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Introduction: From Figure to Field

There are, in fact, no cities anymore. It goes on like a forest.
—Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1955

Landscape has recently emerged as model and medium for the contemporary city. This claim has been available since the turn of the twenty-first century in the discourse and practices the term "landscape urbanism" describes. This volume offers the first monograph account of the subject and locates the impulse behind landscape urbanism in a broader set of historical, theoretical, and cultural formations. Moving beyond the original assertions and ideological charge of landscape urbanism, the book aspires to provide a general theory for thinking the urban through landscape. This begins most productively through the definition of terms.

This is a book first and foremost about urbanism, albeit an adjectivally modified urbanism. The term *urbanism* in this context refers reflexively to both the empirical description and study of the conditions and characteristics of urbanization, as well as to the disciplinary and professional capacity for intervention within those conditions. The term appears in English near the end of the nineteenth century adopted from the French *urbanisme*. As adopted from the French, and in present usage, the term refers to cultural, representational, and projective dimensions of urban work specific to the design disciplines that the social science term *urbanization* lacks. Urbanism has been found particularly useful as a single term, in English, to reconcile the academic and professional split between the social sciences and planning on the one hand, with the disciplinary and professional formulations of the design disciplines on the other. As the foundational term for this study, urbanism is understood to signify at once the city as an object of study, its lived experience, and its inflection through design and planning. In this sense, we would define urbanism as the experience of, study of, and intervention upon processes and products of urbanization. To problematize urbanism with landscape is, in the first instance, to simply add an adjective. In this formulation, the compound neologism *landscape urbanism* qualifies the subject *urbanism* with the adjective *landscape*. As such, the term signifies an understanding of urbanism read through the lens of landscape. More than a book about landscape per se, this is a book about the potential for thinking urbanism through the lens, or lenses, of landscape.

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Landscape is used in this volume in several of its standard English-language meanings. Building on the term's irreducible plurality of meanings, the book argues that the promiscuity of the term is central to its conceptual and

< Figure 0.1 Ludwig Hilberseimer, planner, with Alfred Caldwell, delineator, the city in the landscape, aerial view, 1942.

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theoretical utility. Over the course of several chapters, various definitions of landscape are unpacked, each offering a distinctly revised reading of the urban sites and subjects in question. The etymology of the English-language term *landscape* has been the subject of significant scholarship over the past several decades. Seminal essays on the subject by Ernst Gombrich, J. B. Jackson, and Denis Cosgrove, among others, point to the origins of landscape as a genre of painting as early as the sixteenth century. By the seventeenth century, landscape had migrated to form a way of seeing or experiencing the world. By the eighteenth century, landscape as a mode of subjectivity had slipped into a description of the land viewed in such a way, and ultimately to those practices to modify that land to such effect. This volume describes the very origins of landscape in English emerging from the representation of the formerly urban. This corroborates recent scholarship on the origins of landscape painting as fundamentally bound up in questions of urbanity. As such, the volume reflects on the various readings of landscape itself, understood *as a form of urbanism*. In so doing, the argument examines the plural and promiscuous meanings of landscape in order to excavate their potential for revising our received understandings of the urban.

Various meanings of landscape are situated throughout the argument, as appropriate to the site or subject in question. Each of these various uses suggests a shading of the subject matter, while retaining a precision about its meaning. Landscape is used here to mean a genre of cultural production, as in landscape painting, or landscape photography. Equally, landscape is used as a model or analogue for human perception, subjective experience, or biological function. Alternatively, landscape is used as a medium of design, through which gardeners, artists, architects, and engineers intervene in the city. Multiple chapters refer to the development of landscape as academic discipline and design profession. Given the significance of these varied and multiform meanings, these distinctions are often developed as microhistories within the larger arc of the argument in question.

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This account situates the emergence of landscape as a medium of urbanism in a variety of sites. Most often the sites associated with rethinking the urban through landscape are found at the limits to a more strictly architectonic order for the shape of the city. Most often these are sites where a traditional understanding of the city as an extrapolation of architectural models and metaphors is no longer viable given the prevalence of larger forces or flows. These include ruptures or breaks in the architectonic logic of traditional urban form as compelled by ecological, infrastructural, or economic change.

