a landscape design and planning process that could ensure the resilience and sustainability of suburban public space, and presents an argument that:

- public landscapes must be seen as multi-dimensional complex systems emerging from the coevolution of different players in the landscape community with the dynamics of their wider ecosystem; and
- the resilience of these spaces is dependent on collaborative decision-making, the engagement and empowerment of the local community, and an on-going responsive interaction with the site.

This approach is referred to as 'deep landscape design' and is expanded through the presentation of a number of guiding principles, which it is hoped will support designers, council staff and community leaders to explore it further. These guiding principles describe a facilitated, nested and iterative theory of design in which:

- the physical, ecological and cultural dimensions of landscape can be integrated holistically;
- multiple engagement methods are established enabling the inclusion of a large range of community partners; and
- those engaged in the design of the space are able to reflect on the impacts of their decisions and make changes accordingly.

The paper suggests that through the inclusion of deep design principles, small projects with a specific focus can initiate a process of increasing community knowledge, skill, and ownership in the design and maintenance of landscapes. A process that is necessary for the sustainability and resilience of public spaces.

Keywords: Landscape design, collaborative process, sustainability, resilience
In our rapidly developing world human manipulation of the landscape is occurring faster and at a larger scale than ever before (Resilience Alliance 2010, 4), with serious consequences including increased habitat fragmentation, resource decline, and social and cultural upheaval. The present paper argues that if the planning, design, and maintenance of suburban and urban landscapes is to support both healthy ecological systems and resilient liveable communities, it must occur in a fashion that honours underlying ecological and social processes equally, and strengthens the relationships between communities and their local landscapes. This paper also seeks to explore what this could look like in practice.

The key to understanding such a methodology is the understanding that when we are dealing with living systems they must be engaged with as “a process, not as a catalogue of fixed structures”. Bloch (1984,1). This process which we call landscape does not just include the dynamics of the geological, hydrological and biological realms, but also includes all the artifacts and phenomena of human society, culture and spirituality; physical and non-physical. Human beings are animals, which are as much a part of the human ecosystem as any other organism; as consciousness and mental faculties are part of being human, they are also part of the ecosystem. As ecosystems evolve through the interaction of the countless behaviours and qualities of the organisms of which they are composed, it follows that human inhabited landscapes evolve through the interaction of their biophysical aspects with the behaviours, systems and structures generated by human consciousness, thought and emotion.

Taking this approach, Buchecker et al. (2003, 30) have argued that the static view of society in which landscape is seen as a resource (to be either exploited or protected) is outdated and suggest instead a dynamic model of society-landscape interaction. Their co-development view of landscape and society is based on a more dialectical approach in which the landscape, society and individuals are seen to coevolve through on-going interaction.

The work of the Resilience Alliance (2010, 4–10) defines landscapes as complex "social-ecological systems" and describes their coevolution as a “panarchy” of nested sub-systems which, while possessing their own internal dynamics or “adaptive cycles”, also influence the states and dynamics of the systems ‘above’ and ‘below’ them. Each subsystem of the panarchy can be defined by social-ecological boundaries that are both spatial and temporal, but will not be seen in their full context unless “cross-scale system interactions” are also considered. Managing a social-ecological system thus “requires an understanding if what is happening at multiple scales” (Resilience Alliance 2010, 8).

The theory of Holistic Landscape Ecology also reflects this view and describes landscape as a “single interactive system in which each species adapts to and affects others in a constant process of community evolution” (Naveh, 2000, 16). Borrowing from the Santiago Theory of Cognition of Maturana and Varela (1992, 75), this intimate, interconnected relationship between people and the wider landscape is referred to as “structural-coupling” (Naveh, 2000, 7-26).

This definition of landscape, in which the subjective, social, cultural aspects of human existence are seen to be interconnected with the biosphere and geosphere in one holistic co-evolving system, and where the subjective human being is a part of the natural landscape from which it has emerged, rather than at its center, could be described as a ‘deep ecology’ perspective. The term 'deep ecology' was first used in 1972 by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (Katz et al. 2000, xi) and can be
contrasted against the dualistic 'shallow ecology' perspective in which the workings of the human mind are seen as separate from the workings of nature. Katz et al. (2000, xiii) describe the deep ecology perspective of landscape as “ecocentric”:

“Ecocentrism is the idea that the ecosphere and ecological systems are the focus of value. It is a holistic view of value, for entire systems are thought to be valuable, rather than individual humans or individual natural entities (such as animals).”

