

Ciudad paisaje:  
Naturaleza y regeneración urbana  
en las ciudades americanas

## Landscape City: Nature and Urban Regeneration in American Cities

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### Abstract

Alongside the well-established European concept of Compact City, there is a very different model that has guided the development of most North American cities. The authors call this model the Landscape City and they argue that it is deeply rooted in America's history and specifically in its attitudes towards Nature, from pre-Columbian times to lead thinkers of the twentieth century. The study and understanding of these two models is crucial for the urban regeneration of American cities in the 21st century.

**Keywords:** Landscape City, Compact City, Americas, Nature, Urban Regeneration, Wilderness

### Resumen

En contraste con el concepto europeo de ciudad compacta, la mayoría de las ciudades norteamericanas han seguido otro modelo de desarrollo. Los autores han denominado este modelo la ciudad paisaje y proponen que es un modelo arraigado en la historia americana, específicamente en su relación con la naturaleza, desde los tiempos precolombinos hasta destacados pensadores del siglo XX. El estudio de estos dos modelos de ciudad es fundamental para afrontar la regeneración urbana de las ciudades americanas.

**Palabras clave:** ciudad paisaje, ciudad compacta, américas, naturaleza, regeneración urbana

### Introduction

Cities are always unfinished and engaged in a continuous effort to improve themselves. The simultaneous study of two distinct urban models –one European, associated with the Compact City, and one American, associated with what we call Landscape City–, has great potential to generate ideas and research topics that can improve urban design. The working hypothesis of this essay is that both models can coexist if we apply them to specific situations while always understanding the real advantages and shortcomings of the experiences offered by both types of cities.

We also acknowledge that what is truly innovative about this essay is that, alongside the pre-established model of the Compact City, we propose another urban model that we have named Landscape City. This proposal requires from us a significant explanation in which we will try to avoid the preconceptions that frequently burden current discussions about urban issues.



Compact City vs. Landscape City: Aerial photographs of Madrid, Spain (right) and Austin, Texas at the same scale. Both cities occupy approximately the same surface area, but Madrid's population is almost five times larger than that of Austin

### Thinking and working on cities

Cities are complex cultural artifacts, a great human collective work. As John Reader said, "Cities are the defining artifacts of civilization. All the failings and achievements of humanity are here."<sup>1</sup> Cities embody the values and aspirations of the societies that create them, and accordingly they maintain a powerful relationship with humans. Winston Churchill summed it up eloquently: "First we shape our cities and then they shape us."<sup>2</sup> As architects, we are also aware that the city is an "incomplete" human work. Cities are always under construction, especially the most dynamic ones. It is precisely in this process of constant development and transformation that we must uncover new guiding principles of urban design.

In one of his well-known books, Arnold Toynbee goes to the text of a Roman epigraph to introduce his thoughts about cities: "*Urbem fecisti quod prius orbis erat*,"<sup>3</sup> or translated: "You made a city of what before was a world," a disorderly world. This brief Roman maxim reminds us that the city, a human creation, rises over something that came before: the chaotic natural world. The city

is equivalent to Civilization; nothing offers order like the city. On the other hand, Nature is simultaneously the matter from which the city is built and its antagonist. A poignant example of this is the lost Mayan civilizations, with their ruined cities in the jungle offering an overwhelming reminder of the man's precarious control over Nature.

However, during the twentieth century, the opposition that had dominated Western culture's relationship with Nature was transformed through scientific knowledge. Before this shift, only a small group of thinkers and artists could overcome the set of common beliefs propagated by fears and desires for dominance. But as Ian McHarg insisted at the beginning of his influential book *Design with Nature*, Western thought needed to evolve from its initial hostility towards Nature. Today, that need has become dire, as human civilization (all civilizations that coexist on the planet) must respond to save its relationship with the Earth.

There is no room nowadays for a responsible urban strategy without this global framework as reference. In addition, we should search for

new strategies and existing qualities through the thoughtful analysis of current urban models and the avoidance of prejudices. Along these lines, we consider it critical to propose on the one hand a defense of the fundamental relationship between architecture and city, and on the other a strategy for the future of our cities that emanates from a richer relationship with the landscape.