Landscape has been found relevant for sites in which a strictly architectural order of the city has been rendered obsolete or inadequate through social, technological, or environmental change. The discourse and practices of landscape urbanism have been found particularly useful for thinking through large infrastructural arrays such as ports and transportation corridors. Airports, in particular, have been central to the discourse and practices of landscape urbanism as sites whose scale, infrastructural connectivity, and environmental impacts outstrip a strictly architectonic model of city making.

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Landscape has also been found useful as a way of thinking through urban form in the wake of macroeconomic transformations. This includes so-called shrinking cities as well as the countless individual sites of brownfield abandonment left in the wake of economic transformations. Thus landscape as a medium of urbanism has often been invoked to absorb and in some ways mitigate various impacts associated with social, environmental, and economic crises. It has equally been found relevant for thinking through sites at the intersection of large, complex ecological and infrastructural systems. Most recently, landscape has been found relevant to questions of green infrastructure in the informal city, and in response to questions of risk and resilience, adaptation and change. The cumulative effect of these sites and subjects has been to foreground the potential for landscape as a medium and model for the city as a collective spatial project. In its most ambitious formulation, this suggests the potentials for the landscape architect as urbanist of our age. In this role, the landscape architect assumes responsibility for the shape of the city, its built form, and not simply ecological and infrastructural exceptions to its architectonic structure. Rather, landscape thinking enables a more synthetic understanding of the shape of the city, understood in relation to its performance in social, ecological, and economic terms.

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The landscape urbanist discourse emerged at the close of the twentieth century in the ascendency of design culture and populist environmentalism and in relation to progressive architectural culture and post-Fordist economic conditions. These confluences prompted an acceleration of ecological thinking across the urban arts. Landscape urbanist practices evolved to occupy a void created by urban planning's shift toward a social-science model and away from physical design over the past half century, as urban design committed to neotraditional models of town planning. Landscape urbanist practices flourished through an unlikely combination of progressive design culture, environmental advocacy, increased cultural capital for designers, and in the context of laissez-faire development conditions. They were further fueled by new forms of public agency and donor culture in relation to planning, at the moment that both urban design and planning were described in their respective literatures as confronting crisis.

This book describes landscape as a medium of design from a variety of disciplinary formations and professional identities concerned with the contemporary city, including landscape architecture, urban design, and planning. Taking up the emergence of landscape as a form of urbanism from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, it relates the origins and historical evolution of various professions responsible for the shape of the city. Stepping back from partisan and ideological construction of disciplinary identity allows for the development of a more historically informed and synthetic argument for the relations between landscape and the urban. Recently renewed interest in landscape as a medium of urbanism is the third such historical moment in the past two centuries, the first being the nineteenth-century invention of the profession of landscape architecture as responsible for the shape of the industrial city, and the second the development of twentieth-century landscape planning practices.

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In the dense industrial city of the nineteenth century, landscape architecture was conceived as an exception to the traditional order of the city, capable of compensating for the unhealthful social and spatial dynamics. In the decentralizing city associated with a mature Fordist industrial economy, landscape was reconceived as a medium of ecological planning, lending spatial coherence and occasionally social justice to the otherwise centrifugal sprawl of urbanization. In the contemporary post-Fordist industrial economy, landscape has been reconceived again, this time in the guise of landscape urbanism. Here landscape is invoked as a performative medium associated with the remediation of formerly industrial sites left in the wake of the Fordist economy's collapse. In this third era, landscape is also called on to structure the redevelopment of those sites for new forms of urban living, through a unique combination of ecological performance and design culture. This most recent formulation, rather than offering an exception to the structure of the city or planning for its dissolution, aligns with the return to the project of city making associated with contemporary service, creative, and culture economies. In this context, landscape urbanism promises to clean the sites of the formerly industrial economy while integrating ecological function into the spatial and social order of the contemporary city.

