



The Evolution of English Picturesque Landscape Garden to Urban Public Park

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Abstract: From the very late 17th century to the early 19th, the English garden design style and the landscape garden movement became the most emblematic cultural achievement of England, and have also motivated the development of urban planning and public policy. The natural garden style became the symbol of the liberal philosophy and the enlightened way of thinking. By the last third of the 18th century, the continent has gained upon the great exemplar England. It was a German philosopher, who has written for the first time about the necessity of urban public parks as a tool in strengthening the national feeling and social cohesion, and in solving the social and environmental problems of industrially developed cities. The opening of royal gardens and hunting parks in Paris, Berlin or London were far from being enough for the social demands at that time.

Keywords: landscape garden movement, urban park, classical picturesque garden, deer park, municipal park, romantic picturesque garden

1. Introduction

The English landscape garden style is the child of Enlightenment. The natural space forming in the gardens and the liberation of nature from the restrictions of Baroque architectural forms are the ideas of philosophers, poets, artists and scientists of the early 18th century. The wish to create the ideal, Arcadian landscape was the idea of these professionals and their enthusiasm has diffused amongst the

highly educated Whig society. Their liberal way of thinking and their independence from the royal court were reflected in the love of free growing nature.

However, from the late 18th century the culture of ideal landscapes also appeared as a practical tool in social coherence in order to realise the great ideas of the French Revolution. This is the reason why we have to call the English landscape garden a movement and not only a style, which attracted and reformed the gardens, landscapes and even the urban structure of Britain and the Continent,. The idea of social coherence added a new content to the garden design theory and resulted in the birth of the first public gardens and parks in England and on the Continent as well.

2. Materials and Methods

The history of garden art, the professional literature of English landscape garden movement have many keynote, important theoretical publications, which offer the possibility to analyze the development of landscape gardens to urban parks step by step. The birth of English garden, the classical and romantic picturesque garden style is well published not only in the British but in the continental and the American literature as well. Among others, the publications and books of Nicolaus Pevsner, Miles Hadfield, John Dixon Hunt, Charles Quest-Ritson, David Jacques, Tom Turner and Timothy Mowl dealt very detailed with the social background of the so-called landscape garden movement. [1] [5] [6]. Besides the British Island, the continental development proved to be very important where contemporary writers, like the German philosopher, C.L. Hirschfeld [2] called the attention to the social aspects of the industrial and urban development of the 18th century and suggested the establishment of public parks in the urban fabric. The German professional literature, first of all the publications of Dieter *Hennebo* in the 1970s underlined the importance of multifunctional public parks. The research of Dorothee Nehring was the very first to introduce the German born Henrik Nebbien's work, among them the City Park of Budapest as one of the first public parks on the continent [4].

3. Results and discussions

From the end of 17th century, the wealthy Whig families laid a stress on spiritual and educational development, besides the growing economical and political independence from the royal court. The regularly organised grand tours to Italy proved to be flourishing as study tours and also as collection tours. Many landscape paintings of the famous landscape painters have been saved and transported to the castles of the English noble society of England. The treasures of

ancient and renaissance architecture of Italy inspired the most talented members of the high society to develop their own estates and to create the ideal landscape. Lord Burlington, an amateur architect and talented artist, William Kent met in Italy and their friendship proved to be flourishing according to the first epoch of landscape garden movement.

The early 18th century brought an intensive development of estates with the so-called enclosure, when common lands have been confiscated to have larger deer parks and pastures. As a result of growing pasturelands, the woodlands disappeared. The few, only remained forests became highly estimated. The love of Nature played an important role in the very first landscape garden of Sir William Temple, who heard and read about the most natural landscape forms of Chinese gardens. However, no paintings or decorated books of the Chinese garden culture were on the market, but only the masterpieces of Chinese decorative art, paintings and porcelains. Temple, a fanatic collector of porcelains, learnt the natural space forming from the decorations of these masterpieces.



Figure 1: The Moor Park in the late 18th century with Baroque parterres and fine serpentine water forms in the side-garden. The landscape is dominated by deer parks

The other example of the irregular or the so-called serpentine form garden design is also linked to a nice forest. Charles Howard, 3rd Earl of Carlisle, a wealthy British statesman and member of the peerage of England, in 1699 commissioned a new Baroque mansion, Castle Howard, in Yorkshire, England to the design of Sir John Vanbrugh. He rejected the regular way of opening up the wood with Baroque vues, and established instead a natural form space system and garden ways along the Wray Wood of Castle Howard. The 70 hectares large wood kept its wild and natural character, because only small architectural elements have been fitted in the clearings, while the emblematic Temple of four winds planned by

Vanbrugh was constructed on the corner of the forest so as not to compete with Nature, but to amend it. Stephen Switzer, the philosopher of the early 18th century called the design of Wray Wood the most natural and polite space forming.

