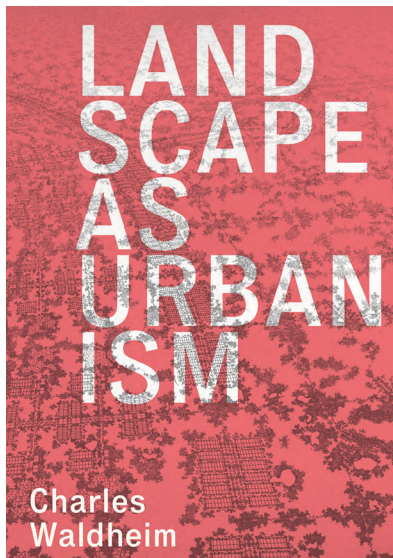


Landscape As Urbanism – A General Theory

Author: Charles Waldheim

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Today, in the context of globalization and post-Fordist model, landscape gradually supplants architecture's historical role as the basic building block of urban form. This book by landscape architect Charles Waldheim from Harvard University, observes the sudden rise of landscape practices since the twentieth century, and he attempts to define landscape in a new way through the lens of urbanism.

This volume is organized in nine chapters, offering an intellectual history of landscape urbanism in three parts. The first part combs the theory and practices of landscape urbanism, situating its emergence in post-modern architectural culture and the critiques of modernist planning. In Waldheim's view, because landscape is more flexible, resilient, and low-cost than architecture, it is more likely to respond to the social problems caused by economic structural change. The second part reveals the economic and political conditions underpinning the emergence of landscape urbanism. In the third and final part of the book various representations of landscape urbanism get reviewed. The author believes that, since the beginning of landscape architecture established as a discipline and a profession it has been responsible for the shape of the city rather than for rural areas outside the city.

Through extensive research on the history of landscape and socio-economic change, the author builds up a theoretical framework of landscape urbanism, supporting the previous arguments for his approach. Landscape urbanism, still searching for a theoretical counterpart in historical cases, lacks sufficient widespread practice. There is not yet clarity as to how this theory could guide contemporary urban planning and development in areas where the socio-economic conditions are totally different from those of Western countries. This difference between countries or areas is not mentioned in this book. Whether landscape urbanism will be of guiding significance globally needs to be verified over the years. Besides, this volume has a great deal of specialized vocabulary. The detailed descriptions of many cases in the text sometimes causes the reader to lose connection to the context. The book is unsuitable for laity and beginners in landscape architecture.

Landscape urbanism has been controversial since it was proposed. Through an account of its origin, evolution and prospect, this book reveals the relation between landscape and changing socio-economic structures. The publication is more of a manifesto and the establishment of a new way of thinking about landscape than a theory. The landscape thinking expressed by the book will enable us to better understand the interrelationship between the shape of the city and its social, ecological, and economic aspects. This book appeals to landscape architects and want them consider how landscape influences the urban development and how to get involved in the process of social change from a more macro perspective.