to critique modernism in the 1980s, many landscape architects, both practitioners and academics, sat on the sidelines.

So, regardless of the possible (or impossible) influence of the book in its original time, the translation of this book has presented an opportunity to catch up on some critical lessons of urban design. Not only does it send one back to the bookshelf, it puts one in a polemical frame of mind. As Samuels points out, the rigorous method of the book is an antidote to the bubble diagram thinking that characterized mainstream practice in the late twentieth century. One of the best aspects of the book are the critical sections through the block forms in the principal cities analyzed. It still seems challenging, for example, to many landscape architecture students to draw a critical section through a space and consider that this drawing is an essential hypothesis of a spatial, even ecological, idea. Instead the acceptable default is the conceptual bubble diagram. Perhaps this commentary suggests the poverty of our own analysis of historical precedents and their lack of potency in the discourse of design. If that point is not persuasive (or at least provocative), the other lesson for landscape architects reading this book is architectural: the shape of buildings can also be the shape of space. This point lies at the core of the authors' intellectual souls. A reader would have only hoped for more detail in the architectural portions of the block sections.

And with all of its strengths, there are for landscape architects two other frustrating gaps in the book: streets and park systems. While there is a nascent sense of the critical importance of the cross-purposes of streets in providing both public and private transport in modern urban space, the design of streets and transit systems is not treated (or even depicted in some of the sections unless integral to the authors' conception of the definition of the block structure). Similarly the treatment of the evolution of Sixtus V's plan of Rome to Haussmann's for Paris suggests that there is little difference in their intentions: to make axial relationships between monuments. This bias clouds the critical role of Haussmann in providing a unifying street infrastructure (above and below grade) that allowed the house and its bourgeois inhabitants to be hooked up to the rest of the city, including J. C. A. Alphand's magnificently re-designed new parks. Here, too, is an American historical connection since Alphand's Paris provided the inspiration to both Frederick Law Olmsted and H. W. S. Cleveland, our most innovative city park system designers. These gaps, then, are really an opportunity, perhaps, to make a companion book to this excellent informational and provocative volume that should be on every landscape architect's to-read list.

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LANDSCAPE URBANISM: A MANUAL FOR THE MACHINIC LANDSCAPE
edited by Mohsen Mostafavi and Ciro Najle. 2003. London: Architectural Association. 176 pages, illustrations, $31.50, cloth.
ISBN 1-90290-230-0

Reviewed by Gale Fulton

*L*andscape Urbanism: A Manual for the Machinic Landscape is the first book dedicated solely to the discussion of the emerging body of knowledge referred to as *landscape urbanism*. Because of its relative youth and the breadth implied in its hybridized moniker, it is difficult to find a clear or precise definition of landscape urbanism or even to imagine that a clear definition will ever appear. Variously referred to in *Landscape Urbanism* as a "design ethic" (Hight), a "hybrid discipline" (Corner), and an "emergent discipline" (Hensel), it would seem that achieving a precise definition of what landscape urbanism *is* takes a back seat to exploring what landscape

urbanism *does* or can do for the future of urbanism.[1] Following this line of thought, the book is offered as a manual—an operational guidebook for the practice of landscape urbanism. Building on this expanded repertoire of strategies and practices for engaging urbanism, landscape urbanists may attempt their greatest coup—leveraging landscape, with urbanism as a fulcrum, from centuries of scenography to the machinic or operative landscape valued more highly for its capacity to do work than to provide a backdrop. This would effectively shift the predominant landscape metaphor from the machine *in* the garden to the machine *is* the garden.

Comprising eleven essays and two interviews interspersed with a series of project-based sections derived from London's Architectural Association's (AA) graduate program in Landscape Urbanism, the book is organized around six major themes: 1) Framework, (2) Medium, (3) System, (4) Prototype, (5) Plan, and (6) Context. Excluding the introduction, texts are grouped in pairs around these themes, providing the reader with a series of lenses to more fully understand and evaluate the thinking and practices of one model of landscape urbanism.

The introductory text by co-editor Mohsen Mostafavi, former chair of the AA, sets the stage by describing a brief history of the tenuous relationship between landscape and the modern city. He argues that "as a framework for the imagination, landscape produces new insights in response to the contemporary urban situation" (7), and adds that this new understanding of the urban also requires the rethinking of traditional boundaries of landscape architecture and architecture. Beyond this call for disciplinary hybridization, Mostafavi also identifies inherent conditions of landscape such as temporality, functional indeterminacy and operative potential, as well as openness to a wide range of urban and natural forces that are also of particular importance to landscape urbanism.

