

Local History: Global Myth – The Concept of Nature in Landscape Architecture in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

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THE CONCEPT OF NATURE has been fundamentally transformed during the ages. The modern 'utilitarian' view - 'nature as resource' - culminated during the industrialisation in the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century, nature became an object for protection against man's destruction. Local landscape architecture has been heavily influenced by the prevailing global concepts - or myths - concerning nature. This paper discusses the development of the public park in Norway related to the development of nature mythology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since the idea of the public park was formulated by Christian Hirschfeld in the late eighteenth century, there has been a development towards democratisation of landscape design, culminating with the great American park systems of Frederic Law Olmsted and others. This development continued through movements like the 'City Beautiful' the 'Garden City' and 'Green Belt' from the end of the nineteenth century through to the first decades of the twentieth century. The park systems resulting from these movements were coloured by the evolving myths of nature. These myths were expressed by planners, architects and landscape architects like Camillo Sitte and Patrick Geddes, and locally by landscape architects and urban designers like Harald Hals and Marius Røhne, who, together, published the new strategy for a greener Oslo region in 1929. The development of green-structure planning in the second half of the twentieth century fed on these myths about nature's aesthetic, social and ecological values. The paper concludes by addressing the contemporary nature mythology and discusses what lessons can be drawn for today's landscape designers.

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