In order to deal with landscapes from an ecocentric or 'deep ecological' perspective and adequately deal with the ecological and social realities of landscape discussed above, the present paper argues that design, planning and maintenance methodologies must treat landscapes as complex, multi-layered systems with geological, biological and cultural dimensions. They must be seen to be dynamic and co-evolving at multiple scales; living communities rather than static forms.

As discussed above, in the present understanding of landscape, human action, thought and emotion are part of the landscape. It then follows that the degree to which these actions, thoughts and emotions support the dynamics of coevolution, or continued structural-coupling can be seen to be a key sustainability/ecosystem health indicator. Sustainable design cannot refer only to the snap-shot integration of the physical aspects of human life into the landscape (in terms of water and energy conservation and waste reduction for example). It must also include the degree to which these subjective, behavioural, social, cultural and spiritual aspects are structurally-coupled to the rest of the landscape.

As a meeting point of human constructions and the rest of ecosystem, a ‘ecocentrically’ resilient landscape is then one in which the intrinsic value and self-organising properties of nature are respected, allowed to flourish and supported to coevolve in harmony with the continuing development of human spirituality, culture and society.

A design and planning process that would allow such coevolution to occur is termed in the present argument as 'deep landscape design'. In such a model the ‘re-coupling’ of the on-going design of a space to its 'wild ecology', or ensuring on-going responsiveness in the design process and governance, is more significant than the plants, materials or finishes that are specified in an initial design programme. Equally important is a re-engagement, or re-coupling of the inner and outer life of the landscape’s community with the coevolution of the landscape to ensure a sense of place and ownership. This could also be described as 'ecological community restoration'. This is not the attempted restoration of a pre-human environment, but the creation of a coevolving recombinant ecosystem through the protection and nurturing of the ecological dynamics of the wild system and a restoration of the structural-coupling between the local community and that wild system. The degree to which the community is actively and effectively involved in the development and maintenance (or coevolution) of this system will be a key measure of its resilience.

This is a process in which supporting resident communities to deepen their understanding of, sensitivity towards and interaction with their bio-regional landscape is given as much importance as the initial minimisation of material eco-toxicity and the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services. This could be by way of, for example, increased ecological and geographical education,
support for active community landscape stewardship and increased support for creative expression in, about, and for local landscapes.

So what could deep landscape design look like in practice?

**Deep landscape design is collaborative**

As landscapes are complex systems, the flow on effects of change are ultimately unpredictable, and can take place over both short and long timescales. Taking this into account, complexity theory, as explored by the Resilience Alliance (2010) and Inspiring Communities (2010), therefore suggest that multiple viewpoints are necessary in order to ensure that any changes are made with as broad an understanding of the landscape system as possible. As landscapes develop through an ongoing interaction between society and their environment (Kallis 2007; Naveh and Lieberman 1994; Naveh 2000), the long-term health and resilience of a public landscape, and the ease with which it can be maintained, are inseparable from the attitudes and behaviours of the community who interact with it. So while this collaborative approach certainly includes the engagement of multiple expert opinions, and design or architectural experience, it must also include the on-going education and empowerment of the landscape community, the residents of the area. In order to empower and enable involvement for a wide range of individuals, effective collaboration requires a community development based approach. Community development principles such as those presented by Inspiring Communities (2010), Ife (2002) and Ricketts (2008) suggest that this approach should involve: developing a process that is accessible and inclusive, supporting the community to identify their own needs for the space, nurturing existing relationships with the landscape, attempting to break down unsupportive power structures, and in the terms used by Girard and Stark (2007), de-hierarchise decision making. In her work on communicative collaborative planning, Healy (1992, 9) has suggested that such a de-hierarchisation must include an acknowledgement of the “biases conveyed in various forms of communication” and efforts to ensure that scientific rationalisation is not automatically given higher status than other forms of knowing and communicating.