Following the introduction, *Frameworks* is the first of six project

sections. The project sections comprise 12 full-page color and black-and-white images accompanied by a short text written by co-editor Najle describing the importance of each term (Framework, Medium, System, Prototype, Plan, and Context) as it relates to landscape urbanism. The individual project work is briefly described according to the specific strategy being explored. Occasionally, projects appear in more than one thematic area allowing the reader to gain insight into the project at various scales and levels of resolution. Despite the display of rigorous inquiries into new strategies of urbanism, it seems that too often there is a tendency for the projects to fetishize formal invention at the expense of programmatic and strategic innovation, arguably the most significant factors in accomplishing any new form of urbanism today.

Following the project work on frameworks, Christopher Hight's "Portraying the Urban Landscape: Landscape in Architectural Criticism and Theory, 1960–Present" is a wide-ranging inquiry into the potentials and pitfalls of employing a landscape model in urbanism. Hight's essay focuses on the establishment of a "design ethic" or "ethos" (23) that is unique to landscape urbanism. Arguing that a new approach is required because we are now dealing with an urbanism unlike any in the past, Hight's primary message is one that problematizes any simplistic acceptance of traditional modes of landscape design into landscape urbanism by architects or urbanists. Instead, he believes there must be a new way to "operate and intervene according to a transversal mode" (32). Hight also suggests the need for landscape urbanists to develop new methods and techniques of design visualization as one aspect of this alternative practice.

Lawrence Barth's "Diagram, Dispersal, Region" focuses on the expansion of the urban diagram beyond its traditional architectural or urban design usage to a broader "strategic field" (33). Barth claims the significance of the diagram as it pertains to urbanism is found not only in

drawings or built forms, but also is dispersed across a wide range of processes comprising the practice of landscape urbanism. In this way, Barth outlines the requirements for a "diagrammatic practice" (39), which is significant to landscape urbanism as it requires or promotes urban practices that are strategic, political, and analytical as well as formal.

Under the heading of *Medium*, Inaki Abalos and Juan Herreros' "Journey Through the Picturesque (a Notebook)" revisits thoughts on the picturesque from such designers and thinkers as Uvedale Price, Frederick Law Olmsted, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Robert Smithson, among others. Supplemented with a short text of their own, the authors seem to suggest that the picturesque is somewhat inescapable—a shifting concept or construct in need of constant reassessment to be effectively harnessed in design. An updated or expanded understanding of the constructed nature of the picturesque may also suggest new insight into another perennial problem for landscape: the perceived division between nature and culture.

In his essay, "Landscape Urbanism," landscape architect James Corner, Chair and Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania and Director of Field Operations, provides a compelling vision of landscape urbanism through five themes essential for its practice: (1) Horizontality, (2) Infrastructure, (3) Forms of Process, (4) Techniques, and (5) Ecology. Corner describes landscape urbanism as "a complex amalgam . . . more than a singular image or style: it is an ethos, an attitude, a way of thinking and acting" (58). Corner deftly illustrates the potentials landscape urbanism can seed and harvest from the contemporary metropolis, as well as the broad range of faculties the landscape urbanist must command in order to negotiate the complex political, economic, and material realities of urbanism in the 21st century. Corner's text stands apart from several others in this volume in its illustration of contemporary urbanism as sufficiently complex in its

makeup to provide seemingly endless fodder for the opportunistic landscape urbanist without heavy reliance on theories external to the practice of urbanism.

The next four texts, following the themes of *System* and *Prototype*, are exemplary of the divergent thought already present in landscape urbanism. The four texts include project descriptions by Florian Beigel and Philip Christou, and Ocean North's Michael Hensel, and interviews with landscape architect Michel Desvigne and architects Jesse Reiser and Nanako Umemoto of RUR. The texts effectively demonstrate what I believe is an important distinction between 'landscape architectural' and 'architectural' landscape urbanism. Beigel, Christou, and Desvigne, demonstrating the landscape architectural bent (Beigel and Christou are apparently architects), sensitively describe the landscapes and processes within which they are attempting to work. Their approach seems to echo what Mostafavi referred to as the landscape urbanist's approach which, like the landscape architect's, "always begins with the given" (8). Here it could be argued that in an age when designers seem almost obligated to consider the space of flows, datascapes, and various other seemingly invisible forces at work on a site, what is 'given' could be almost anything. But Desvigne, like Beigel and Christou, describes an approach to landscape that is broad in its understanding of global forces while sensitive to local, physical phenomena as well—the oftentimes messy, unpredictable environmental or 'natural' forces so unique to the landscape medium.