Landscape urbanist practices have found traction on either end of the uneven development spectrum—equally relevant for cities that continue to shrink as capital recedes from the previous spatial order and for those awash with capital in the new urban configuration. In some senses, landscape has been called on to absorb the shocks the changing industrial economies of the twentieth century generated, as the landscape medium has been found responsive and flexible in relation to the more durable yet brittle urban orders founded principally on architectonic models and metaphors. Landscape has been increasingly deployed to insulate urban populations from the worst social and environmental impacts of these economic transformations. Rather than a stylistic or scenographic deployment, this book argues that landscape has been invoked over the last two centuries in a structural relationship to urban industrial economy. As macroeconomic and industrial transformations have left the previous urban form redundant in its wake, landscape has been found relevant to remediate, redeem, and reintegrate the subsequent form of urbanization. Economic geography and critical urban theory have recently articulated specific spatial orders associated with the economic transformations associated with various eras of industrial economy. Rather than posing a simply stylistic or cultural question, this volume describes a structural relationship between landscape as a way of thinking through urbanism and transformations in the industrial economies that underpin processes of urbanization.

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This book offers a general theory for thinking about the city through landscape. In so doing, the origins of urban design and planning are placed in relation to the formation of landscape as architecture, making an argument for the landscape architect as the urbanist of our age, and for landscape urbanism as a new set of practices. It also reminds us of the central role for landscape found in the most environmentally informed planning practices of the twentieth century. The book locates the origins of landscape urbanist discourse in a particular

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strand of postmodern architectural thinking and its critiques of modern planning. For those architects and urbanists committed to the city as an object of study, yet wary of the style wars associated with postmodernism, *program* or *event* came to stand in for the urban in architectural terms. For many post-1968 architect/urbanists interested in the city as a social project, but wishing to avoid the architecture of the city, density of social relations came to stand as a surrogate for urbanity, even in the absence of appropriate architectural accommodations. Many of these protagonists would inform the emergence of interest in landscape as a form of urbanism, locating in landscape a particular mix of social intercourse and programmatic performance, unburdened of all that architectural baggage.

The emergence of landscape urbanist discourse and practices in this context fueled an equivalent interest in the various alternative planning practices of the twentieth century associated with social and environmental agency. One flank of the landscape urbanist agenda has been the construction of a useful history. This volume reconstructs that particular genealogy and identifies a small set of ecologically informed planning practices from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These precedents, most notably evident in the work of Ludwig Hilberseimer, among others, share an interest in ecological function and social equity, manifest in spatial terms. Most often these projects take the form of political or cultural critique, as in the work of Andrea Branzi. These projects, as described here, stand in contradistinction to the abject failures of many modernist planning practices to come to terms with the environmental and political crises of modernity. These antecedents to landscape urbanism also sit within a longer intellectual tradition of ecological planning. That long-standing tradition of planning the city through ecological knowledge is described here as a necessary, yet ultimately insufficient, precondition for the formation of landscape urbanist discourse in the postmodern era. The discourse and practices of landscape urbanism presuppose an intellectual and practical tradition of ecological planning as a foundation. Yet it was only through the unlikely intersection of modernist ecological planning with postmodern architectural culture that landscape urbanism would emerge. Whereas ecological planning presupposes the region as the basic unit of empirical observation and the site of design intervention, landscape urbanism inherits the region as a scale of ecological observation and analysis, yet most often intervenes at the scale of the brownfield site, which is itself the result of ongoing restructuring of industrial economies.

In reexamining the origin myth and basic claims for landscape architecture as a new profession and academic discipline in the nineteenth century, the narrative revisits the origins of landscape as a genre, locating the original impulse for landscape in the formerly urban sites of the shrinking city. These interpretations shed new light on the origins of planning in the field of landscape architecture. They also illuminate the origins of urban design and the unrealized potential for that disciplinary formation to have been housed within landscape architecture. This examination raises timely questions regarding the ongoing relevance of an architectural metaphor for urban order, as well as for the status of the architectural object in the contemporary field of planetary urbanization.

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In constructing a general theory for rethinking the urban, this volume assembles a thick description of cases and conditions, sites and subjects. This layering of material from discrete disciplines and discourses, while acknowledging the significance of disciplinary boundaries, aspires to a more relational reading of the urban arts grounded on a range of claims, conditions, and cases. Taken together, these materials presuppose the ongoing act of theory making as a necessary element of disciplinary formation and reformation. The term "general theory" in the subtitle signals the aspiration to offer a coherent and broadminded, if not comprehensive, monograph-book-length account of a subject that has been previously examined through journal articles or occasional anthologies of shorter, more episodic, projects and texts.

