

LANDSCAPE REVIEW



THEME

Reviewing Contemporary Writing on Landscape

CONTRIBUTORS

Katherine Melcher, Valuing the Discipline: Refrains and Riffs

Rod Barnett, Viridiana: Plant Life and Landscape Aesthetics

Gill Lawson, Questioning Tenets of Landscape Architecture

Rudi van Etteger, The Forest, the Trees and the Science of Scenery

Andreas Wesener, Paradoxically Urban

Julian Raxworthy, Landscape Architecture in the Gulf

VOLUME 18(2)

A SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE JOURNAL OF
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

LANDSCAPE REVIEW
*A Southern Hemisphere Journal of
Landscape Architecture*

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CONTRIBUTIONS — The editor welcomes contributions
and will forward a style guide on request.

Landscape Review aims to provide a forum for
scholarly writing and critique on topics, projects and
research relevant to landscape studies and landscape
architecture. Articles are considered and published in
three categories. 'Research' articles report on recent
examples of substantial and systematic research, using
a conventional format that normally includes a review of
relevant literature, description of research method, and
presentation and interpretation of findings. 'Reflection'
articles undertake a more discursive examination of
contemporary issues or projects and may be more flexible
in format to suit the subject matter.

All published contributions in the 'Research' and
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Criteria for acceptance are critical insight, originality,
theoretical and methodological rigour, and relevance to
the aims of the journal.

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on progress. Although not normally fully refereed,
contributions in this category are nonetheless subject to
editorial review.

The editor is particularly interested in contributions
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practices of special relevance to the southern hemisphere,
but welcomes contributions from around the globe.
Contributions are encouraged from both academics
and practitioners.

ISSN 2253-1440

Published November 2019

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Editing and proofreading *Tanya Tremewan, Christchurch;*
layout *Jenny Heine, Wellington.*

Book Criticism: A Review of Landscape Architectural Publications

JACKY BOWRING

This issue of *Landscape Review* is devoted entirely to book reviews. As a survey of recent publications in landscape architecture, it offers a snapshot of how the discipline, and the reviewers, as well as the books themselves, provide insights into key concerns.

The term 'Book Criticism' is suggested here in preference to 'Book Reviews', which is somewhat limited in scope. Merely reviewing a book, and passing a judgement on it, can be useful in the way film reviews provide a guide as to whether a film is worth watching. But a critique builds the review into a wider reflection on the book's theme, and on the discipline in general. Book criticism generates a discourse around the published works and raises further observations and questions about the profession and the discipline.

Parallels can be drawn between criticising a book and the critique of design. One of the most useful frameworks for design criticism is Wayne Attoe's (1978) *Architecture and Critical Imagination*, which is structured around three purposes for critique: normative, interpretive and descriptive. Normative criticism is evaluative, assessing the designed work against standards or norms. By contrast, interpretive criticism bypasses evaluation; instead it uses the object of criticism as the inspiration for a creative response, which, as Attoe (1978) notes, might be 'impressionistic, evocative, or advocatory in character' (p 9). Finally, the aim of Attoe's category of descriptive criticism is not to evaluate a work, but rather to situate it within the life of the designer (or author, in the case of a book), the process of its creation or the influence of the context it responds to.

The six book critics in this issue cover the full spectrum of Attoe's three categories in evaluating, interpreting and describing the books that are the focus of their papers. The lengthy reference lists of some critiques are a simple but clear signal that this issue of *Landscape Review* not only engages with the books that were assigned for review, but also takes in a vast terrain of literature that influences thinking in our discipline. Contributing to the diverse and lively collection of critiques in this issue are authors from a range of geographical locations, from the USA to Europe, and from Dubai to New Zealand.

First up is Katherine Melcher's critique of three recently published books, each of which draws together numerous threads on contemporary landscape architecture. These edited books are: M Elen Deming's (2015) *Values in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design: Finding Center in Theory and Practice*; Christophe Girot and Dora Imhof's (2017) *Thinking the Contemporary Landscape*; and the Landscape Architecture Foundation's (2018) *The New Landscape Declaration: A Call to Action for the Twenty-first Century*. Melcher's interpretive critique of

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EDITORIAL

these books creates an overview of landscape architecture's dilemma of seeking a sense of uniqueness while aspiring to a more expansive view. Through her critique, Melcher tackles the slipperiness of the very idea of landscape itself, the state of theory in the profession, and an opening out to global issues in which landscape architecture has a role to play. In Attoe's terms, this critique gives a sense of an advocatory position; of challenging landscape architecture to consider its role in society.

Challenging landscape architecture's core values and practices is also a thread running through Rod Barnett's critique of Julian Raxworthy's (2018) *Overgrown: Practices between Landscape Architecture and Gardening*. While for some the connections between gardening and landscape architecture are problematic, Barnett reminds us that the profession grew out of a 5,000-year history of garden design. He points to Raxworthy's neologism, the 'viridic', which seeks to overcome the schism between humans and the non-human world through an involvement in the world of plants, particularly through gardening. Within a richly philosophical context, Barnett positions Raxworthy's book into a reflection on aesthetics and landscape architects' predilection for the distanced practice of representation (rather than getting our hands dirty) and, like Melcher, unsettles and disrupts any complacency about the core of the profession or discipline.

Another book critical of landscape architecture's collective values and practices is Margaret Grose's (2017) *Constructed Ecologies: Critical Reflections on Ecology with Design*. In a descriptive critique, Gill Lawson navigates through Grose's book, drawing attention to the key concepts and challenges that the book offers. She emphasises how Grose challenges landscape architecture to look closely at itself, particularly in considering the ways science is used (or abused) in the design process. While the discipline might be struggling to find its uniqueness, to assert its general applicability, to re-tune practice towards more embodied ways of working, it needs also to be mindful of how rigorous and creative incorporation of science into designing is fundamental to a relevant and innovative landscape architecture.

Science also gets a close examination in Rudi van Etteger's review of Andrew Lothian's (2017) *The Science of Scenery: How We View Scenic Beauty, What It Is, Why We Love It, and How to Measure and Map It*. Van Etteger gives a vivid sense of the expansiveness of this book, questioning whether its length of almost 500 pages is justified – an argument that is reminiscent of a film critic begging for some judicious editing to craft a more focused narrative. In critiquing Lothian's approach, van Etteger deftly positions it alongside other ways of addressing questions of 'scenery' and the complexities of aesthetics that this entails. Importantly, van Etteger cautions against a conflation of landscape quality and scenic beauty, and offers a range of philosophical positions to consider as alternatives, including that the ordinary is also significant in our perception of landscape.

The final two critiques focus on books with specific geographical orientations – New Zealand and the Middle East. Andreas Wesener critiques Garth Falconer's (2015) *Living in Paradox: A History of Urban Design across Kaingā, Towns and Cities in New Zealand*, which, like Lothian's *The Science of Scenery*, is another massive volume at over 500 pages. Wesener criticises the book's chronological approach to development on the grounds that it creates repetition and confusion. Overall the book is also wanting in its lack of easy navigation coherence, Wesener

observes, and he raises questions over the domain of a profession. While other book reviewers in this issue have highlighted the sticky terrain of landscape architecture's core knowledge and practices, in this case the focus is on urban design. Wesener advises that the book does not contribute much of depth to a critique of the discipline of urban design, as it is primarily descriptive rather than analytical. Here he draws attention to the distinction between the expectations of a scholarly academic book and one written for and by professionals. It is a point that connects to the tensions that are implicit in some of the other critiques in this issue, based on the often marked differences between the ways landscape architecture is theorised and how it is practised.

Finally, Julian Raxworthy critiques two recent books about landscape architecture in desert environments – Gareth Doherty's (2017) book on Bahrain, *Paradoxes of Green: Landscapes of a City-State*, and Julian Bolleter's (2019) *Desert Paradises: Surveying the Landscapes of Dubai's Urban Model*. As an interpretive critique, Raxworthy's response to the two books is impressionistic, interwoven with his own recent experiences of desert dwelling. He also deftly describes how these books fit into the oeuvres of their authors, and the similarities between them, which in itself provides an insight into the world of academic publishing. Raxworthy's observations on the two books illuminate the complexities of languages in the Persian Gulf region, including environmental and technological challenges, as well as religious and political dimensions of the cultural landscape.

Together the six critiques covering 10 books, and alluding to many others, push and pull landscape architecture in many directions. This approach attests to a healthy discipline – as Melcher notes in her critique, self-reflection within the discipline and profession is increasingly complex. Arguably, landscape architecture for much of the twentieth century could be characterised as being focused primarily on practical and professional concerns, rather than on theory and critique. Early in that century, Hubbard and Kimball (1959, original foreword from 1919) observed, 'Nearly all the trained men in the field are giving their energies to active practice rather than to theorization or writing' (p vii). Albert Fein's seminal report in 1972 concludes that the profession was more craft oriented than theoretical in outlook, and in 1995 Owen Manning suggests the 'common perception [is] that landscape design is an empirical process lacking a theoretical base to support what is actually practised: to explain why it "works"' (p 2). Further, Peter Walker and Melanie Simo (1994) suggest that the lack of theorising and critique can be attributed to the very nature of landscape architects, in that they tend to be 'reticent, discreet, accommodating and not given to undue publicity' (p 3). Landscape architects, they observe, 'tend to be doers rather than critics or philosophers [and] they have tended to focus on the practical work at hand' (p 4).

Overall the focus on the books critiqued in this issue is reassuring as much as it is unsettling. While the apparent maturing of the profession reaches a milestone of sorts, signalling landscape architects have gone beyond being merely doers, the need for vigilance and for brave and strong voices is also clear. These six critiques give a refreshing sense of the presence of the writers, often writing in the first person. While much academic writing in the discipline remains formal and disembodied, here we gain an engaging sense of the book critics voicing opinions,

drawing on their wide knowledge of landscape architecture, and of contributing to the health of the discipline through challenge and debate. Thank you to all of the book critics who wrote for this issue, and infused this experiment of focusing an entire issue on books with such an intriguing and thought-provoking discourse.

The diversity of books, and of critics, in this issue suggests that it would be useful to have another issue with a book criticism theme in the future. If you are an author or publisher, please get in touch with any books for review. Likewise, if you are a reviewer or essayist interested in critiquing books, please let me know. Contact the editor, Jacky Bowring, at jacky.bowring@lincoln.ac.nz

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Valuing the Discipline: Refrains and Riffs

KATHERINE MELCHER

The New Landscape Declaration: A Call to Action for the Twenty-first Century, Landscape Architecture Foundation (ed), Los Angeles, CA: Rare Bird Books, 2018, ISBN: 978-1-945-57269-2 (hardcover)

Thinking the Contemporary Landscape, Christophe Girot and Dora Imhof (eds), New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2017, ISBN: 978-1-616-89520-4 (paperback); 978-1-616-89559-4 (ebook)

Values in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design: Finding Center in Theory and Practice, M Elen Deming (ed), Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2015, ISBN: 978-0-807-16078-7 (paperback); 978-0-807-16079-4 (ebook)

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The number of landscape architecture theory books published over the past few years¹ suggests an increasingly complex level of self-reflection within the profession. Three edited volumes in particular – *The New Landscape Declaration*, *Thinking the Contemporary Landscape* and *Values in Landscape Architecture* – debate and define the value of landscape architecture as a profession and discipline.

The New Landscape Declaration (The Declaration) was published from a summit convened by the Landscape Architecture Foundation with the purpose ‘to look at how landscape architecture can make its vital contribution to help solve the defining issues of our time’ (p xvi). *The Declaration* shares the 32 individual proclamations and nine panel discussions from the summit along with its synthesis, ‘The New Landscape Declaration’, a 400-word ‘new manifesto for the landscape architecture discipline’ (p xvi). *Thinking the Contemporary Landscape (Thinking)*, edited by Christophe Girot and Dora Imhof, came out of a symposium intended to ‘contrast the current [positivistic scientific] discourse with a more philosophical and poetic stance’ (p 7). *Values in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design (Values)*, edited by M Elen Deming, brings values more explicitly into the discussion, by reflecting on ways in which landscapes incorporate and express cultural norms, with a special focus of the agency of design to add value to places.

All three of these books wrestle with two seemingly counteractive forces: a desire to find a centre for landscape architecture as a discipline by defining its unique value; and a desire to expand its value within society. *The Declaration* merges ideals of a core (through the synthesised manifesto) with the diversity found within the individual proclamations and discussions. However, in his



Landscape Architecture Foundation

introduction to the book, Richard Weller (2018) acknowledges that these forces exist in tension:

I am keenly aware that institutions, schools and practices can hardly countenance expansion when they are struggling just to hold their ground, but if the profession is to close the gap between what it *says* and what it *does*, then individuals and organizations need to be more ambitious and more adventurous. (p 10)

Although Girot and Imhof's explicit aim in *Thinking* is to make space for both poetic and scientific understandings of place, they also desire a more coherent practice. They worry that '[l]andscape architecture suffers from broad intellectual dispersion and tremendous cultural disparity, precisely at a moment when direction and cohesion are indispensable to our civilization' (p 7). Deming's subtitle 'Finding Center in Theory and Practice' clearly indicates that centring landscape architecture is a primary concern.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's (1987) essay '1837: Of the Refrain'² provides a useful analogy for this tension between centring and expansion. The Refrain refers to a process of territorialisation, which involves three moments. First, within chaos, a child hums a song to comfort himself. Second, the child secures and stabilises this comfort by making a circle around it. Third, 'one opens the circle a crack' and 'launches forth' (ibid, p 311). Deleuze and Guattari claim that 'these are not three successive moments in an evolution. They are three aspects of a single thing, the Refrain (*ritournelle*)' (p 312). The diverse contributions to these three books, I think, are part of landscape architecture's refrain; they help mark landscape architecture's territory, define its boundaries and suggest new trajectories or lines of flight.