Our working hypothesis allows us to merge, by means of an inclusive logic, several of the main arguments within the debate that is currently taking shape both in Europe and North America. We do so based on two critical concepts: first, the Compact City, an idea defended as a principle (almost like a mantra) by those promoting sustainable urbanism; and second, the Landscape City, a concept that we propose in this essay. It is a concept with parallels and precedents that are profoundly connected with the essence of the North American city.

### Compact City and urban regeneration

The concept of the Compact City was developed in Europe in the early 1990s. It was a counter-



point approach that viewed the expansive urban model as unsustainable. It advocated instead for a more complex and diverse city characterized by an emphasis on mixed uses and a severe criticism of the effects of zoning, such as the specialization and fragmentation of urban areas. The Compact City is not only about the search for an efficient urban form and the reduction of land consumption, but also about the overall sustainable future of cities, and accordingly all urban spaces must be rethought from this perspective. While there is a growing debate about what this “compactness” really means, European cities are channeling this concept towards a more nuanced strategy of “urban regeneration”.

After the Leipzig Charter,<sup>4</sup> the sustainable city strategy became associated with one of the singularities of Western European cities: their tradition of urban rehabilitation/regeneration. The strategy that originated with the rehabilitation of the historic centers expanded first to *brown-fields* and empty or abandoned interior areas, then to blighted neighborhoods and, gradually, to the entire city. Based on the concept of an “in-

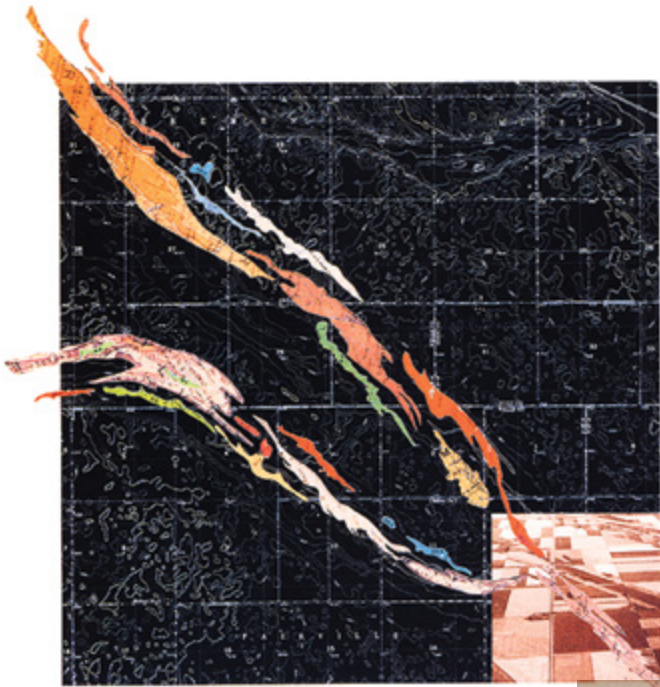
tegrated urban development”, or a coordinated effort to systematically improve the existing city, this process of urban regeneration is a pragmatic approach that embraces the idea that the form of the city of the future is rooted in the existing city. Most of the time, it is an existing form full of complex challenges and social problems, and in need of upkeep; but it is also full of resources and opportunities.

These European ideas resonate with some very well-articulated proposals for a more sustainable future in American cities. A clear example is Rutherford Platt, who wrote: “In the decades ahead, the emphasis must shift from limiting ‘urban sprawl’ to making the resulting metropolitan fabric as green, habitable, and humane as possible.”<sup>5</sup> This notion clearly resonates with the “urban regeneration strategy”. In both, the key is in the existing cities. Very similar to the European program, Platt’s proposal for what he calls the Humane Metropolis describes a city that is green, healthy, civic and inclusive. He also reminds us that 1968 saw the publication of three texts that have become landmarks of the envi-

ronmental movement: *Design with Nature* by Ian McHarg; the paper “The Tragedy of Commons”, published in *Science* by the ecologist Garrett Hardin; and *The Last Landscape* by William H. Whyte. In *The Last Landscape*, “Holly” Whyte wrote:

We don’t have to wait for the grand design. It is there already. The structure of our metropolitan areas has long been set by nature and man, by the rivers and the hills, and the railroads and the highways. Many options remain, and the great task of planning is not to come up with another structure but to work with the strengths of the structure we have –and to discern this structure as people experience it in their everyday life[...] There is no clear image but thousands of them.<sup>6</sup>