The irregular and serpentine form gardens designed by amateurs, by poets, like Alexander Pope or scientists, like Addison, or statesmen and architects, like Lord Carlisle and Vanbrugh, were only the first steps in the landscape garden movement. The gardens of the new philosophy gave freedom to the vegetation and the strict formal structures. However, the almost half a century long first period of English garden movement did not bring too many new garden creations. Only some wealthy and highly educated Whig landlords started reconstruction projects on their home estates.

The most talented designer of the first, the so-called classical picturesque garden period, William Kent, was originally a coach painter, then a painter and scene-painter. Kent learned the classical landscape painting in Italy, then arrived home to England to utilise and improve his new knowledge in a three-dimensional design technique. His most well known masterpieces are Claremont, Euston, Rousham and Stowe, where he worked as a garden designer and an architect as well. His garden designs are three-dimensional paintings, theatrical scenes in Nature, created with Nature therefore I would call Kent's gardens the "scenescape" gardens. All separated and interlinked garden scenes tell about mythological or classical stories. His gardens are for contemplation and thinking, for enjoying life and harmony with Nature.

Kent's designs are deeply integrated in the landscape and so is his architecture. His building and all his built garden elements are composed on classical architectural studies in a fine harmony with the traditional, strong English architectural forms. Kent's buildings are deeply rooted in the English landscape, but also refer to the history of architecture with many direct and hidden references.



Figure 2: The garden scene of the Venus vale with water ponds, cascades and wooden space walls in the Rousham garden designed by William Kent (early 18th century).

The independent life from the royal court demanded not only strong economical background but also the wish to fulfil the cultural, social organising roles traditionally represented by the royal court. Besides the classical quotations telling about the stories and heroes of mythology and about the everlasting human values, the national commitment is also reflected in the gardens. The temple of British worthies in the Stowe garden is a gallery of spiritual and royal giants who played an important role in the political and cultural development of England. Among the busts there are only a very few royal personalities, like Queen Elisabeth or King William III, but there are poets like Milton, Pope and Shakespeare, there are scientists, like Bacon, Newton. We can admire the statue of Captain Drake and the Palladian architecture of Inigo Jones. The gallery of Stowe is more than a portraits gallery; it is the first sign of national or patriotic philosophy.



Figure 3: The Temple of British Worthies (W. Kent, early 18th century) is the gallery of spiritual and royal giants of national importance. (Photo made by Imre Jámbor)

The classical picturesque gardens are not easy to understand. They have a well-framed cultural program and message, therefore they can be fully taken in only by learned people who are educated in ancient mythology and classical arts – otherwise small touristic books helped visitors to understand and read the words of the architectural citations fitted or hidden in the garden in the open air stage-scenes. The guidebooks of Stowe and the Leasows, the garden of the poet Shenstone, offered the physical and spiritual way to walk around the garden and understand its ideal landscape. The classical picturesque gardens belonged to the learned, accomplished, most polite high-class members.

By the mid-18th century, the few classical picturesque gardens of the Whig aristocrats' became well known and also desired assets. These gardens were expensive to build and to maintain. The economical aspects did not play an important role in their development. They were luxurious, magnificent creations of the new garden art talking about spirit, human values, culture and about wealth, in

a very sophisticated way. The turn arrived with the figure of Lancelot Brown who started as the talented student of Kent. However, he was much more a gardener than a three-dimensional painter was. He became the most important master of garden design of his time. His special design method reflected the practical way of thinking, the knowledge of economical and ecological aspects of garden design. He was famous for his design method, which started with a walk around the estate to study the landscape, the ecological systems and the farm economical possibilities. He insisted on Kent's design school as his gardens kept the picturesque idea. But he added the economical sustainability as a special aspect of garden design, which resulted in a new phenomenon in the English garden movement, namely the landscape park. The estates developed by Brown, became financially manageable, they produced significant profit out of farming and silviculture, out of huge deer parks and orchards. Brown's design and management system was easy to learn and follow. The main tools were the meandering beltways along the surrounding forests, which produced timber and fruit and small game. The serpentine form water together with the clump form and discrete plantations used to be the consistent and compulsory elements of the Brownian landscape park. Besides Stowe, probably Petworth and Bowood could be mentioned as the largest scaled creations out of the almost 200 Brownian parks.