This review reflects on this refrain found in all three books: How is landscape architecture marked as a unique discipline? What circles are drawn to define the discipline's territory? In what directions can landscape architects venture forth, especially if one aims to demonstrate landscape architecture's relevance to today's global challenges? My impression is that landscape architecture is at a point where its practitioners can engage with all three questions at once, as in Deleuze and Guattari's Refrain. There is a core to the profession, simply and eloquently stated by *The Declaration* as 'the profession charged with designing the common ground' that is 'the landscape itself' (p xxii).

Another refrain that runs through the books is a concern about current social and global conditions such as climate change, globalisation, social justice and urbanisation. To address these concerns, landscape architecture cannot remain content with the circle it has drawn; it needs to venture forth, explore new trajectories.

One of the greatest contributions, collectively, that these three compilations provide is the diversity of suggested trajectories, potential directions through which the discipline can consider its relevance and value. Each of these three books provides a rich compilation of significant ideas and examples that, in Weller's (2018) words, 'are good to think with' (p 11); they all provide worthwhile food for thought for landscape architecture professionals, students and academics. *The Declaration* succeeds as 'a call for personal reflection on what it means to be a landscape architect at this moment in history' (ibid, p 11). Reading through the proclamations, one is inspired to reflect on the motivations



behind one's own design practice. *Thinking* contains more theoretical reflections on how landscapes mean and how design can engage with that meaning. *Values* provides a mixture of case study research and theoretical pieces that question the political values expressed in and through landscapes.

Weller (2018) warns that 'it is ultimately criticality, not backslapping, that forges a profession that the public looks up to' and voices a concern that 'landscape architecture still lacks the self-critical philosophical underpinnings that are needed to restrain its messianic tendencies and make more credible its claims' (p 8). This review is my riff on the refrain of landscape architecture in an attempt to provide some criticality. In doing so, I reflect on some themes found within and between these texts, but this review is not a comprehensive overview of them (that would take significant time because each of these three is a rich compilation of many interesting, intersecting perspectives on landscapes and landscape architecture). It is also not a balanced or neutral review of the three editorial positions. As a riff, this review is only one improvisation with the aim of inspiring additional riffs that continue to form and transform the boundaries of the discipline.

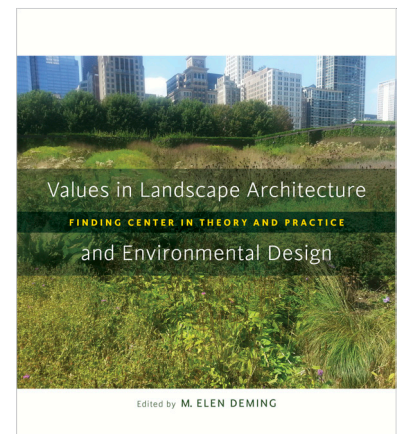
Part One: A ground within chaos

A child in the dark, gripped with fear, comforts himself by singing under his breath. He walks and halts to his song. Lost, he takes shelter, or orients himself with his little song as best he can. The song is like a rough sketch of a calming and stabilizing, calm and stable, center in the heart of chaos. ... [The song] jumps from chaos to the beginnings of order in chaos and is in danger of breaking apart at any moment. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p 311)

A person from outside the discipline reading these three compilations might get the impression that the field of landscape architecture is chaotic. As landscape architecture draws from many different disciplines, it is challenging to describe the profession as a coherent whole. For example, Deming (2015b) highlights lessons from landscape studies, environmental humanities, environmental/ecological history, heritage and historic preservation, cultural materialism, semiotics, phenomenology, aesthetics, and place theory, participatory and place-based design. Girot and Imhof's *Thinking* contributors come from the disciplines of art history, architecture and sociology as well as landscape architecture.

In *The Declaration*, James Corner (2018) claims that one should think of '[t]he city as a garden' (p 68), while Charles Waldheim (2018) celebrates that landscape architecture identified itself with architecture over gardening. Alan M Berger (2018) voices a concern that landscape architects are stepping 'back fearfully in the name of artistic ... imperatives' (p 41) and that the field needs 'reopening ... to scientific thinking' (p 42), while Girot and Imhof (2017) claim that 'aesthetic concerns ... recently, have all too often been overshadowed by a positivistic scientific discourse about nature' (p 7). But within the chaos is a stabilising point, and I think *The Declaration* is inspirational in its simple focus on the landscape itself:

... humanity's common ground is the landscape itself. Food, water, oxygen – everything that sustains us comes from and returns to the landscape. What we do to our landscapes we ultimately do to ourselves. The profession charged with designing this common ground is landscape architecture (p xxii).



Although landscape remains a complicated term with multiple meanings,³ it provides the mark that centres each book and landscape architecture itself.

Part Two: Organising the territory

Now we are at home. But home does not preexist: it was necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile center, to organize a limited space. ...

For sublime deeds like the foundation of a city or the fabrication of a golem, one draws a circle, or better yet walks in a circle as in a children's dance, combining rhythmic vowels and consonants that correspond to the interior forces of creation as to the differentiated parts of an organism. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p 311)

Kongjian Yu (2018) defines landscape as 'the medium where all natural, biological, and cultural processes interact' (p 54). Therefore, landscape architecture's ground of knowledge is situated between what Ian Thompson (2017) calls the 'three great empires of academia: the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the arts and humanities' (p 40).

To use Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) terminology, landscape architecture's territory is within the chaotic milieu between other disciplines. This in-betweenness can cause tensions between different disciplinary perspectives, as the quotes from Berger (2018) and Girot and Imhof (2017) above make evident; but, in general, the refrain that landscape architecture works across these empires repeats across all three books.

In his contribution to *The Declaration*, Mark Treib (2018) asks, 'Need we divide into separate camps those who stress the social, ecological, or aesthetic dimensions of landscape architecture considered only in isolation?' (pp 131–2). *The Declaration*, *Values* and *Thinking* all respond with a resounding, no. *The Declaration* claims, 'Landscape architects bring different and often competing interests together so as to give *artistic physical form* and *integrated function* to the ideals of equity, sustainability, resiliency, and democracy' (p xxiii, emphasis added). Kristina Hill (2017) concludes with the statement, 'The combined use of empirical and predictive science, memory, and strategy provides us with our design intelligence, in a context of compassion and humanism' (p 193). Deming (2015a) puts forward Elizabeth Meyer's work, especially 'The Post-Earth Day Conundrum' (2001), as an example of how the embrace of both art and science can 're-center' landscape architecture (p 229).

In *The Declaration*'s 'Private Practice Panel', Mark Johnson states, 'We must have our feet on the ground with our knowledge base that others do not fully share, just like we do not fully know and share theirs' (p 193). If landscape architecture's in-between position is where its knowledge base lies, then this in-betweenness needs more academic attention. Rather than fighting over territory within the discipline from the camps of science, art or social science, or blandly declaring that landscape architects are holistic thinkers, landscape architects can focus more on understanding and articulating how the design process works between these three master disciplines.

Treib (2018) might be calling for this knowledge when he asks, 'How does a grounding in the humanities as well as the sciences create a vision that contributes to more than mere environmental management?' (p 132). Girot and Imhof (2017) are looking for more clarity about the relationship between arts

and science through their volume, observing that, '[t]his mix of rational scientific discourse and poetic interpretation about landscape has never been so murky and inextricable as it is today' and claiming that '[p]laying critical attention to the way we conceive our environment, both symbolically and scientifically, may indeed help reconstitute a stronger vision and direction in landscape architecture' (p 8).

It is my impression that landscape architecture as a discipline is lacking in theory and research that critically examines how scientific, social and artistic forms of knowledge combine within the design process, where these disciplinary approaches may conflict and how designers can navigate those conflicts. For example, if '[f]rom a science-based perspective, it makes sense to see aesthetic experience as potentially instrumental, and ask whether aesthetic experiences can have effects on human cognition and behavior' (Hill, 2017, p 193), does it also make sense from the social or ethical perspective? When the public prefers an aesthetic that the designers consider 'counterfeit nature', do designers opt for the truth of the ecological narrative (as they perceive it) or the truth that emerges from public debate (Ahn and Keller, 2017, p 62)?

Some articles within these books provide useful examples of how design can navigate between these disciplinary empires. In particular, Kathryn Moore's (2015) 'The Value of Values' provides a philosophical way-out of the scientific versus artistic thought binary, suggesting that 'all thinking whether in the arts or the sciences, is ... interpretive and metaphorical; neither uses a special kind of reasoning' (p 61). Additionally, James Corner, Christophe Girot and Kathryn Gustafson's separate contributions to *Thinking* provide a trilogy of complementary techniques for site analysis and design. Each one covers a different set of design methods (layering of maps, 3D topology and tactile model making, respectively), and each provides compelling reasons for the choice. A review of these three essays in a studio could help students compare and debate these methods and develop their own hybrid approaches.

To conclude, landscape architecture's territory of specialised knowledge involves working between the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities in an applied manner through design. Fascinating insights into how landscape architects think and work can come from looking between science, art and social science, instead of arguing for the dominance of one over the others. These insights could be useful not only for landscape architecture practice but also as ways to better connect disciplines across academia as a whole.

Part Three: Venturing forth

Finally, one opens the circle a crack, opens it all the way, lets someone in, calls someone, or else goes out oneself, launches forth. ... One launches forth, hazards an improvisation. But to improvise is to join with the World, or meld with it. One ventures from home on the thread of a tune. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p 311)

Across all three books, one more refrain resounds – a concern about the current and future conditions of the world. Each book suggests, in its own way, that this concern translates into a renewed call for landscape architecture. This concern was the premise for the original 1966 Declaration of Concern as well as the current New Landscape Declaration. One reason why landscape architects need to become more values-literate, according to Deming (2015a), is that 'the political

decision-making process surrounding environmental issues ... is likely to remain ideological and adversarial' (p 225). Girot and Imhof (2017) suggest that the 'massive environmental transformations to come' should be taken as 'an open invitation to reconsider landscape architecture's pivotal role in society' (p 11).

However, many of the forces at play – for example, in climate change, rapid urbanisation and global inequality – are outside landscape architecture's traditional domain. Weller (2018) reflects that '[t]he problem for the profession ... is that these pressures are shaping territory where landscape architecture has very little capacity' (p 9). Therefore, responding to these challenges requires not just a clear delineation of territory but also a venturing forth. Landscape architecture as a discipline cannot rely on its common ground or knowledge base to explain its value to society. The profession needs to draw trajectories, connections between landscape architecture and society.

One trajectory commonly suggested for valuing landscape architecture is to measure the value added to a place through design. Deming (2015a) describes this trajectory as 'the "prove it" paradigm [that] seeks to justify any and all investments ... Landscape services, from storm-water recharge rates to public perception and pride of place, are now increasingly being measured using both qualitative and quantitative measures' (p 230). The Landscape Performance Series from the Landscape Architecture Foundation exemplifies this type of trajectory.

Another common trajectory is to focus on design as the creation of meaningful places. Meaning is a value that often eludes measurement but motivates people in ways scientific measurement cannot. People act based on what gives them meaning; what they value. Authors in all three books make the case for designing with respect to the moods, meanings, memories, affects, narratives and myths that landscapes can create.⁴ Weller (2018) observes, 'As elemental as it is, the ecological crisis is also a crisis of meaning' (p 11). Girot and Imhof (2017) suggest that an appreciation of memory, myth and narrative be combined with the rational approach, in order to 'weave ... meaning' and 'entrust ... the common landscape good with a deeper sense of purpose' (p 10). Azzurra Cox (2018) summarises this trajectory well when she comments that 'we must be more than problem solvers. By crafting sensorially memorable experiences, we must help generate new modes of living and ask new questions' (p 165).

In addition to these two trajectories connecting landscape architecture to social value, I propose a third; one that, in some ways, combines the two described above but, in other ways, points in a slightly different direction. Simply put, landscape architecture can demonstrate its value in the world by creating places that people value. People value places for what they can do for them (instrumental value); they also value places that have meaning to them (poetic value). However, both these perspectives overlook the perspective that the value of a place is not just added or encoded; it is enacted.