A key issue in aiming for collaboration is that of adequate representation, or how many participants constitute ‘community buy-in’. It can also be the case that strongly opinionated and vocal community members take part in the process, while shyer or more alienated community members do not. To ensure this collaboration process is inclusive and accessible, and thus to enable as many people as possible to participate in the design process, it is important to have a wide variety of engagement methods and to ensure that these different methods provide adequate support (O’Shaughnessy 2010) and shelter (Buchecker et al. 2003). Efforts must also be taken to ensure there are engagements that support the inclusion of often marginalised or alienated groups (whomever they may be in a given landscape community). Lunch time or evening meetings will each only attract a certain demographic of the community, while other individuals or groups may be better reached through, for example, social media, or through facilitated engagements at one of their own meetings. Targeted, personal communication can also be useful. This model of collaboration requires engaging different members of the community in the way most suited to them; supporting them to deepen their relationship with the landscape, and participate in its future. The literature on insurgent planning reminds us that for such a process to be genuinely collaborative and empowering for the wider community (rather than simply tokenistic efforts which in fact serve to further reinforce power structures) it is essential that engagement are not always by way of “sanctioned
spaces of invited citizenship [sic]” (Miraftab 2009, 41). As much as possible individuals and groups must be allowed to suggest and generate their own ways of engaging with the space and its design, and the efforts and passions of individuals and groups already working (or playing) in the area must be respected and nurtured.

To ensure that the different parties involved see the larger context within which they are participating, it is necessary to make genuine efforts to build bridges between different value systems and ways of knowing. Effective ways can then be sought to bring together different viewpoints, needs and visions into a holistic, multi-dimensional picture of the landscape from which decisions can be made. Healy (1993, 236) describes this process as the challenge of finding ways to acknowledge different ways of “experiencing and understanding while seeking to ‘make sense together’.”

Collaborative landscape design does not necessitate everybody involved in the process needing to be part of every decision being made, or that the knowledge and experience of designers, architects or other experts, whether professional or otherwise, is neglected. What is necessary is the transformation of a process solely directed by experts (Buchy and Hoverman 2000), who cannot be expected to possess all the solutions to the landscape issues (Ricketts 2008), into one in which everybody is valued as an integral part of the landscape, is encouraged towards active citizenship, and has the opportunity to engage genuinely in decisions that affect them. This is a process that Bucheker et al. (2003) have suggested will help to restore to the community a sense of responsiveness and responsibility for landscape issues. The scale and parameters of a project will help determine who should be involved, and what people need to be involved in what decisions. As landscapes can be viewed in a multitude of different ways the 'big picture' or conceptual levels of a project require wide ranging input. While still working within an overall collaborative context, details could be dealt with by smaller groups or individuals and with suitable individuals engaged in dealing with technical/engineering issues.

As Healey (1993, 236-244) has noted, it is unlikely, if not impossible that true consensus will be found, and that there won’t be conflicts and disagreements. What is necessary is to encourage participants to “recognize [sic] each other’s presence and negotiate their shared concerns” (Healey 1993, 244), to search for a level of “mutual understanding” that enables action to be taken whilst also accepting that another’s perspective may never be fully comprehended. Healey (1993, 243) has also noted that through creating an environment where participants are supported to “articulate their interests” seemingly fixed viewpoints and polarisations may soften.

**Deep landscape design is multi-layered and nested**

As landscapes systems feature interconnected physical, ecological and cultural dimensions each of the 'layers' and the 'sub-layers' of which they are composed need to be explored and included in the design process. To ensure the maintenance of the structural-coupling between these different layers, the design process should involve the engagement of people working within, or who are passionate about, each layer (for example engineers, ecologists, artists and activists) and the development of effective methods of communication between them. As discussed above, not everyone needs to be actively involved in the exploration of every layer of the landscape, but
everybody involved in the process can be supported to acknowledge the significance of each layer and understand both its parameters, and the way it interacts with the landscape as a whole.

In practice this could result in a nested design process. In this nested structure specific groups or engagements could focus on exploring, maintaining, developing and advocating for particular layers or aspects of the landscape, while a representative 'core' group could ensure that these different groups are working within a holistic context. To do this the 'core group' could monitor the overall direction of the project, and support holistic development through ensuring that information flows between the different groups. Provided there are effective communication systems in place, this process could enable those best suited and most passionate about different dimensions of the landscape to have relative autonomy in different aspects of the design, without compromising the overall holism or collaborative nature of the design process. Depending on the nature of the project, there are different ways in which this structure could form. As in the example given in Fig. 1, the core group could form from representative members of other groups with specific interests or an existing connection to the landscape. Or an existing group could support the formation of new sub-groups, such as that working on the art project. In another scenario, these sub-groups, may in fact not actually be groups as such, but could refer to the individuals reached through each of the different engagement methods deployed during the project (as discussed above). The core group could then be charged with synthesising the output or learnings harvested from each engagement, and feeding them back to the different participants.

