



influence of values on taste

Shelley Egoz's dialogue with conventional and organic farmers confirms landscape types correlate with paradigms.

Landscape architects engage in enhancing and creating environments for communities. One of our concerns is aesthetics and the form of the landscape. That form, however, might take on a contrasting meaning to different individuals or communities. Cultural landscapes, whether designed by professional landscape architects or created by others, represent a range of possible ways of life and meanings ascribed to those landscapes. The form of the farmed landscape is thus not only a portrayal of technologies but also displays people's world-views. The exploration of what constructs the aesthetic appreciation of these forms, or landscape tastes, is a pertinent question to landscape architects.

FARMING LANDSCAPE AS A MIRROR

An opportunity to pursue these questions lay in the distinct forms of the organic and conventional farmed landscape of Canterbury. There is an apparent tension between multiple meanings in the paradox of New Zealand's organic farming landscape. While the avoidance of herbicides is environmentally friendly, the resulting appearance often does not conform to the New Zealand tradition of a tidy, cultivated landscape which reflects the legacy of a hardworking settler mentality.

Organic farming landscapes are therefore sometimes interpreted to represent negative values such as laziness and neglect rather than a positively-viewed clean environment. At the same time the controlled farming landscapes are seen by some organic farmers as a reflection of lack of an understanding of nature and therefore not representing an environmental ethos. It is observable that both landscape types symbolise

different lifestyles and world views.

In the last few years, however, there has been a significant increase in organic farming practices in New Zealand. Many of them adopted by established conventional farmers who hold different values from those of the traditional organic farmer stereotype. The appreciation of the various landscape types by farmers could thus serve as a model to investigate the links between landscape tastes and associated values and examine the landscape implications of the growing organic farming practices.

Egoz explored these affiliations through in-depth interviews with conventional and organic farmers in order to gain an overall impression of the farmers' views and identify landscape taste themes. The reading of the social meanings imbedded in interviewees' discourse was based on a review of the ideological, social and historical context in which the landscapes were created. The examination of the contextual background was then used to structure an analytical framework of themes for the interpretation of farmers' discourse. The following frames were chosen as a tool to portray the relationship between cultural values and landscape taste: Agrarianism, Arcadianism, Sense of Place, Productionism and Productivity, Social Respectability and Yeoman Farming.

While each one of the frames cannot claim to exclusively represent a preference for one type of landscape, they still give a useful indication of how landscape types correlate with paradigms.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

The relationships between the paradigms and their expression in the landscape, as shown in the table, illustrate the complex array of signs which a landscape exhibits. These findings suggest that

paradigms have particular landscape expressions and that current trends in farming practices indicate a coalescence of paradigms. The findings also imply that opportunities exist for landscape architects to respond to these trends in a complex way which is meaningful and rich. Such a response which Egoz names a complex ecological aesthetic, is an opportunity to extend beyond a simplistic representation of ecological values limited to a curvilinear nature-imitating design language.

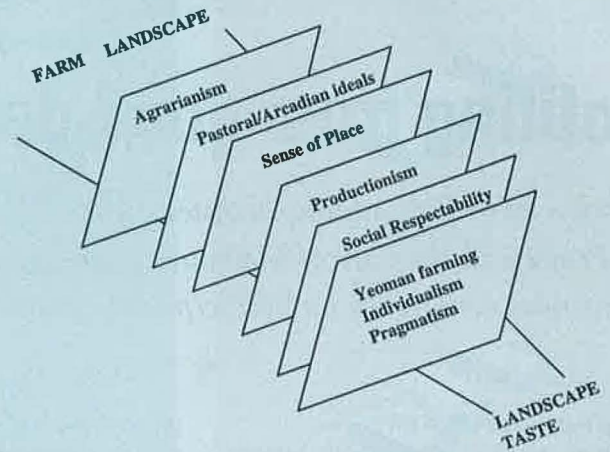
An inclusive use of iconic landscape forms such as trimmed shelterbelts, for example, supports the landscape preferences which reflect some of the core social values that exist within New Zealand society.

