

# PAPERS 47 THE CHALLENGE OF LANDSCAPE IN METROPOLITAN AREAS

## FOREWORD

Amongst the processes linked to the territorial expansion of the city —particularly to the development of great urban systems— we find the production of metropolitan landscapes, the characteristics of which cannot be understood in the light of the usual landscape categories nor the methods associated to their analysis. That is why remarkable efforts have been made over the last twenty years in order to develop a theoretical body for their understanding, parallel to the efforts carried on by the public administration in order to improve them.

Both their territorial reach and their being the background of most of the population's daily life entail an increasing prominence of metropolitan landscapes as objects of planning, design and management. Furthermore, this prominence is enhanced by the goals of the European Landscape Convention, which introduces the need to dedicate attention to common landscapes, and —in the case of Catalonia— the implementation of the policies stipulated by the *Llei del paisatge* (2005). The articles in this issue of *Papers* suggest a reinterpretation of metropolitan landscapes that can be understood as a challenge to achieve a better articulation of the territory and an improvement of the quality of both places and the lives of their dwellers.

In the first article, Carles Llop refers the most substantive elements and dynamics of metropolitan landscapes and claims the worth of the concepts and instruments unfolded by the territorial planning, and the principles of environmental sustainability, as means to deal with the current stage of the city. In accordance to this goal the author introduces the challenge of renewing territorial planning basing on a reinvention of the landscape.

In the second article, Francesc Muñoz expounds the way in which mobility, besides transforming the territory and the landscape, is determining the appearance of typologies of places and landscapes related to each type of mobility. In particular, the author analyses the rise of a new type of *low cost* geography and landscapes which are linked to the needs of this form of aerial mobility, and the breaking away of

the traditional bonds between individuals and places, to be substituted by a paradoxical *delocated* sense of place.

The third article, by Enric Batlle, deals with the leap of scale regarding the design of parks in metropolitan areas, as landscape plans that intend to respond to territorial functions which go beyond municipal boundaries. The author's discourse runs over a number of design strategies found to be adapted to the scale and characteristics of places —from municipal urban parks to metropolitan park systems— through what he calls value-added environments.

After describing the main features of the process of urbanization of Northern Italy during the second half of the 20th century, Fabio Renzi writes about one of the most innovative experiences of the Lombardia park system: the *Parco Agricolo Sud di Milano*, appeared in the 1990s as a supra-municipal answer to the urban pressure affecting one of the most developed areas of the country. Being based on heritage, ecological and social landscape values, the *Parco* has become a European reference in the field of metropolitan territories and landscapes management.

In the fifth article, Ramon Torra, Antoni Farrero and Víctor Ténez describe the ways in which the successive plans of the metropolitan area of Barcelona have interpreted the Llobregat River, and analyse several initiatives promoted by the *Mancomunitat de Municipis* that aim to create a new type of relation between the river and its territorial environment, according to what they call the *river city*. They deal, amongst others, with the means and projects focused on environment, landscape and social restoration of the last stretch of the riverside.

The last article of the issue is Jaume Busquets', which reflects on the importance of the appreciation of urban peripheries and the evolution of groves as a shaping factor of the entrances to the cities, introducing the project of landscape improvement of the access to the town of Granollers through the BP-5002 road. Based on urban-planning requirements and the understanding of the landscape values of the site, this plan is an example of intervention in peripheral areas, in which landscape improvement cannot be undertaken without regarding the citizens' wellbeing.

## METROPOLITAN LANDSCAPES: POLYCENTRISM, EXPANSION, MULTI-PERIPHERIES AND MICRO-PERIPHERIES. From the cliché landscape to the kaleidoscope landscape

Carles Llop

### 1. *Quo vadis city? Quo vadis territory? Quo vadis landscape?*

The use of the territory has always followed an expansionist trend. Notwithstanding, up until the last century the city has demonstrated a controlled configuration. Now, the city and the territory are changing inexorably and, consequently, how they are interpreted. But, what we perceive as an "urban landscape" or a "territorial landscape" should not be seen from an apocalyptic or nostalgic point of view. We revise the state of the city and the territory to improve them in an attempt to construct quality landscapes, proving the Catalan aphorism "*el paisatge és l'ànima del territori*" (the landscape is the soul of the territory). After all, it is never too late to start and nothing is completely lost when it comes to city, territory and landscape quality.

There have been a number of seminars and papers read, not forgetting resulting published articles, that have concerned themselves with investigating new landscapes, particularly metropolitan landscapes.<sup>1</sup> In particular, I would like to underline those studies which have talked in detail about densely populated territorial areas where phenomena such as urban sprawl determine the characteristics of public concern that attempts to deal with environmental management from a renewed standpoint.

American cities have already experienced the expansion of the city across the territory many years before us here in Catalonia, and many articles have been published on the phenomena of metropolitanisation, generating a substantial bibliography of explanations and definitions.<sup>2</sup> "Cities without Cities" is the title of the introductory conference to the seminar *The Future Metropolitan Landscape: Conference Reflections*, which focused on understanding contemporary regional metropolitan landscapes. This title has a bearing on our awareness of how the traditional city (more or less compact, but which can be measured and delimited) is losing its configuration in the face of the ever-increasing