

Article

Productive Friction Between Practice and the Academy: Why Can't We Be Friends?

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Abstract: This essay examines the various machinations and relationships between landscape architectural practice and landscape architectural academia. Through the lens of productive friction and the philosophical framework of radical hope; I unpack various examples of disruptors and innovation with the aim of opening up a discussion around our urgent need for transformation.

Keywords: praxis; radical hope; productive friction; profound disruptions



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1. Introduction

I have been composing this essay over the better part of the year, often finding myself frustrated and thinking quite literally; “so what?” [1] When so many of my black brothers and sisters are calling out for social justice, the US once a pinnacle for democracy now descending into corruption, and our planet is literally on fire, in flood, in famine, in drought, in crisis, and yet we are IN DENIAL. Let alone a world pandemic whereby we witness many supposedly democratic government entities selecting capitalism over human lives, economic plenitude over human health. Why should I try and write another essay which is doomed to gather more dust, albeit digital, which cleverly tries to articulate my thoughts on the praxis between the academy and practice? How might I find radical hope and optimism in working through various options which are disrupting the fixations of landscape architectural discourses when the world is calling out for much bigger fish to fry? Perhaps by invoking radical hope and its underpinnings I can unpack a few ways forward for those of you willing to take on board in this very winding, somewhat narrowly focused, assumptive, and often seemingly contradictory essay. To do this from the onset, I will delve a bit deeper into Johnathan Lear’s concepts of radical hope, then provide readers with a personal disclaimer channelling Dean MacCannell’s advice, followed by very selective, key moments in practice and academic discourses which produce exemplars of productive friction, whereby finally settling upon series of recent examples which I briefly touch upon but which ultimately inspire me to believe in radical hope for the collective futures of the discipline.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Radical Hope as a Philosophical Framework

Johnathan Lear writes, “The inability to conceive of its own devastation will tend to be the blind spot of any culture . . . A culture tends to propagate itself, and it will do that by instilling its own sense of possibility in the young” [2] (p. 126). The ability to envision possibilities beyond those handed down by our existing culture, Lear argues, requires what he calls ‘radical hope.’ He explains:

“For what may we hope? Kant put this question in the first-person singular along with two others—What can I know? and What ought I to do?—that he thought essentially marked the human condition. With two centuries of philosophical reflection, it seems that these questions are best transposed to the first-person plural. And with that same

hindsight: rather than attempt at a priori inquiry, I would like to consider hope as it might arise at one of the limits of human existence . . . What makes this hope radical is that it is directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is. Radical hope anticipates a good for which those who have the hope as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it. What would it be for such hope to be justified”? [2] (p. 14)

Lear, a philosopher, explores a thought-provoking interpretation of one man’s account of the collapse of his culture, as well as the hope he offers for a future for his people. Based on the life history of Chief Plenty Coups (as recorded by Frank Linderman during the late 1920s); Lear contemplates two equally profound images proffered by the Crow elder. The first is embedded in Plenty Coups’ statement, “after this nothing happened,” referring to what happened after being placed on a reservation, and the second comes from Coups’ medicine dreams in which the destruction of Native American culture is foretold. Plenty Coups leads the Crows to follow the example of the Chickadee, listening and learning from the mistakes of others. Plenty Coups thus provides the Crow with what Lear coins as radical hope for renewal that survives their destruction, though in a form of survival that could not be anticipated at the time. For the Crow, the necessary extension of practical reason was spurred by enigmatic dreams and oracles. As Lear writes, “Precisely because they are about to endure a historical rupture, the detailed texture of life on the other side has to be beyond their ken. In the face of such a cultural challenge, dreaming provides an unusual resource. It enables the dreamers to imagine a radically new future without becoming too detailed about what this future will be” [2] (p. 103). My point here is that we have to transcend our crumbling context because the latter no longer offers suitable answers. Lacking a concrete conception of the future of our discipline we need a commitment to the idea that landscape architecture’s contribution to the world transcends one’s limited and vulnerable attempts to understand it. I am not sure I can actually conjure radical hope for the discipline, when I am vexed with deep concerns over the future of society and our planet, but I will do my best to offer up something more than blatant criticism and blame for both the academy and practice because I see this as counterproductive; and because it often leads to nostalgia which to be frank the good old days had its fair share of hegemony and divisiveness.

2.2. Authenticity and Owning Subjectivity

Professor Emeritus of Landscape Architecture at the University of California at Davis Dean MacCannell writes:

“Everything written in the objective style of 1950s social sciences or New Criticism, and everything written in the opaque style of post-structural discourses, now risks being read as a kind of political cover-up, hidden complicity, and intrigue on either the right or left. Interestingly, the one path that still leads in the direction of scholarly objectivity, detachment, and neutrality is exactly the one originally thought to lead away from these classic virtues: that is, an openly autobiographical style in which the subjective position of the author, especially on political matters is presented in a clear and straightforward fashion. At least this enables the reader to review his or her own position to make adjustments necessary for dialogue”. [3] (p. 17)