Figure 4: The Petworth garden, one of Brown's first masterpieces, is a huge and rich deer park with serpentine form water bodies, clumps and undulating landscape [7]

The ideal landscape offered by Brown did not demand the knowledge of classical culture to understand it. The refined artistic design theory of Kent's gardens was over. The classical architectural elements remained simple stress points and eyecatcher for the visitors walking around without having a special meaning or intellectual program. Brown has moved a big step into the direction of popularity and self-evidence. The fact that Brown was appointed in 1764 a royal gardener by George III, made the Brownian gardens even more popular and demanded. The profitable deer-park system of the landscape parks opened the market for the less wealthy society and the royalist Tory estate owners had their old

gardens renewed by Brown or his followers or other talented gardeners. In this way, a large quantity of landscape gardens were developed in the second half of the 18th century, which has reformed the completely English rural landscape.

Owing to the urban and industrial development, the London urban environment and the concentrated population needed more open space in the urban fabric. From the mid 17th century, some royal gardens were opened for public use, at least for the high and mid level society, but they did not prove to be enough for the urban population. Besides the half-open royal parks, many privately developed pleasure gardens could be found mainly in London to offer some open air recreation possibility for the residents.



Figure 5: The Marylebone garden, one of the most well known pleasure gardens of London (18th-19th c.)

The social strain cried for remedy. The turn happened not in England, but on the continent, almost parallel with the Great French Revolution. The ideology of freedom, equality and fraternity has inspired the garden theory as it can be seen in Hirschfeld's works. Christian Cay Lorenz Hirschfeld was a Danish philosopher who was confident in the huge embellishing power of Nature. He considered the landscape parks as possible social melting pots for every social class to meet and get to know each other. [2] The ideology of Hirschfeld impressed many gardeners in the German regions, among others Ludwig Sckell, the talented main gardener of the Schwetzingen gardens. Sckell studied garden design directly in England, but he was a fanatic of Hirschfeld's theory. In 1789 Prince Karl, the Prussian monarch asked Sckell to develop the military recreation area along the Isar river into a Volksgarten. The park was formed in a very Brownian style but it has been developed and supplemented with practical functions so as to supply a wide variety of open-air amusement for all public classes. The Englischer Park was directly planned for the purposes of a city park, but the order came from the monarch. After

the French Revolution, the idea to give more space and freedom to the people was more than an obvious step from an open-minded monarch. The park was very important in its urban context as well, because it served as a green link to the traditional, historical town centre and the principal gardens.



Figure 6: The Englischer Garten in München is an urban park opened by the monarch for public recreational use (Source: [3])

By the turn of the 18th-19th century there were opened royal gardens and parks given as urban recreational open-air areas to the public society of the large industrialised and urbanised cities. However, the very first real public park, the so-called municipal park was developed in Hungary in the capital, Pest-Buda, as it was called at that time.

The peri-urban landscapes lying at the eastern border of Pest used to be a royal hunting field in the medieval times, and later remained abandoned. By the mid 18th century, the reclamation of the waste site became necessary and the necessary plantation was started by the municipality of Pest with acacias and mulberry trees. Attempts were made later to develop the area into a privately sponsored pleasure garden, but this project proved to be unsuccessful. By the end of the 18th century, the city of Pest regained the ownership, and the newly reformed Embellishment Commission under the leadership of Joseph Palatine accepted the wish of the residents and decided to develop an urban park, the so-called Volksgarten, or City Park (Városliget in Hungarian).

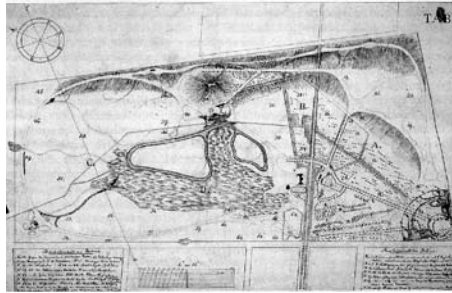


Figure 7: The site of the City Park in Pest before the construction of the very first municipal park (Drawing by H. Nebbien, 1813 [4])

In 1813, the Commission organized a competition, which was won by Heinrich Nebbien, a German landscape designer, and manager, who educated himself in landscape gardens of England. Nebbien developed his plan between 1813 and 1816. His plan was born in the spirit of Brown's landscape parks but he also integrated the social ideas of Hirschfeld. The large grass meadows with the circular beltway and the serpentine form waters, together with the clump formed plantation, reflect a strong emphasis of the English landscape parks. Owing to the low budget of the council, he offered his honorary for the construction together with many citizens who were enthusiastic about the urban public park. Unfortunately, the collected money was not enough, therefore the construction was not fully finished. In spite of this fact, the Városliget, with its grandiose classical and romantic picturesque character was the very first municipal park, and it is going to have its 200 years birthday in 2013.