The valuing of a landscape is a performative act, as in Judith Butler's (1999/1989) sense of the term (which is significantly different from the common use of 'performative' within landscape architecture and planning). Butler suggests that gender is not an identity grounded in an essence, but instead it comes from a performance: 'Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the

appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being' (pp 43–44). It might seem like a stretch, but I think that, similarly, the values found in landscapes are 'manufactured through a sustained set of acts' (ibid, p xv) rather than being simply added or encoded by the designers for the end users to consume. Therefore, if one is interested in the value of a landscape, one should pay attention to 'the mundane way' (ibid, p 180) in which people engage with a place. Value is built – constructed, questioned, cultivated and elaborated – through the acts of everyone who touches the place. These acts, when repeated over time, may congeal into core values, but they also might not.

Value is not only prescribed through a set of rubrics or inscribed through the poetic narrative of design. The values in a landscape (for a place always contains multiple values) are what emerges through the designs, the construction and the uses of a site. Therefore, value in a landscape is not only added in a mechanical process. For a design to add value, in addition to having 'a design agent ... apply[ing] a theory of value – that is a theory of goodness' (Deming, 2015b, p 13), it should involve an understanding of how people add value to a place through their own interactions with the place. The desired end value that informs a design might not necessarily be the values that people discover within a place post-construction.

The 'goodness' connected to landscape might not be anything one can describe in words; and it shifts through time and from person to person. The particular values of a place continue to shift, grow and, hopefully, multiply and expand long after the design has been constructed. For example, the value of a simple concrete walkway to a child with chalk in hand is different from its value to an elderly person wanting to cross the street. It has a different value again to the ecologist observing a plant in its cracks and to the artist observing the same plant. Leatherbarrow's (2017) review of Wang Yu's architecture reflects how a landscape post-design can continue to develop into a rich conglomeration of values and meaning:

When projects take up a conversation with preexisting conditions they generally succeed in making some of their points apparent; but in the course of the dialogue they also suffer some unexpected assertions, different forms of mismaintenance, over- or undergrowth, reuse that tends toward misuses, and so on. The labors of design and construction are not for that reason unsuccessful, for they survive in part, requalifying the location and freeing it into kinds of significance that could not have been realized anywhere, but are not defined by meanings assumed to exist only there. (p 206)

I believe that design should encourage the growth and co-existence of these values within a landscape; by doing so, landscape architecture can help create rich, vital places. The encouragement and support of multiple values is a slightly different form of poetics from the designer creating one collective narrative or encoded cultural meaning. The acknowledgement that people bring their own narratives, moods, memories and imaginations to the value of a place seems to be largely missing from the discourse in these three books. However, Kate Orff (2018) suggests that '[i]n the age of climate change, everyone is a landscape architect' (p 77),⁵ which I take to mean that everyone interacts with landscapes, making meaning, making places and making our shared world.

If this is the case, then the question becomes: how can a designer encourage people to value a specific place? Cox (2018) suggests that design can do so by 'evoking something simple yet radical: meaningful engagement with a place and

fellow citizens' (p 164). Rather than creating 'designed spaces that support the *perception* that humans are [courageous, resourceful and compassionate]' (Hill, 2017, p 193, emphasis added), perhaps landscape architects can create places that simply allow people to *be* courageous, resourceful and compassionate.

How can a design create value by supporting and celebrating individual memories, moods and aspirations? How can a designer facilitate such an open-ended process? Rather than understanding an *ethos* as a 'culturally standardized system of organization of the instincts and emotions of the individuals' (Bateson, cited in Meyer, 2015, p 37), perhaps we can start from Giorgio Agamben's (1993) proposition that *ethos* is 'the manner in which [one] passes from the common to the proper and from the common to the particular' (p 19).⁶ With this *ethos* in mind, designers would practise with an awareness of the responsibility that comes with designing for the common (one place or one society) in a manner that respects the proper and the particular (the multiple individuals acting in the place). This *ethos* is performed; it is particular, situated, contextual and ever-shifting. This *ethos* does not provide an easy answer or a set of ethical rules; all it points toward is a continual back and forth between proper and common, individual experiences and a collective place. I think Cox (2018) captures the spirit of this performative ethos in her statement:

Our task for this century is to craft those vessels of human experience and agency, to balance between the extreme specificity of a site and an openness of vision that welcomes a range of voices, subjectivities, and tensions. Designing space is a necessarily humanistic endeavor; it is messy. (p 165)

Landscape architects' ability to listen, which Tim Mollette-Parks (2018) emphasises, is an essential part of acting out this *ethos*.

The value of a landscape has no one centre or core except for the place itself, as a common yet complex ground. Design is only one act that values a place. Therefore, although designers can act with agency, they also need a sense of humility, an awareness that they are enacting alongside many others. This humility does not diminish the value of landscape architecture; to the contrary, I believe it can increase that value. As Gustafson (2017) encourages, 'You do not always have to do big things; you can do little things – things that will also change how somebody experiences and walks through a space' (p 161).

Designers still have agency but that agency is projective instead of determining. In Meyer's (2015) words, 'we set the world in motion. We chart out propensities without controlling outcomes. We design socio-ecological experiments in living with no promises. Something. Perhaps. It might. Who knows?' (p 49).

Conclusion

What is the potential value of landscape architecture to society? Although landscape architecture suffers from an interdisciplinarity that makes it hard to find a centre, it is also characterised by a shared understanding that the landscape itself is landscape architecture's common ground. Landscape architecture's territory of specialised knowledge is how we work between the sometimes conflicting disciplinary knowledge systems of the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and art with applied outcomes. Much more can be done to

describe how these differing systems integrate in the design process in order to move beyond thinking of design ‘as a highly personal, mysterious act, almost like alchemy’ (Moore, 2015, p 59).

Landscape architecture can demonstrate its value to society simply by helping build places that people value. People value places for instrumental (utilitarian) and poetic (meaningful) reasons, but that does not mean the values in a place can be pre-determined through design. The values of landscapes reflect the ongoing interactions people have with places and the meanings they make out of them. These values often escape calculation and consensus. Value can be added to a landscape by design, but it is also added to a landscape by everyone who interacts with it. Refocusing landscape architecture practice to support and celebrate these interactions could result in a multiplication of landscape values.

The value of a designed landscape and therefore the value of landscape architecture do not come solely from proclamations, metrics or designed narratives but also – and more importantly – from a collection of how all individuals value a place. Acknowledging that values are multiple and open-ended positions landscape architecture on much less certain ground. Perhaps, like the values in a place, the ground of landscape architecture is performative. Rather than consisting of one unified, unchanging definition, the discipline of landscape architecture is made up of many overlapping lines where practitioners trace boundaries and take lines of flight. These three books trace over these lines, reinforcing some boundaries while launching forth across others.

NOTES

- 1 In addition to the three edited volumes reviewed in this article, see Herrington (2017) and Murphy (2016).
- 2 Alessandra Ponte’s article in *Thinking the Contemporary Landscape* (2017) made the initial connection between Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of territorialisation and the discipline of landscape architecture that inspired this reflection.
- 3 For interesting overviews on how landscape has been defined in different moments of history, see Deming (2015b), Scott (2017) and Leatherbarrow (2017).
- 4 Some of these authors are Cox (2018), di Palma (2017), Geuze (2017) and Meyer (2015).
- 5 Deming (2015b) also points out that ‘all of us are agents and shapers of landscape(s)’ (p 26).
- 6 Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call the musical ‘nome’ – the little tune we sing – *ethos* or Abode. Perhaps *ethos* is our tune, what we tell ourselves, how we make sense of our practice, as opposed to a fixed ethical rule.

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Viridiana: Plant Life and Landscape Aesthetics

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Overgrown: Practices between Landscape Architecture and Gardening,
Julian Raxworthy, Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2018,
ISBN: 978-0-262-03853-9 (hardcover)

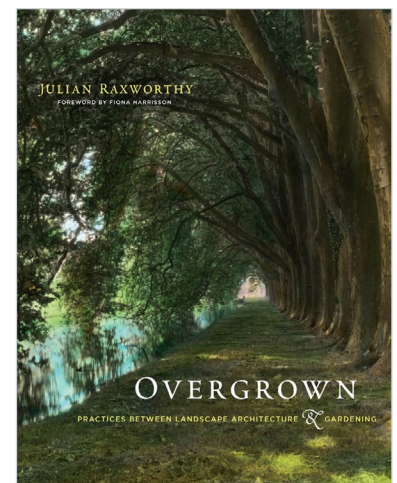
Julian Raxworthy's new book advances an intriguing, well-researched treatise about the design of gardens. I found that, like some old book of philosophy, it lays out not so much a thesis as a guide for living, a practice doctrine, a set of rules, the divinations of a magus. After reading it, I found myself rethinking the spells in my own personal witchcraft. My review of Raxworthy's book is a transcript of this rethinking operation. It, too, is about gardens.

Brutal, melancholy, ironic ... descriptions of gardens and landscapes are becoming more nuanced. A steadily growing interest in the aesthetics of landscape architecture is pushing garden design discourse to overcome its own constraints. New narratives are emerging (see, for example, the Call for Entries for Suburbia Transformed, which completely overhauls the idea of the suburban garden¹). For all its expanding internal literature and the rubber-necking from passing disciplines, however, landscape architecture rarely discusses aesthetic categories. One reason is that the profession has been in thrall to the categories Edmund Burke established in the eighteenth century: the beautiful, the sublime and the picturesque.

Even though other aesthetic categories have come along in other aesthetic practices (the abject, for instance, in literature and photography), mostly landscape architects have contributed by rethinking the beautiful in the light of, for instance, environmental design (Meyer, 2008) or considering its subfields, for instance, melancholy (Bowring, 2018).² Another reason is that garden designers have always had clients. What we might call an aesthetic sociality prevails, and reception (feeling, talking and thinking about gardens) is always conservative because it evolves slowly. People expect designed landscapes to be in some way beautiful, or sublime, or picturesque, or all three. Garden design is influenced by this aesthetic sociality, which in turn is structured by the famous subject/object split that distances the human from the non-human and reverberates all through our encounters with art, with landscape, with the world ...

Novelty itself is framed within inherited aesthetic categories. The general model of attraction these days includes the slow, the fragile and the uncertain, descriptors that disclose the development of a greater complexity of reception. But it is still limited. Diverse creative practices from novels, to movies, to sculpture

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and poetry have elicited a broad spectrum of complex emotional responses.³ Movies can be emotionally compromising, or bitter, but designed gardens are generally required to be uplifting, or pretty, or calming – contemplative, at most. The possibility that a new aesthetic category might be developed for landscape architecture has rarely been mooted, but now someone has come along with just the thing. Or have they?

Julian Raxworthy has developed what he calls a ‘formal language’ of garden design. I think it is more like an aesthetic order, so let’s quickly conclude our discussion of that idea. You will recall that Burke introduced the concept of aesthetic categories with his definition of the beautiful (that which is well formed and pleasing) and the sublime (that which has the power to compel and destroy us).⁴ Kant found two more, the agreeable and the good, which were categories of rational judgement rather than aesthetic categories, but through these he was able to distinguish between ethical, sensory and subjective judgements. They all were very eighteenth-century determinations, bound up with eighteenth-century issues around wresting free will and moral law from Christianity and grounding human life in rational rather than religious codes. Art was thought of differently then, as was landscape.

As I have noted, what counts as aesthetic has changed somewhat since Edmund Burke’s categorisation. For instance, cultural theorist Sianne Ngai’s (2012) new categories are the zany, the cute and the interesting. The zany expresses the playfulness that is everywhere, particularly in items we buy or watch on the internet. It is to do with cultural production. The interesting is found mostly in discourse, where we develop our mutual interests but find these interests unfocused and somewhat boring. And the cute is bound up with consumption, where feelings of tenderness and aggression arise together at the same time in response to the same cultural stimuli. Ngai’s categories reflect minor, everyday experiences of shoes, hedgehogs and jokes, and yet force us to consider behaviour that is gendered, othering and demeaning as well.

I have discussed aesthetic sociality, the distribution of inherited codes and markers throughout aesthetic discourse. But this cannot occur without what sociologist Andreas Reckwitz (2017) calls the twenty-first century ‘creativity *dispositive*’: the irradiation of all post-industrial, consumer culture with aesthetic capitalism. This affects the two issues we have been reviewing: the creative shaping of the individual’s subjectivity through its encounter with aesthetic conditions – an extreme reflexivity; and the modern figure of the creative act as producing something new, the production of permanent novelty.

Contemporary society is characterised by a striving for originality and uniqueness, in politics, in technology, in urbanism, in fashion, in literature, in business, in architecture and, yes, in landscape architecture too. We are to some extent ‘produced’ by this *dispositif*. In this world where everything is aestheticised, but where beauty is conflicted and sometimes irrelevant, and the terror of the sublime is rolled into the hyperobjects of climate change and mass extinction, what new aesthetic category can we turn to for its inside energy, its speakingness, its ability to refresh and reformulate our lives?