Fig. 1. A nested approach towards landscape design and management.
Different decision making methods will be better suited to different groups and engagements, as will different ways of communicating and connecting, and this model allows for this. Some groups may prefer to vote on decisions or rank priorities, while a more consensus-based structure may be better suited for other groups. Some groups may choose to interact continuously using online tools such as Facebook or Loomio, while others may opt for semi-regular formal or informal face-to-face meetings. Within this nested model, each sub-group can make decisions within its mandate in the way best suited to its constituents. A key factor however, will be ensuring that key information flows between the groups, or to and from the core group in a way that is manageable, intelligible and able to be collated.

Establishing a multi-layered or nested approach to design could be said to utilise both the facilitation and advocacy approaches towards engagement and participation discussed by Shirvani (1985). It involves facilitation in the sense that it requires supporting greater communication between different aspects of the community and landscape (a point which will be further discussed below). It could also be said to involve advocacy as it provides a mechanism through which aspects of the community or landscape, which may have been overlooked or neglected in the past, can be included in future landscape decision making.

**Deep landscape design is continuous and iterative**

To ensure responsiveness to the impact on the landscape of any changes made, the design process needs to be a continuous, iterative process, which is itself able to evolve. This means that the design of the site is an on-going process bigger than any individual person or group involved, and that there is no end product. This does not imply that a landscape is always left 'half-finished' or incomplete, but rather that the development occurs in phases or stages. After which, there is an opportunity for reflection on the impact of any changes made.

![Fig. 2. The 'woven rope' model of landscape project management.](image-url)
This aspect of deep landscape design can be visualised as a 'woven rope' – see Fig. 2. In this model each project phase begins with an engagement period (to form the collaborative structure described above) and has a period of peak activity in which ideas are explored and changes are made. The closure of each stage of the development then provides an opportunity for reflection on whether the proposed subsequent stages still serve an opportunity for individuals to pull back from the project and to engage new participants in the next stage, and also an opportunity to reflect on the nature of the engagement and design processes themselves. The process can thus be continuously handed down to new participants. This handing down process could be made easier through leaving an unfinished or unspecified aspect at each stage of the design, which could form the starting point for the next stage of design. The next stage may choose to deviate from this original plan, but this handing down process allows room for new creativity without losing the momentum or vision generated by the previous stage.

Having some way to record the current vision for the site in a way that is itself dynamic and iterative can be useful to avoid fixed maps or plans implying that the nature of site is itself fixed or static.

**Deep landscape design gives nature a voice**

While this paper has made a case for the importance of community development in sustainable landscape design, the ecocentric or deep ecology perspective argues that this empowerment of the community must not come at the expense of the conservation and preservation of the non-human ecosystem. Community development projects are often focused on marginalised or oppressed groups and their general empowerment, with flexibility about the way this manifests being a principle of the process. In shallow landscape design, the non-human ecosystem of the area could also be considered to be marginalised or oppressed. In addition to empowering the community to engage in the on-going design and maintenance of their local landscapes, the deep design process is also about ensuring that the 'voice of nature' is empowered and represented. Therefore, during the on-going design process, it is important to ensure that efforts are continuously made to honour and represent the intrinsic value and dynamics of the non-human parts of the landscape (which could be referred to as their rights and needs). The way that this is done will also depend on the nature of the project and the group currently engaged with it. It could mean including an ecologist in the core design group, ensuring adequate representation of traditional/indigenous landscape wisdom, having a restoration/conservation sub-group representing both scientific and traditional views as a key part of the nested structure, or ensuring that there is an adequate exploration of the ecological layer of the landscape, which is taken into account when any changes are proposed. In this process, care must be taken to ensure scientific knowledge is not further privileged over traditional or culturally unique ways of knowing and views of landscape value.

The principle of ecocentrism can also be supported through ensuring that at each closure/engagement stage of the woven process, the reflection on the impacts or flow on effects of any changes or developments gives equal weighting to the ecological and more human focused layers of the landscape. Ensuring this equal weighting will help to ensure that as changes are made to a landscape, the holistic health of a space, what Morgan (2006) would refer to as it's 'mauri', is maintained.
Deep landscape design is self-facilitating and co-facilitated

This paper suggests that for the inception or nurturing of a deep landscape design process, facilitation is necessary. This facilitation may involve guiding a group through a specific stage of the design process, supporting on-going engagement or the linking together of different groups with the landscape of focus. This facilitation may come from within the existing community or may be engaged from without to support the process. It may be an individual person, or a group combining their skills to support the process.

