

Dumbarton Oaks

Mellon Initiative in Urban Landscape Studies

Grant number 11400622

Narrative Report, 2015-16

In 2015-16, the Garden and Landscape Studies program at Dumbarton Oaks inaugurated the first full year of the Mellon Initiative in Urban Landscape Studies. Consistent with the objectives of the Mellon Foundation's "Architecture, Urbanism, and the Humanities" initiative, we launched our new program of fellowships, offering four semester-long residencies that were shared between historians and practitioners; we inaugurated a series of academic events that brought together humanities scholars focusing on urban landscape studies with practitioners in related fields, such as landscape architecture, environmental design, and urban environmental policy; we hosted our second senior practitioner resident; we held a graduate workshop to develop the research of emerging scholars of the urban environment; we organized public events, including lectures and a film screening; and we engaged middle and high school students in programs that explored both the many landscapes of the city and the various professional opportunities in urban landscape management. In addition, we retained Jeanne Haffner to help manage the program as the Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Urban Landscape Studies.

The first four semester-long **Mellon fellows** were **Christina Milos** and **David Wooden** in the fall term and **Alpa Nawre** and **Kara Schlichting** in the spring (information on current and former Mellon fellows can be found at <http://www.doaks.org/research/garden-landscape/mellon-initiative-in-urban-landscape-studies/current-fellows>). Milos is completing a Ph.D. in Landscape Architecture at the University of Hannover (Germany). Her research project, "Anticipatory Urbanization Strategies for In-Situ Oil Sands Extraction in Nigeria," explored potential trajectories for urbanization resulting from Nigeria's oil sands development. Wooden, an Environmental Protection Specialist at the Department of Energy and Environment in Washington, D.C., used his fellowship at Dumbarton Oaks to pursue a study entitled "Washington's Sewer History: Ideological, Technological, and Environmental Evolution." During his time at Dumbarton Oaks, Wooden also organized tours of the sewage treatment plant and aqueduct for fellows, and collaborated with one of our other fellows in garden and landscape studies on the creation of a "Water Atlas" for Washington, which traced where water comes from and goes in the

metropolitan region, a digital humanities resource that will soon be launched. The Spring 2016 fellows found especially productive synergies between their projects. Alpa Nawre, a landscape architect, pursued research on “Adaptive Land-Water Edges in Indian Cities,” focused on the multifunctional use and cultural significance of ponds, rivers, and canals in India as a way of challenging monofunctional urban water infrastructure throughout the world, while Kara Schlichting, a historian, worked on the construction of waterfronts in New York and Providence in the early twentieth century. Her project, titled “The Nature of Urban Coastal Resiliency: Twentieth-Century Governance, Environmental Management, and Design,” investigated the historical development of the “littoral” as a concept, and the differing approaches to coastal management it inspired.

In addition, in September 2015, **Jeanne Haffner** became the inaugural **Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow** in Urban Landscape Studies. Haffner is an urban historian whose work explores the intersection of dwelling, urban design, landscape, and ideas about “environment.” Her book on the role of aerial photography in twentieth-century French social scientific research and urbanism, *The View from Above: The Science of Social Space*, was published by MIT Press in 2013 and won a grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. She assumed the role of helping to manage the many aspects of the Mellon initiative.

In March 2016, landscape architect **Gary Hilderbrand**, Professor in Practice at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and founding partner at Reed Hilderbrand, served as a **Senior Practitioner Resident** in the Mellon Initiative (<http://www.doaks.org/research/garden-landscape/mellon-initiative-in-urban-landscape-studies/senior-practitioner-residents>). Hilderbrand contributed significantly to numerous discussions with other designers and academics, presented a Midday Dialogue called “Vegetal City,” and completed a paper titled “Transforming Campus Paradigms: Two Olmsted Brothers Cases,” which he presented at the Garden and Landscape Studies symposium, “Landscape and the Academy” (May 5-7, 2016).

