

England in 1914: “No one can possibly guess the exciting effect of that book on me.”⁹ A new edition of the book was issued in 1949, the year McHarg returned to Scotland, and Geddes’s papers were at the Glasgow College of Art, where McHarg taught a course in 1952.¹⁰ Though McHarg does not acknowledge him as an influence, Geddes’s “valley section,” the model by which he organized his analysis of a city and its region, resembles the methods of McHarg and his colleagues from the 1960s (Figs. 3 and 4). That Geddes’s work, its aims and methods, prefigured much of McHarg’s does not diminish McHarg’s contribution, but failure to appreciate the importance of Geddes’s work as a precedent is telling. The desire to be seen as original is typical of landscape architects, who fail repeatedly to build upon prior efforts and often reiterate ideas without advancing them significantly.¹¹

From 1897, when John Muir and Gifford Pinchot split bitterly over grazing rights in Yosemite, a persistent schism in American environmentalism has divided those who advocate preserving natural landscapes and protecting them from the disturbing influence of humans (Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Earth First) and those who promote the “wise use” of natural resources (Resources for the Future, U.S. Forest Service).¹² The conflicting views of Muir and Pinchot are also embodied in McHarg’s words and deeds: when he calls humans “a planetary disease,” he speaks as Muir; when he proposes that natural resources be used wisely for human benefit, he sounds like Pinchot. In 1969, McHarg saw that “clearly there is a desperate need for professionals who are conservationists by instinct, but who care not only to preserve but to create and manage.”¹³ The conflict between preservation and change is McHarg’s most persistent inconsistency, and it highlights the contradictory position of landscape architecture as a profession. As agents of change, landscape architects are inevitably entangled in this conflict.

Pedagogical and Professional Practice: Ideas in Action

For environmentalism, McHarg, and landscape architecture, 1962 was an important year. Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*; McHarg taught a studio course with an ecolo-

⁹ Lewis Mumford, *Sketches from Life: The Autobiography of Lewis Mumford, the Early Years* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), 150–51.

¹⁰ McHarg says he was first introduced to the work of Geddes in 1951–53, but that he did not study it (*Quest for Life*, 112, 380). Nevertheless, Geddes’s ideas were in the air, as evidenced by the reprinting of *Cities in Evolution* in 1949. Mumford, whom McHarg acknowledges as a mentor, was greatly influenced by Geddes. Mumford named his son “Geddes” and calls Geddes “The Master” in *Sketches from Life*, 152.

¹¹ McHarg ignored precedent when he asserted, as he has many times, “I invented ecological planning in the 1960s” (“Ecology and Design,” in *Quest for Life*). The importance of McHarg’s contributions is not diminished when seen in the context of work by others such as Phil Lewis, Angus Hills, and Arthur Glickson, who pursued similar ideas from the 1950s and early 1960s, not to mention many prior figures, such as Patrick Geddes and Warren Manning. This tradition was not acknowledged in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania when I was a student there in the early 1970s, nor did we draw from it in our work at Wallace McHarg Roberts and Todd during that period. Though both department and firm made numerous innovations, there were also many reinventions.

¹² See Anne Whiston Spirn, “Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted,” in *Uncommon Ground*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995).

¹³ Ian McHarg, *Design with Nature* (Garden City, N.Y.: Natural History Press, 1969), 151.

gist for the first time, hired a forester as a full-time faculty member, and founded the firm Wallace McHarg with his colleague, architect and planner David Wallace. From 1962, environmentalism was fully integrated into McHarg's teaching and professional work, and he emerged as a leader who played an increasingly important role in shaping national environmental policy.

McHarg used his position at the University of Pennsylvania to develop ideas about environmentalism and landscape architecture through the speakers he invited, the faculty he hired, and the courses he taught. He tested and revised these ideas in practice, applying them to projects for specific clients in particular places. By 1969, the year McHarg published *Design with Nature*, Penn's Department of Landscape Architecture was among the leading programs in the world, much as his professional office, Wallace McHarg Roberts and Todd (WMRT), was among the foremost firms of landscape planning. From 1962 until his break in 1979 with David Wallace, William Roberts, and Thomas Todd, the ideas and methods of McHarg and his colleagues at Penn and WMRT evolved in a dynamic dialogue between theory and practice. The university studio was a place of theoretical experiment; the professional office, a place to test ideas in actual places, with real clients and programs.

McHarg taught his course *Man and Environment* throughout the 1960s and 1970s. "It permitted me," he says, "to invite the most distinguished speakers in the environmental movement for the illumination of students and the development of my knowledge."¹⁴ The course consisted of thirty-six lectures: McHarg gave six, and the remaining were given by colleagues at Penn, like Mumford and Loren Eiseley, along with visitors from all over the country, including the anthropologist Margaret Mead and the biologists René Dubos and George Wald. Carol Franklin, a partner in Andropogon Associates and an adjunct professor at Penn, recalls that when she took the course in 1963, eight of the lecturers were Nobel Prize winners.¹⁵ Most speakers were invited back year after year; they, in turn, invited McHarg to speak at their own institutions and to publish essays in books and journals that they edited. In 1960–61, he hosted a television series, "The House We Live In," organized for CBS in Philadelphia, which was based upon his *Man and Environment* course and featured some of its speakers. The course and the television series permitted McHarg to develop the philosophical and scientific ideas for his book *Design with Nature* and prepared the ground for its reception outside the profession of landscape architecture. Among the most influential ideas on his teaching, practice, and writing were the notions of nature as process, of places as products of physical and biological evolution, of adaptation and fit (René Dubos), and of man as a planetary disease (Loren Eiseley).¹⁶

Studio courses applied these ideas to landscape architecture. McHarg, with his colleagues and students, devised the methods for an approach he called "ecological planning and design" that was taught, used, and refined in studio courses and adapted to diverse

¹⁴ McHarg, *Quest for Life*, 157.

¹⁵ Carol Franklin, personal communication with author, 1998.

¹⁶ Ian L. McHarg, "An Ecological Method for Landscape Architecture," *Landscape Architecture* 57 (January 1967): 105–7.