While MacCannell’s context for scholarly contributions is in his explorations the complex relationships between tourism, capitalism, and exploitations of culture, this quote weighs heavily on me for this essay. Much of the following discussion is couched in my subjective position and is what I would describe as a piecemeal examination of several concepts with exemplars taken from landscape architectural discourse. Rather than explicate my autobiography, which deeply informs the agendas in this essay, I have included it in the acknowledgments section of this paper at the end. This is for those of you who trust MacCannell’s criticism of the so-called objective and opaque styles in post-structural discourses and are somewhat sceptical as I admittedly am of many scholarly

papers claiming to be neutral or objective. This very rambling essay is an attempt at unravelling a number of disparate thoughts, experiences, and ideas, in a bid to offer up ideas which may spark transformation and provide a form of radical hope. At the very minimum I wish to add to growing awareness for our urgent need to transform both the academy and practice. Like many who have preceded me I am attempting to embody productive friction in this exploration as a means to spark initiatives.

2.3. The Necessity for Productive Friction and Other Calls to Arms

Productive Friction is a concept coined by John Hagel III and John Seely Brown in their book; *The Only Sustainable Edge: Why Business Strategy depends on Productive Friction and Dynamic Specialisation*. Hagel writes;

“When people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and skill sets engage with each other on real problems, there is usually friction in the form of misunderstandings and arguments. Such friction can get dysfunctional. But if properly harnessed, this kind of friction can become very productive, accelerate learning, encourage innovation and foster trust across diverse participants. Productive friction can generate opportunities for capability building across specialized players within process networks”. [4] (p. 14)

Friction produces many uncomfortable moments, but this is often essential. When we examine major disruptions and innovations in our discipline and more broadly across society, there is generally some form of discord. However, it is delicate, and it involves people’s willingness and ability to challenge each other in the interest of coming up with better approaches. Hagel and Seely Brown document productive friction case studies across a wide range of sectors including in the non-profit and university sectors. They contend that productive friction demands that we challenge complacency; force re-examinations of what are doing and whether there are other ways to be more impactful. While many contend that discourses in the profession and university foster productive friction, I remain unconvinced that is regularly encouraged and expected as a responsibility to improve the discipline. Yet, as we face issues that are more complex, unexpected, and demand fresh solutions, we need a broader range of approaches to landscape architecture practice and education to meet unprecedented challenges.

Creative sparks fly not when interactions between practices and universities are seamless but when the activity at the seams is challenging, stimulating, and catalytic. Keep in mind that productive friction does not usually happen so naturally. As we all have probably observed when people with different backgrounds, experiences, and skill sets engage with one another on problems, misunderstandings arise, arguments occur, and time is consumed before resolution and learning take place (if they do at all). Too often, in fact, the friction becomes dysfunctional. Misunderstanding hardens into mistrust, and opposing sides focus on the distance that separates them rather than the common challenges they face.

So, in ruminating on the current state of play and thinking about the future I want to take a short, very pointed look back at a seminal figure in landscape architecture, Dan Kiley. This is not so much to celebrate his work but to capture his rather infamous views on the academy and the establishment, the American Society of Landscape Architecture (ASLA); and to discuss the role of productive friction in driving both the academy and practice forward. This is not to say that more contemporary examples exist, but I would rather frame this through an example of 20th century history using well cited evidence before delving into my 21st Century conjecture.

Dan Kiley in his recollections of conversations with Warren Manning said; “Warren Manning told me two things: do not go to Harvard and do not join the ASLA.” (Reference [5] as cited in [6] (p. 9). Whereby Kiley enrolled in the GSD in 1936 without having an undergraduate education and infamously left without completing his degree in 1938. Joseph Dispozio offers some explanation as to why rebelling against the establishment, in this case the academy, was precisely what motivated practice to move forward. He writes:

“At Harvard Kiley might have thrived precisely because the historicist academic atmosphere of the landscape architecture curriculum proved so repellent—his career seems to suggest that this situation was conducive to his development. Antagonism is a form of competition and Dan Kiley is nothing if not a competitor” [6] (p. 10)

Kiley’s bristling and brushing up against academic and professional institutions extends well beyond his formative years. Disponzio summarises this aptly:

“Kiley has not made the task of critically investigating his career easy—he has made a sport of sparring with the profession that places him at its top, ignoring the professional establishment, writing little, and avoiding explanations of his work. He has never joined its national organization, the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) He is disinclined, if not quietly hostile, to any perceived academic intellectualized scrutiny of his work”. [6] (p. 8)

Dan Kiley was not alone in his eschewing of the academy and professional organisations, there are significant number of other well-regarded practitioners throughout the 20th and 21st century who adopt similar attitudes. Another particularly relevant example of rebelling against or critiquing normative landscape architectural dogmas, includes Martha Schwartz. Distinctly, Martha offers her critique of the establishment through her projects. On a surface level, her deployment of mundane materials which are not about lasting forever or growing stately over time, or pretending to be stewards of the land, and her general ridicule of landscape architectural conventions, began an epic debate which has yet to end about gardens, landscape architecture, and material practices. Ian Thompson writes:

“Martha Schwartz horrified those with settled opinions about landscape architecture and gardens by using unconventional materials and fake plants in her projects. Coming from art practice, she launched her new career with the witty Bagel Garden (Boston, MA, 1979) which used shellacked (varnished) bagels as decorations in a domestic parterre (a parterre is a design on the ground, usually edged with box hedging and filled with coloured earths or gravel) which poked fun at its grander equivalents in French formal gardens. It was a pivotal work which caused a rift in the discipline at the time”. [7] (p. 70)

Schwartz has over four decades now of work which challenges academics and practitioners to question preconceptions of nature, landscape, art, and aesthetics let alone materiality, sustainability, and longevity. I once shared a very long cab ride with Martha in Beijing and we spoke about many things, but pointedly she reflected on being a professor of practice at Harvard. Her critique at that time was the resounding lack of females and practitioners in the GSD in landscape architecture, and the lack of critical mass who were willing to rigorously challenge diagram mania better known as landscape urbanism. I will not attempt to unravel the tortured history and discourses in landscape urbanism and/or ecological urbanism but I wish to acknowledge that these discourses certainly do offer another interesting set off rich examples of the antagonistic relationships between academia and practice.

While Kiley and Schwartz are only two examples whereby productive and perhaps unproductive friction have played a pivotal role in their careers and their notable contributions to the discipline, practitioners are certainly not the only ones who thrive when taking on the role of the provocateur. Academics are often poking the bear, writing scathing reviews of built work, decrying a lack of depth, philosophical intent, and challenging practitioners in general over all sorts of vitriolic and often idealistic agendas. That is not to say that they do not have or make valid points, but does this result in productive friction?

An interesting and robust example of this is the 2004 ‘Apocalyptic Manifesto’ by then Iowa State academics, Heidi Hohmann and Joern Langhorst. Their treatise starts off in the following way:

“At the start of the 21st century, landscape architecture is a troubled profession, more distinguished by what it lacks than the qualities that it actually possesses. It has no

historiography, no formal theory, no definition, direction, or focus. A vast schism currently exists between its academics and professional practitioners. In universities across the nation, researchers poach methodologies from other, more vibrant disciplines. Meanwhile, in professional offices, designers yoked to the bottom line crank out pedestrian design.

We believe these problems are pervasive and chronic. They indicate that landscape architecture is not just troubled, but sick. The condition of the patient is critical, requiring immediate attention". [8] (p. 26)

Their provocation agitated practitioners, and academics alike, as there were a number of interesting responses internationally. So, while Kiley and Schwartz utilised practice to level their critique and invite productive friction, Hohmann and Langhorst use an academic treatise albeit published in Landscape Architecture Magazine for their call to arms. All of them share a way of inciting discussion or provoking action but what of their rage against the machine, has it made any difference? A re-examination of the key points and critique that Langhorst and Hohmann levelled offers up some interesting insights.

Langhorst and Hohmann put forward six symptoms:

1. Landscape architecture has lost its roots in intellectual thought, culture, and literature.
2. Landscape architecture no longer has connections to power and politics that historically defined its periods of greatest production, innovation, and prestige.
3. Landscape architecture has not replaced the loss of intellectual roots and political leverage with any new or important context or support.
4. Landscape architecture, as currently practiced, is a deeply conservative activity.
5. Landscape architecture today has no central or core defining values.
6. If landscape architecture cannot define a current direction, neither can it cope with its status as an undefined and undefinable profession. [8] (p. 29).

This is followed on by a deeply critical and cynical examination of five miracle cures, which are often touted by academics and practitioners alike, but fail to make any difference.

Well-meaning members of the profession regularly propose panaceas for the aforementioned symptoms, in the exciting guise of "redefining the profession." Such cures range from reforming education to "designing with nature" to "expanding the field" to "recovering landscape" to "(de)forming, in(form)ing, and re(forming) landscape." [8] (p. 38)

Langhorst and Hohmann then systematically challenge the five solutions to disciplines' never-ending crisis state:

1. The development of a critical discourse will re-energize landscape architecture's moribund nature.
2. If landscape architecture could learn to present its contributions to human welfare in a more convincing manner, then it would be understood and embraced by all.
3. The formulation of a body of theory will unify the disparate activities of landscape architecture and provide a direction for the field.
4. Ecology and sustainable design will breathe new life into landscape architecture, which will then become the bastion of applied ecology and the protector of the earth.
5. Landscape architecture is uniquely situated to be an experimental field less bound by formal and technical constraints and should be reinvented as such. [8] (p. 42).

Noted Landscape architectural theorist and academic Elizabeth K. Meyer responded by calling out their manifesto published a response in the same issue of Landscape Architecture magazine:

"An Apocalyptic Manifesto" is neither a manifesto—"a public declaration of motives and intentions" (as the authors claim)—nor apocalyptic—revelatory and disclosing. It is a list of complaints and contradictory assertions—the whining of those who are not satisfied with the profession but who are unengaged in changing it. It is the yearning

of those who desire theory in a design field to share the predictive role of theory in the natural sciences.

