The Landscape Matrix:
Urban Landscape Networks as Frameworks for Collage Cities

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Cities change and so does the physical space of their landscapes. However, through reasons including both deep emotional sentiments of topophilia and practical, marketing-oriented needs of place recognition, we struggle to establish, maintain, and even recreate images and identities of places. There is a distinction between "image" and "identity." Image *of* a city is a quickly-comprehensible representation of the city to the world beyond. Identity *with* a city is something built through time, with direct contact and familiarity, and belongs to the individual, whether in the time frame of a series visits to the city, or the life span of a life-long resident. Identity with the city is built from sequences of intimate, feet-on-the-ground experiences rather than the selective depictions of the image. The recent-and ongoing-struggles in Leipzig, Germany to establish the city as a special place in a changing world present a valuable case study of urban places consciously attempting to create a recognizable image of the city to the outside world and a lasting identity with the city for those making their homes within the local spatial boundaries. (Isaacs, in review)

Like many cities Leipzig has resorted to clichés of loaded nicknames and catchy slogans, along with architectural icons to create an easily recognizable image of a place. These images have marketing value. However they are merely selective snap shots that fall short of generating deeper, sensual experiences of a city and its complexity. The value of nicknames and slogans is well established in the advertising industry and in politics. Similarly, they are effective tools for city development, appearing in marketing films and brochures, calendars, tourists' books, newspapers, and also in the spatial environments of urban landscapes. This increasingly common practice, recently referred to as "branding," (Finucan) allows the packaged images to be conjured in a single, heavily-loaded phrase that is synonymous with the city itself. Unfortunately, the phrase tends to become a simplistic caricature to which the city conforms.

Architectural icons, too, are quickly recognizable images with which a city can be associated. Spectacular buildings have long brought recognition to particular cities and today that effect is even more pronounced. In reference to this practice James Russell wrote that "architects mold urban identity one project at a time." The recent crop of these instant-place-makers, whether with titanium siding or moveable wings, can be included in what Robert Mugerauer called the "technological aesthetic." (Mugerauer, p. 120-124) or Kenneth Frampton's universal, "technologically optimized" modern building. (Frampton, 1983) Building in this manner implies embracing the spirit of the present and pushing the current limitations of technology. The results are often daring representations of a particular time in human history, but do little to embrace in the spirit of the place. A common reaction to the technological aesthetic is the reliance upon "past and archetypal landscapes," (Mugerauer, p. 125) a re-building of the spirit of the place through the architectural expressions of an earlier time, or artificially holding on to an earlier time in that place. Herein lies a danger: "Continually constructing the past in the present as a means of holding off the technological future is an attempted escape which dissolves into mere nostalgia and fantasy." (Mugerauer, p. 125) Frampton calls this approach the "compensatory façade" of superficial, populist architecture of the regional vernacular. Building images and identities in this manner is a self-imposed limitation on the continuing development of an urban culture and a denial of urban reality.

Dissatisfied with both the technological aesthetic and the archetypal past, Frampton and Mugerauer call for an architecture that does not reject either its time or its place. Mugerauer's answer is a context responsive "fitting placement" (Mugerauer, p. 132-150) Such an architecture would capitalize on the experiential qualities of its place, for example topography, local weather patterns, and "inflected qualities of local light," (Frampton) but would not resort to iconographic visual

representations of an assumed local style. Frampton continues emphasizing the entire range of complementary sensory percep- tions. "... heat and cold: the feeling of humidity...the echoing resonance of our own footfall..."

While Frampton and Mugerauer are essentially stressing a landscape experience. they still limit themselves to architecture. Architecture can be very effective image material. However, I propose that questions of both the image of a city and – even more so – one's identity with a city are not architectural ones at all. A city, like any terrestrial environment, is one of *dynamic continuity*...some things change; and some things stay the same – but not always in predictable ways. A landscape, which is a sensually experienced and understood terrestrial environ- ment, is a result of overlapping complex processes, both human and non-human. The physical space of the city is a dynamically continuous landscape shaped by years, centuries and millennia of both human and non-human processes. Various typographi- cal elements of the city are subject to faster or slower rates of change than others, leaving the impression that – in the human experience – some things do not change at all, and others change from one day to the next. It then follows that the image of the city and identity with the city are really found in the complexity of the urban landscape and not in any singular or collective architectural expression.

