

**PARK SYSTEM. A USEFUL TOOL FOR DESIGNING AND PLANNING
THE FUTURE FREE PUBLIC SPACE? QUALITIES ABOUT ITS
CONTINUITY IN TIME AND SPACE**

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Abstract

“Quality” of open space, What does it mean? In view of the possible renunciation of the municipalities to keep a coherent and inclusive public space “System”, and in view of the lack of understanding of their “users” toward it, its value, its necessity, its enjoyment, toward that quality, which means in some ways the loss of capacity to detect (good) urban “landscape”; and, however, simultaneously, in view of the persistent demand for “eco-cities”, rural country, “individualities”, “walks”..., We detect an old and at the same time revitalized tool that could work well as a structuring “principle” of the urban frame in its sense more material: the called Park-System (or the misunderstanding Green, or today, Green Structure, Green Strategy, or Environmental Infrastructure...), one “way of doing”, or at least “of understanding”, which can serve to “connect” us with our dear cities in time and in space.

Key words

Park - System, Urban Structure, Landscape – Urbanism



fig. 1. Fragment of the Olmsted Boston Park-System, below aerial photograph of 2008.

1. Introduction. Signs

Utilitarianism, consumerism, landscape as vision -even as frontal vision only-..., are aspects of the same reductionism in the “production” of space as human environment. Different voices say we are lacking of ideologies for creating coherent spaces, cultural landscapes with meaning, contemporary meanings... If we join it to current moment of crisis about the global System... Has it all failure with regard to our human-and-urban environment, with regard to our ways of producing or enjoying it? Have we also lost the capacity to be amazed with for example the Nature, the wilderness, the middle landscapes?

On the one hand there are some negative evidences for the generic public open space in our cities with regard to its quality, the capacity to esteem it, the inability or inefficiency about a comprehensive management..., ¡space crisis! But on the other hand some positives signs or at least requests exist too in the “popular urban thinking” that, in an inalienable way, have to do with public open space. Satiated petitions?: environmental preoccupations “or” eco-cities; open country “or” country life, individualities; valuation of landscape architecture design per se (biennials, magazines, fleeting events...), isolated “or” in its context...; demands of promenades, walks, *paseos*... (places and actions).

In this mixture, somehow following the thread of what today rises with strength as “Landscape Urbanism”, the “old” Park-System (or misunderstanding Green) can be defended, proposed as an instrument that cannot almost be waived

(unrenounceable) for undertaking the quality of public open space from both physical and social point of view, and in a global way, but at the same time very specifically, in our future cities. These cities will not be others but our present and past cities, and their futures, an urbanized territories that will have to incorporate in their ramifications, or even in their contractions, a “natural / man-made” space with meanings and functions, which means, with values.

2. Park-System. An “old” tool which can remain as useful as it was.

Throughout almost this last decade I have elaborated a doctoral (PhD) research under an apparently simple hypothesis: Understanding public open and “natural” spaces -or with capacity to be natural-, in the city, like pieces of a “system”, better than lungs, or beautiful sceneries, or standards..., can contribute to get stronger both themselves and their role in the urban lattice, a role which is biological, social and, definitively, urban –that helps to structure urban fabric-. The way I selected to include these spaces like “park-system”, and to verify that hypothesis, was a bit more complex: a historical review of some clearly “systemic” urban approaches, which ones contain too many histories in constant process. The system can be a way for understanding open spaces in the city, but it can be also an authentic project.

Of course in that historical support there were also multiple deviations: first in favour of the “Beauty” and the Plan –to produce some scenery, to contribute to one or another structure of mobility or/and of class-; then in favour of the “Plan” and the standard –more prevalence of another type of mobility structure per sé, sizes, percentages...-. Deviations could oscillate between something where you put too much focus and something that is not focus, or that blurs because it is taken out of focus. But always more or less residual space is left, that someone dares to look at and to change from back to form..., to discover new systems.