Alternatively, architects Reiser, Umemoto, and Hensel dedicate much of their focus to the theorization of form. Perhaps the primary distinction between the two groups can be understood in how they discuss process. For the landscape architect, process is more often than not dealing with the formative physical processes of the design as it unfolds over time. Architects seem more likely to describe formative process as the virtual processes the

design is put through on the way to achieving its final geometry. After the design achieves built form, there seems little opportunity for ongoing formative landscape process to occur or affect the built form.

Following the project section titled *Plan*, the next two essays in some ways echo this notion of lingering (and potentially stifling) disciplinary approaches to landscape urbanism. Alejandro Zaera-Polo's "On Landscape" highlights the historical opposition between "a rational, artificial, linear geometry and a picturesque reproduction of nature" (132) that he believes hinders the evolution of a new discipline such as landscape urbanism. Zaera-Polo, founding partner of Foreign Office Architects (FOA) and Dean of the Berlage Institute, briefly traces the manifestations of this opposition in landscape and architecture. He goes on to describe FOA's entry for the Downsview Park competition that he believes offers an approach to form-making, which breaks down the aforementioned oppositions by harnessing advanced computer modeling techniques.

Similarly, Detlef Mertins' "landscapeurbanismhappensintime" foregrounds the attempts by designers in the Downsview Park competition to overcome the natural/artificial divide, adding that this breakdown is important for the future of landscape and urbanism. Mertins says that there is a shift underway in which "form is understood as never fixed but always in flux and susceptible to changing forces" (136). Such forms "cease to be models" (136), and instead become catalysts for future changes through a variety of material techniques and practices such as "reshaping and redirecting, deleting and inserting, seeding and planting, structuring and unstructuring, separating and mixing, mutating and accelerating"—a vocabulary which should appear familiar to many landscape designers.

The last two essays of the book, Keller Easterling's "Error" and Ciro Najle's "Convolutedness," are situated after the project work on *Context*. Placing landscape and architectural practice in the context of

error, Easterling suggests that such practices, despite their sophisticated attempts to model complexity and chaos, are still oftentimes guilty of creating reductive representations of the real phenomena being mapped. Describing landscape as "a diagram" and an "organization that is always becoming" (154), Easterling describes the need for new techniques that recognize and capitalize on the generative capacities of error while simultaneously outlining an expanded field for architectural and landscape practice better equipped for engaging in the forces of global urbanization.

Co-editor Ciro Najle's final essay of the book, "Convolutedness," is an aptly named reformulation of Rem Koolhaas' "Bigness." But while a rereading of Koolhaas' seminal text (especially through the bifocal lenses of landscape and urbanism) asks one to reconsider the inertia of much contemporary landscape and urbanism, Najle's text fails to provoke the same level of questioning due, at least in part, to its almost impenetrable prose. Convolutedness seems to be, for Najle, architecture's "theory of everything," but one wonders if it might fall victim to what its predecessor referred to as "theorizing it beyond the point of application."[2]

As the first full-length book on the subject, *Landscape Urbanism: A Manual for the Machinic Landscape* is an important assemblage, but one must remember the nascent condition of landscape urbanism when evaluating the book. Indeed, in the same way that many strains of architectural, landscape architectural and urbanistic thought have evolved, it would be naïve to think landscape urbanism will not follow suit. Being one of the first on the scene places the book in a difficult context, and undoubtedly it will be guilty of falling short to some readers. This being said, the book successfully identifies and expounds on many of the difficult challenges/primary opportunities landscape urbanism may engage. These range from aesthetics to trans-disciplinary collaboration to the development of new strategies, practices, and technolo-

gies better suited to accomplishing landscape urbanism's unique goals. Perhaps most importantly, the book has made a real contribution towards outlining *how* to practice landscape urbanism—a consideration made even more significant by the fact that there are only a handful of institutions in the world currently teaching such practices.

While much of the project work on display demonstrates what seems to be an *architectural* landscape urbanism, this may simply be a reflection of landscape urbanism's early stage of development. As time passes and the body of criticism, theory, and built works attributable to landscape urbanistic thinking and practice grows, mutations will occur to more convincingly distinguish it from its past disciplinary predispositions. This does not suggest the need for a simplification of the formal outcomes that may be achieved in the pursuit of what the overly practical may term a more "achievable" built work in the context of drawn-out public processes and increasing fiscal conservatism (especially for landscape). Instead, I would argue for the continued development of practices unique to landscape urbanism which truly do justice to the complex interdisciplinary framework landscape urbanism provides. This will require a departure from the formal preoccupations of architecture, the strategic and political naiveté of landscape architecture, and the dependence on outdated formal precedents and over-reliance on policy by urban designers and regional planners.