Fitting placement implies inserting a building into that complex urban landscape. Through years of inserting buildings into that landscape, the urban composition evolves. Rowe and Koetter used the term "collage" to describe this urban composition (though "ensemble" is perhaps a better term, being less referential to the visual.) They explained that the urban collage consists of "scaffold and exhibit." (p. 136) The exhibit includes the individual elements of the collage, being buildings, individ- ual sites, neighborhoods. The scaffold is the field of relation- ships of the elements within the city and regional scale. The sensual space of the scaffold is the landscape matrix of the city, the experienced spatial network of the interaction between human and non-human processes. The exhibit is relatively ephemeral; the scaffold is slower to change and affords a higher degree of permanence and stability. To imagine an enduring sensual image of an urban place – one with which various individuals will develop identities – we must conceptualize the local urban landscape matrix itself. (Isaacs, in review) The case study of Leipzig suggests how this may be done.

RE-DECLARATION OF THE MESSESTADT

Following German reunification in 1990, the city of Leipzig was suddenly – *once again* – a member of an extended market place, including not only Germany and Europe, but the entire world. To chart its future Leipzig turned to its past. Since the Middle Ages, Leipzig was an important trading center with regular contact with distant places. While the independence of the market oriented population was uncomfortable for the German and Saxon rulers, they recognized the importance of
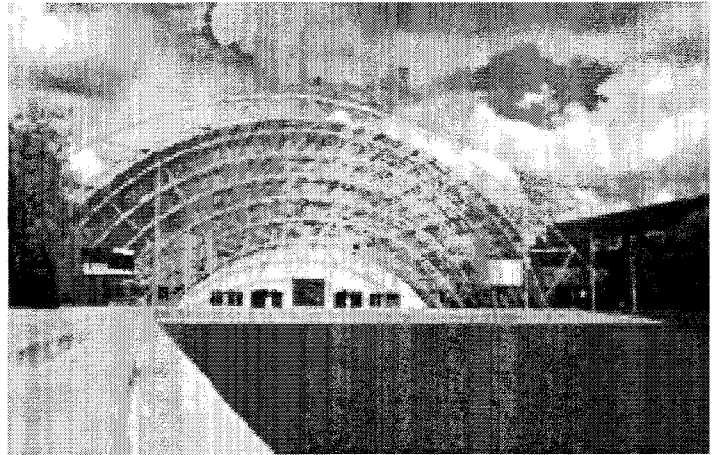
Leipzig's New "Messe".

medieval Leipzig as a growing business center. The German Emperor with encouragement from the Saxon Elector granted Leipzig the *Messepriveleg*, the exclusive regional privilege to hold trade fairs. For the next several centuries Leipzig was known as the "Messestadt" (city of trade fairs). Soon after the reunification Leipzig boldly re-declared itself the "Messestadt." On the outskirts of town, near a freeway with a short connection to the new airport, the City built an elaborate exhibition center, including many buildings. The featured component is a spectacular glass hall. (See illustration) With this crystal palace for the twenty-first century the world would take notice that Leipzig was once again a world class trade and business center, a self proclaimed "Handelnsmetropole" (Trading Metropo- lis)....or would they?

Leipzig experienced several disappointments. The new exhibi- tion center did not garner nearly as much attention as expected. Industries that came to Leipzig followed the city's lead in building sprawling facilities out on the peripheral greenfields, rather than re-using the abandoned industrial lands nearer the city-center. With a population that now had cars – a new post- reunification phenomenon – residential development, too, was shifting the greenfields, contributing to a population decline for the City. While not abandoning the concept of the City of Trade Fairs and the Trading Metropolis, the City launched another strategy: the "Neue Gründerzeit" to counter the decline in population *and* in status.

The Gründerzeit was the time following the establishment of the modern German nation in the late nineteenth century. It was a prosperous time for the Leipzig, not only as a trade and finance center, but also as a center for railroads, industry, education and publishing. During that flowering period, the city was densely built out in the style of Jugendstil architecture, featuring elaborate residences and shopping arcades – a true nineteenth century Trading Metropolis. Many of the building survive. The phrase "Neue (New) Gründerzeit" is intended as an optimistic view to a shaky future. However, it relies on urban

images associated with the nineteenth century prosperity, including the associated period style of architecture: Jugendstil. If the new exhibition center is the embodiment of the placeless "technological aesthetic," then the reliance on Jugendstil architecture is a *selective* return to the archetypal past. The criticism here is not about preserving a stock of historical buildings, but about promoting the City with the referential imagery of only one cycle in the City's development at the expense of the more complex urban composition.