This volume is organized in a series of nine chapters, offering an intellectual history of its subject in thematic thirds. In the first third of the book, chapters 1 through 3 rehearse the discourse and practices of landscape urbanism. These chapters situate the emergence of landscape urbanist discourse in postmodern architectural culture and critiques of modernist planning, concluding with the more recent claim to the landscape architect as urbanist of our age. In the second third of the book, chapters 4 through 6 reveal the economic and political conditions underpinning the emergence of landscape urbanism. These chapters locate the origins of landscape urbanist practices in the neoliberal economies of post-Fordist urbanization, rather than in the purported autonomy of architectural culture. In the final third of the book, chapters 7 through 9 revisit various forms of subjectivity and representation implicated in the subject. This account reframes the nineteenth-century origins of landscape architecture as an academic discipline and liberal profession responsible for the shape of the city, rather than pastoral exceptions to it.

Chapter 1, "Claiming Landscape as Urbanism," rehearses the primary assertions of the emergent neologism "landscape urbanism," providing a genealogy of the concept originating in postmodern critiques of modernist planning in the 1970s and 1980s. It further articulates the origins of the concept as embodied in critical texts and canonical projects from the 1980s and 1990s by Stan Allen, James Corner, Kenneth Frampton, Lars Lerup, Bernard Tschumi, and Rem Koolhaas, among others. This account surveys Koolhaas's interest in "congestion without matter" and Tschumi's concern with the "open work," along with Frampton's concepts of "megaform as urban landscape" and "acupunctural urbanism," and Lerup's notions of the "zoohemic canopy" and an urbanism populated by points of "stim and dross." Allen's interest in infrastructure and the performative dimensions of the horizontal surface is shown to correlate with Corner's articulation of the operational field of contemporary urbanism. Collectively these critical concepts are taken to form the intellectual groundwork for "landscape urbanism" at the end of the twentieth century.

Chapter 2, "Autonomy, Indeterminacy, Self-Organization," builds on the concept of the "open work" as discussed in the previous chapter and traces the impact of ideas from literary criticism, linguistics, and critical theory on architectural theory in the postmodern era. Landscape urbanist discourse emerged at the intersection of neo-avant-gardist architectural interest in concepts of

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deferred authorship, open-endedness, and indeterminacy in relationship to landscape ecology. In this formulation cultural interest in indeterminacy and delayed authorship found an analogue in the natural world conceived as a self-regulating system absent human agency. Postmodern architectural culture's rejection of function or use came to stand as a proxy for criticality, or cultural value, as seen in Peter Eisenman's 1976 essay "Post-Functionalism." These questions of authorship were appropriated from cultural practices of the historical avant-garde. The strategy of delayed, deferred, or distanced authorship in architecture of the postmodern era became a means toward a putatively critical architecture, as these concepts were adopted by urbanists in the 1980s and 1990s, and by advocates of the nascent landscape urbanism in the 1990s and 2000s. As architects and urbanists of a certain generation espoused the critical dimension of their work through autonomy and problematized authorship, proponents of landscape as a form of urbanism articulated the potential for reading ecology as equally autonomous, open-ended, and indeterminate. This chapter surveys a short list of canonical works embodying concepts of criticality through problematized authorship in landscape and urbanism that were subsequently supplanted by nascent landscape urbanist discourse and practices.

Chapter 3, "Planning, Ecology, and the Emergence of Landscape," outlines the relationship between contemporary practices of landscape urbanism and the disciplinary and professional commitments of urban planning. The chapter describes continuities and discontinuities between current landscape urbanist practice and antecedent planning practices informed by ecology. Particular practices of ecological or landscape planning from the twentieth century formed a necessary yet insufficient basis for the articulation of landscape urbanist discourse and practice at the close of that century. The chapter locates early and mature landscape urbanist work in relation to nontraditional planning actors and agents, neoliberal development practices, and the rise of philanthropy in support of design culture and environmental performance.