The work ahead for those responsible for planning the future of our cities will involve reworking what already exists; tweaking, adapting and adjusting it to existing conditions; and looking for opportunities within the city, from the central spaces to the outskirts. This idea emphasizes the critical role that emerging disciplines like



Images from "Taking Measurements Across the American Landscape" (1996), by James Corner (author) and Alex S. MacLean (photographer)



landscape architecture should play in the future of urban planning. It also calls for an unequivocal acknowledgment that American cities are very different than European cities. The American landscape, with its extraordinary features, is essential in defining those differences.

### Landscape Cities: Cities in the wilderness

Nature is deeply rooted in American culture in a very different way than in Europe. The longer and more particular history of the European continent has led to the juxtaposition of closed cities and villages with their related agrarian landscapes. Nature is only recognized in remote landscapes (nowadays frequently protected). In the American experience, however, the land use discourse includes more references to "our endangered life-support systems";<sup>7</sup> or calls for the "restoration of

disturbed harmonies"<sup>8</sup> –both ideas consistent with the approach of *Design with Nature*. In North America, the idea that Man and Nature must be involved together in the construction of cities is often present despite the significance of industrial landscapes (or even because of them).

With the premise that there is not a unique approach to address urban form, our working hypothesis is that we can find in the American conception of Nature a specific source of urbanity. This is radically different from the European model based on the Renaissance concept of the city as a big artifact. To introduce this idea –the Landscape City– we propose a tour through some American concepts on landscape.

Bruce Babbitt wrote a poignant book, titled *Cities in the Wilderness*, with the purpose of demonstrating "how we can prevent the loss of nat-

ural and cultural landscapes and watersheds through stronger federal leadership in land use planning."<sup>9</sup> Babbitt insists on the necessity of renewing the commitment to appropriate land use laws that can guarantee the protection of critical ecosystems. More importantly, in his view, land conservation is not a problem of experts but a question of social or "civic" values. Echoing Frederick Law Olmsted, Nature has a role in the task of civilizing American cities.

Probably the very idea of "wilderness" is one of the most important American contributions to contemporary Western thought.<sup>10</sup> It is not easy to summarize here its nuances and complexity. However, this notion involves a clear and direct reference from Culture to Nature, in a very different sense of domination or supremacy. It could guide more sustainable ways for the manmade

in an “urban world”. Wilderness now exists within many cities, as large and medium cities invade and transform entire regions, growing in more intense and radical ways than in the past. The idea of wilderness brings up a new contrast between urban and natural landscapes –between urbanization and natural processes. It is a blueprint for defining relationships between Nature and Urban Form.

In *Man and Nature* (1864), George Perkins Marsh described the destructiveness of man, and how humans were subverting the balance of nature to their own detriment. The originality of this milestone in North American thought is a new vision of physical geography as a reality modified by human action. Nature arises as a source of significance in a different way than in Europe, where only during brief and diverse periods did small groups of European intellectuals, like Francis of Assisi or Petrarca, “discover” the wild landscape in the forests, the mountains or the seacoast. After Romanticism, these ideas led directly to a new building type –the Spa– during the urbanization process of both beach and mountain.<sup>11</sup> In the European concept of landscape, there is no specific preference for the Wild Nature. Moreover, Beauty in Nature is rooted in the Beaux Arts, where discussion of natural landscapes leads one away from the natural sciences and into the field of aesthetics.<sup>12</sup>

In Siena’s Palazzo Pubblico, a mural by Ambrogio Lorenzetti titled “Effetti del Buon Governo in città e in campagna” (1339) displays how people in the early Italian Renaissance recognized the cultural and economic relationship between the agrarian landscape and the urban settlement. Outside the urban walls there is the countryside; beyond, the dark forest and in the limits of this world the *terra ignota*, the realm of barbarism. In old Europe the source of sense has been primarily cultural, as seen in the idea of *genius loci*, the classical concept of place in eighteenth century English landscape design. For Alexander Pope and Horace Walpole, “to create a garden is to paint a landscape” –working with the place, working in the place.

But, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, many thinkers –from Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Law Olmsted and John Muir to Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson– have shaped a different, American culture. John Muir proposed in his



Robert Smithson was an admirer of Frederick Law Olmsted. Smithson’s work captures Scully’s idea of the “old way” in which human intervention is established through a meaningful relationship with Nature

autobiography (1913) “learn in Nature... where the eye reads omens where it goes, as Emerson said, and where Nature is the Wild Nature, the landscape of forests, waters and sands in a universe composed of Nature and Soul.”<sup>13</sup> Muir even talked about the “University of the Wilderness”, preaching that going to the mountains is going home, and that these wild lands are “fountains of life”, sources of contemplation.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, the conservation of singular natural spaces such as National Parks, and wild areas such as forests or deserts, is no exception. This is a unique aspect of the development of North America.

However, the *genius loci* is a complex and evolving concept, as places gather not only different functions and uses, but accumulations of meanings. As stated by Christine Macy and Sarah Bonnemaïson, in the United States the relationship between the English words “nation” and “nature” has been central to its colonial history, from the discovery of a “lost” paradise, to the mythology associated with the frontier and the conser-



Two Landscape Cities: Tikal, Guatemala and Austin, Texas. Just like Austin has a downtown of skyscrapers surrounded by single-family houses in a forest, Tikal had a ceremonial center of towering pyramids surrounded by detached houses amid the jungle. Tikal had approximately the same population density as Austin

vation of islands of wilderness.<sup>15</sup> A brief foray into French etymology reveals that the words *pays* (the region or nation) and *paysage* have a similar root. But although *pays* is equivalent to Nation, *paysage* refers to neither Nature nor Wilderness.

Nature is not only a historical source of significance, it also has the potential to inspire new concepts and attitudes. In *The Natural and the Manmade*, Vincent Scully (1988) insisted: “we need to revive our traditions and begin again.”<sup>16</sup> Those who inhabit the American continent are fortunate to have still active native cultures and the remains of great pre-Columbian cultures exhibiting an “old way”, a mimetic approach where human works try to integrate into nature. However, the “new way”, the dominant way since the first rationalism appeared in Europe with the Greeks, is the way in which manmade structures are erected in contrast with Nature: “The past ten thousand years show such humanization to be the norm across the world. Driven by metabolism and reproduction, humans have pressed Nature into its role as provider of the resources to sustain burgeoning populations.”<sup>17</sup>

The concept of wilderness can play a role in reactivating this “old way”, even if it is not so clear how the old way fits into the urban project today. It is perhaps through the singularity of the American thinking on Nature, “a shift from viewing wild nature as merely a valuable resource (as a means to economic ends) and obstacle (wilderness must be conquered for civilization

advance) toward a conception of wilderness as the end in its own right.”<sup>18</sup> But we cannot forget, as Lawrence Buell wrote, that “the success of all environmentalist effort finally hinges not on “some highly developed technology, or some arcane new science,” but on a “state of mind: on attitudes, feelings, images, narratives.”<sup>19</sup> The innovation we need is in values, in popular knowledge, in the situations of everyday life.

Members of the Land Art movement have superbly captured the idea expressed by Scully. In Robert Smithson’s work, the presence of the “old way” permeates the manmade artifact and its compelling relationship with nature. The notion of the landscape emerges, rich with ambiguity and polysemy. Can we also look at this American tradition as the basis for the idea of “landscape cities”, where a symbiotic and deeper relationship between City and Nature and the concept of Wilderness can resonate?

In any case, it is clear that the search for a more engaging relationship between the artifact-city and nature has been lately an ongoing preoccupation in American publications on landscape and related fields. Many relevant titles share these ideas: *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*; *Design with Nature*; *The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design*; *City Form and Natural Process*; and *Design for a Vulnerable Planet*. The Canadian landscape architect Michael Hough argues for a more precise relationship between city form and natural



process. This invariably must start with a more in depth understanding and protection of natural systems and a growing awareness of the role of “ecology” in shaping cities.

The presence of Nature, both as a cultural and as an environmental concept, is very powerful in North America, and as such it can play a critical role as a moderator in the evolution of the interplay of science, technology and human activities. Moving forward, we hope the emerging landscape disciplines –landscape planning, landscape ecology, landscape architecture, landscape design and now landscape urbanism<sup>20</sup> –will uncover concrete results of best practices in the United States, encouraging a debate with their counterparts in Europe.