If authors Hohmann and Langhorst think landscape architecture can be reduced to site engineering, site ecology, environmental art, site design, planting plans, sustainable design, and cultural criticism—all of which can be accomplished better by someone else—let them diagnose their landscape architecture patient as terminal. The practice of landscape architecture I see is alive and has never been better.

I could argue with most of Hohmann and Langhorst's assertions, but they offer no evidence, so there's nothing to argue against. Rather, I would like to examine their thesis, as it is founded on a serious case of mistaken identity due to "eyes that cannot see". [9] (p. 48)

Additionally, she incorporated the manifesto into one of the assignments in her Theories of Modern Landscape Architecture courses at the University of Virginia and assigned her students to respond to it as well. The students' responses some of which were subsequently published in lunch, the UVA School of Architecture's student journal, offer transformative agendas in their own right. Meyer describes them aptly; "The student writings that follow demonstrate that a creative and critical stance towards contemporary practice is grounded in personal conviction and an awareness of the discourse of one's field, the communication of ideas and construction of a conversation across generations" [10] (p. 49).

Meyer opens the door for productive friction between students, academics, and practitioners. She incites her students to engage with the manifesto through asserting their voices and reactions, but they are also compelled to offer alternative, imaginative visions. The student essays explore forms of hope and agency for the profession and the future of our discipline at large. This is exemplified 2006 MLA student Anne Bohen in her essay, 'untitled dialectic'. Bohen discusses the need for dialectics in Landscape Architecture and espouses the virtues of being an ambiguous or difficult profession and discipline to define. She writes:

"The dialectic of landscape architecture offers opportunity, and potential within what the authors call the "ambiguous nature" of landscape architecture. Specifically, the dialectic allows for an ambiguity, which is productive and allows for an infiltration of thought in landscape that ultimately creates new definitions responding to new social conditions. Values of Landscape Architecture are in direct response to ever changing values of society, directly tied to site, history and social need or more specifically, "environment". To state that "landscape architecture today, lacks a compelling and unifying social agenda" is again to find fault with that aspect of landscape which defines it uniquely, separate from every other profession: landscape architecture is a profession of response, it is an action, not complacent and accepting, but responding to and challenging the values of our constructed environments. If the profession seeks a raison d'être, let it be found there in the active engagement of both the conversation and construction of our built environment". [11] (p. 56)

Meyer concludes with: "Unlike the authors of "Apocalyptic Manifesto," these landscape architects and architects are channelling their dissatisfaction with how things are done into statements of beliefs upon which design action can occur." [10] (p. 49) Which in many ways embraces the aforementioned description of creative sparks, productive friction, radical hope and disruptive innovation but did this debate shift the course of landscape architecture?

I am often labelled acerbic and cynical as well as being too direct but in revisiting this seminal treaty and the various discussions which followed, I am challenged in disputing that our profession has radically shifted since Langhorst and Hohmann's collective account was first levelled. I tend to agree with Meyer and others in terms of the lack of depth and investigation presented but Langhorst and Hohmann's 'Apocalyptic Manifesto' manifested reactions, debates, and critical reflection through a professional journal which at times

publishes more advertisements than judicious insights. While the lunch essays are perhaps more productive in terms of stimulating alternative and transformative ideas, the manifesto provides sufficient antagonism to elicit responses. Perhaps it is too soon to know if it sparked a major shift or reconsideration. Productive friction may provide one method for re-charging relationships between academics, students, and the profession but we have a more pressing difficulty on hand.

2.4. Waning Demand for Landscape Architectural Degree Programs

The domestic student demand for university places in landscape architecture has plummeted in Australia and the United States. So much so that when COVID-19 hit earlier this year, a number of degree programs in Australia are now facing severe cost reductions, staff redundancies and program closures. Foreground, the Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture's digital publication foretold this pending catastrophe in a short essay on this vulnerability in 2018 when they covered a small panel of practitioners and educators in a round table discussion. They reported;

"If international student numbers were to dry up, landscape architecture programs around the country could conceivably lose the majority of their students, making them untenable . . . This impression is largely borne out by data gathered by AILA on enrolments in 2017 across five of the eight university landscape architecture programs that lead to accreditation as a registered landscape architect. According to this data, the average ratio of local students to international is 23 to 77 percent, meaning local students are outnumbered nearly three-to-one by internationals". [12]

Similarly, in the United States, where forty percent of MLA enrolled students are international; there have been steady declines in overall program (both masters and undergraduate) enrolments from 2013–2017 of 10% [13]. Perhaps what is most astounding is that the overall numbers of students (undergraduates and postgraduates) in 2018 in both Australia, 563 and the United States, 5376; is relatively small in comparison to overall population size [12,14]. However, this might explain why our impacts across practice and the academy are quite limited, there are simply not enough landscape architects. Or more optimistically do we punch above our weight? Are we small in numbers but fierce in impact and capacity? For a fairly petite sized discipline are we producing cutting edge knowledge which is reshaping the world theoretically and physically?