In *Overgrown: Practices between Landscape Architecture and Gardening*, Julian Raxworthy invites us to consider the viridic. This is his term, newly

minted, for that feeling of involvement with the world of plants. We sense the viridic when we enter a sunlight-filtering rainforest, or when we move through a garden that has a resolution achieved through the knowledgeable organisation of qualities that only very specific plants possess. This human–plant–world interaction unleashes ‘a fluid and indeterminate wave of energy’ that disrupts and overwhelms our senses, and engages us in plants’ biotic becoming. The viridic, Raxworthy writes in a manifesto at the end of his book, is a rejection of the split between the human body and the non-human world. What is more, the viridic is a unique language of landscape architecture. But, Raxworthy cautions, this language is on the verge of being lost. Landscape architecture has turned away from gardens and gardening, where the viridic is most clearly expressed, and become caught up in the technocratic delivery of performance-based outcomes as it battles engineering and architecture for the stewardship of planet Earth in the twenty-first century.

Raxworthy argues that gardening is at the heart of landscape architecture, and that it should be reinstated as a source of fructification of the discipline. To design gardens, however – and this is the rub – the designer must garden, that is, practise gardening. For the viridic is a non-representational endeavour. It is born from action, not drawing. The creative practice that produces the viridic (a combination, remember, of human and non-human drives) is the act of gardening in a landscape, not designing in an office. Moreover, without practising gardening you cannot practise garden design. To support this radical revisionism, Raxworthy lays out a theory of design, visits and presents six case studies, and establishes his manifesto, his *Guide for the Perplexed*. This book reclaims the garden as central to landscape architecture practice and discourse, reframing its role for the twenty-first century by demonstrating that gardening is an essential component of garden design, and placing human–plant interaction at the crux of landscape architecture.

Raxworthy is right to suggest that the project of the garden has been devalued in Anglo-American landscape architecture.⁵ Sometimes it is simply passed off as designing for rich folk, as in Billy Fleming’s recent ‘Design and the Green New Deal’ (2019), where landscape architects are scolded for designing gardens rather than saving the world. We often forget that for 5,000 years the aesthetic language of landscape architecture developed in a wide array of privately owned and civically operated gardens. Without gardens, there would be no landscape architecture, despite those who think the discipline sprang fully formed from the brow of Frederick Law Olmsted. Olmsted inherited, rather than invented, the aesthetic language of landscape architecture – and it is continuing to evolve. If probed about Olmsted’s influence, the majority of environmental designers practising around the globe today would probably ask, Who is that? Criticising landscape architects for making gardens is a little like criticising muralists for making easel paintings, or journalists for making novels.

This is why Raxworthy’s book has a manifesto. A statement of belief. And like those ancient formulations of the good life, it has a system behind it – a philosophy, if you like. I wish to comment on two components of Raxworthy’s philosophy that are circulating prominently through landscape architecture today. The first is the turn to embodied performance (as opposed to representational design),

and the second is the problem of anthropocentrism. In making this comment, I am effecting a 'conscious uncoupling' of garden practice from the spatially and socially bounded territoriality with which it is usually associated. I suggest that conversations about gardens in landscape architecture must drift over the wall and into our shared social realm, so that – for instance – Raxworthy's insights can have wider influence. I will also demonstrate why aesthetic practices developed in garden design and production are critical for landscape architecture in general.

One of the reasons garden design is seen as irrelevant is that landscape architecture has developed a social agenda that focuses on public and civic terrains. A socially engaged, or participatory, landscape architecture works with cities and communities to produce metropolitan social and physical infrastructures that develop power relations and enhance the agency of local collectives. Compared with this mission, gardens seem *infra dig*.

Raxworthy shows how participation not only is critical in the design of gardens – that the designer must dig, sow, prune and harvest – but also overcomes the ontological divide by distributing agency throughout the garden network. Gardeners, for Raxworthy, enter the world of plants actively and as an equal. Landscape architecture decision-making and judgement, he states, 'should be exercised on the basis of physical involvement in the landscape being developed' (p 331). Both garden and gardener are shaped reflexively through their interactions.

Gardens, then, are sites of contestation. Raxworthy sees the designer as doing battle with vast forces, just as transforming civic institutions requires engaging with competing constituencies in fraught situations that are always contingent and open-ended – and could always be otherwise. Inevitably, it will come to a point where a threshold has to be crossed (the branch will be lopped off, the pest will eat the bud) and this moment will reflect the power relations inherent in the situation.

The engaged garden designer, like the engaged landscape architect, assists human and non-human collectives in their struggle to produce territory that is truly communal. In this way, participation brings the practitioner closer to the problems of life itself. Work that is truly engaged admits no shadow. The essential principle for that old activist designer William Morris was that the design and the execution should never be separated, no more than they were in the Middle Ages, his dreamtime.⁶ I think this is part of Raxworthy's point. And it is the promise of participation: the thinking, the doing and the making are all one, and they are carried out in a space to which everyone has access and to which everyone can contribute.⁷

This brings us to the second of my two thought-cycles. It has been 30 years since Bruno Latour (1987) began to study the practices and behaviours of scientists. His examination of what scientists actually do led to actor network theory (ANT), which casts the wide framework of society as an indivisible network through which elements circulate, rather than a discourse divided into fact (science) and value (society), with the two never merging. I do not think any other discipline or profession is more in need of ANT than landscape architecture, given it deals with humans and non-humans alike.

Raxworthy recognises this when he states that humans and plants are entangled equally – and ‘intersubjectively’ – in garden processes. As we have seen, he argues that gardeners are involved in the shaping of plants, and through this involvement are themselves shaped – ‘the viridic is inherently recursive and iterative’. Gardeners learn by observation of the effects of their previous actions. Latour has painstakingly described the passage of objects and processes through the networks of social exchange as inherently political. Science and politics are deeply imbricated and it is useless to try to describe what, say, botanists or ecologists do, separately from the social regimes in which their work is made possible. In the same way, the practice of gardening, in which the gardener bends plant growth – evolutionary, biological – through material actions that physically shape the plant ‘for aesthetic outcomes’, is a creative act that involves political agency in this production of new ‘things’.

Why political? Precisely because of the intersubjectivity, the co-creation, the wilful, reflexive tyranny. Plants, as all botanists and surely all landscape architects know, cannot be reduced to simple, individual objects. They are connected, like humans, by the soil biome for a start, and through the physical and social ecosystems they co-create. We could describe them aptly as vascular unfoldings, that draw and are drawn into assemblages with humans and other non-humans. Or, alluding to the *new vitalism*, as cross-order associations (and the various modes of becoming that comprise these) that interact materially and aesthetically (see Bennett, 2010; Connolly, 2011; Shaviro, 2014).

Not only are plants agentic; they are also radically open to disruption and can change their trajectories even as they remain true to their origins in material and energetic thinghood. In this respect, they are like us. Humans and plants have a continuity. We affect each other. Thus agency is distributed throughout the heterogeneous assemblage of organisms that comprises the garden; it is not restricted solely to human bodies or human collectives. With a nod to the recent *geological turn*, we may wish not to restrict agency to flora and fauna, but to include minerals and liquids in the realm of vital, dynamic operations (Bonneuil, 2015; Cohen, 2015), but this step is beyond Raxworthy’s scope.

While recent overlaps between consciousness theory, systems theory and biophysics suggest that plants are more like modern humans than modern humans have imagined, their political agency has not yet gained them acceptance into the republic of beings as imagined by most Anglo-Americans (Grusin, 2015). Like most people, landscape architects put plants on the other side of the divide. Of course, plants are part of a world that is occupied by humans but they are not dependent on humans and can continue without them. While connected, they are also remote. In most respects, they are not like us. But their political agency consists, exactly, of asserting and projecting non-human action within the public ecosystems of planetary life.

The contribution plants make to public culture is often related to their instrumental provision of proteins and vitamins, carbon reduction and phytoremediation. Raxworthy’s theory of the viridic explains how their aesthetic modes influence global ethics and politics as much as their biophysical modes, as much as the visual and tactile entanglements of art – as much, even, as words, arguments and reasons collected in social or literary manifestos.

Further, these modes are multiple. Of course, plants achieve their efficacy and causality for humans through the human sensorium, but our perception of them is complicated. They seem to operate within the human imaginary as part of a taken-for-granted configuration, or *habitus*, that organises and stimulates human feelings about the world. Plants illuminate the human world by affecting us in specific ways, both bodily and conceptually, but they also regulate it through their continuity with processes that contribute to planetary capacity and the resilience of Earth systems.

Despite the aloofness of plants, they share with human life a co-evolutionary, co-dependent, reflexive inter-animation. Vegetal and anthroid (to coin a term) bodies can differently realise in ways that are conjoint and therefore political (because public and collective). Plants and humans form a kind of polity, then, within the larger biospheric community, a polity that subsumes the oh-so-human ordering of species. Well, this is the thinking anyway (Latour, 1987; Protevi, 2009). To consider plants as having aesthetic agency is to suggest that the conjoint action of plants and humans is not under the control of a rational plan or intention. The field of political action is like a self-organising ecology, in which plants and humans are equally actants, sources of transformation.

How does the rehearsal of representation (epistemology) and human–non-human interaction (ontology) that I have outlined above enable us to rethink the viridic as an aesthetic category, and why is this useful? I believe it eschews value judgements about what plants could or should do or be. Plant attributes are not seen as having ‘qualities’ for humans to rearrange. Texture, Raxworthy writes, ‘emerges as a characteristic with ecological or physical rationales in relation to growth, such as avoiding transpiration or predation’ (p 325). Colour can be understood as a register of time that has nothing to do with the colour wheel or human habits of association. Plants are no longer bundles of attributes; even less are they objects to our subjects. Their subjectivities are co-created, as are ours. Also, when humans and plants are equals, a plant’s trajectory is its own affair.

The rationalism and individualism that drive landscape architectural design occlude the political structures (the speciesism) that enable and configure it in the first place. When humans and plants have equal rights, any plant’s biological destiny is a matter of negotiation. The idea of the viridic (‘when we look at plants, we don’t know what is going on’) makes possible a rapprochement in which humans, rather than bending plants to their will, work with plants to create a new human–plant-world assemblage in which plants are not reduced to manipulable qualities. This implies a pluralism – a pluralist democracy – in which plants, people and other organisms develop a collective, conjoint social life that recognises the we and the they, but does not use these to impose an aesthetic or political hegemony on the organisms that enable humans to live. The viridic, Raxworthy avers, is a learning practice. As a new, relational aesthetic category, the viridic denotes an ongoing agonistic configuration of power relations that achieves no finality, only further negotiation.

Raxworthy rails against landscape urbanism, but landscape urbanism was necessary for the development of landscape architecture, as it helped us understand and formulate the operation of the political within the institutional complex of the profession. Ultimately, it has generated the viridic as an aesthetic

category that enables landscape architects to engage and re-imagine the political. Landscape urbanism has focused us on important social processes, particularly the production, circulation and reception of landscapes, and it helps us see why the garden is not an unsullied autonomous realm but, just like all the others, a powerful political terrain.

The ‘invention’ of the viridic is not a purification of planting design, then, but a recontamination of garden practice by a politicised aesthetic. The garden emerges from Raxworthy’s discussion as a collection of social practices and conventions in which consumers, corporations, academics and scientists participate. Now we can see it as a structural model of the social – an aesthetic sociality – a unique actor network with its own actants and relations; these actants are all the organisms (especially the plants?) that construct the garden.

The idea of the viridic, with its flattened ontology and the imbrication of the designer in the process of plant growth – not as an autonomous and dictatorial tyrant, but as an equal co-evolutionary participant – enables us to see gardens as a part of a landscape-empowered social process that produces sensuous, symbolic and emotional stimuli for an audience. It moves us away from the figure of the gardener as wielding aesthetic hegemony, based on a tradition of purified forms of aesthetic appreciation (colour, texture, form, space, growth). The gardener is no longer a shepherd. That old custodial regime implies human exceptionalism. The viridic places humans within an order that does not distinguish between organisms on the basis of categories that are important only to humans.

The inward-looking aesthetic sociality of the garden was oriented towards bourgeois tastes and ideals of beauty that it organised and perpetuated in relatively fixed historical and regional formats (the formats that Raxworthy wishes his case studies to break down). But Raxworthy has to be careful that gardeners (whom he venerates) do not emerge from their interaction with the viridic with their despotic and legislative tendencies intact. The promise of the viridic is that the garden is reformulated not as a closed aesthetic system, but as an open one with social and physical, ontological and epistemological borders that are continually reassessed and redissolved for the sake of inclusion and expansion.

Although he never states it and his comments about aesthetics are slight, focusing on ‘the look of a plant’, Raxworthy has, I think, developed a theory of aesthetics in landscape architecture. But his notion of the viridic needs to be contextualised within a more comprehensive theoretical framework that both resets the role of representation in design and accounts for the human–non-human agency of the material collective.

As the discipline of landscape architecture tries to shake off traditional aesthetic attachments to, for instance, good taste, the line of beauty, positive affect and the notion of the garden as an autonomous sphere of experience, it is important to consider the relationship between the idea of participatory design and the overcoming of the human–non-human binary. Aesthetic categories structure human involvement with the world. This is why the aesthetic is political. In our age of androcentric environmental destruction, facilitated in no little way by a hubris reinforced through distancing strategies, a landscape architecture aesthetic that pulls humans into the mix by overcoming representation–embodiment and human–non-human structures of relation has got to be a step forward.