I’ve been immersed in the study of almost a hundred of western more or less “historical” city cases related with the park-system. Obviously together with the study of so many implicated actors, “builders of space” in diverse senses: architects, landscape architects, engineers, botanical scientists, planners, managers, “artists of wild”..., from mid of XIX century to now –and tomorrow-. And besides I’ve insisted on the study of the continuity of those same cases and some new others -consecutive appearance, diversification, ramification...-. This multiple background has allowed me to discover, recognize or confirm the timeless –and, at the same time, intrinsically attached to its spaces and times-preoccupation for fixing on the territory a “system” of natural/man-made references about public and natural open space, that can interweave town, town and country, town and nature, and all of those pieces with theirs inhabitants.

3. The Allied History. Figures and Cities.



Fig. 2. Olmsted Boston Park System

We can trail the park-system from Frederick Law Olmsted, Central Park/Prospect Park etc- New York (1850s), Emerald Necklace- Boston, to the revolutionary dealing of “urban-nature” by Ian McHarg (1960s-70s), and to which we can add a lot of diversity of contemporary bets. A useful evidences of that can be some quotations said by distinguished “urban” figures throughout these almost 200 years of modern cities –with parks-, inside different proposals, some of them failure projects. These aspirations reflect that the park system, specifically defined, has been a constant preoccupation in the history of urban planning since a century and a half ago. I will only mention some of them:

There would be hundreds of those quotations belonging to Frederick Law Olmsted, from those in which, without going beyond the park boundaries, he said: *‘It is a common error to regard a park as something to be produced complete in itself, as a picture to be painted on canvas. It should rather be planned as one to be done in fresco, with constant consideration of exterior objects, some of them quite at a distance and even existing as yet only in the imagination of the painter’* (Olmsted, 1870); to others that clearly defended a network, a chain, ...an emerald –green and blue- necklace, as a whole, a “multipurpose environment” (recreational, artistic, social, biological... ecological...). Olmsted changes a “Muddy” river and a “Back” Bay Fens into pieces of the probably best park-system in America, for Boston, between 1879 and 1890. Also other less known landscape architect contemporary to Olmsted, Horace W. Cleveland, , verified his hypotheses about the value of tree-lined, *parklike* linear connective spaces in cities, fixing his attention from North-America East Coast towns (New England) to Middle-East, climate and landscape clearly different (Chicago or the water-city, Minneapolis).

After this germinal and golden age, the “City Beautiful Movement” in America and other urban theories or ideologies in Europe, incorporated the original “principle” to their treaties or handbooks, sometimes more mechanized, other times more distorted, and other times authentic, genuine for one or another specific context or place. That is the reason why there always have been urban master figures throughout urban History of XX century that noticed its useful presence. The thread, sometimes weak, never was cut.

We can pick out for example in Patrick Geddes and in his “Cities in Evolution” (1915): from the sketch of an “olmstead” type park-system to the really suggestive paragraphs, from one as simple as “by leaves we live” to others specifically referred to the spatial form: *‘Towns must now cease to spread like expanding ink-stains and grease-spots: once in true development, they will repeat the star-like opening of the flower, with green leaves set in alternation with its golden rays’* (p. 97), and he said that we will avoid that these rays (major public ways) get together if we put between them, on rural unbuilt superficies, playgrounds, schools and empty lots¹. Of course *‘If the writer (Geddes) has learned anything from a life largely occupied with nature-study and with education, is that these two need to be brought together, and this through nature-activities (...) open air schools for the most part; and henceforth, as far as may be, situated upon the margins of these open spaces’* (pp. 97-99). But Geddes also –or perhaps above all- found natural places inside the heart of Old Historic City, *‘...Garden quadrangles should thus increasingly replace the present squalid labyrinth of wasted greens, cut up by innumerable ways... The present is the day of small things...’* (p. 107). Not in vain Geddes had sketched a park in system for a small Scottish town –Dunfermline-, full of Nature and Education; or he imagined the regeneration of Old Edinburgh starting from little backyard- gardens...