2.5. That Old Chestnut: The Jack of all Trades and Master of None

When reflecting on and reviewing the causes of the lack of interest in studying landscape architecture, the various mantras around the profession and the discipline being relatively unknown, "young", and ill-defined continue to resurface [15]. Precisely the point that makes it an interesting discipline, it is emergent, and responsive to its social, political, and environmental contexts. Revisiting landscape architecture's strength in terms of ambiguity circles back to Bohen's points made earlier but instead this thread led me to question the distinctness of our degrees and training or the educational offerings to future landscape architects in general. My observations in Australia maybe somewhat narrowly focused but I would say that the broad-brush nature of the profession and corresponding academic programs' structures play heavily into national professional accreditation criteria. In attempting to enable our students and graduates to be capable of approaching diverse landscape architectural challenges, we created a number of degree programs and courses with generic learning outcomes and skill sets. I am mindful that a number of universities also require common courses across built environment disciplines as a part of course optimisation and fiscally efficient operations. Nevertheless, our degree programs promote this generalised approach so that landscape architects can practice at many scales and be across a broad range number of project types. Yet, all of the programs in Australia claim to be distinctive and unique in their offerings and approaches to the discipline of landscape architecture. An examination of the student work produced in design studios, history and theory courses, technical, construction, professional practice and design communication

courses begs to differ. My successive years on accreditation panels, adjunct professorial roles, as well as being an external assessor for university reviews, evidences similar course content and student work nationally.

Yet, our programs have more academic staff with specialised knowledge gained through their PhD completions than ever. One speculation is that specialisations are much more common at the Masters degree level, as is the case in Landscape Architecture Programs in the United States. This is simply untrue. In Australia, we lack a critical mass of post graduate course work degrees (there are six Master of Landscape Architecture programs) all of whom conform to professional accreditation requirements which largely construct their curricula in a sea of sameness. That is not to say that a number of the independent student design projects produced both in the capstone studios of undergraduate degrees and in the independent major project studios of post graduate degrees lack quality and breadth, because for the most part they do, but there is not a concentration around key challenges facing the profession or those aforementioned contemporary concerns raised at the beginning of this essay. My provocation here is that while academic staff in Australian universities have been developing very distinctive research profiles and areas of endeavours which do tend to unpack and re-think challenges to our profession and the discipline at large, the corresponding degree programs remain rather generic. More specifically, in Australia there is not a university which is leading landscape architectural education in terms of wrestling with climate change and resilience, Aboriginal and Indigenous knowledges in relation to the Australian landscape, the new normal in public space post pandemic, ecosystems services and biodiversity, humanitarian landscape architecture, landscape and health, etc. In fact, almost all universities claim through individual student projects and design studios that they are leaders across all of these areas and then some. This is symptomatic of educators covering as many bases as we can to prepare graduates for professional practice and the ambiguity of the discipline. As well as the insatiable need by our academic institutions for everyone to have an individual research expertise which may or may not trickle into teaching let alone building a degree program which specialises in depth of knowledge in one or two complex challenges rather than breadth across the whole of everything.

Should we reconsider this approach? Our university ecosystem of landscape architecture degree programs is small, but they can work mobilise relatively easily. The accrediting body for universities is also our professional body, the Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture (AILA). Given the impending shortage of domestic graduates, according to data collected by AILA in 2017, the average ratio of local students to international is 23 to 77 percent, meaning local students are outnumbered nearly three-to-one by international; it is in the best interest of practice to consider alternative approaches to landscape architectural accreditation [12]. University programs in Australia may see increased enrolments of domestic students, although early national numbers for 2021 do not indicate major increases in demand for landscape architectural degrees, but the fiscal pressures of not being able to attract international students during COVID-19 border closures means that University programs need the dexterity and the openness to explore nonconformity.

The University of Technology Sydney envisioned embedding and partnering their post-professional masters degree students with local practices. The vision included landscape architecture masters students to provide research which was of critical value to their sponsoring private practices. This program proposal was shelved in its early stages by the former Head of School. Post professional degree Masters programs more generally are struggling to attract students, even with increased places funded by the Commonwealth Government. This is partially because of the increased demand for skilled graduates in the field whereby bachelors degree graduates prefer to work rather than continue to study. Additionally, many practices do not see a post professional degree as a value proposition.

It is also noteworthy that we are still accepting professional practice norms which are modelled on 20th century paradigms of project procurement and delivery processes let alone the master- apprentice forms of hegemonic office structures. Should our degrees

operate as a factory for latent capitalism to feed the market which in turn feeds the destruction of the planet and society [16,17]? We continue to produce generic degree programs and graduates to service obsolete forms of practice. At a time where disruptive innovation is sorely needed, we have yet to fulfill or satisfy the emergent nature of the profession and higher education all together. Can embedded masters students play an integral part in re-shaping practice?

3. Results

The LSA, FSA, EMILA, and Other Models

In a radical approach, the London School of Architecture (LSA), which had its first student intake in 2015 is England's first independent school of Architecture since 1847 [18]. The LSA is a bottom-up initiative whereby the founder and current CEO Will Hunter started the initiative through a 2012 article, "Alternative Routes for Architecture" in The Architecture Review as well as launching a think tank exploring new models of architectural education [19]. The LSA think tank and advisory group went on to gather over 100 practices to participate in its network and the School continues to grow and flourish. The ethos behind the school is strategic to attract more diverse student cohorts into architecture, make the degree more affordable, and embed learning and design research within practice environments without encumbersome university administration.