The post-1968 radicalization of planning in the North American academy resulted in its effective alienation from design culture and rejection of spatial planning in favor of a turn toward the social sciences. This was a historic shift in relation to economic and political transformations in North America that tended toward neoliberal and laissez-faire development practices rather than traditional welfare state public planning. These transformations had particular impact on the legacy of environmentally or ecologically informed planning practice, as public-sector capacity for state control of planning tended to recede in North America at precisely the moment that it was most forcefully articulated in the work of Ian McHarg and a generation of landscape planners. The chapter similarly locates landscape urbanist practice in relation to the origins and development of urban design in North America, seeing landscape urbanism as an alternative to neotraditional town planning strategies that advocated for a return to spatial patterns of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century city. In this regard, landscape urbanism embodies an unlikely combination of progressive architectural culture and environmental performance in the context of an economic transition from industrial to postindustrial.

Chapter 4, "Post-Fordist Economies and Logistics Landscape," locates

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recently renewed interest in landscape as a medium of urbanism in the transition from an industrial "Fordist" economy of production toward a "post-Fordist" economy of consumption. The work of David Harvey is seen to sharply articulate the role of design and planning in anticipating and enabling new forms of urban identity through spatial and cultural production. Harvey's concept of "spatial fix" explains the role of the landscape medium in the spatial transition from an industrial to a postindustrial urban economy. Also referenced is his account of stylistic change in the arts and design culture as embedded in larger structural economic transformations, which situate landscape urbanism's ascendency.

This chapter describes the formation of landscape urbanist practices in relation to the economic structure of contemporary urbanization. Recent scholarship in economic geography distinguishes between three periods of urbanization: a dense nineteenth-century "pre-Fordist" industrial economy, a decentralized twentieth-century "Fordist" economy, and a distributed twenty-first-century "post-Fordist" economy. In the nineteenth-century metropolis, landscape was conceived as an exception to the spatial structure of the city, most often as a form of park or public-realm improvement intended to ameliorate undesirable social and environmental conditions. In the decentralizing twentieth-century city, landscape was invoked as a medium of planning and was called on to provide spatial limits and structure. Finally, in the globally urbanized twenty-first-century city, landscape has taken the form of landscape urbanism, and is expected to mitigate the transition from one economic spatial order to another. In this most recent formulation, landscape remediates the formerly urban postindustrial site, animating the latent cultural, economic, and ecological potentials of derelict and distressed sites. The chapter describes the emergence of landscape urbanist practices as a structural response to the cultural conditions of advanced capitalism and, following Harvey, identifies landscape as offering a particular spatial order for our contemporary economic restructuring. In this regard, mature landscape urbanist practice is understood to be particularly relevant as a balm for the shrinking cities described in the next chapter as the "formerly urban."

Chapters 5 and 6 extend questions of economic structure and spatial order to examine another venue for landscape urbanist practice, the shrinking city. Chapter 5, "Urban Crisis and the Origins of Landscape," cites Detroit as the most legible form of advanced industrial economy in the post-Fordist era and identifies the origins of the landscape genre in the West in the articulation and representation of urban abandonment. The chapter builds on the concept of *disabitato* as referring specifically to the abandonment and reappropriation of the formerly urban. A key reference is made to the reception of Claude Lorrain's drawings and paintings by English popularizers of the modern taste in landscape gardening, and the disproportionate impact of Lorrain's images of the formerly urban in the formation of what would become landscape architecture.

Chapter 6, "Urban Order and Structural Change," continues the question of urban economy and shrinking cities to identify a proto-landscape urbanist practice of landscape planning that anticipated the decentralization of the city. The chapter examines Ludwig Hilberseimer's theory of the "settlement unit," and his single built example, Lafayette Park in Detroit. Hilberseimer's planning

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practice was an important antecedent to contemporary interest in landscape urbanism and a relatively underexamined exemplar of landscape as a medium of urbanism. At Lafayette Park, landscape is deployed as a driver of urban order uniquely capable of anticipating and responding to the ongoing spatial decentralization of the mature Fordist city. Further, Hilberseimer's planning concept proposed landscape to insulate populations from the worst social and environmental impacts of spatial restructuring associated with the mature Fordist economy.