In the case of guiding a group through a specific stage of the design process, the facilitator would require some degree of design experience and depending on the scale and complexity of the project, may need to be an architect: this is the approach towards design suggested by the School Landscape Project (Hunter et al. 1998). Alternatively, an experienced designer could be involved in the project, with the facilitator supporting them to include the rest of the group in the process. In any case, key to empowering the participants of the project is for the facilitation to ensure that decision-making is genuinely collaborative and not just the designer making decisions and seeking feedback. Similarly a key role of facilitation is to ensure that all parties participating in a process have an opportunity to be heard and that strong personalities, including their own, do not dominate the process.

Once the momentum of a project is going, communication structures are in place, and a responsive design process is established external facilitation may no longer be necessary. In any case, part of the role of facilitators should be to make themselves redundant through supporting the group or groups to find ways to maintain the project on their own, to self-facilitate. The power imbalance between the facilitator and the rest of the group can, as alluded to above, likewise be addressed through working towards a co-facilitation model, in which different members of the landscape community take responsibility for different aspects of the process.

Key challenges to the model

In any landscape project attempting to utilise the principles explored above, there will be numerous challenges.

Finding a balance between individual ideas and collective decisions

During the preparation of this paper a local artist observing the process commented that having so many people involved in the decision making around a creative endeavour such as landscape design risked a 'blanding' of the outcome; the potency and holism of an initial idea or concept could be lost by trying to cater to everybody's opinion. Further adding to the potential for this, Buchecker et al (2003, 31) have suggested that as people hand over the management of public space to authorities, they come to see their own private property as the only legitimate environment for their individuality. Buchecker et al (2003, 31) then claim that this has led to a sentimental notion that the collective always knows best which can prevent people from asserting their own thoughts and ideas when engaging in collaborative or participatory projects. Genuine collaboration or participation requires an empowered individual, someone who is confident enough to engage and offer their opinion. Therefore, while it could equally be argued that the collective manifestation of a brief could actually result in a stronger and richer development, and in many situations groups may welcome
the challenge to do this, it is important that individuals within the process feel empowered to argue for their individual opinion. Collaboration does not imply that every participant needs to have their input clearly visible in every decision. When dealing with a specific decision within a functioning collaborative process, a group may decide to use a modified form of one person's idea, combine a number of ideas into one solution or decide to utilise a single participant's idea in its entirety.

In other situations, a design group may be filled with so many strong ideas that there is no sense of collaboration at all as people compete to have their own ideas expressed in the design. Therefore in some cases it may suit the needs of a given project better to have individuals take responsibility for the specific interpretation of different parts of a brief. However this could then create the risk of having so many different ideas being represented in a space that the design becomes a 'hotch-potch' of elements with no real design unity. In any case, to ensure that strong ideas can be heard, avoid unnecessary 'blanding' and ensure there is a holism to the design; each collaborative project will need to find its own balance between individual empowerment and collective activity. Key to this will be working to generate a group rapport, nurturing an overall spirit of collaboration in the design process, and as much as possible, developing a clear design brief for each phase of the design in which everyone involved can feel a sense of ownership.

**Time poverty and decision making fatigue**

An on-going process such as that explored in this paper could appear to be a very time consuming process which presents another set of challenges.

In any community project, in which on-going input from non-paid individuals is required there is the issue of time poverty. Time poverty refers to the situation of individuals, who may feel passionate about a project and wish to be involved, not having the time to engage or maintain their engagement on top of other responsibilities.

Related to the issue of time poverty is that of decision making fatigue. In landscape projects there can be many details to deal with and expecting a voluntary community group to make decision after decision, on top of other commitments that they might have can easily drain energy and lead to rash or flippant choices.

To deal with these issues it is important as much as possible to build links between the landscape project and what engagements and activities are already occurring within the community, or to 'scaffold' off existing momentum. The awareness of time poverty and fatigue issues adds to the case for breaking the process into interlinked phases. While still forming an overall continuous process, people are then able to engage and pull out, without having to make long term commitments. Selecting the frequency and duration of sessions or engagements and the length of each design phase is also important, as is awareness of when decision making around details or technical issues can and should be delegated.