Architecture of the "Neue Gruenderzeit".

Sibling Rivalry: Leipzig and Its Neighbor, Dresden

While Leipzig resorts to clichés and architectural icons to establish itself as a particular place in the world, so does its neighbor, Dresden. Leipzig has always had a necessary but uneasy relationship with its neighbor, Dresden, and continues to do so. Dresden, situated in a picturesque valley of rolling hills and the broad, sinuous Elbe River, was the historic seat of the Saxon Electors that were so uncomfortable with the independent-minded merchants of Leipzig. As the residence of the rulers — even kings at particular moments in history — Dresden became a city organized around hierarchically centered, Baroque architecture in the eighteenth century. This established Dresden as the "Residenzstadt" (the Residential City [of the King]) and also as the "Barockstadt" (the Baroque City).

Lacking a royal family, Leipzig never acquired such a spectacular architectural ensemble as Dresden. In addition, the flat landscape does not afford panoramic views of any kind of architecture. After eight centuries of competition between the sister cities, Leipzig is now waging the image battle with a significant handicap. Here we can see the shortcomings of the cliché and iconographic architecture approaches to generating the image of and identity with a city. It is necessary to get beyond the historical snap shots and to draw on the broader experience of the urban cultural landscape.

BEYOND THE ICONS: BUILDING THE LANDSCAPE MATRIX

The slogans and nicknames reflect an important part of Leipzig's history, its image, and associated identities. The featured architectural works, both the Messe and the Jugendstil buildings are representative components of the historical development of the city. But they are only partial representations. They were built in particular time cycles that are merely scenes in an epic drama set within a particular landscape. As most cities, Leipzig is much more complex than these images suggest. The local landscape network can be the matrix that holds the elements of the composition together. Understanding the natural ecology and the centuries of human interaction with the landscape of Leipzig can lead to a more complex, yet cohesive expression than the new Exhibition Hall, the Jugendstil buildings, or any other single periodic, architectural representations.

A study of the early landscape in which Leipzig is situated and the evolution of the human settlement that became the contemporary city of Leipzig suggests a conceptual framework for a unique urban landscape, at the confluence of several small rivers, flood plains, and perennial wetlands. It is situated in a broad, flat basin that was once covered with a dense deciduous forest. Remnants still stand in the remaining *Auwald* (Floodplain forest) in and around Leipzig. Before human settlement the present site of Leipzig was a relatively wet landscape of dense vegetation. Natural levies along the rivers provided dry, stable land for traversing the landscape and for settling. Two of Central Europe's primary trade routes followed the levies and crossed on an mound. On this mound a trading post and fishing village became a city. As German military and colonists pushed the border with Bohemia eastward to the Elbe River, Leipzig, relatively deep and protected in the Saxon hinterland, quickly developed a cosmopolitan atmosphere as a culture of merchants, bankers and craftsmen at an important European crossroads. Leipzig evolved as a commercial center, but also as an intellectual center, a center of fine arts and literature, and as a city of liberal thinking. It along with the exclusive privilege to hold trade fairs, Leipzig earned the privilege to have the first university in the region. The city spread first along the trade routes, and then filling in wherever the ground was dry. The Auwald remains today a distinctive feature of the densely built urban landscape. Today Leipzig is a finance, media and regional transportation center, no longer a village in the forest, but a city with a forest within it.

As one studies carefully the space of the present day city — informed by an understanding of the processes that generated those spaces — a concept of that landscape can be formulated. The city is a tight network of streets and buildings intertwined with a network of small rivers, canals and forests. The dense built areas contrast sharply with the dense green areas, both natural and human constructed. (See illustration.) The flatness,

slow moving water and density defy orientation and hierarchy. There are no panoramas. The essence of the city landscape is not revealed in sweeping vistas or directed distant views. One must find it by moving about the city to experience it at the tactile level. As a local planner reflected. Dresden is a city that one sees: but Leipzig is a city that must feel. A vision for the sensual landscape based on this concept could aid in the development of a varied, yet cohesive landscape matrix that joins the various images generated by urban nature and urban culture.

