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VADEMECUM

77 Minor Terms for Writing Urban Places

edited by
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Further readings

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Metropolitan landscape

Mid-size cities can be understood as components of their larger framework: a hybrid and complex *metropolitan landscape* which is a profound mix of city and landscape, nature and culture, spaces and flows. This urban-landscape system is characterised by multiple modes of organisation and dynamic socio-spatial processes. The metropolitan landscape is the landscape of the Anthropocene: not so much a new landscape type, but a new way of looking that replaces the classical urban-rural dichotomy with a range of all kinds of urbanity, landscape and infrastructure. These are not clearly divided but exist on a gradient, including diffusion (horizontal metropolis) as well as densification (vertical metropolis), where even the most urban area is influenced by the landscape underneath, and the most natural area is influenced by urban forces. Historically, urban and rural realms were divided administratively, economically and in planning terms. But these notions, based on clear distinctions between core city and urban fringe, centre and periphery, city and landscape, town and country, are not able to address the current condition of a polycentric, fragmented and patchwork urban-landscape fabric. According to architect Lars Lerup (2000), in this unstable, dynamic environment the continuity and compositional logic of the classical city appears to have been replaced with a contiguity of elements and networks, different spatial conditions that exist next to and on top of each other, in a constant process of formation.

Landscape architects Clemens Steenbergen and Wouter Reh (2011) defined the metropolitan landscape as a hybrid of two systems. One is that of nature and the agricultural landscape. This is set over against the spatial system of the city. Each has its own topography, spatial form and visual structure, and their structure and morphology overlap and interact rather than merely lying next to each other. The landscape interacts with the urban condition as a permanent, underlying substructure, as a physical open space system, and as a metabolic process. This interaction leads to various intermediate spatial forms characterised by flexible and dynamic relationships, congestion, layering and interpenetration.