**Funding structures**

The alignment of community development and an on-going design process, with the project management procedures and/or funding criteria of any council partners or other funding agencies,
presents other challenges. An ideal model for the deep landscape design of a suburban landscape is to have the processes and developments take place through community resources and 'in-kind' support from council staff and other agencies, with external funding required only for specific elements. While this model may be possible from the outset in certain circumstances, or develop over time in others, it is not realistic for every project. In many projects it is likely that the process will be reliant on contestable funding, or on funding allocated by landscape managers for specific developments. While key to the model of design explored in this paper are flexibility, an ability to evolve, and an allowance for the emergence of unexpected outcomes, these funding sources are likely to have specific criteria, and require specified outcomes, measurables, and predictable timeframes. Thus supporting the growth of such a process may not fit naturally within a council or funder’s structure, and trying to do so may induce a rush to get the project ‘finished’, force outcomes and disrupt the genuine community development. In some situations the council or funder may show flexibility around criteria, extend funding deadlines, or be able to ‘roll funding over’ into the next financial year, however this cannot necessarily be depended on.

In some cases, supporting continuous interaction between a community and its landscape could be made easier by applying for different funding streams for different phases of the project, or for developments taking place in different layers of the landscape. This could allow the project as a whole to change course over time, or for different aspects of the project to be matched to different funding criteria without having to limit the overall scope of the project. However, funding pools are limited and applying for funding can be a time consuming process. Thus the degree to which this is a viable option will depend on both the economic context of the given project, and the capacity of the individuals and groups involved in it.

**Keeping the process alive in the face of change**

A process such as this might work well in a small contained community in which it is easy to recruit new participants, maintain continuity of engagement and conserve the direction of a project. However in larger areas, areas prone to residential transience or faster rates of population change it is likely to be more difficult to do so.

To a certain degree divergence from initial ideas and plans is inevitable and is in fact expected. At the centre of this approach must be an acceptance of change and willingness to ‘alter one’s course’, however this does not mean that the knowledge and decisions of previous participants needs to be lost.

Information, knowledge and concepts uncovered during the design process does not always have to be explicit in the physical landscape, however stories must be keep alive to ensure respect for the history, ancestors and precedents of an area, and that the knowledge and wisdom gleaned from earlier projects and/or mistakes is not lost.

A potential solution to both accepting change and maintaining continuity of process is through the nurturing and utilisation of diverse means of dynamic community story telling. Local theatre, history walks, creative documentation of previous projects and embracing the potential of new media and technology to ensure that information is retained in a way that is easily accessed and easily passed
through generations; allowing the history of a landscape and its development to be honoured and celebrated without expecting it to remain the same in the face of inevitable change.

**Additional benefits of the model**

A culture and process of on-going collaborative design such as that explored above may initially prove more complicated and difficult to implement than a more conventional designer driven approach. However, in addition to it being better suited to ensuring the resilience of landscape systems, there are additional benefits to this model, both directly to the site of focus and also to the participant community.

Through attempting to inform and engage as many people as possible, deep landscape projects can access a wide range of resources in the community, some of which may be unconventional and could potentially be over looked or under-valued in other approaches. These resources can include skills and knowledge, and materials and equipment. Accessing available or under-utilised community resources could reduce the cost of a given project, reduce waste and also add a unique vernacular aspect to the design, further grounding it within the local landscape.

Collaborative cross-cultural engagements could increase community networking and the relational capital of the community. Also, working with a design paradigm such as that explored in this paper could result in a greater degree of community ownership over the site of focus, and a subsequent decrease in vandalism.

**Key questions to ask in supporting the development of a deep design process**

As discussed above, the journey towards a deep design process in a given landscape will be dependent on numerous factors. In some cases attempts could be made by facilitators or landscape managers to engage the local community and establish such a process over time, while in other circumstances it may be a case of groups already working within different layers of the landscape nurturing its emergence through cooperating and communicating more effectively. In any case, Table 1 contains a series of key questions that may be of use to landscape managers, designers or community members wishing to establish, or nurture a deep process in the design and maintenance of a given public space.