In particular, it is relevant how the concept of “landscape urbanism” has evolved, starting as an idea and transforming into a “movement”. James Corner anticipated the idea at the end of the twentieth century when he pointed out a resurgence of interest in landscape led by a discipline, namely landscape architecture, which was well established in North American culture.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Corner breathed new life into the goals of urban design, incorporating in several projects a new perspective more in tune with Nature. In 2006 Charles Waldheim shed new light in his reader on the origin of the concept, going back to historical figures like Jens Jensen and Ian McHarg. Waldheim went on to point out the key American figures of the movement as well as their connections with European

landscape architects and architects like Adrian Geuze in Holland or Battle and Roig in Spain.<sup>22</sup>

Waldheim’s thesis asserts that, when repurposed as an interdisciplinary endeavor, “landscape has become a lens through which the contemporary city is represented and a medium through which it is constructed.” Without delving into this issue, its importance lies in demonstrating a rediscovery of the landscape potential in urban settings, as well as positioning ecology as a guide to urban design.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence (particularly in the United States) the landscape disciplines can now contribute holistically to urban design, which until recently had operated only in very specific areas or had been altogether forgotten by architects, who were more focused on buildings and the formal definition of urban centers. The relationship with nature has been mainly present at the regional scale (Growth Management), associated with suburban expansion and the protection of natural habitats, while movements like New Urbanism have concentrated their influence in the outskirts.

Europe has followed a different course; architects became interested in the landscape in the 1990s, and they embarked on an important collaboration with landscape architects, mainly centered on the design of parks, public spaces, urban edges and waterfront projects, but not necessarily looking comprehensively at the whole city. The consolidated urban spaces of Europe –together with a highly regulated urban design discipline–

Thorncrowne Chapel (1980), by Fay Jones. The integration of architecture and its context







have conditioned, with few exceptions, this spike in interest in the landscape. In any case, the relationship between City and Nature is currently at the top of the agenda of most cities.

### **Building in Nature: The ancient American Experience**

How should we think about Nature in today's cities? In "The American Ideology of Space" (1988), Leo Marx discussed the difference between the built environment of the Old World and the unbuilt –or natural– environment of the New World. In the latter, the immensity and emptiness of the landscape, still "un-civilized", have together defined a difference in its perception. For example, the impact of the Great American Landscape in people's imaginations throughout the world has fuelled massive migrations to the Americas by individuals pursuing the American Dream. Those immigrants, just like other Americans, chased the dream of having their own house on their piece of land. Even today, attaining this dream is still perceived as a symbol of success. Leo Marx also reminds us about the pastoral myth in the American ideal of suburbia as a desire to "live within Nature."<sup>24</sup>

It is within this context that it is important to understand that the open, endless, low-density American city –the "Landscape City"– is part of a strong tradition that unfortunately tends to be oversimplified as a model mainly driven by the advent of the automobile and referred to with the pejorative term "sprawl". The impulse towards Nature is not a new development in the Americas. Here, human settlements have always maintained a strong connection with Nature, and the majority of American cities have grown as aggregations of single-family detached houses expanding outward into the surrounding landscape.

We have attractive ancient examples in the abandoned pre-Columbian Mayan cities. These truly "landscape cities" scattered and merged with the landscape in the same way that American cities do today. For instance, it is estimated that Tikal in Guatemala, at its peak in the eighth

century, had a population of 50 000 people stretched over fifty square kilometers; this concentration is similar to the population density that Austin, Texas has today. Just like Austin has a downtown of tall buildings surrounded by residential suburbs of single-family houses, Tikal had a ceremonial center built out of stone, and the rest was a sprawling city made up of single-family detached houses that merged with the jungle. Mayan cities in the jungle are a clear example of how the insertion into an extraordinary setting determines an alternative urban model.