Implementing the Landscape Matrix

Of course, conceptualizing an urban landscape is one thing; but making it happen is something else. The concept that I described above and in more detail in another writing (Isaacs, in review) is a theoretical example to illustrate the possibility of the landscape matrix for any urban place. However, based on continuing observation of the planning process in Leipzig, there are indications of how such a concept can be made into reality. Landscape planning is much more common, even institutionalized in Germany than in North America. Unfortunately, the actual practice of landscape planning, especially at the regional level, is too technical, abstract, hierarchical and bureaucratic to be very effective at the sensual level. Yet, Leipzig and the neighboring communities have managed to find their own way by creating an approach to urban landscape planning that is a bit outside of the traditional German planning structure.

The approach is a coordinated effort at two levels. One level is the City of Leipzig. Every city in Germany is required to prepare a landscape plan. These tend to be rather technical in nature, more of a landscape inventory than a proposal for the future. The City of Leipzig added a conceptual vision to their landscape plan, which is proactive in guiding the planning, designing and managing of the city's public landscape. But, the landscape does not end at the city limits: and the landscape planning efforts of a city or community are diminished if they are not in sync with the efforts of neighboring communities. Consequently, Leipzig and its neighboring communities rely on the inter-governmental organization called the *Grüner Ring Leipzig* (Green Ring of Leipzig). The Green Ring does not prepare or implement specific project plans. Instead they assist and advise the local planning agencies with the intention of coordinating projects into a comprehensive and coherent regional network. At both levels there are compatible landscape concepts for public open space including parks, greenways, waterways, historic sites, ecology/technology stations, reclaimed brownfields, and more. While the concepts fall a bit short in terms of the sensual aspects of the landscape as I have called for, they go beyond the traditional idea of a connected park system. The concepts are holistic, encompassing historical preservation, ecological restoration and preservation, recreation, education and urban/regional aesthetics.

The story of Leipzig and its landscape is far from over, and never will be. So far there are indications of successful – if partial – implementation: but it is still early in a long process. As stated above, there are shortcomings within the concept – I don't think they give adequate attention to the sensual experience of the landscape of the city. But, we do find here a practical example of how an urban landscape matrix can be established, which brings cohesion to the complex urban environement. There are many players involved, with landscape architects and planners obviously among the most central ones. Architects who understand the landscape experience will also be important contributors, either directly involved in planning and designing components of the landscape network, or by the "fitting placement" of buildings within the matrix that the landscape network becomes.
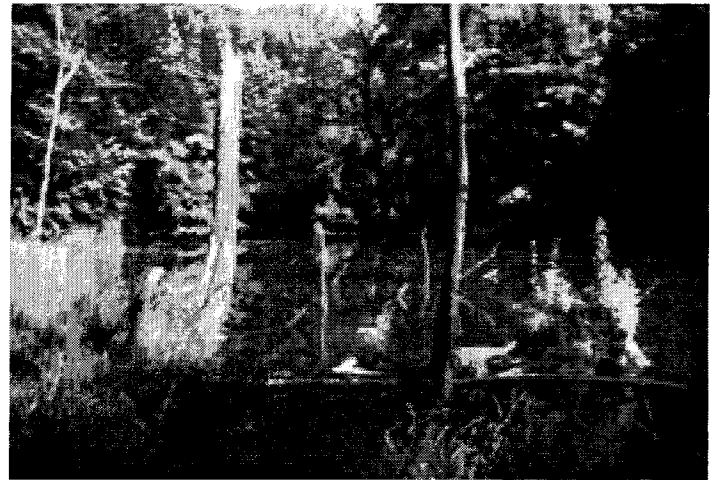
Riparian zone in Leipzig.

The task of fitting placement is made easier by the establishment of the landscape matrix. For architecture this is liberating. The burden of the image the city and identity with the city will appropriately distributed though out the space of the city, rather than limited to signature buildings or styles. Architecture will be free to respond to and to express contemporary concerns, while the landscape maintains the connections to the longer passage of time and to the larger geography of place. This liberation, however, does not relieve architects of responsibility to context. Inserting objects into the matrix required an understanding of that matrix. "Fitting placement" of buildings requires sensitivity to the urban landscape and the processes that generate it. The buildings, too, are part of the urban landscape, and consequently works of landscape architecture. As architecture becomes analogous to landscape architecture, architect becomes analogous to landscape architect. In this sense architects are called upon to think like landscape architects, or in other words to work "with a landscape attitude."