NOTES

- 1 <http://jamesrosecenter.org/exhibitions/suburbia-transformed>.
- 2 The literary field of ecocriticism has created a resonant vocabulary of the beautiful, through reformulations of canonical works in the light of the environmental humanities.
- 3 Film noir is often cited as an emotionally complex film genre. See Barnett (2008).
- 4 Just in case you are wondering, even the so-called technological sublime is not crafted – that is part of the point of this category.
- 5 He identifies a landscape architecture or garden design tradition in Europe, however.
- 6 See Houellebecq (2012) for a graceful but unstinting examination of this principle in the contemporary art world.
- 7 For useful discussions of participation in arts practices, see Bishop (2012) and Thompson (2015).

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Questioning Tenets of Landscape Architecture

GILL LAWSON

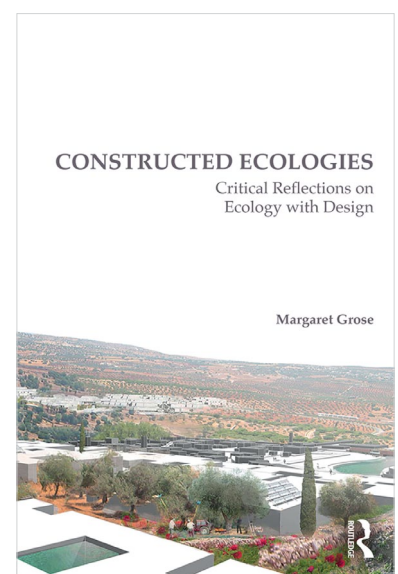
Constructed Ecologies: Critical Reflections on Ecology with Design, Margaret Grose, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017, ISBN: 978-1-138-89021-3 (hardcover); 978-1-138-89022-0 (paperback)

Constructed Ecologies: Critical Reflections on Ecology with Design is a critical narrative that questions long-held beliefs and ideas in landscape architecture. According to Margaret Grose, our foundational knowledge in landscape architecture has shifted from horticulture to ecological systems, requiring some updating of our scientific understanding and viewpoints. While some may adhere to a love-hate relationship between landscape architecture and ecological science (Hoefler, 2015), Grose sees the importance of building a stronger relationship between theory (ideas) and data (evidence) to inform our future thinking in the discipline and profession.

Grose expands the debate about how ecological science can help with inquiry and uncertainty in designing and constructing places for the future. She does not attempt to describe how landscape architects should implement such *constructed ecologies* in landscape planning and design, as Wende (2018) suggests. Instead she prompts us to compare, reflect on and rethink our prejudices and constrained views about the practice of landscape architecture for our own purposes.

Constructed Ecologies is a collection of five essays. The first, 'Global Differences, Not Universals', introduces new notions of *spectrums of responses*, *shifting continuities* and *shifting places*. *Spectrums of responses* refers to facilitating a wide range of planting design responses for genetically diverse organisms to be selected based on their evolutionary histories and adaptation capacities. *Shifting continuities* concerns the survival of plant populations in changing environments and challenges our entrenched views about natives and non-natives; conservation and restoration; monocultures and 'rewilding'. Grose gives us a fascinating and thought-provoking journey through hemispheric differences and points out where plant dispersal, holdouts and refugia facilitated the persistence of species locally during broad-scale climate change. *Shifting places* asks us how we might assist plants to shift site by site through design practice and conservation. This essay gives us much to consider in asking us to replace our perception of stable places, climates and plant populations with a less stable world of migration routes, fragmented landscapes and heterogeneous spaces. It was a captivating essay for me.

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In the second essay, 'Shifting Adaptabilities, Not Static Concepts', Grose begins with a discussion of a gob-smacking 11 new species and four new genera of hominin or humans discovered through fossil findings, molecular genetics and climatology. Based on other scholarly work, she argues that climate variability has been a catalyst for the evolution of human behaviour and culture. A fascinating concept is the idea of soft inheritance where our environment could determine the functioning and expression of genes passed down from one generation to another.

Discrediting the long-held savannah theory that humans have a preference for one particular type of landscape, Grose posits that human minds have been shaped by the many and varied environments to which we have been exposed. Our behavioural flexibility, she argues, has allowed us to think about and adapt to a wide range of habitats through shifting adaptabilities rather than static landscape preferences. For this reason, by necessity, rural dwellers are able to move to urban environments, one nationality can emigrate to another country and humans continue to explore frozen continents, marine depths and the solar system. The extent of this adaptability is quite remarkable when you think about it.

The focus of the third essay, 'Multiple, Not Solo Voices', is on *design georgics*, which encompasses 'things of the farmer' or developments in agriculture, one of the most significant *constructed ecologies* worldwide. Grose challenges landscape architects to reimagine and redesign agricultural enterprises, in particular the farm, which is especially relevant to those of us in New Zealand and Australia where food exports are the fastest-growing industries of our national economies. Landscape architects are frequently involved in so-called urban 'agriculture', or perhaps civic greening, but Grose asks us to consider whether vegetable gardens in urban areas are ever going to address the world's food crisis – that is, to feed a projected 10 billion people in 2050.

Big-picture food production systems in rural communities could become part of the focus of landscape architectural rural design studios on how to increase production from agricultural landscapes around the world. Multiple voices are needed to address the loss and mental health of farmers; soil depletion; loss of native and crop biodiversity; fragmentation of habitats for migrating regional species; and management of big data – to name just a few. Grose argues that designers and young farmers could make a significant difference to agrarian landscapes in the coming decades.

The fourth essay, 'Inquiries, Not Assumptions', questions our assumptions about lighting up the night in urban areas. Grose explains how it affects human health, ecology, crime and safety, new technologies and urban design. Of course, it helps to know a little about the physics of light: after giving us a basic understanding, Grose presents a fascinating narrative that starts with new knowledge about ecological effects of artificial night lighting on street trees, animal reproduction, the human circadian system and consequently our physiology, metabolism, health and behaviour.

Her argument about moving our understanding of the purpose of public lighting from 'public safety' to 'community health' is compelling and very much part of the landscape architecture realm. She cites scholarly work that refutes the old assumption that lighting prevents crime and shows that, to the contrary,

lighting increases crime by assisting criminals. LED lighting of signage and streets is increasing both glare and low colour temperature in the name of energy savings. But are alternatives available? Well, apparently they are and we have been caught napping under outdated assumptions and beliefs.

Finally, in ‘Thinking Backwards, Not Forwards as a Linear Narrative’, Grose discusses shifting our design processes from forward problem solving to thinking backwards or backcasting to address inverse problems. She suggests we first find a solution or a vision for the future and then work out how to get there from where we are today, rather than starting with an analysis of the problem today and working out what the future state should be. Daylighting of waterways is given as a classic inverse problem. The outcome is known but the ways to achieve that outcome can vary. Grose posits that this approach is in line with current science research. This design–science commonality suggests the value of expanding evidence-based practice. If you are not interested in data and evaluation, then this essay may not be for you. If you are, then working with data may just increase the scope of our collective imagination.

In my view, Grose adeptly presents landscape architects with strong criticism of our long-held beliefs and assumptions. She makes us consider work scholars are undertaking in allied fields that we may not have accessed. Most significantly for me, she points to interesting areas of specialisation for our emerging practitioners and educators. This is a book that I highly recommend.

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The Forest, the Trees and the Science of Scenery

RUDI VAN ETTEGER

The Science of Scenery: How We View Scenic Beauty, What It Is, Why We Love It, and How to Measure and Map It, Andrew Lothian, San Bernardino, CA, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017, ISBN: 978-1-534-60986-0 (paperback)

It is not every day that you get to review someone's life work. Dr Andrew Lothian's *The Science of Scenery* certainly qualifies as a life work. It offers almost 500 pages on everything you wanted to know about scenic beauty, and then a few things besides that in its encyclopaedic approach to the issues of scenery and landscape quality. The subtitle, *How We See Scenic Beauty, What It Is, Why We Love It, and How to Measure and Map It*, leaves little to the imagination. In this review, I describe and evaluate the content of the book and place it in a wider context of philosophical thought on landscape beauty by confronting it with the work of environmental philosophers, particularly Canadian philosopher Allen Carlson.

In brief, the book opens with an outline of its focus, which is to offer a conceptual framework and an example of a project in the Lake District and measure its scenic beauty. In part 1, the mainstay of the book, Lothian offers a diverse set of 'eyes' through which to look at the issue of scenic beauty. From a glance through the eyes of the divine, the symbolic, the philosopher, the human, the inner, the sublime, the artist, the living, the explorer, the accountant, the doctor and the child, we get a kaleidoscopic view of scenic beauty. Part 2 describes scenic beauty and why we love it, part 3 describes how to measure and map scenic beauty and part 4 concludes with a prospective discussion on the future of scenic beauty.

Scenic overload

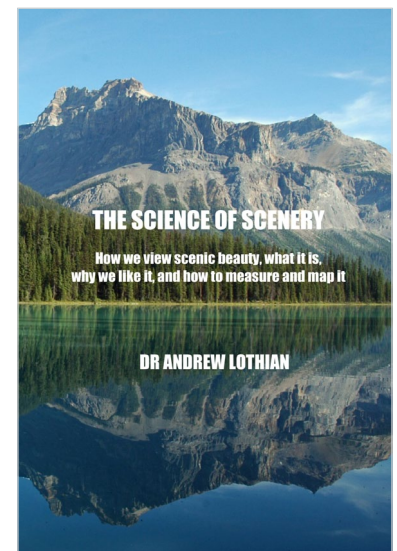
The book tries to be complete and describe everything. For each of the 'eyes', Lothian describes the basic principles and their application to the science of scenery. He shows all of the steps that he has taken to come to the insights he provides in the finale of the book. Though I am not denying that these may all be necessary and useful steps, it is questionable whether one should confront the reader with all of them or instead take some for granted and concentrate instead on the combination of insights.

It is an encyclopaedia on scenic beauty, but one is reminded of Borges' story about the fabled Chinese description of animals. This example is supposedly taken from an ancient Chinese encyclopaedia entitled *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*. As Borges describes it, the list divides all animals into

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14 categories, such as Those that belong to the emperor, Embalmed ones, Those that are trained, Those drawn with a very fine camel hair brush and Those that, at a distance, resemble flies.

Though everything in *The Science of Scenery* is indeed connected to scenery and Lothian attempts to classify the topics into different 'eyes', the book contains repetition and areas of overlap while failing to confront and reflect on what it all leads to. Sometimes a chapter focuses on the perception of mountains, sometimes on the way psychoanalysis informs our understanding of the beauty of landscape. I think that this lack of focus arises because the book was published by the author himself. On the one hand, that approach has the advantage of giving the author total freedom and it is probably the only way to get such a book into the world. On the other hand, the razor-sharp skills of an editor are missing.

The structure of the book is also peculiar in that it gives one example on landscape quality assessment of the Lake District at the beginning and then dives deep into the history and ideas on landscape perception and landscape quality. A clearer structure might have been either to give an example and then defend it with only the necessary arguments or to build up from the ground to culminate in a model and finally an example.

The book abounds with information gathered from reading an immense number of publications on landscape quality assessment. Therein lies a great bonus of the book. Although the use of verbatim quotes without paraphrasing is somewhat demanding on the reader, for a beginning researcher in the field, the wealth of information makes this book the ultimate starting point. From a strict methodological perspective, it would have been beneficial if the author had set out his method in gathering the literature for his review, providing a reassurance that it is reliable and unbiased. The introduction to chapter 19 indicates that Lothian used Google Scholar, but it does not give details such as keywords used in the search.

As well as being a major benefit, the wealth of information is the major flaw of the book, in that the author does not impose order on this information. Much of the information is repeated without offering enough context to allow for evaluation of the findings in all these studies and how they add up. A consistent use of the model offered by Dearden and Sadler (1989), which is very similar to Bourassa's (1991), would have greatly improved the reader's ability to make sense of the many disparate findings from the literature quoted in the book.

The conflation of landscape quality and scenic quality

As a landscape architect and philosopher, I have some issues with the conceptual framework. For instance, in defining landscape quality, Lothian states that it is 'the human subjective aesthetic perception, both positive and negative of the physical landscape responding to its land forms, land cover, land uses, the presence of water, and other attributes' (p 6). This definition seems particularly geared towards the aesthetic component in landscape quality. Vitruvius (30 BC/1999) and Thompson (2000) offer a wider definition of landscape quality that is more generally used: it involves the aesthetic quality, but also the components of utility and firmness (these days often interpreted as sustainability). Within the aesthetic component, Lothian seems geared towards the beautiful or picturesque.

The discussion on good gestalt (pp 93–94) seems to be specifically describing something matching with Burke’s beautiful, and thereby ignoring the qualities that can be found in the sublime in landscape.

Another issue I have with Lothian’s definition depends on the interpretation of the term ‘perception’. It is not an issue if the definition is broad enough to include the ability to see, hear or become aware of something through all the senses. However, often discussions on landscape quality in *The Science of Scenery* seem to limit ‘perception’ to the ability to see only. A good description of the visual quality of landscapes from a static point of view is welcome, but it becomes a problem when that specific form becomes the only way of appreciating landscape.