A **workshop for graduate students**, “Frontiers in Urban Landscape Research,” took place in November 2015 and was hosted by John Beardsley, Director of Garden and Landscape Studies, and Thaisa Way, University of Washington, a senior fellow at Dumbarton Oaks (<http://www.doaks.org/research/garden-landscape/scholarly-activities/past/frontiers-in-urban-landscape-research>). The colloquium was an opportunity to bring together six early-career scholars pursuing cross-disciplinary work and shaping new approaches to the urban environment. It was intended to generate greater awareness of the urban humanities, while helping an emerging generation of scholars advance their work across a range of

relevant fields, including landscape architecture, history, and art history. Each participant was paired with a mentor and discussed topics ranging from landscape in twelfth-century Marrakech to the role of panoramas in the development of Chicago's park system. Three additional graduate students received funding to attend the event through Mellon Travel Awards.

Mellon scholars and practitioners came together for weekly "**Midday Dialogues**," hour-long presentations by invited speakers followed by discussion. Topics ranged from informal urbanism in North Africa and Brazil to dredging Baltimore harbor; environmental history to the gentrification of toxic sites; urban trees to "innovation zones." Speakers represented a wide range of perspectives and professional approaches, including designers, historians and public officials. The audience included both Mellon Fellows and regular Garden and Landscape Studies fellows along with fellows from other programs, Dumbarton Oaks staff, and invited guests. These "Midday Dialogues" proved an especially fruitful aspect of our activities, encouraging a great deal of animated discussion. A list of speakers and their topics is attached as an appendix below; more detailed information can be found at <http://www.doaks.org/research/garden-landscape/mellon-initiative-in-urban-landscape-studies/midday-dialogues-with-urban-landscape-fellows>).

While Midday Dialogues were open primarily to Dumbarton Oaks fellows and staff, the Mellon Initiative also offered **public programming** aimed at making urban landscape research accessible to non-academic audiences. In March 2015, we screened *Containment*, a documentary by Professors Peter Galison and Robb Moss of Harvard University. The film explored post-World War II landscapes of nuclear waste and current attempts to conceal this waste for generations in the far future. Peter Galison attended the event, which was part of the Environmental Film Festival in Washington, D.C., and took questions from the audience after the screening (<http://www.doaks.org/research/garden-landscape/scholarly-activities/past/containment>). In April, landscape architect Mary Margaret Jones of the widely-acclaimed landscape architecture firm Hargreaves Associates presented a lecture titled "Olympic Landscapes: Green and Greenest." Her presentation recalled her personal experience with the challenges of creating sustainable designs for Olympic parks in Sydney, Australia (2000) and London, England (2012) (<http://www.doaks.org/research/garden-landscape/scholarly-activities/past/olympic-landscapes-green-and-greener>).

In addition, one of the most exciting parts of the Mellon Initiative in 2015-16 was the launch of extensive **outreach to elementary, high school, and university students** in Washington, D.C. The effort began with a session devoted to research in the urban humanities at the centennial meeting of the

Ecological Society of America in Baltimore in August. Planned in collaboration with Alex Felson at Yale University, the session was an element of the “Earth Stewardship Initiative,” which brought design students as “ESI Fellows” to the ESA meeting to interact with ecologists and community design professionals in a series of seminars and design charrettes that address the future of specific sites in the host city. The Dumbarton Oaks/Mellon component was meant to affirm the importance of research in design practice, reminding ESI Fellows that understanding the historical dimensions of both design and ecology is crucial to sustainable urbanism. In Fall 2015, Mellon fellows Jeanne Haffner, David Wooden, and Christina Milos and Anatole Tchikine, Assistant Director of Garden and Landscape Studies at Dumbarton Oaks, lectured on landscape issues in course titled “The Modern City” at Georgetown University taught by Professor Jordan Sand. In Spring 2016, we partnered with the landscape and architecture teacher at Phelps Architecture, Construction, and Engineering High School, as well as the National Building Museum and the DC Arts & Humanities Education Collaborative, to provide a series of workshops on landscape design and sustainable urbanism to underserved high school and elementary school students in Washington, D.C. Our list of workshops includes:

Biodiversity from Garden to City

Field trip with Phelps Architecture, Engineering and Construction High School

April 27, 2016, 12:30pm-2:30pm

Ten landscape and architecture students from Phelps Architecture, Engineering and Construction High School, grades 10-12, toured the Dumbarton Oaks Garden with particular attention to landscape design, water management, and the design and mechanics of plant beds. Students were shown different types of plant beds throughout this historic site, from the purely aesthetic Rose Garden to more functional ones such as the Kitchen Garden, used to grow food, and the Wilderness, which serves to absorb water as well as to provide a contrast with more formal areas in other parts of the garden. Reaching the pollinator garden, a plant bed that is currently under construction near the Garden Court, they discussed water management challenges at this site as well as the connection between certain plants and the insects they attract with Tyler Fellow Deirdre Moore, who is leading this project. The field trip ended with a pop-up exhibit of Moore’s drawings and maps of the pollinator garden in the Lower Refectory, where students were given the opportunity to ask Moore questions about the design process.

Tree Notebooks

Field trips with students (grades 4 - 8) organized through the DC Arts & Humanities Education Collaborative.

May 3rd (Thirty 7th-8th graders from the Achievement Prep Academy); and May 9th (Thirty 4th graders from the Achievement Prep Academy), 9:30am-11:30am

This workshop, intended for middle school and junior high school students, introduced the basics of tree identification and pointed to the importance of trees in urban sustainability and well-being. Students were first asked to identify the uses of trees, from providing wood to providing food and, in some cultures, spiritual renewal. They were then given notebooks, taken through the garden, and asked to sketch particular trees within its surroundings – an exercise aimed at reinforcing some of the elements of tree identification as well as landscape design at Dumbarton Oaks.

City of Trees

Field trip organized through the DC Arts & Humanities Education Collaborative

May 11th (6th graders from McKinley Middle School), 9:30am-11:30am

Using the grounds of Dumbarton Oaks, thirty 6th graders from McKinley Middle School were shown various ways in which ecological issues enter the city, from gardens like the one at Dumbarton Oaks to water management and biodiversity at the pollinator garden and LEED certification at the Fellowship House at 1700 Wisconsin Avenue. Throughout the tour, students also paid particular attention to topography in the garden and various strategies for controlling the flow of water from garden to park.

Public Park, Private Garden

Field trip with the National Building Museum Teen Council

May 14th, 10:30am-1:30pm

Twelve teens from the National Building Museum's Teen Council, from grades 9-12, came to Dumbarton Oaks to explore the transition between Dumbarton Oaks Garden and Dumbarton Oaks Park. They were first given a one-hour tour of the garden with a particular focus on landscape design and water management as well as planting bed design. At certain parts of the garden students were asked to make a quick sketch of landscape design elements. They were then brought through the gate at the base of Forsythia Hill to Dumbarton Oaks Park. Students were shown remnants from the pre-1940 era when

Dumbarton Oaks Park and Garden were one property, which included the stone bridge, dams along the creek, and stone benches along the path.

Looking ahead to 2016-17, we will continue to work with students at Phelps and teens from the National Building Museum's Design Apprenticeship Program. In addition, we will expand outreach to Anacostia High School, an underperforming school located in one of the most economically underprivileged areas of Washington, D.C., as well as the Anacostia Community Museum (Smithsonian) and ACE Mentors, an afterschool program for students interested in Architecture, Construction, and Engineering. Four Mellon Fellows – two historians and two designers – have accepted fellowships for next year; a list of next year's fellows is included below. For Fall 2016, we are planning a joint workshop with the Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative on housing and the urban environment. In Spring 2017, the Garden and Landscape Studies annual symposium will return to an urban topic, focusing on "The Landscapes of Pre-modern Cities;" a description is attached.