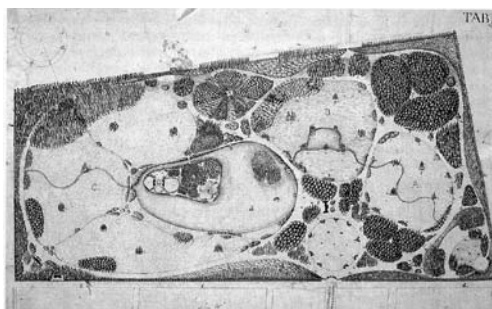


Figure 8: The City Park designed by H. Nebbien in a classical-romantic landscape park form [4]

Nebbien added the national aspect and the functionality to the concept of the renewal of the park and its adaptation to the public use. The main entrance opened at the end of the avenue leading out of the city to the periphery. Owing to the typical dense and levelled plantation, the park gate became a strong architectural and landscape architectural element. The sustainability of the urban park was also an idea, which had its origin in the Brownian design theory. But this economical aspect was combined with the ideas of a social supply in Nebbien's plan. The multifunctional park offered various recreational possibilities at that time. Besides opportunities for riding and walking or simply enjoying nature, there were dance halls and sport arenas for athletes.



Figure 9: Nebbien's plan for the main entrance and the Rondo with the concave form looking to the park from the avenue [4]

With Hirschfeld's theory in his mind Nebbien intended to develop the public park as an educational and cultural scene, therefore he designed statues, heroic monuments of the national history – some similarity with the British worthies – in a fine classical architectural form. The garden ways and park roads were designed in a separated system as Hirschfeld offered it: alleys and hedges with a nice concave space form divided the riding path and the walking path.



Figure 10: Nebbien's plan for the separated way system with concave green space walls [4]

In spite of many efforts for collecting money for the development of the park, the budget proved to be very low and the construction remained unfinished. The most important landscape elements were finished, like the elegant Rondo and the

islands together with the beltways. The plantation developed a lot as well. Not only Nebbien was enthusiastic about the city park, but also the inhabitants of Pest loved the park very much. Soon it became the most well known amusement and recreation place that was mentioned in many poems and songs.



Figure 11: The City park with its romantic landscape (late 19th century)

We have started our grandiose tour following the main steps of the development of the English garden movement from the Continent, from Italy to England, than back to the Continent. Turning back to the cradle of the landscape gardens and parks, we have to admit that owing to the more open space recreation possibilities given for the London citizens in the form of pleasure gardens and opened royal parks, the time for the development of a typical urban park came much later. Moreover, not even in London, but in another industrially developed city, Liverpool, where by the middle of the 19th century the first English public park was born on the plans of Paxton. Paxton's work proved to be much more important than to remain an urban park. It has won an international reputation by F.L. Olmstead, the creator of the word 'landscape architecture', who imported the landscape park idea to America.

How the American park design developed and affected the European, which is another story.

4. Conclusion

The history of urban public parks started with the liberation of Nature and the birth of English garden art. The English term 'park' originally meant a deer park. The 18th century English landscape garden movement inspired by the new liberal

philosophy and the love of classical arts transformed the deer parks of the aristocratic society into picturesque gardens or later into landscape parks. In the meantime, gardens and parks became a necessity for the recreation of the urban population in the form of urban parks in the early 19th century. From the very first classical picturesque gardens, the design theory developed with involving the economical aspect into the concept and making the English garden an economically manageable estate. The romantic picturesque gardens arrived at the strengthening middle society of the industrialised world, and last the urban parks became the social melting pots where people could gather to enjoy nature, fresh air and sunshine.

First some royal or principal deer parks have been turned into urban parks on the continent, later new public parks have been created integrating new public functions and simplified architectural forms into the romantic landscape garden concept, so as to supply the increasingly populous urban society with sufficient recreational possibilities and gardens that are easy to understand. The very first strictly public park, the municipal park of Pest-Buda, the City Park is going to be 200 years old in this decade. The overloaded and low-maintained park waits for the renewal, which should recall some elements of the once worldwide famous Nebbien's concept both in its philosophy and in form.

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