The issue of religion

Lothian opens the book with a psalm and makes his religious beliefs clear in his biography. Clearly, Christian beliefs are part of the way the author looks at the world. On the one hand, his openness about his background is an asset in that the author allows for a critical examination of his viewpoint. The idea of science as a completely value-free rational exercise is behind us. But, on the other hand, one has to wonder what place those beliefs – as opposed to cultural background – have in a purportedly scientific book on scenic qualities. At a certain level, quality judgements may be influenced by the particular religion of the individual making them. Lothian explores this issue, for instance, in considering how Australian Aboriginal beliefs about landscape affect their view of the landscape.

The influence of religion on the experience of landscape quality and attitude towards scenic beauty can be researched in a scientific manner and can offer valuable insights. But by being so clear about his own beliefs as religiously held, and given such belief systems can contain inflexible attitudes towards scientific arguments and reasoning, Lothian prompts questions such as: How unbiased is his treatment of other beliefs? How critical is his treatment of Christian beliefs and how does this subsequently influence, for instance, the methodology he offers for measuring landscape quality? While the methodology offered seems to be impartial, the author’s emphasis on his beliefs jeopardises our acceptance that his book is a scientific endeavour.

Scenery as a free quality

Lothian stresses in his introduction that scenery is free to be enjoyed and not diminished by that enjoyment. Even in an introduction, this is cutting too many corners. The landscape is never there for free; landscape – as opposed to natural beauty – demands constant management. If someone does not put in the effort to maintain landscape, it will revert to a feral natural environment that does not always have the scenic beauty that the maintained landscape had.

Most scenic landscapes, furthermore, contain restraints that make the land use less profitable than other versions of that landscape that may offer less scenic quality. Many landscapes that have been improved for agricultural use and that offer a decent yield, rather than depending on tenuous subsidies from local and national governments, are no longer as scenic as they were before. This difference in profitability is all the more problematic if those who profit from the enjoyment do not carry those costs. Visitors can enjoy but do not contribute to

the management of the landscape. They might pay for part of it through their taxes, but in general that does not cover the costs. Hotels and other tourism-related businesses profit from the greater numbers of visitors, but again do not directly contribute to the quality of the landscape. What is more, their actions might even degrade the landscape; for example, walkers may increase erosion, and creating extensions and new buildings to house tourists in the landscape may be inappropriate. So the matter of freely available beauty and non-consumptive enjoyment seems to oversimplify many issues surrounding scenic qualities.

Editing and production issues

It seems an impossible task to discuss all of the topics suggested in the subtitle in one book but, after 480 pages, the reader is a lot wiser on most of the topics. However, the reader must be someone of real endurance to struggle through these 480 pages. The coherence and argumentative line have been sacrificed on the altar of completeness. The book diverges into theme after theme and passes by writer after writer, unfortunately without offering a clear narrative structure of its own, beyond summation. It names the different authors and theories without going into real depth and without a clear analysis of why some of this information is useful and some of it is just not. So for an introduction to a topic related to scenic beauty in landscape, this is a good book if you pick the part you need, read that and then explore the topic further on your own and make up your mind. A good editor would have stripped out at least half of the book, relegating large parts of the text to appendices or to the pile marked 'other books one should also write'.

In the process of production, one aspect certainly fails the reader: the quality of the printed photographs and maps. Some of the images were taken from the web and lack the quality to be included in a book on beauty. Many of the diagrams are low resolution and appear grainy at the edges and fuzzy. Many of the landscape photographs look like they were printed on blotting paper, lacking sharpness. If a reprint of the book is considered, this matter should be addressed. Also the superfluous use of the title *The Science of Scenery* on each page is annoying, especially in such a voluminous book; if a title on each page is desired, then the name of the part of the book or the chapter would have been a better choice.

A more fundamental philosophical critique

The book, though it speaks of the beautiful, concentrates on the quality of landscape in terms of the picturesque and, to its detriment, ignores the qualities as offered in descriptions of the sublime. These three subdivisions of the Beautiful (with a capital B) as the overarching principle, though mentioned in the book, are not part of the methodological framework, which seems firmly geared towards the picturesque. The method for measuring beauty is not used in, for instance, a context in which another concept of beauty might become apparent, including concepts of beauty from diverse cultures such as those of Wabi-Sabi, Yapha and Sundara, as offered by Sartwell (2004).

Although Lothian is thorough in his discussion of scenic landscape quality, his work is open to a philosophical critique. Recent philosophical literature on environmental aesthetics from philosophers Allen Carlson, Arnold Berleant and Yuriko Saito gives at least three points that severely limit the conflation of landscape quality and scenic beauty.

In analysing the discourse on environmental aesthetics, Carlson (2000) gives an overview of different viewpoints on the appropriate appreciation of environmental quality. He offers us the object model, the landscape model, the natural environmental model, the engagement model, the arousal model, the mystery model, the nonaesthetic model and the postmodern model.

Lothian's position fits with Carlson's landscape model, which corresponds with the tradition of the picturesque and forces us to see landscape as though it were a landscape painting. In a method that is consistent with this model, Lothian uses a photo as a stand-in for the landscape and equates the responses to the photos with the response to the landscape. Though Carlson does not rule that out, given the visual pleasure derived from viewing a scene from a static point is a part of appreciating a landscape appropriately, it is only one part of landscape appreciation. Carlson himself is a proponent of the natural environmental model in which all the senses play a role in landscape appreciation.

Landscape is not just in front of us in the distance; landscape is environmental and around us and involves all senses. It is not just the picture from the top that makes a landscape beautiful.

Adding to this analysis, Berleant (1997) argues that, beyond the picturesque appreciation of a landscape painting or photograph, some kind of engagement is involved in the appreciation of real landscapes. One enjoys the landscape as part of a walk, for instance. The view from the top is a moment in a flow of experiences and cannot be seen separately from these other experiences. Enjoyment of a landscape is more than a photo opportunity.

Finally, Saito (2007) makes us aware that this focus on the spectacular scenic view is not fair to our everyday experience of landscape. Focusing only on the top experiences and the race to be the most beautiful landscape, which underlies the methodology in *The Science of Scenery*, leads to a neglect of the ordinary, everyday world.

Does this philosophical critique diminish the truth about scenic quality as offered in *The Science of Scenery*? I do not think so, but it does put the book into perspective. Scenic quality is a part of landscape quality, which has many other aspects. The conflation of the two leads to a poor and diminished view of landscape quality. In that sense, the book may be a tool more for people in recreation, tourism and marketing than for landscape architects. Should landscape architects solely rely on this work for a description of landscape quality, they will be pushed into the corner of decorators or stage set designers, which I think is not a good place to be.

Conclusion

Those who are brave enough will find material in the current edition of this book that is well worthwhile; but be prepared that you may not find the forest for the trees. For the second edition, which I would love to see published, I recommend employing an editor to sharpen the storyline and halve its length, hiring a professional for the layout, being more modest about the reach of scenic beauty and dropping the religious connotations. What remains after that will be immensely valuable.

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Paradoxically Urban

ANDREAS WESENER

Living in Paradox: A History of Urban Design across Kainga, Towns and Cities in New Zealand, Garth Falconer, Matakana: Blue Acres Press, 2015, ISBN: 978-0-473-30219-1 (paperback)

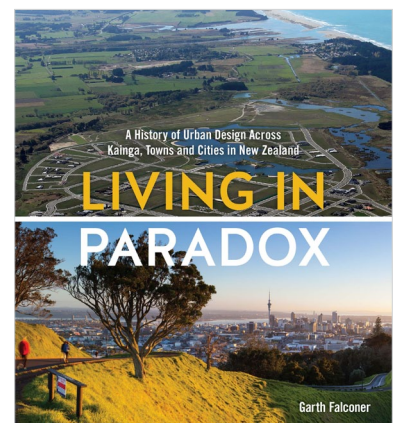
At more than 500 pages, it is a big book that Garth Falconer presents us with. This is hardly surprising considering that a comprehensive work on urban design history in New Zealand has been missing. Falconer's approach to the topic is well reflected in the book's title. The notion of 'paradox' echoes the challenges and tensions the author encountered while scratching off the thin layer of paradisiac veneer that has been wilfully and often strategically applied to this newest of New World countries. His critical deconstruction of utopian and social visions that accompanied the first settlements uncovers those exploitative and profit-driven processes that have dominated the comparably short but eventful history of urban development in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Falconer unveils the origins of deeply ingrained and romanticised preferences for Arcadian semi-rural lifestyles that have prevented any serious commitment to urbanity and created a strange bias towards the city that is noticeable today: 'New Zealand's preference for the middle landscape led to low-density residential neighbourhoods, non-urban cores and the erosion of the natural and rural landscape' (p 18). While the vast majority of New Zealanders live in urban areas, 'much of New Zealand has become an urban "anywhere", with little that is distinctive' (p 19).

Falconer explores the sociocultural background that flourished in relative geographical isolation and influenced the urban development of New Zealand through to today. His discussion helps the reader to grasp some of those typical anti-urban sentiments that seem odd from an outsider's perspective but are frequently encountered. Falconer's focus on specific inherent paradoxes that characterise historical and contemporary processes and products of town planning and urban design in New Zealand is therefore not only highly informative, but also particularly useful for readers who did not grow up in this country (like the author of this review) but try to make sense of the peculiarities they encounter.

The book includes 13 chapters and an introduction. Following a short discussion on the general geographical context, the book follows a fairly structured chronological order – starting with early Māori settlements and ending with Auckland's Unitary Plan – which seems appropriate for a historical work. However, each chapter has also a specific theme that informs the discussion

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and often breaks with the historical chronology, leaping in time and space to accommodate comparative considerations according to a topic or theme. For example, in chapter 1 ('Lies on the land'), the section 'Maximising land and tourism' covers swiftly a period that spans Prince Albert's visit to Rotorua's famous, and now destroyed, Pink and White Terraces in 1870, the 'New Zealand 100% pure' campaign and twenty-first century Middle Earth tourism. The next section goes on to discuss 'camp cities', again across decades and centuries.

While such an order can be useful with regard to clustering topics and themes, it also creates some repetition across the book and is confusing at times when the reader is looking for particular information, for example, about a place, event or process within its historical context. Likewise, information on specific New Zealand cities is spread throughout the book. For example, the founding of Christchurch is described in chapter 2 ('Getting connected') under the subheading 'Creating Christchurch', the 1877 map of the central city is found in chapter 3 ('Dreams at a distance'), the (early) architectural history is described in chapter 8 ('Three curious cities') and the city's twenty-first century history, including the 2010–2011 earthquakes, is found in chapter 12 ('Christchurch: Response and opportunities'). It is also odd that detailed descriptions of pre-European Māori settlements appear anti-chronologically following several sections on European colonial history (including ruminations on post-colonial theory), and quite late in the book, in chapter 5 ('Palisades and picket fences').

Another example is the history of town planning in New Zealand, which is told generally although not entirely chronologically in chapter 9 ('Shakers and movers'), whereas the biographies of some important figures in New Zealand town planning and architecture are found across the book. For example, William Mason's life and work are split between chapter 3 ('Dreams at a distance') and chapter 10 ('Shapers and interventionists'). The titles of chapters are catchy but not self-explaining and the reader needs the index to find subject-specific information. While the theme-oriented concept that structures the book enables comparison, it also leads to fragmentation and makes the search for interrelated information a time-consuming exercise.

The book covers a lot of ground, including topics from urban ecology to detailed biographical accounts of New Zealand's state architects and urban planners and their roles within the almighty Ministry of Works. Such a breadth of information is, on the one hand, useful for readers who are not familiar with the New Zealand context, or are new to urban design and her sister disciplines (architecture, planning and landscape architecture). On the other hand, those who have some familiarity with urban design concepts and best-practice precedents might not get much out of the sometimes overly descriptive smorgasbord of topics. Excursions into theory and urban design paradigms such as landscape urbanism remain rather short and often disconnected from New Zealand precedents.

Due to its mainly descriptive character, the book does not create much analytical content that is of direct use for scholars and practitioners. For example, it is quite common for historical urban design studies to apply urban morphological analysis – with the help of figure-ground maps – to illustrate and reflect on the historical spatial development and growth of cities. Analytical maps of major New Zealand cities such as Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch between the

1850s and the twenty-first century would be of direct use to scholars, planners and designers who need to understand the historical spatial development of cities before proposing new urban design or planning concepts.

Falconer is an active landscape architect practitioner. Not surprisingly, we find a considerable amount of his own work (and the work of his companies) in the book. This is sometimes refreshing and informative, but at times it is too much. For example, the author's own alternative urban design proposal for Christchurch's rebuild might be of interest to some readers. However, in the context of a book that covers broadly the entire history of urban design in New Zealand, Falconer's unrealised design proposals might be negligible. Likewise, lengthy details about the development of Auckland's latest planning framework, including many diagrammatic illustrations from Falconer's own design company (that are not always well explained), do not make the final chapter necessarily a page-turner.