Garden and Landscape Studies at Dumbarton Oaks remains one of the only programs in the world targeted to both humanities scholars and landscape practitioners. The Mellon Initiative in Urban Landscape Studies greatly enhances our opportunities for both groups, fostering constructive dialogue between practitioners and scholars about the history and future of urban landscapes and providing a bridge between their professional modes of thinking. It is through such interdisciplinary dialogue, we believe, that new developments in urban landscape theory and practice can emerge..

Appendix 1

"Midday Dialogues" List of speakers and topics:

Anne Rademacher (New York University), "Producing Green Expertise: Place, Pedagogy and Sustainable Architecture in Mumbai." Anne Rademacher discussed her forthcoming book on the practice of landscape architecture and sustainable design in contemporary Mumbai, India.

Jennifer Vey (Brookings Institution), "The Rise of Innovation Districts: The Intersection of Innovation and Quality Places." The Brookings Institution has partnered with the Project for Public Spaces in New York City to locate and develop innovation districts across the United States. Jennifer Vey, an urban

designer and fellow in the newly-created Centennial Scholar Initiative at Brookings, presented the challenges and successes of this program.

Gary Hilderbrand (Harvard Graduate School of Design and Reed Hilderbrand), “Vegetal City.” Gary Hilderbrand, a Senior Practitioner Resident in the Mellon Initiative, discussed the politics surrounding contemporary projects to increase tree canopy in U.S. cities, including Washington, D.C.

Sheila Crane (University of Virginia), “Inventing Informality in Algiers and Casablanca.” Professor of Architectural History Sheila Crane presented her forthcoming book on the development of the idea of “informality” in North Africa and its connection to French colonial history.

Bruno Carvahlo (Princeton University), “Informal by Design: From Amerindian “Garden Cities” to Olympic Urbanism in Brazil.” Bruno Carvahlo, co-director of the Princeton-Mellon Initiative in Architecture, Urbanism, and the Humanities, discussed the deep history of informality in Brazil, stressing its opposition to historical ideas about morality and aesthetic ‘correctness’ as well as large-scale planning, which made it into a problem in need of rectification.

Alpa Nawre (Mellon Fellow), “Talaab, Ghat, and Canal Waterworks on the Indian Urban Landscape.” Alpa Nawre presented her current research project, which explores the multiple uses – spiritual, commercial, and functional – of water edges in central India and the challenge of landscape architects in the design of such multifunctional spaces.

Mariana Mogilevich (Pratt Institute), “Beyond the City: Metropolitan Environments and Urban Identification.” Mariana Mogilevich discussed her book-in-progress, a study of the invention of “public space” in New York City in the 1960s and its connection to the rise of environmentalism.

Clark Wilson (Environmental Protection Agency), “Design Matters! (Even at the EPA). Clark Wilson considered the increasing need for landscape architects in contemporary sustainable design practice.

Anatole Tchikine (Dumbarton Oaks), “The Flood of Missed Opportunities: Florence, November 4, 1966.” Anatole Tchikine’s presentation explored the impact of flooding on the historical development of Florence, Italy.

Jeanne Haffner (Dumbarton Oaks), “Housing, Landscape, Environment.” Jeanne Haffner’s talk discussed the intersection of dwelling and landscape in Europe and the United States from the turn of the twentieth century to the turn of the twenty-first.

David Wooden (Mellon Fellow), “Critical Work: Innovative Green Infrastructure Regulations Transforming DC.” David Wooden provided an overview of stormwater management practices in Washington, D.C.

Christina Milos (Mellon Fellow), “Anticipating Future Urbanization in Nigeria’s Oils Sands Belt.” Christina Milos presented her research on ways of modeling future scenarios for rapid urbanization in productive landscapes such as the oil sands in Nigeria.