Hunter explains:

"Our starting point was a simple one: how can you make architectural education lower cost and better value? The first so that the profession is an affordable career for talented students to enter; and the second so that graduates are well equipped with the intellectual creative capital and the core competencies to shape the built environment in the 21st century. We did not want what we were doing to be an attack on other schools of architecture, many (if not most) of whom are asking exactly the same questions. However, we did feel that there was a gap in the marketplace for an institution outside a university campus setting". [18]

The LSA model offers a two-year post graduate program, where the first year embeds students in a practice placement and the second year is focused on self-directed learning. The reciprocal relationship between practices and students builds knowledge transfer and joint responsibility between study and practice. Hunter's realised vision for the School includes frameworks and scaffolding for students to self-organise into design research clusters and collaborative activities across practices which co-produce relevant and provocative work. While the Architectural practices are the physical and immersive learning environments in the first year, the course and program scaffolding demand that both students and practitioners explore multiple perspectives and ways of working. In their second year during their independent studies, students move to different London borough and the focus is more outward and community facing. The LSA created an agile network which is demonstrated not only in how it collaborates with practice but by the considered decision to not have fixed physical infrastructure. Their nomadic occupation of the city, allows for dexterity and fluidity whereby architectural education is concerned with multiple contexts, contestation, and "a wider ecology of ideas." Integral to the LSA are principals where student voices are heard, and their collective ambition is supported [20].

Will Hunter discusses this more deeply:

"The students are embedded in the locale, and one of the questions that we ask of them as a student body in first year is how do they want to do that? Will they spend the budget on studios? Or a hub space? Or a high street shop? The first part of the second year is group work investigating the borough at an urban scale, and this then moves into individual thesis projects. These will be taught by practices in the network, and these practices might rotate on an annual basis. All the technical teaching would be delivered within the practices, with a budget to bring in the expertise of consultants in their professional network". [18]

By granting the students collective agency in the form of budget discretion over where and how they locate their studios, the LSA is empowering another kind of independent learning and stimulating collaborative decision-making processes [20]. The LSA also employs a robust transparency on funding sources (sponsorships and grants) as well as student fees and School expenditures; thereby holding true to the ethos of a 21st century education where ethical decision making is supported through action and the institution is held accountable. This builds trust with their practice networks but also the greater public. In the Australian context the general public and federal politicians who determine our funding pools, have decidedly lost faith in how universities spend public monies and the impact we have on greater society. While many vehemently argue against this, fundamentally loss of trust and lack of transparency in University finances has created difficult environments for many remaining in traditional academic institutions. While the London School of Architecture offers a very intriguing and 21st century approach to disruptive innovation in higher education, the capacity in Australia for this to be duplicated particularly in landscape architecture is relatively unknown. I am hopeful that the ever-entrepreneurial generation of relatively recent graduates take up this challenge and re-invent it in our context.

There are myriad of other options including establishing private architecture colleges such as those in the United States which were established by practitioners, such as SCI-Arch, Cranbrook (Saarinen) and Taliesin (Wright) but private colleges in Australia and elsewhere are fairly nascent and while we certainly have many practitioners of note, none have come forward with a large endowment and the ambition to start their own private academies. Private colleges have their own challenges, Taliesin nearly closed after 88 years due to financial pressures, disputes over maintaining the original intent of its founder, and has now broken with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. They have changed their name due to copyright infringements and have relocated to Cosanti and Arcosanti [21]. It is also notable that there are two architecture programs in private colleges in Australia (Bond University and Notre Dame) but they both have been heavily impacted by COVID-19 and academic staff are facing similar challenges to public universities.

Another interesting model includes Peter Zellner's Free School of Architecture (FSA). Founded in 2017, Zellner envisioned a tuition-free, salary-free, post-studio model of education. The Free School is founded on non-hierarchical relationships between students and teachers, open conversations, student autonomy and critical engagement. At the time of founding Zellner felt there was an imperative and necessity to "unshackle students and teachers alike from the master-disciple model of teaching" [22]. In Zellner's 2016 seminal essay, "Architectural education is broken-here's how to fix it" he sets out the premises for the FSA:

"Many schools of architecture now find themselves mired in various forms of academic cult worship: digital traditionalisms, faux-art fetishisms, silly mannerist dead-ends, philosopher-shaman worship, and other neoconservative returns . . . Several generations of students were robbed of their voices and their right to grow potent individual practices. Without placing more radical expectations on our current models of architectural education, our schools will forfeit their ability to fulfill their cultural and academic missions. Without freeing up a zone for architectural education to explore the space between vocations and ideas, the profession and the discipline will wither. Without a return to the value of an architecture of ideas and not an architecture of marketing concepts then the purpose and need for the very school of architecture may be on the table". [22]

The Free School runs intensively over six weeks during the summer in various sites across Los Angeles, there are no assignments to eliminate power imbalances between students and staff, and students, recent attendees and staff collaborate to determine the successive programme of activities. After its initial offering, Zellner stepped back as he had always planned for the FSA to be free to evolve rather than dominated by one person's agenda [23]. The Free School enables a coming together of students, practitioners, academics and others for embedded experiences which evolve over time, encourage fluidity

and through acts of volunteerism and generosity. While the FSA is not in place of traditional university programs and professional body lead initiatives, it certainly extends them and encourages other ways of engaging with discourse and the discipline. Its allure is its temporality and rigour like an extended or enduring flash-mob, which has the feel of an artist residency and the sustained energy of a conference workshop.