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Notes

1. The following texts are other significant texts currently available on the subject. They are also useful for demonstrating some of the alternative viewpoints on the subject. See

Charles Waldheim, "Landscape Urbanism: A Genealogy," PRAXIS 4: Landscapes, (2002): 10–17. See also Grahame Shane, "The Emergence of 'Landscape Urbanism': Reflections on Stalking Detroit," http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/research/publications/hdm/back/19_onlandscape.html.
2. Rem Koolhaas, "Bigness, or The Problem of Large," in *S, M, L, XL.* (New York,: Monacelli, 1999), 504.

A FIELD GUIDE TO SPRAWL
by Dolores Hayden with aerial photographs by Jim Wark:
Norton, 2004. 128 pages, $24.95.
ISBN: 0-393-73125-1

Reviewed by Ann Forsyth

Landscape architects have a complex relationship with urban sprawl. Landscape architects do much of their work (as well as much of their most respected and innovative work) in suburban and exurban private gardens, shopping centers, nature preserves, recreational trails, public parks, wetland restorations, roadside improvements, cluster subdivisions, and streetscape enhancements. Thus Hayden's *A Field Guide to Sprawl*, a critique of suburban areas implicit in its title, is on the face a challenging document for the profession. Hayden says as much in her introduction, where she observes, "While a devil's dictionary of sprawl may be controversial, it is intended to stimulate observation, discussion, and organizing" (10).

Structured as an introduction, followed by 51 heavily illustrated definitions based on terminology from urban design and development professions, the book is aimed at a curious lay public. The book does contain an argument about better development—Hayden would like it less segregated and speculative; more compact and equitable. She proposes eliminating subsidies for sprawl. However, it is deliberately meant to be a critique rather than a book presenting "positive solutions" (13). This argument is in part laid out in the introduction but is also developed through the numerous

definitions that act as captions for the book's many photographs of outer suburban development. The book is, then, a guide to the visual culture of sprawl—a visual culture not only seen as an aesthetic issue but rather "read as the material representation of a political economy organized around unsustainable growth" (13).

Of course in a book about definitions, it is important to define "sprawl." It is a complex term, often ill-defined. But it is hard to avoid, particularly in works trying to reach a more popular audience, which the book has, being featured across several pages in the *New York Times* as well as receiving attention from other national media outlets. While canvassing a number of different definitions of sprawl, Hayden finishes with a fairly standard professional one, seeing sprawl "as a process of large-scale real estate development resulting in low-density, scattered, discontinuous, car-dependent construction, usually on the periphery of declining older suburbs" (8). This definition of sprawl as a process is supplemented by the clearly written text, which gives more detail about topics such as the structure of the billboard industry, the federal National Network for Large Trucks, and types of shopping malls. Not all of these topics warrant their own section, but the useful index helps the reader locate these additional terms. While generally seeing sprawl in a negative light, Hayden is even-handed in this negativity, including *mansion subsidies* and *manufactured housing*, *tract mansions* and *truck cities*.

Hayden is an historian, and the book has some nostalgia for earlier development patterns. She is more sympathetic to new urbanist ideas than many high-style architects. However, she is critical of "countering bad design with good design, where good design creates instant community" (13). Hayden is also critical of the more elite forms of sprawl, the architect-designed *starter castles* and *Valhallas* of the super-rich, that are frequently ignored in architectural critiques of suburban devel-

opment that tend to focus on the middle classes.

Of course this is not merely a book of text, but rather a book in which carefully selected low-level oblique aerial photographs illustrate terms associated with suburban growth and development. Hayden has been exploring the use of aerial photographs in activism around urban development, first with Alex Maclean and now with Jim Wark. As she states, she became interested in this kind of photography because "contemporary development patterns stretch out on a scale that ground-level photographs cannot always capture"(14). From my own experience with the Metropolitan Design Center's collection of low-level obliques, they do capture the extensive character of the metropolitan landscape quite well, but can make this landscape look more visually interesting than on the ground. From the air, parking lots, car dumps, and big boxes can form visually striking patterns, while vibrant inner city areas are obscured by roofs, trees, and the visual jumble of older buildings and small parking lots. So Hayden uses an urban intersection as an example of "impervious surface," while on closer inspection the intersection houses some kind of street procession or event, that would be likely quite interesting from the ground. This is not a problem that is easily solved. Overall, the vast metropolitan landscapes that people in the United State now inhabit are extraordinarily hard to capture in two dimensions, making Hayden's clear commentary on each topic all the more important.

How then should landscape architects, and in particular landscape architecture faculty, regard this book? The introduction contains a knowledgeable overview of debates about urban growth. Professionals familiar with the technical literature, who keep up to date with Urban Land Institute publications, will recognize most terms in the body of the book, but Hayden has done a fine service by pulling them together and matching them to photographs. The book's main strength, however, is in its deliberately provocative character,