The New World civilizations flourished in isolation from the rest of the world and still revered a pantheon of gods entrenched in Nature at the time of contact with Europeans. Just like in other ancient cultures across the globe, in the Americas what humans built was greatly influenced by the fact that people understood "the sacred" as being intrinsically associated with the landscape, the natural world. The sacred manifested itself through natural phenomena or natural features and, accordingly, humans related to nature with reverence.<sup>25</sup>

For example, the Sacred Stone of Machu Picchu reproduces the sacred mountain of Putukusi to the east. The ancient Inca understood their natural surroundings very differently from the way we do; they lived in a sacralized landscape. The mere fact that stone, as a material, was considered sacred, or that an individual stone could be worshipped, is something quite contrary to what we are used to in our Western tradition. Indeed, this kind of belief is generally referred to as belonging to so-called "primitive" cultures. However, when one travels through the Inca region and observes the impressive masonry walls they left behind –for instance, Cusco's famous twelve-angle stone, with its puzzlingly intricate shape and impossibly tight joints, all made with other stones since no metals were available to carve stone– one wonders: what were the Inca after? What lay behind the incredible effort, the care and dedication, with which the Inca carried out their stonework?



Urban regeneration, Bilbao, Spain. The Guggenheim Museum was the first piece of a profound transformation of the industrial harbor of Bilbao

Different times pose different challenges for their artists. In the Greek and Latin world (and later on in the Renaissance), the challenge was to imitate the human body, which was understood as an ideal of perfection. On the other hand, in Inca art and in the pre-Columbian world in general, the challenge was more sublime: to imitate Nature, to do like Nature does, to connect with the natural world. Undoubtedly this was a very different search to the one we are used to in the Western world.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, pre-Columbian architecture aims to fit in; by looking for models in nature, it seeks a mimesis that allows humans to feel integrated into the world and into a system of beliefs that stems from it. Because the sacred manifests itself in nature, the connection is very powerful and fundamentally affects any construction effort. Often the efforts were monumental because the two most common natural models being emulated were mountains and valleys. Thus, the two dominant building types found in pre-Columbian cultures are the pyramid with a temple on top (a reproduction of the sacred mountain) and the courtyard or *plaza* (a recreation of the sacred valleys).

The ancient Greeks introduced a paradigm change in Antiquity that has persisted to the present; it occurred when the sacred loosened its association with nature, and the ancient pantheon of gods was replaced with humanized, Olympian gods. In order to create the home for their new gods, the Greeks created an architectural language that has been used to this day. When one wanders

through the streets of any Western city, it is remarkable to witness that the language created by the ancient Greeks and Romans was still used in the nineteenth century and beyond. With variations ranging from lofty institutional to domestic, it is an architectural language that operates as an autonomous discipline with its own regulations, altogether uninterested in imitating the natural world. The Western sense of connection with Nature in architecture, as reflected in Laugier's *Essai sur l'architecture* (1752), is through the origin of the primitive hut, a human abstraction that occurred in Nature.<sup>27</sup> This differs radically from the mythical reading and recreation of the landscape of the pre-Columbian cultures in the Americas.

After Ancient Greece, the monotheism that came to characterize Western culture relegated nature, just like humans, to a mere creation of God,

Sacred Rock of Machu Picchu, Peru





Pedestrian Bridge (2006), by Miró Rivera Architects. The integration of architecture and its context.

the Creator. Humans, understandably, focused their efforts to please this new God. For example, after the arrival of the Spanish in the Americas, there was a shift from a mimetic architecture integrated into the landscape, to a new architecture of contrast. From Spain came an architecture with a codified language, centered on the clear vision of an omnipresent God; religious architecture came to dominate the skylines of Latin American cities.

In North America, when the United States became a new country, the founding fathers adopted the language of Classical Antiquity for the image of their institutions. Would that still have been the case had Frank Lloyd Wright been born 100 years earlier? Probably not, Wright almost single-handedly created a new architectural language born in America; he called it organic architecture. Full of the pioneer spirit of a young nation, Wright understood the American landscape as a vast territory to be explored. The new American man enters into the wilderness in a

quest for self-discovery and to create a home in harmony with nature. Wright admired Thoreau and understood freedom like Muir, linked to a new society seeking pastoral ideals. In the 1930s, Wright designed what he thought was the ideal city for his country: Broadacre City, a model for a new democracy where each family would occupy a 1-acre plot. It was a true Landscape City.

