Abstract
This paper argues for changing the role of landscape architects, by identifying two significant changes recently noticed in the profession of landscape architecture: a rise of indeterminate design and trans( beyond 'inter' or 'multi')-disciplinary practice. Significant international design competitions, through their briefs and requirements, in many cases reflect what society wants from design(er) at the moment. Recent cases are those of Downsview Park and Fresh Kills. These proposals revealed high level of indeterminateness in both their respective program and spatial order. The author recognizes these changes as foretelling signs that the power of designers has become weakened in large-scale public projects. Now more than ever, public spaces are shaped by diverse disciplines and social variables, rather than by designers alone. The role of the designer here is to 'initiate' the process of the park design and to guide collective decisions as well as physical transition of the parks. Designing a park became increasingly strategic rather than operational, and by framework rather than by masterplan.

This is however not a phenomenon that only design profession encounters. During the last three or four decades, the global society lost some of the values believed to be 'absolute' and we are living in the society where nothing is certain any more. Thus the profession of landscape architecture needs to contextualize itself, modify its boundary, and redefine its own identity. But the focus of this paper is, even accepting the future is uncertain and unpredictable, whether if designers really have to waive their power to control, and if so, "how far?" The balance between open-ended-ness and guiding
structure is not easy to achieve. If the level of indeterminancy is too high, the constructed space can be disastrous. Therefore, designer of this age has to come up with the answer of "how much design is too much?" in order to get rid of the fear of over-design.

Meanwhile, due to the increasing complexity of making large parks, as well as to the increased interest in the landscape itself by related disciplines, the conventional function of respective profession is going through modification: the traditional and exclusive role of landscape architecture is being challenged. Yet, this trend of trans-disciplinary practice calls for re-thinking of the core contribution of landscape architecture, rather than blurring its boundary: what is the ontological core of this profession? What can it offer that others cannot?

The author will try to answer to these self-questions through looking into some recent cases of park designs, mainly Parc Downsview Park in Toronto, from its competition proposal to the schematic plan.

References