Another initiative and innovative model, which began with Erasmus funding and was spearheaded by Dr Karin Helms, is the European Master in Landscape Architecture (EMiLA). Unlike the LSA and FSA, EMiLA is within Universities but is a cross-university or shared degree. The EMiLA consortia includes: Amsterdam University of the Arts (AUA)/Amsterdam Academy of Architecture (AAA), Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC)/Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura (ETSAB)/Escola Superior d'Agricultura de Barcelona (ESAB), The University of Edinburgh/Edinburgh College of Art (ECA)/The Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (ESALA), Leibniz Universität Hannover (LUH)/Fakultät für Architektur und Landschaft and Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Paysage Versailles/Marseille (ENSP). Originally formed at a time when European borders were opening and there was collective agency brought forward by the European Landscape Convention in 2000. The five programs are united under a core philosophy which recognises that political borders do not necessarily follow landscape and geomorphologies, and that practicing at a territorial scale is necessary going forward. The EMiLA website describes the necessity for this initiative:

“There is a specific need for such a Masters because there is a lack of landscape architects dealing with the understanding of our cultural landscape differences in Europe . . . Our European landscapes do not stop at national borders even if the national and historical policies have been very important in each nation. The objective is also to make students and professional practitioners more aware of the links between the EU policies and the territorial scale of management as well as of the possible role of landscape design. The EU policies are adapted to each culture and geographical region, which makes the potential interpretations a source of new concepts”. [24]

The EMiLA curricula involves semester-based student exchanges between the partners and an annual intensive summer workshop where all of the institutions come together collectively. More specifically, five students from each of the universities spend their 2nd and 3rd semesters at two of the network's other institutions, whilst the students spend the 1st semester and complete their master's thesis at their home institution. In between the two exchange semesters, all 25 students meet for a joint Summer School in one of the partner countries. Additionally, an eLearning module provides collective knowledge about European landscape architecture and the European Landscape Convention [24]. The model is relatively small, but robust and produces graduates who have an international education. It involves trust and coordination across each institution but also an appreciation for difference in terms of educational pedagogical approaches. So, while it may not address specific nexuses between practice and academia, the model opens up opportunities for graduate differentiation, fluidity of curricula, and collegial cooperation. In 2013 I initiated a much smaller and less ambitious pilot in the spirit of the EMiLA programme in Australia, but unfortunately it failed to take root. Unfortunately, we were far too competitive with one another and frankly, our egos got in the way of trusting that each program had something to offer as well as some rather pragmatic concerns around funding models. However, now that we are facing a crisis, perhaps it is time to resurrect this model, totally re-think it, and invent for ourselves an Austral-Asian Master's Program.

4. Discussion

I am nearing the end of the essay and I have realised that I have written nothing about creative practice PhDs which invite practitioners into universities to examine and articulate the new knowledge that practice brings to bare. I am mindful that some traditionalists are quite sceptical of these programs; however, situating the knowledge that is discovered through practice in wider discourses and articulating it for others to engage with is integral

to developing stronger disciplinary knowledge. Contributions to knowledge through design practice-based PhDs range from the advancement research methodologies, the discovery of novel forms of practice, the exploration innovative design methods, and the explication of tacit knowledge within the design outcomes themselves, all of which can be contextualised in appropriate discourses.

These doctoral programs also foster other kinds of relationships between practice and academic institutions. A poignant example in New South Wales of creative practice PhDs and their impact includes the Firestick Alliance [24]. For many years a number of researchers across Australia been collaborating with Indigenous Elders regarding regimes of care for and with Country. Several creative practice PhDs document this knowledge and communicating it to through films, dance, and other visual means. However, the Elders' cultural knowledge has seldom recognised as novel or adding to landscape discourses in terms of awarding formal qualifications and traditional academic conventions. In 2005 James Cook University awarded Dr George Musgrave and Dr Tommy George PhDs recognising their contribution to knowledge in terms of land rights and Indigenous land management practices. The Firestick Alliance was inspired by the late Dr George Musgrave's and Dr Tommy George's, Kuku Thaypan Fire Management research project in Cape York. The Awu-Alaya speaking Elders' work is greatly respected and has gone on to inspire communities elsewhere in Australia. Their legacy continues to bring people together to learn about Aboriginal fire management and appropriate research methodologies. In 2018 New South Wales hosted the National Indigenous Fire Workshop and the was the first time the event has left its Cape York birthplace. Workshop participants learned first-hand from the local Yulin Elders how to read Country, animals, trees, seasons, and understand the cultural responsibility of looking after Country. The first had dissemination of knowledge of Country and their associate regimes of care, are vital going forward for Australia with the challenges we now face. The Firesticks Alliance website captures this sentiment aptly:

"When all the old people die the country too will die. This quote from Dr Musgrave echoes his concern that knowledge of Country and how to care for it would be lost if it was not learnt. Dr George and Dr Musgrave wanted to ensure that this did not occur, so they initiated their fire research project in 2004. The Elders research methodology was their cultural obligation to care for their Country and implement their cultural fire knowledge on Country, to ensure that this was recorded and importantly passed onto their descendants and others willing to learn. In this way they could ensure that Country would be looked after for generations to come. What the Elders taught was how to read Country, and this important lesson continues to be taught today "the knowledge is in the landscape. The Elders have not passed. The land is an Elder too". [25]

The late Kuku Thaypan Elders, Dr George and Dr Musgrave, initiated their research project in response to fires that were too hot, lit at the wrong time, in the wrong place and done the wrong way. In the words of Victor Steffensen, "There is only one fire, and that is the right fire, for the right Country" [26]. From a mainstream land and fire management perspective, this phrase 'there is only one fire' can be misinterpreted as meaning there is only one kind of fire. However, according to Awu-Alaya fire knowledge there are different kinds of fire recognised in the knowledge system; each fire is considered in relation to particular qualities and needs of Country and specific conditions. Today the descendants of Dr George and Dr Musgrave are continuing this important work on Kuku-Thaypan Country and working with the Firesticks Alliance across Australia. [24]

Contemplating the work of the Firestick Alliance returns me to Johnathan Lear's radical hope. Lear asks how we ought to live with the potential collapse of a way of life, not knowing what's on the other side. His inquiry while focusing on the predicament of the Crow peoples, resonates more widely, and is quite illuminating in the situation we all now face. Lear reminds us that humans inhabit a way of life inside a given culture and since a way of life is vulnerable, so is the human condition. He invites us to understand how we

live with shared vulnerability, and cope with civilisation's possible end—an idea that many will find incomprehensible. Lear has confidence that cultures will find ways to sustain themselves, they will endure and adapt proving resilient while discovering something salvageable from the wreckage. Our moment calls for consciously new directions rooted in renderings of justice, solidarity and sacrifice that lie beyond the disappearing culture. We teach students to make the world a better place as if humans can continue to assert themselves over other systems to fix things. Possibly we should start with radical hope and the ethics of what that really means by questioning our authority over the planet and other living and non-living entities. The current transformation requires the same kind of courage Lear describes, one that seriously grapples with losing a way of life even when we cannot understand what this really entails.

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Acknowledgments: Here are a number of things, which I am not, because those who read this will inevitably find a range of angles to throw stones at my fragile glasshouse. It is much easier for me to lay claim for all of those things I am not, then define clearly what I am. So, I am not a theoretician or a philosopher, although I find it amusing and sometimes useful to take theories and philosophies out of their safe academic contexts and consider things more widely in my writing. I do so knowingly that it is hacking and that I am a hack. I am also not a historian. I don't subscribe to linear or various versions of history where cause and effect are seen as factual, and I don't pretend to have the rigour in my scholarship to investigate any and all facets of key ideas and experiments which surfaced before now. I will provide explicative and incomplete examples at best, usually documented and written by someone else and if these experiments are still in play or relevant, and I have witnessed them first-hand, I most likely will provide my reflections for whatever this is worth. I am also not in commercial landscape architectural practice, although I live with one of these creatures. While I had for many years before joining the dark side or the light side of academia, depending on whom you speak with, worked in a variety of scales of private practice including having a lucrative partnership in a medium scale practice before chucking it in for the rarefied world of the academy . . . or so I thought. Thus, I pick and choose my theory, my history, and my gaze to support a very subjective and often tragically flawed set of deliberations about most topics. But here is what I can lay claim to: I have three degrees; an undergraduate degree in Landscape Architecture, a master's degree in Landscape Architecture and a PhD in, you guessed it . . . in Landscape Architecture. My first two degrees were in my country of birth, the United States of America, and my final degree is in my home of over twenty years, Australia. I draw heavily from these contexts in this essay, and while understandably some of this data may not match what is happening in other continents, there are some universal concerns that landscape architectural practitioners and educators must face going forward. My student experience spans three different decades (the 1980's, the 1990's and the 2000's) so in the discontinuous thirteen years while I was a student, I do have some experiential epistemologies which might help others. I am a hackademic (as described above), a pracademic (as in a practicing academic albeit in a very particular sphere), and sadly for the past six years I have found myself in middle management, as in the low level and low-life creatures who carry out the administrivia of being a Dean and Head of School. Thus, where I was once inside the everyday life of academics and practitioners; I am now gazing on them as curious beasts. I currently occupy a liminal space where course and program optimisation, efficiency metrics, evidence-based performance, change management, and systematic failures of university processes at all scales occupies my time. So, while I left professional practice to be closer to what I thought was my passion for landscape architecture and social justice, I've ended up in a managerial role at a time when compassion, empathy, and ethics are more important than ever.

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