Wright's organic architecture emerges from the land, searching for mimetic expression. Such is the case with Fallingwater, which reminds us of those images in Peru, where architecture's substance connects with its natural setting. In Fallingwater we find a characteristic that is common in some of the most recognized American modern buildings: their value is derived not only from the quality of its architecture, but also from the memorable dialogue that the building establishes with its environment. Fay Jones, Wright's disciple, built Thornycrown Chapel in the spirit of his master: the chapel aims to blend with the woods that surround it. Another building that



Palazzo Pubblico di Siena: Ambrogio Lorenzetti's mural painting titled "Effetti del Buon Governo in città e in campagna" (1339)

acquires its value through its relationship with the surrounding landscape is the famous Douglas House by Richard Meier. Just like the ancient Greek did in Selinunte or Paestum, here the architect aimed for a language of contrast, between the greenness of the Michigan woods and the whiteness and purity of the house. In the Douglas House also resonates the idea of the American landscape as an individual conquest –the idea of the vast landscape ready to be inhabited by the pioneer; it is both the conquest and the stewardship of the land.

Along these lines, scholarly works like Stan Allen's "From the Object to Field" or the Land Art work of Robert Smithson and his efforts to create new trajectories in the visual arts, are perhaps as much a breakthrough as they are a return to the "old ways". For the relationship with Nature is not just benign but demanding; just like in Antiquity, the woods, deserts, mountains and oceans where our cities rise still overwhelm us.

### Conclusion

Can we respond to Vincent Scully's challenge that "we can revive our traditions and begin again"? The sense that there is a different way of doing is perhaps already present in many American cities rooted in their natural setting; especially in medium-sized Landscape Cities like Austin, Seattle, Tucson, Denver, Portland or Minneapolis –all contemporary "cities in the wilderness". The American concept of Wilderness (poorly understood in Europe) and the two-fold ideology of respect for Nature and stewardship of the land that stems from it is crucial for our urban future. The Landscape City model demonstrates that, with the intelligent incorporation of design strategies of the Compact City model, there is a potential for urban regeneration, for urban improvement in the future. All the spaces, all the "places", of our cities can be involved in it.

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### Notes

1. John Reader, *Cities* (London: William Heinemann, 2004), 1.
2. Quoted by John Reader, *Cities*, 9.
3. Arnold J. Toynbee, *Cities on the Move* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).
4. *Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities*, adopted at the U. E. Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development and Territorial Cohesion in Leipzig on 24/25 May 2007. Also we can see the UE trend of future proposals in "Urban regeneration for smart, sustainable and inclusive EU cities", CDR 98/2010.
5. Rutherford H. Platt (ed.), *The Humane Metropolis: People and Nature in the Twenty-first Century City* (Boston & Cambridge: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy & University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 321.
6. William H. Whyte, *The Last Landscape* (New York: Garden City-Doubleday, 1968), 13.
7. See Eugene P. Odum, *Ecology and our Endangered Life-Support Systems* (Stamford, CT: Sinauer Associates Inc., 1993).
8. In the sense of Anne Whiston Spirn, see *The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).
9. Bruce Babbitt, *Cities in the wilderness. A new vision of land use in America* (Washington: Island Press, 2005), 5.
10. This American tradition stands out relevant figures, like Henry David Thoreau, John Muir and Aldo Leopold, in the sequence pointed out by Roderick F. Nash in *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967). Max Oelschlaeger, in *The idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), explains widely the American environmental thought around the idea of wilderness. Here we can feel the echoes of the Clarence J. Glacken's classic, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1967) about the western thinking on Nature and also a revision of the Nash perspective. In any case, the discussion about the different meanings of wilderness in American history is alive: see Michael Lewis (ed.), *American Wilderness. A New History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). We can not here develop a deeper view about this concept, our reflection is clearly oriented to its significance on landscape and urban design. In this sense the main American figure is Frederick Law Olmsted, always present but not always well understood. Witold Rybczynski in his relevant book about Olmsted, *A Clearing in the Distance* (New York: Touchstone Edition, 2000), writes "Exhibitions and books are one thing, but what revived Olm-

sted's reputation among the general public was the rehabilitation of Central Park" (p. 420), and, "When I started to think of writing about Olmsted, Laurie Olin told me, 'Always look at the work first'" (p. 421), showing that American idea of landscape is not only a collection of thoughts, it is a reality present in these and other works. And we also know that the lines drawn between civilization and wilderness "are not so firm as we characteristically think", as Neil Evernden established in *The Social Creation of Nature* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

