



THIS IS AN URBAN PAK

WHY NOT WILD?

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Parks are not the answer. Not for impoverished cities plagued with socio-economic crises that are painfully embodied in immense tracts of land abandoned by defunct industries and antiquated infrastructure. The question is: what if reframing formerly urban fallow sites as fertile ground for regeneration constitutes a means for a city to reinvent itself? When traditional redevelopment under-delivers or fails to materialize, as it often does in times of fiscal distress, can landscape architects offer resourceful design strategies that require a new way of seeing and a fresh vocabulary?

The term 'wildland' posited here attempts to brand cultivated urban wilds along with other unconventional landscape-based tactics to fill the gaps and dispel the stigma of disinvestment. Can wildland assume a role as healthy urban fabric, no lesser an asset than parkland? For well over a decade, notable examples in Germany invented 'urban nature parks' promoted by progressive planning policies to convert fallow land into productive resources for the current and future city. Yet American municipalities

default to mowed lawns to keep blight at bay, albeit at a great cost. The unfortunate urge to tame urban wilds denies the reality of urban entropy and sacrifices the socio-ecological benefits that citizens could harvest from a landscape with a savage tenacity.

Cultivated urban wilds can encompass an ingenious range of prototypes. From cheap and cheerful fields of spontaneous vegetation gaining the prestige of 'cosmopolitan urban meadows,' as botanist Peter del Tredici coins them, to urban wild woodlands, pruned and planted trees that restore depleted urban canopy. Along with producing jobs for local civic gardeners, this wild repertoire responds responsibly to strained municipal budgets. Wildland demands another way of working, of looking. Designers must provide a new language: vacant = full; abandoned = available; fallow = fertile. Rendering interim and incremental form, design restraint may inspire a patience to see the beauty of a landscape that grows according to its own logic, not ours. The next landscape urbanism is a wild one. The post-settlement metropolitan landscape is a city in reverse; its regenerative disturbance regime we can set in motion, and then let it go.

TRANSFORMATIVE EDGES. IMAGINARY AND FACTUAL PARKS IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA OF BARCELONA

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Since the recognition of the dynamic condition of landscapes as a complex of ecological and social processes, landscape architecture has sought to integrate this dynamism, not only in its imaginary but also in its materiality. This integrative challenge is particularly present in the case of public space, and especially in situations where the vegetation has already started to perform ecologically, despite orderly frames¹.

The metropolitan periphery of Barcelona, most notably the edges in contact with the Natural Park of Collserola², are zones of conflicts and complexities. In these landscapes, atypical for their lack of distinct appearance³ or control⁴, the material expresses the passage of time beyond form, the management of which does not always match the use. This situation is a consequence of the unequal relationship between the systems in contact. The city acts mechanically on the natural environment creating a space of imbalanced exchange, or, in ecological terms, an agitated border.