As North American landscape architect Joan Nassauer (1995 and 1997) argues, the way landscapes appear does not necessarily indicate their ecological health. Yet, ecological sustainability has to rely on a community's willingness to incorporate sound environmental practices that promote health. Sadler and Carlson's (1982) observed that aesthetic appreciation is "an amalgam of physical properties and social values" (1982:5).

Egoz proposes that we need to recognize the social values that are expressed through a preference of a controlled landscape for example, and that we also need to acknowledge that in one way or another, we are all trying to control nature rather than pretending that creating naturalistic environments is "natural". Landscape architecture by definition is a human attempt to manipulate natural elements and it would be naive for us to assume that any design would be natural. A culturally inclusive aesthetic can incorporate icons









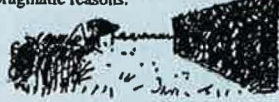
Far left and centre:
Short mown grasses
and neatly trimmed
shelterbelts
characterise the
Canterbury
conventional
farming landscape.
Left: High grasses
and irregular forms
are typical of
organic farms.



PARADIGMS AND LANDSCAPE EXPRESSION

Paradigm

Farm landscape expression

<p>Agrarianism The ideology of agriculture - the belief that farming is the most important economic activity - a moral duty for "feeding the world" - finding the balance between "taking care of the land" and "making a dollar"</p>	<p>A landscape that produces food - appearance is efficient, "mechanistic", controlled, tidy, clean of weeds, short mowed grasses and geometric shelterbelt forms, a <i>form follows function</i> aesthetic.</p> 
<p>Pastoral/Arcadian ideals A yearning for a return to nature</p>	<p>A <i>Garden of Eden</i> type landscape which represents a retreat to nature: seemingly uncontrolled, curvilinear forms, a naturalistic-looking aesthetic.</p> 
<p>Sense of Place (threat to) Fear of change</p>	<p>A landscape that does not conform to a tidy and controlled appearance, a landscape which is different to its surroundings.</p> 
<p>Productionism Getting the most out of the land</p> <p>Productivity Getting the optimum out of the land without compromising the environment</p>	<p>An extreme version of the Agrarian landscape.</p>  <p>A landscape in which the function of ecology dictates form, a seemingly un-ordered, uncontrolled and weedy landscape. Another type of <i>form follows function</i> aesthetic.</p> 
<p>Social Respectability The idea that the way the farm looks represents the farmer</p>	<p>A landscape that exemplifies good management in conventional terms is a landscape which signals <i>cues for care</i>: controlled, tidy, clean of weeds, short mown grasses and geometric shelterbelt forms.</p> 
<p>Yeoman Farming/Individualism/ Pragmatism Traits of New Zealand farming culture relating to the settler society</p>	<p>A landscape which challenges the conventional controlled appearance. Possibly untidy but at the same time driven by pragmatism; space shelterbelts might have a geometric form for pragmatic reasons.</p> 

of the conventional agricultural landscape to act as "orderly frames" (Nassauer, 1995) in the context of a complex ecological aesthetic. Such an aesthetic can also integrate elements that promote environmental health such as planting for biodiversity. This approach is underpinned by integrity of design based on a *form follows function* principle. If the form of the landscape is understood for its function it is more likely to be appreciated. It is also more likely to be appreciated when its historic roots are valued.

Egoz says, "Emphasis on ecological practices are at the core of our profession and this can be reinforced while respecting a cultural layer which has its own historical merit. In following a diversity of landscape tastes, and drawing from them to enrich their design vocabulary, landscape architects have opportunities to turn barriers into bridges and promote environmental health". ■■

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The above is based on PhD thesis: "The rational landscape in the Garden of Eden" - deriving a complex ecological aesthetic from the tastes and interpretations of New Zealand's farmed landscapes by Shelley Egoz, Lincoln University 2002