11. We can see a singular interpretation of it in Alain Corbin, *Le territoire du vide* (Paris: Aubier, 1988).
12. The aesthetical perspective of landscape is frequently related in Europe with the restoring of a "lost" order, but not in the sense of Nature. Eugenio Turri with *Antopologia del paesaggio* (Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1974) and his last work, *Il paesaggio come teatro* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1998) has showed this ideas. In the perspective of historians we can see a synthesis in the work of Robert Delort y François Walter, *Histoire de l'environnement Européen* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), a real attempt for envisioning historically the environmental problems in Europe. Raymond Williams wrote in *The Country and the City*" (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) one of the better descriptions of this duality through the British contemporary literature.
13. John Muir in *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* (1913). See John Muir, *Nature Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1997).
14. In contrast to this American perspective and subdued by the Myth, wilderness belongs in the European conception of Nature to a mixed reality. The role of Civilization is to control the fears and to build the project of dominion. We can remember the Roman concepts of *civitas & urbs, ager & silva*. But the Industrial Era rose up the dichotomy between city and countryside. As a fabulous machine, the industrial *urbs* transforms everything. Where is here wilderness?
15. See Christine Macy & Sarah Bonnemaïson, *Architecture and Nature. Creating the American Landscape* (London-New York: Routledge, 2003).
16. Vincent Scully, "The Natural and the Manmade" in S. Wrede & W. H. Adams (eds.), *Denatured Visions. Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: MoMA, 1988), 7-18. This "old way" arises in a new urban context, when the city form has not formal patterns: see Juan Luis de las Rivas, "El paisaje como regla: el perfil ecológico de la planificación espacial", in María Castrillo y J. González-Aragón (eds.), *Planificación territorial y urbana* (Mexico City: Universidad de Valladolid y Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana de México, 2006), 11-36.
17. Max Oelschlaeger, *The idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 1.
18. Max Oelschlaeger, *The idea of Wilderness*, 4.
19. Lawrence Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond* (Cambridge & London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), I. Buell shows the diversity of debate about Nature in North America, with real presence in the cultural debate, going beyond common places.
20. We can find a good summary of the evolution of these perspectives in Frederick R. Steiner, "Nature and the City: Changes for the First Urban Century in the United States", *Ciudades* 12, 2009: 13-31.
21. "There has been a remarkable resurgence of interest in landscape topics during the past ten years or so," this is the first sentence of James Corner in his influent *Recovering Landscape*. The Landscape Urbanism debate and a lot of interesting urban projects have confirmed the joining of landscape and urban design "in a number of expansive ways". However, when proposing the "Landscape City" concept we are trying to focus on a possible future urban model, rooted in Nature. See James Corner (ed.), *Recovering Landscape. Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999).
22. See Charles Waldheim (ed.), *The Landscape Urbanism Reader* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006). Waldheim considers the Landscape Urbanism Conference that took place from April 25-27, 1997 at the Graham Foundation in Chicago as the first public discussion that consolidated the concept.
23. Along the lines established in pioneering works like Sin Van der Ryn & Stuart Cowan, *Ecological design* (Washington: Island Press, 1996) or the one edited by G. F. Thompson y F. R. Steiner, *Ecological Design and Planning* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997).
24. Leo Marx, "The American Ideology of space," in S. Wrede y W. H. Adams (eds.), *Denatured Visions* (New York: MoMA, 1991), 62-78.
25. See Juan Miró's explanation of Mesoamerican iconology, "Teotihuacan: en busca del diálogo perfecto entre ciudades y naturaleza", *Ciudades* 12, 2009: 49-66.
26. Western culture has in the arts a permanent opportunity for different ways of thinking, directly connected with values and related with the quality of their productions. See Esther Pasztor, *Thinking with Things. Towards a New Vision of Art* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).
27. Art generates a continuous interference of meanings. As Le Corbusier recreates in his little drawing about Pisa, which inspired design rules for his Palace of Soviets, it is all a question of order. The architect recalls Laugier formula for urban design –learned from *paysagistes*: "ordre dans les détails et tumulte dans l'ensemble", a pre-organic idea.

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