On the up side, the book is generally well referenced as to be expected from a historical work, even if there are parts (for example, chapter 2 from page 64) that could have used additional sources to support the largely descriptive historical details. The book is also well illustrated. However, figures are not numbered (for example, figure 1), and have no direct link with the text. As a consequence, text and figures appear often detached or even unrelated. For example, the image of 'leaky homes' on page 94 does not seem to correspond with the surrounding text, which is about urban ecology in Christchurch.

For some of the above-mentioned reasons, the book does not meet all the high standards of a scholarly publication – however, it does not claim to be one. Written from a practitioner's perspective, it comprises a broad range of valuable historical information on urban development and design in New Zealand. In addition, it provides a laudable critical sociopolitical discussion that demystifies some of the most pertinent Kiwi myths (for example, the 'green image') by presenting us with an urban reality that has not been whitewashed or branded. It is a discussion that focuses on the many challenges and opportunities encountered by New Zealand towns and cities. One of Falconer's goals is 'to understand what the New Zealand City is and to design it and live in it with ease' (p 22). While the book does not provide all the answers, it is certainly a step towards a better understanding of urban development and design in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Landscape Architecture in the Gulf

JULIAN RAXWORTHY

Paradoxes of Green: Landscapes of a City-State, Gareth Doherty, Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017, ISBN: 978-0-520-28502-6

Desert Paradises: Surveying the Landscapes of Dubai's Urban Model, Julian Bolleter, Abingdon: Routledge, 2019, ISBN: 978-0-815-35550-2

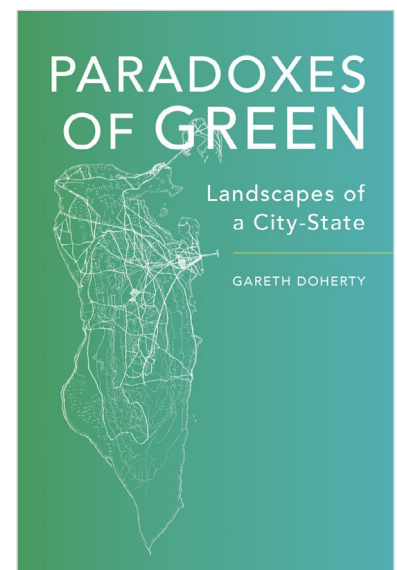
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I never planned to end up in Dubai. And when people ask how I am finding it, my standard response is 'I don't love it ...'. I mean it as a compliment, in so far as I am not saying 'I hate it', which is the reaction that most people I know expect from me. They expect that I will find it totalitarian (it seems relatively liberal to me, so long as you keep to the rules), too hot (so far, it has been no worse than a stinking Queensland day) and too Islamic (ironically, I love the call to prayer, something I grew familiar with in Cape Town and find the most authentic part of Dubai). As a landscape architecture academic, I am used to finding value in the everyday, tracing the influence of climate, geography and culture to get a sense of the place, even in places that others might see no value in. It is in this aspect that I find it hard in Dubai: the more you look for authenticity and nature here, the further it seems to move away. But, as the expats say, the longer you live here, the more you like it.

In this context, it has been useful to have the opportunity to review two recent books about landscape in the Middle East: Gareth Doherty's *Paradoxes of Green Landscapes of a City-State* about Bahrain; and Julian Bolleter's *Desert Paradises: Surveying the Landscapes of Dubai's Urban Model*, about my current abode, Dubai. By way of introduction, these books have some similarities. Notably, the biographies of their young authors have much in common, with both books resulting from their doctoral studies at the institutions where they work.

The basis of Doherty's book is his Doctor of Design at Harvard University Graduate School of Design, where he is associate professor of landscape architecture. His supervisor was Lebanese architect and urbanist Hashim Sarkis, formerly of the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and now at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who is the curator for the 2020 Venice Architecture Biennale.

Bolleter's book is from his Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Western Australia, where he is deputy-director at the Australian Urban Design Research Centre; his supervisor was Richard Weller, now Meyerson chair of urbanism at the University of Pennsylvania. Another similarity is that both authors are humble but prolific publishers: Doherty co-edited the seminal *Ecological Urbanism* (Mostafavi and Doherty, 2016), *Is Landscape ...?* (Doherty and Waldheim, 2016) and, most



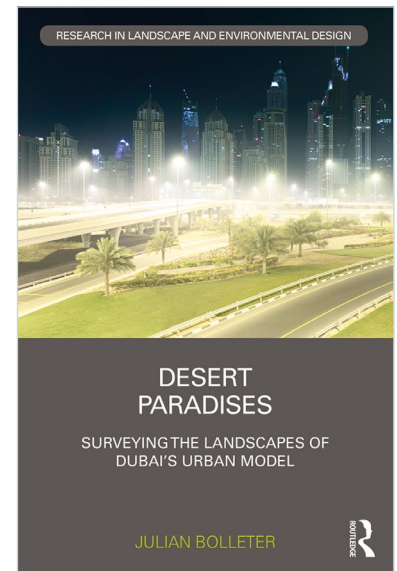
recently, a major contribution on the Brazilian landscape architect *Roberto Burle Marx Lectures: Landscape as Art and Urbanism* (Doherty, 2018); while Bolleter authored *Take Me to the River: The Story of Perth's Foreshore* (2015) and co-authored *Greenspace-Oriented Development: Reconciling Urban Density and Nature in Suburban Cities* (Bolleter and Ramalho, 2019) and *Made in Australia: The Future of Australian Cities* (Weller and Bolleter, 2013). They also share an interest in a topic that attracts little attention: landscape in the Islamic world, and the Middle East in particular. Further, after *Contemporary Urban Landscapes of the Middle East* (Gharipour, 2016), published by Routledge in the same series as Bolleter's, these two books are the most significant contributions to the subject in landscape architecture to date.

Despite these broad similarities, however, they are quite different books because they are based on markedly different frames for reading landscape and contrasting methodologies. That is, Doherty uses the frame of colour to look through and follows an ethnographic method, while Bolleter has an urbanistic frame and uses a method that emphasises the political and economic.

Landscape as colour

With the title of Doherty's book clearly identifying 'green' as its subject, it is no surprise that not just that particular colour – green – but colour generally is a theoretical underpinning of the book and potentially its most novel contribution. As Doherty acknowledges, colour is tough to theorise, but he has made a good effort in exploring basic 'chicken and egg' questions like: does an object produce the meaning of the colour, or vice versa? After positioning himself in relation to colour theory, Doherty admits that, essentially, the closer one gets to colour, the more difficult it is to discuss. Ultimately it is keeping colour within the medium of *words* that is perhaps the greatest weakness of the book: I wanted to *see* the colour. While the rhetorical device of colour as a way of structuring the book is highly effective, I was left wondering whether the book is confronting a problem of genre. Namely, it occupies the serious scholarly space of textual discourse, rather than the more colourful space of images that Doherty has already operated in with *Ecological Urbanism*.

Logically the book starts with blue, the generic colour of water, which reveals the fundamental paradox captured in the book's title, as well as being green's immediate neighbour on the colour wheel. In the way of good research, the basic premise of the book that its title captures is common sense: it is a paradox that green – as vegetation in the first instance – is so poorly suited to the desert of the Middle East, which is inherently dry and in need of water, which happens to be ... blue. While Bolleter is attracted by the newness of Dubai, it was Bahrain's history that led Doherty to that country as a site for his research, an urge that will be familiar to anyone who has lived (or is living) in the rapidly changing Middle East, where one feels an inherent impulse to search for authenticity. Doherty tells us that the role of blue in Bahrain is fundamental to its reputation for green-ness in the Middle East. *Al-Bahrain* means 'the Two Seas' in Arabic: those seas are respectively outside, the sea surrounding the island of Bahrain, and inside, the groundwater that was the only water supply that allowed Bahrain to green but is now sadly much diminished.



With the loss of its natural 'blue', it is easy to imagine that keeping Bahrain green – both its historical, though now ornamental, agriculture, as Doherty argues, and its newer landscaping – requires a new sort of blue, and lots of it. As groundwater is almost gone, most of the water supply comes from desalination, which is prohibitively expensive, and increasingly from treated sewage effluent (TSE). TSE is another problematic source in that, while much money is being invested in it, it is culturally disliked because it is seen as *haram*, and its use is prohibited in many landscapes where people will interact with it and in agricultural activities because of its exposure to faecal coliforms. Other measures to deal with water scarcity, such as the use of indigenous species and xeriscaping applications, are rejected, Doherty suggests, because they do not involve the right type of green and are unsuited to the desired image of Bahrain.

Alternative water technologies – such as water sensitive urban design (WSUD) and sustainable urban drainage (SUDS) – also have limited use in the Middle East, with its limited rainfall. In Dubai, I have noted with concern the use of increasing amounts of chlorine to clean (or 'kill') the common lakes that are often the centre of landscaping, in preference to wetland treatment trains to clean and reuse runoff, a studio project I hope to develop here. For me, Doherty's chapter on 'blue' is perhaps the most important of his book and he could have considered water technologies in greater detail, before moving on to other types of recreational blue. As he notes, 'if there is a need to focus on reducing the demand for blue, we should keep in mind that blue and green are inseparable', adding 'water can be more efficiently managed only if green is too' (p 59).

The tension, as I perceive it, between ethnography and landscape as a subject is felt acutely in the chapter on red. Doherty attempts to build a bridge between green and red, noting the relationship between them, together with white, in Muslim flags, a religious dynamic between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Doherty attended the religious festival of Ashura with Shia friends, where the colour green featured extensively in basil used as part of the observance, and as a plant left for graves and grieving, but where the focus is actually on blood, as red.

For those of us who are unfamiliar with the subject, a pivotal difference between Sunni and Shia Islam is that the Shia mourn the martyrdom of Husayn with blood-letting, one aspect of the commemorative processions through Manama, the Bahraini capital. Although the link to the central theme of the book is tenuous in this chapter, this in no way diminishes the quality of the writing or the broader cultural understanding it gives the reader as Doherty's experience is compelling and informative about the Middle East.

In reading Doherty's book, I was most excited to hear about the 'grey-green' of the date palm, *Phoenix dactylifera*, in the chapter entitled 'The Memory of Date Palm Green', because it resonated with my visit to the oasis at Al Ain, where the configuration of date palms is similar to the one Doherty describes: a dense overstory of date palms that are irrigated by above-ground channels called Aflaj.

Geoffrey Sanderson, a long-time landscape architect and resident in the Middle East, described to me how this canopy creates shade under which other species are grown, with one layer shading another, each reducing evapotranspiration for those below. Adding detail, Doherty describes the species below as comprising figs, mangoes and pomegranates (pomegranate juice, interestingly, is used as an

alcohol-free substitute for balsamic vinegar in some Muslim countries) in the small tree and shrub layer, with a ground cover of alfalfa.

This use of shade reminds us that plants are essentially pumps, compelled by light to transpire, so reducing light is a solution akin to reducing water requirements. Dates were used completely for 'giv[ing] seeds for fodder, stems for building, leaves for baskets and houses, fiber for ropes' (p 81), and are also reliant on people for pollination. It is an interestingly symbiotic relationship, given the sun also desiccates people, making the date grove a kind of paradise that still plays a role in the social life of some of the wealthier people in Bahrain.

Doherty also points to language to demonstrate the key role of the date palm in the Middle East. One alternative name for it is the 'Mother of Bahrain'. Capturing its significance, Doherty recounts an event he went to with a family whose house and tamarind tree were about to be demolished for a new development: their goodbye was directed more to the tree than the house. In Arabic, the date palm is known as Nakheel, also the name of a station on the Dubai Metro, demonstrating the date palm's everyday significance.

Of all the factors relating to plants in Dubai, what perplexes me most is tree spacing. Doherty notes that the spacing of the date palm is 5 metres apart in a plantation, yet in urban 'landscaping' they are used singly, in rows, often 10 or more metres apart. 'Learning from the oasis' would be valuable for landscape architects, who are generally expatriates, when designing for plants, as density can reduce temperature by 2–3 degrees Celsius in the palm grove. Focused as he is on greenery as 'an indicator of human settlement' (p 77) as much as vegetation, I was somewhat frustrated by this chapter, considering vegetation should have been at its core although, as Doherty notes, 'the predominant shade of green associated with the date palms is considered passé [as] new shades of green are becoming more prevalent as symbols of development and of a brighter future' (p 90).

In this context, Doherty discusses the development of planning in Bahrain. In particular, he deals with the attempts of 'Mr Kazi' to maintain the Manama Greenbelt. This planner, educated in the United Kingdom and influenced by Sir Patrick Abercrombie, had been involved in establishing the Greater London Green Belt in 1944. Kazi's plan for the Manama Greenbelt, though initially opposed as anti-development, was based on an argument for an approach to developing infrastructure that took pressure off the palm groves by making them a green belt. Despite these intentions, development has encroached on the green belt, with much of it 'becom[ing] villas, or desert awaiting villas' (p 95). Intriguingly, Doherty tells us of more cunning strategies used to support preservation of the palms, including the use of religion and law. For example, cutting down trees was made illegal on the grounds that 'It is essential in the Muslim religion to protect Green' (p 95) – although, unfortunately, this leads to tree poisoning instead. Another mechanism is to create Awqaf or religious endowments, where property is donated in perpetuity to all Muslims everywhere and 'once designated as waqf, the property cannot legally be bought or sold'; instead it is 'held in trust for everyone of the faith, the groves remain[ing] groves forever'. Together these mechanisms might preserve the green belt because 'to conserve the date palm means conserving its network' (p 97).