**Concluding remarks**

This paper has explored the idea that in the journey towards holistic landscape resilience, the empowerment and education of the local community, and the development of an inclusive and ecologically responsive design process, are as important as the landscape plan that initially results. While maps and models are certainly useful to landscape design, public spaces are not objects. Landscapes are not static, they are dynamic and multidimensional, and their futures are utterly intertwined with the attitudes and behaviour of the communities who reside in and around them.

To ensure long-term landscape sustainability, the different stakeholders in a given space must work together to take into account the interrelated layers of a landscape, both physical and non-physical. It must be accepted that there are many ways in which people perceive and relate to landscapes, each important, each valuable. The design process utilised must support empowered
communicative relationships between the different members of the landscape community, whether they be council staff, design professionals, passionate locals or marginalised minorities. It must also support an evolving interaction with the ecology of the landscape itself.

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<tr>
<th>Process Area</th>
<th>Key Questions</th>
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| **Project inception and identification of landscape focus** | What is the landscape of focus?  
Who is instigating the present initiative? What are their intentions and what degree of control do they intend to have over any developments?  
Will there be a core group to oversee any changes to the landscape? How will this be composed?  
What layers of the landscape (e.g. geo-physical, hydrological, ecological, cultural) form the initial focus of the current project? |
| **Identification of landscape community**          | Who can be identified as the landscape community?  
Who are the key stakeholders (individuals and groups) within each layer of the landscape?  
What relationships already exist between these groups, and between the groups and the landscape? How could these be strengthened? Are there any grievances or barriers that need to be acknowledged or addressed? |
| **Engagement of community in a multi-layered approach** | How can a wide range of people be included in the exploration and potential development of the different layers? What different tools and engagement processes can be used to access the ideas, opinions and creativity of people with different interests, time availability, and learning and expression styles?  
How can people be engaged in the exploration and development of any neglected layers of the landscape?  
In which layers is it necessary to involve ‘external’ experts?  
What are the key (internal) processes (physical, ecological or cultural) that function within each layer of the landscape?  
What (external) pressures or processes influence, limit or constrain each layer?  
How can the different individuals and groups engaged in the process be made aware of these internal and external processes and how they interact?  
What are the “needs” of each layer of the landscape, and the individuals and groups engaged with each layer? |
| **Project management**                            | How will the needs, knowledge, ideas and information emerging from each layer or engagement type be linked together to generate a common pool of knowledge, collective design brief or vision? How can individuals or groups be supported to maintain their own autonomy while working within that vision?  
How can it be ensured that fundamental landscape, design or technical principles are acknowledged whilst still promoting an empowering and inclusive learning environment?  
How will decisions be made about any changes to occur in the landscape? Will different individuals or groups have a mandate within different layers? What will be the role of the project instigator or any core group in these decisions?  
How will disagreements be managed?  
How can opportunities for reflection and evaluation, and for iterations in the design process be created?  
How can the different individuals and groups involved in the landscape be kept up to date on decisions that have been made and changes that are occurring?  
How will the different groups communicate with each other?  
What is the timescale of each engagement, and where can opportunities be created for participants to leave or join?  
How can a budget for the different engagements of the project be sourced and how will it be managed? |

Table 1. Key questions to ask in supporting the development of a deep design process.
However, turning these ideas into a reality is challenging. Among many other issues, such a process must deal with legislative boundaries, time and budget constraints, and human egos. The model of landscape design explored in this paper perhaps represents an ideal. Moving towards this ideal will require compromise and continuous bridge building between the different stakeholders operating within the landscape, to ensure that the process that emerges will meet their needs, limitations and availability.

In general it may be the case that for a truly continuous, collaborative and de-hierarchised form of landscape design to work, there needs to be an overall paradigm shift in society towards one which is itself more collaborative and de-hierarchised. Taking small steps towards such a culture of design and decision-making in suburban landscapes could prove to be a key factor in this shift. Participatory design leader Henry Sanoff (Sanoff 2007, 215) has suggested that:

“the idea of democratisation of decision-making within all local and private organisations...is...a necessary prerequisite for political democracy at the national level.”

It could likewise be argued that supporting the distribution of democracy and empowering active citizenship at a local landscape level, is an essential pre-requisite of doing the same at a regional and national landscape level.

It is hoped that the design paradigm explored in this paper will contribute not only to the on-going discussion on how to ensure the sustainability of local landscapes, but also to the discussion on how to inspire active citizenship in the evolution of a landscape which is adaptable, resilient and sustainable at every scale.

References