Katrina Jones (MD Port Administration), “Restoring Brown Places into Green Spaces through Community Engagement: The Masonville Story.” Katrina Jones works with local communities in Maryland where dredge from the Baltimore Harbor will be deposited. She discussed various approaches and community responses.

Juan Andres León (Chemical Heritage Foundation), “The Topography of Post-Industrial Gentrification: Toxic Identities and Flooded Realities in Gowanus, Brooklyn.” Juan Andres León exhibited his extensive fieldwork in Gowanus, New York, and his analysis of real estate responses to environmental cleanup of this well-situated urban site.

Peder Anker (New York University), “A History of Environmental Designs.” Peder Anker initiated the Midday Dialogues series with a discussion of the shift from ecology to climatology in environmental design theory and practice.

Appendix 2

Mellon Fellows in Urban Landscape Studies, 2016-17

Megan Asaka, University of California, Riverside

“The Unsettled City: Migration, Race, and the Making of Seattle’s Urban Landscape”

Sara Carr, University of Hawaii at Manoa

“The Topography of Wellness: Health and the American Urban Landscape”

Peter Ekman, University of California, Berkeley

“Suburbs of Last Resort: Vitality and Ruin on the Edges of San Francisco Bay”

Burak Erdim, North Carolina State University

“The Academy and the State: Situating Land Economics and Development Planning in the Cold War Middle East”

Appendix 3

LANDSCAPES OF PRE-MODERN CITIES

Dumbarton Oaks Garden and Landscape Studies Symposium

May 5-6, 2017

Project description

The use of the word “landscape” to describe the formation and infrastructure of cities—as reflected, for example, in current theories of landscape urbanism—largely seems to reflect contemporary preoccupations with the post-industrial urban condition. Indeed, the Industrial Revolution is often seen as a turning point in the emergence of the modern metropolis. The large city as commonly experienced today in the developed world—whether vertical or horizontal, congested or diffused, and divorced from productive nature—is certainly dependent on a range of recent (or quite recent) breakthroughs in construction technology, climate control, communication, and transportation. In this view, urban landscapes appear as a historically late development and are therefore seen to embody an essentially modern and Western concept.

Yet, features associated with contemporary urban landscapes—most notably the forms of human adaptation to and reshaping of the sites where cities develop and expand—can also be found in pre-industrial contexts in different time periods and across the globe. Pre-modern urban settlements generally occupied land that had been used for other, mostly productive, purposes, and their development involved complex and dynamic relationships with the management of natural resources, especially food and water. While ancient cities are traditionally studied as the centers of commerce, trade, and artisan production as well as the seats of secular and religious authorities, questions of how the original clusters of agrarian communities evolved into urban formations, how they were spatially organized, and what the specific characteristics were of these pre-industrial urban landscapes deserve further analysis and discussion. Another closely related question concerns the role of environmental factors and the presence or lack of particular natural resources in enabling this process of urbanization.

To explore these questions, the Garden and Landscape Studies program at Dumbarton Oaks is planning a symposium, *Landscapes of Pre-Modern Cities*, to be held on May 5–6, 2017. It is hoped that topics will

be drawn from a wide range of historical periods and a global geographical perspective. In order to integrate this discussion into the current debate on the sustainable city, the speakers will be asked to address the following questions:

How was the modern dichotomy between the urban and the rural historically expressed in the relationship between cities and the natural environment—especially with respect to land use, environmental control, and resource management?

To what extent was the ability to exert control over the natural environment and its resources through territorial expansion, hydraulic management, and land reclamation a determinant factor in the design, evolution, and historical fortunes of pre-modern cities?

What sense can we make of the contemporary concepts of urban sprawl, biodiversity, climate change, connectivity, and integrated management of natural resources if applied to pre-industrial urban landscapes? What implications does this understanding have for current scholarship, design strategies, and planning policies at the age of ecological transition? Contributions are invited from both designers and historians.