Chapter 7, "Agrarian Urbanism and the Aerial Subject," revisits twentieth-century landscape planning practices as precedents for landscape urbanism, with a focus on Hilberseimer's "New Regional Pattern." Hilberseimer's planning theory is representative of a more general category of agrarian urbanism evident in twentieth-century planning. His work is read in relation to Frank Lloyd Wright's "Broadacres" and Andrea Branzi's "Territory for the New Economy," among other urban propositions. These practices postponed traditional distinctions between city and countryside in favor of a more synthetic understanding of the economic and ecological orders structuring urban life. These projects were critical responses to the economic and environmental conditions of the Fordist paradigm that implied a new form of aerial subjectivity for urban life. Rather than simply a new representational lens or analytical tool, aerial representation is understood as central to the critical position and reception of these projects. In this regard, the synoptic aerial view creates a new form of citizen-spectatorship, the agrarian aerial subject.

Chapter 8, "Aerial Representation and Airport Landscape," extends the focus on the aerial subject of twentieth-century landscape planning practice with an examination of the role and status of aerial representation in landscape urbanism. The chapter evokes the question of aerial subjectivity to account for the privileged modes of landscape urbanist representation, including the synoptic aerial oblique view and the exploded axonometric diagram, which are explained in relation to the scale and situation of landscape urbanist practices. These modes simultaneously offered continuity with particular genealogies of design culture such as flatbed painting, photomontage, and the isometric diagram, while affording legibility of the horizontal field of urban operations. These representational lenses, and their privileging of the aerial subject, foreground one of the more compelling sites in landscape urbanist practice, the airport landscape.

Perhaps as much as any other urban type, the airport has been a central concern of landscape urbanist discourse and practice, as it exemplifies the vast horizontality, near complete contamination, and abiotic function of the metropolitan regions more generally. For landscape urbanists interested in the performance of the horizontal field framed by infrastructure, the port has been found relevant, and the airport especially so, as among the most significant venues for landscape urbanist discourse. This attention is manifest in a range of cases, including the ecological and urban enhancement of operating airfields as well as the conversion of redundant airfields for use as parks and in support of renewed urbanization.

Chapter 9, "Claiming Landscape as Architecture," returns to the original aspirations and landscape architecture as a profession in which boosters of the

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"new art" incorporated landscape as a form of architecture in the second half of the nineteenth century. Recalling the Francophone and Francophile origins of the concept in the compound identity of the *architecte-paysagiste*, the chapter describes Frederick Law Olmsted's adoption of the term and rejection of the English formulation "landscape gardening." Acknowledging Olmsted's misgivings with the "miserable nomenclature" of landscape architecture in the English language, this account revisits the decision to found the new field on the cultural legibility of the architect, in lieu of the artist or the gardener. The new profession aspired to have primary responsibility for the organization of space and urban order through infrastructure and public realm improvements, rather than dealing with plants or the garden. In this regard, the very origins of landscape architecture reside in projects of city building through infrastructure and ecological function. As evidence, the chapter describes the first commission of a landscape architect in the modern sense. This is exemplified in Olmsted and Vaux's commission for the planning of Manhattan above 155th Street, rather than the design of a public park, pleasure ground, or private garden. Landscape architecture was thus conceived in the nineteenth century as a new profession responsible for divining the shape of the modern metropolis.

From the origins of landscape architecture in nineteenth-century Paris and New York, the chapter turns to a description of the emerging role for landscape architecture in the context of East Asian urbanization. It concludes with an account of the Chinese landscape architect Kongjian Yu and his firm Turenscape, the first private practice in landscape architecture in that country. Yu's Chinese National Ecological Security Plan embodies a form of knowledge transfer from his study of ecological planning and digital mapping at Harvard and continues a line of ecological planning nearly eclipsed in contemporary North American practices of planning.

The book's conclusion, "From Landscape to Ecology," offers a brief account of the recent formulation of an "ecological urbanism," presenting the proposition as a continuation of the landscape urbanism project in more precise terms. It also acknowledges the potential of ecological urbanism as a critique of landscape urbanism's reliance on the occasionally inscrutable category of landscape.

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