POSTSCRIPT

...with a Landscape Attitude: the Landscape Matrix in the design studio

Landscape and landscape architecture are special areas of interest among architects and architectural educators. Throughout the history of the practice of architecture there have been architects with and innate interest and sensitivity to landscape. In recent decades the interest in landscape architecture has grown stronger in the practice of architecture (Treib) and in architectural education. However, my proposal within this paper implies a need for a deeper understanding of both natural and human ecologies than is emphasized in contemporary architectural education. As an architect with multiple degrees and practice in landscape architecture, and teaching experience in landscape architecture programs. I was hired by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) in part to teach landscape architecture to architecture students. I was immediately impressed by the interest among the students in landscape architecture and natural ecology. I was also struck by their lack of knowledge and conceptual understanding of either. Their comprehension of landscape and ecology was analogous to the green roofs many proposed in their buildings: too thin to be effective!

"...with a Landscape Attitude" is the subtitle of the design studio I teach; it is also the goal of the course: that architecture students will learn to approach architecture and urban design with strong interest the sensual experience of the urban landscape and with an understanding of the natural and social processes that produce that landscape. In the Fall Semester, 2003, a brownfield in the valley floor near the confluence of three rivers and adjacent to downtown Milwaukee was selected as the case site. It served as a vehicle for exploring the aspects of urban cultural landscapes with the task of designing a portion of a city's landscape network. including urban design and architecture. Within our setting, Milwaukee – coincidently a city of deep German roots – are many parallels to Leipzig: shifting population to the greenfields, underutilized industrial landscapes, a new architectural masterpiece to put the city on the map, and so on. Learning from Leipzig and other relevant case studies, students developed their own proposals from master planning to detail design. Theoretical concepts were discussed in the process of analyzing the site and developing the proposals for this portion of the urban composition and the landscape matrix that binds it.

Being relatively new at UWM, I cannot yet judge the effectiveness of the studio course, which has been taught only once. However, interest among the students is high. Immediate observations of the first run of the course include:

- The instructor's expectations were too high. Coming into the course with a strong background in landscape architecture and urban design, I took many things for granted. Thought advanced in building design, students with no previous exposure to landscape concepts and histories and very little experience with urban design and planning were not prepared for my agenda. I had to adjust as improvise from day to day.

- Students were naïve in their expectations. To them, landscape architecture was a design exercise expressed with colored pencils, not a way of thinking. They had to adjust, as well.

- Students were not prepared to express landscape ideas and places graphically. Workshops were necessary.

- The pace was slow. Visions were slow to emerge; and designs were slow to develop. The pace picked up as the design became more concrete, and students had more "context" to respond to.

- Group work is absolutely essential to this work. Though generally despised by students, they accepted working in groups and made effective use of team-work.

- They did not go off on a building design tangent. The project called for schematic building design. I expected that once they got to this stage of design development, they would turn their attention to the buildings at the expense of the landscape network. As was prepared to redirect their attention; but that didn't become an issue.

- Despite my moments of doubt and impatience, the slow simmer yielded a rich flavor with a lot of depth. Generally speaking, the teams developed convincing master plans responding to the natural and social ecologies with detailed landscape spaces. Buildings supported the landscape space and structure. More importantly the students were able to discuss their proposals intelligently with professionals from various disciplines.

In an unexpected conclusion to a participating student's final project document was written: "The things I learned in this course are countless. First of all, I enjoy working with color and will no longer be afraid of it...most importantly, that there are no independent projects..." In a general concluding remark to the same class an invited critic commented: "All of the spaces mean something; they all add up to something bigger." These comments suggest that the students were beginning to work "...with a landscape attitude." There are remaining questions; and – as in Leipzig – the story is far from over. Only time will tell the impact and effectiveness of my landscape agenda. The courses will evolve in successive semesters, as the feedback loops complete and repeat the cycles. This will be a subject for future conference presentations and discussions.

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