Privately Doherty has suggested to me that his book has much in common with my *Overgrown: Practices between Landscape Architecture and Gardening* (Raxworthy, 2018, also reviewed in this issue). However, I only used green in passing as a word to name a landscape architectural equivalent of the tectonic from *viridis*, the Latin for green – leading to my new term ‘the viridic’ – so compared to him, I am a colour lightweight.

While I may have wanted more images, more actual colour, *Paradoxes of Green* contains plenty of ‘local colour’, which is, perhaps, more like travel literature. Calling it an ethnography, Doherty puts at front and centre the people he met and the everyday landscapes he walked through, allowing us to share in his questions as much as his answers, which remain tentative and provisional throughout.

Like the great travel writer Bruce Chatwin, Doherty intersperses these stories and reflections with his background research and tells us, in the process, much about the Middle East and its history, religion and geography. Considering how my book reflects my own interest in plants, I wanted more discussion of actual vegetation – the green that the title refers to, setting up the expectation that this would be the focus of the book. It is a critique I could also aim at Bolleter. However, for me, this limitation was sup-plant-ed (if you can excuse the pun) by the appreciation that I felt for the broader, travel-style observations of the book, which filled many gaps in knowledge I have been aware of as a new resident of the Middle East.

Landscape as urbanism

It is unsurprising that, considering Bolleter’s work with the Australian Urban Design Research Centre and his book with Weller on Australian cities, *Desert Paradises* is focused primarily on landscape as a part of city-making tools, and its relationship to political and economic forces. Naturally, both Doherty and Bolleter also spend time in their books introducing their respective countries and contexts, which are very different. For Doherty, Bahrain is a country where ‘green’ and its landscape identity have been around for a long time, and he, and his interview subjects, mourn or are nostalgic about this loss of identity.

In contrast, in Bolleter’s account, Dubai is the epitome of new, and its identity is being entirely manufactured through the creation of what Bolleter calls ‘parascapae’. Interestingly, though Bahrain may have been more developed historically, Dubai had a noted port as far back as about 1000 AD. As both authors observe, Dubai has become an important precedent for development in the region and internationally. Doherty observes that ‘Dubai-fication’ is already happening to some degree in Bahrain and apace in Saudi Arabia; Bolleter argues convincingly that this process is evident in other Muslim countries and in Africa as well.

Dubai and Abu Dhabi have an interesting dynamic in terms of landscape architecture and urban culture. Much of the transformation of the United Arab Emirates from a desert to a green place is down to the work and vision of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, a revered figure in 2019, ‘The Year of Zayed’. His influence is especially notable in Abu Dhabi, where he is said to have planted 130 million trees.

With its more developed and conventional open space systems, Abu Dhabi is a demonstration of what landscape can be and what it can do in the Middle East, and is seen as somehow more elegant and cultured than Dubai. Yet the

latter is growing faster and, despite its stricter alcohol restrictions, is seen by expats as a more fun city, as it is brasher and ‘crazier’ – an ‘Australian Gold Coast without the surf beaches and mountains’, as I describe it. The two cities are always bouncing off each other. Abu Dhabi recently initiated a second-layer renovation programme of returning to its initial green spaces for upgrade, while in the past few weeks Dubai announced a programme of creating new links and parks that improve the pedestrian experience as well as linking to and across the massive freeway of Sheikh Zayed Road and into Dubai’s highly effective, though isolated, metro system.

The book hinges on the definition of ‘parascape’, a term that Bolleter coined with his supervisor Weller as a conjunction of the paradise of heaven described in the Quran, and the generic descriptor of scape that is an interstitial space between city and country, the artificial and the natural. Much has been written about Qur’anic descriptions of gardens as a source for earthly gardens in Islam. However, with the exception of the 64-hectare US Holy Quran Park, which Bolleter says was aimed at introducing the many Islamic tourists visiting the city ‘to the “miracles” of the Quran’ (p 54), the relationship between these contemporary landscapes and the Quran seems tentative or, more so, rhetorical. Bolleter does make a reasonable case that Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid looked to the Quran for his mandate for greening. However, his claim that ‘parascape’ was mobilised as a Versailles-like tool for glorification of the monarchy seems a convenience of western universalisation of values. It reflects a key issue I have with this book, notably its assumption of a western ideological frame, which differentiates it from Doherty’s book.

Discussion of politics in relation to the UAE is a vexed issue. My experience of living inside the country and reading descriptions from people who are outside it brings this to the fore, essentially because living here, the stakes are higher. However, having lived in South Africa for five years, my position on this question is different to what it was when my experience of life was confined to Australia and the west. While people in the west might believe in the fundamental merits of democracy and capitalism, and take an evangelical view on its universality, there is no question that specific geopolitical, cultural and religious histories create complex modes of governance in non-western and post-colonial countries that cannot be neatly characterised.

Both Doherty and Bolleter note that Gulf Cooperation Council countries had and continue to have anxieties around popular movements in the style of the Arab spring. Yet, as Bolleter notes, and as I have seen from my own experience here, the UAE is a place of calm in the Middle East, where one meets numerous Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian professionals, for whom it is essentially the only place they can work and live normally. I think an argument can be made that the stability the monarchy provides to Dubai and the UAE in general – tempered by a quasi-liberal acceptance of the predilections of ex-pats – allows to it be a safe haven in a volatile region both for workers and for capital.

At the end of the parascape chapter, Bolleter talks about a range of landscape types that are visible in Dubai, including parks, theme parks, reclaimed islands and transport interchanges. This typology is useful because it documents, at this point in time, the spaces resulting from Dubai’s urbanism. He discusses these

spaces in terms, again, of their craziness, their intensity or their ludicrousness, and has the same criticisms for each of them: they are not inclusive, are highly simulated and lack environmental or cultural authenticity.

Weaving together a range of scholarly narratives – not least, the significant AMO/Volume title *Al Manakh* from 2007 and its sequel *Al Manakh cont'd* from 2010 – Bolleter gives us an exciting ‘Dubai is crazy’ account that should now be familiar. While he cites Davis (2007) to describe it as the ultimate manifestation of the unfettered neo-liberal city, I was not entirely convinced of its uniqueness in this respect. Bolleter sees tropes used to describe real estate developments as demonstrations of attempts to supplant indigenous desert landscapes with ‘parascapes’, yet many of these should be familiar to western readers from their own cities, where a term like ‘Green’ or ‘Lakes’ is added to a name for branding.

Perhaps it is only the juxtaposition of colour – to return to Doherty’s fascination – that makes them unusual, because most of the rest of the cited ‘crazy’ has been described at least since the 1990s by people like Michael Sorkin (1992) and Margaret Crawford (1992). Similarly, claims that open spaces are silencing or smoothing over striated political spaces, normalising them, should also be familiar, because these were precisely the reasons for the emergence of public parks and ‘green infrastructures’ in Europe and the USA in the nineteenth century.

So perhaps the real issue is actually that nothing really new is happening here, because western landscape architecture is just being normatively rolled out. Perhaps, just as the pejorative term FILTH (‘Failed in London, Try Hong Kong’) was used in the 1980s and 1990s, what this is really about is that, without context and critique, landscape architecture is being deployed uncritically as taught. Often I will see a landscape and realise that it is a self-referential plan composition rather than a spatial solution with an interest in microclimate; or I will take a road and feel that this was a traffic engineer’s utopian solution that has not considered the pedestrian; or I will walk alongside a building that is lining a public space with its services along its podium, ignoring its role in shaping public space. But these could be problems with development in any city, and are perhaps only prominent in the UAE because young, inexperienced practitioners are constantly rotating through, or being quickly promoted to entice them to stay. Perhaps the problem is not Dubai, but landscape architecture?

For a whole range of reasons, some of the tropes that people criticise Dubai for might persist. Not least is that the city is hot and inhospitable. While changes of planting, like the creation of deeper shade, and greater connectivity to transport nodes, for example, might extend the season that is suitable for walking by six weeks; after that, air-conditioning will be mandatory. This air-conditioning will create interiors, such as malls. Similarly, the much-maligned tower is a way of centralising services and creating a density that what I call the density police would otherwise adore in cities focused on ‘best practice’ urban design. In the same vein, while both Doherty and Bolleter might be critical of over-planted and over-watered freeway interchanges, residents drive past these 365 days a year and so these spaces could be seen to be more widely used, albeit visually, than are parks, which can only be used half the year in Dubai. Despite the aerial graphic symbol of the Palm Jumeirah attracting some of this ‘crazy’ interest, it is the most banal critique that is most pertinent: it is a very inefficient way for residents to get

from A to B. Notwithstanding the validity of this particular critique, why is Dubai 'bashed' for tropes that arise in other places too?

A recent essay in the *New York Review of Books*, reflecting on Edward Said's *Orientalism*, noted perversely the sad demise of the concept, after 9/11. I would argue that the slighting of urbanism in the Middle East actually manifests a kind of self-loathing, a horror of what happens when the west is doing what it does: colonise. However, when this becomes something unique in the Middle East (or China, or Singapore, though less so), instead we expect it to be more authentic, more desert, more Bedouin. When it is not, getting the elements exported to it by the west – the mall, the tower, the gated community – and owning them and making them *more, more, more*, the west then fetishises their bad taste, exhibiting what a director of a landscape architecture practice in Dubai calls 'market racism'.

Both Doherty and Bolleter use a reflex-critique of development as being aimed at expats, and Bolleter in particular emphasises class divisions between workers, expats and Emiratis. Potential criticisms about access to public spaces in Dubai for workers like domestic workers and labourers are actually not specific to Dubai. They are also clearly visible in the west generally; think, for example, about inequality in places like Chicago, or Alice Springs, or Cape Town, or even access issues for Roma people in Europe.

Inequality and profiling in policing and management in Dubai probably again came from the west, or perhaps synched well with existing class divisions in feudal societies, demonstrating how the feudal and capitalism exhibit similar tropes according to inequality. However, again from a South African perspective, whereas whiteness and money hold power over an indigenous population due to inequality, this equation is not the same in the UAE, where white expats are still workers, like Filipinos, although better paid, and are still visibly lower down the 'food chain' of power than Emiratis, particularly in matters of law and etiquette.

Bolleter discusses how the Gulf region, and Dubai in particular, have changed quickly, leading to a desire to maintain authenticity of vernacular building types, of their faking, as he suggests, because '[the] vernacular built-form is the spatial product of many processes and is unique to the culmination of these forces' (p 84). The forces that are of most interest to me, as someone who walks in Dubai, even in summer, are the bio-climatic, yet Doherty and Bolleter rarely discuss this subject proactively, instead generally treating form as visual rather than affective. One can agree with Bolleter's implied critique that the faking of the vernacular is a move 'after the horse has bolted'; however, some characteristics of Islamic urbanism could well be remembered now, while letting go of their formal resemblance to historical types and allowing them to have some contemporary design.

Both Bolleter and Doherty end by suggesting that landscape urbanism is pertinent in the Middle East. Again, my perspective as a walker in Dubai and my experiences in the Moroccan city of Fez have coloured my sense of the role of landscape, or landscaping in hot climates. In Fez, the Islamic building or urban type – consisting of thin streets, zero setback, three to four stories and an internal court – creates a constantly shaded and cool microclimate at street level. While tree planting, and particularly the dense planting of date palms, can create significant shading and reduce temperature on the street level, architecture will always do this better and so, ironically, it may be that traditional 'urbanism' rather

than 'landscape' urbanism can create better streetscape outcomes, and these might be better achieved through conventional codes. An immediate example might be creating shade maps for streets that make them totally shady at all times and then reverse engineering building heights and setbacks to suit. This would be akin to a back-to-front version of the process Hugh Ferriss used in New York, as described by Koolhaas (1994), to ensure that sun hit the street in Manhattan as the skyscraper developed. Another example might be to enforce an air-conditioned public right of way in all buildings to provide lateral, climate-controlled links to the Dubai Metro, an approach that recent public projects are addressing.

To conclude, both these books make substantial contributions to the discourse of landscape architecture in the Middle East, a subject left behind compared with the attention it has received from Koolhaas et al in architecture. The differences between them – Doherty's as an ethnography, Bolleter's as an overview – are complementary because they show 'green' from the inside and the outside of the culture, respectively, though, of course, both are outsiders, as I am. As for historically colonial countries, the challenge for UAE, lacking any landscape architecture programme, is to develop a uniquely Emirati landscape approach, which seems to remain a distant goal. However, like Singapore, through the amplification and constant iteration of accelerated urbanisation, it may be that by becoming 'more west than the west', its influence on the developing world will be about agency, not aesthetics.

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