There are a lot of possible examples more for this side of Atlantic. The municipal architects in the Weimar Germany, Martin Wagner or Ernst May, with the landscape architect Migge, and his specific “Grünpolitik” of “Kommunale Kolonial-Park”, created their owns green-systems in Berlin, Frankfurt... Or one World War later, in the Report of Plan of London County (1943), P. Abercrombie asked for the “*Co-ordination of open spaces into a park-system*” – which is much nearest or further, more defined, that the usual Green Belt-. After proving the advantages of gathering several open spaces pieces of urban puzzle, which made possible double uses (playing fields for

¹ In the Spanish version of book (Ciudades en Evolución, 1960, ed. Infinito: Buenos Aires) the quotation is: (Si bien) *Las prolongaciones de las ciudades se extienden naturalmente como estrellas a lo largo de las principales vías públicas. Se puede impedir que se junten si se colocan escuelas, campos de juegos y parcelas vacías en las superficies rurales sin edificar que quedan entre ellas.*

adults with scholar sites, near new parks...), he sized up an explicit physical system from (...) *The existing open spaces within the County and beyond...*, which, he observed, were *already loosely grouped in the form of Wedges*' (p.38). Swedish architect Holger Blom, more than three decades chairman of Stockholm Park Department (1938-1971), had also his personal park program and one type of system for other water city, with references in American Olmsted and a bit of the contemporary New-Yorker manager Robert Moses.

Also, Le Corbusier took the system to India, Burle Marx "to" the exuberant Brazil, and make it unique... And coming back to "Olmstedian" America, the New Yorker urban and architectural critic among other things, Lewis Mumford, optimistic in his early writings on urban life (30s...), but quite disappointed regarding that later, went on to believe in "like-systems", in spite of everything. We can find in several of his texts statements so specific as extensive regarding to our tool: In the article "Landscape and Townscape", written in 1960, he said: *'In the cities of the future, ribbons of green must run through every quarter, forming a continuous web of garden and mall, widening at the edge of the city into protective green belts, so that landscape and garden will not be rural monopolies but will likewise be an integral part of urban no less than rural life, for both weekday and holiday uses'*. This writing is inside compilation article's book "The Highway and the City", 1964 (p. 303), and curiously the quote is in part said by G. Eckbo the same year in his book: "Urban Landscape Design". And it is still more curiously that, for example, some contemporary report about greenways², reproduces that (the quote) without identifying its true author. Or in one of his most famous book "The City in History" (1961), Mumford insists: *The small parks and neighborhood playgrounds linked by tree walks for pedestrians deserve the most extensive imitation in Philadelphia and other parts... This should not only give place to renovation inside of the city, but also to the maintenance of **green matrix** and to the transition from congestive conurbation of the past to the new urban and regional grille.*

Mumford deep down continues with the more generic and basic revolution of Ian McHarg of "Design with Nature" (1969). And the same happens with the still alive Lawrence Halprin, who is so present in proposals that today look really avant-garde, but whose creativity for many people was already making up a magnificent tandem with the "theory" of McHarg in the Seventies³. His RSVP

² For example I've found quoted that in the interesting research paper: "Green Space and Growth: Conserving Natural Areas in B.C. Communities", by Calvin Sandborn for Commission on Resources and Environment Wildlife Habitat Canada, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 1996. (p. 53). Here it's referred Patrick Noonan (The Conservation Fund) as who said that (obviously again).

³ For example see Rogers, E. B. (2001), *Landscape design: a Cultural land Architectural History*. Ed. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, pp. 483-486.

cycles and eco-cycles are project-processes with Nature –biological and social nature-, and they can also be applied specifically to “park-system”: In “New York, New York”, a report with several proposals for the City of New York open space, in 1968, under the section heading “**Open Space Network**”, we can read: *‘The existing open spaces in New York City are ranged into a network of types, clearly expressed and orderly in pattern. The network is outward oriented and inward oriented. Starting from the street and the house, the system moves outward to avenue, to neighbourhood plaza, vest pocket park, neighbourhood park, and the area-wide waterfronts and major recreational parks. Inwardly, it progresses from street to entrance to interior malls and courts, playgrounds and roof decks. The division is not arbitrary. It reflects a sequence which links the private to the public domain, the personal to the community. It thus shapes all aspects of the city. This sequence should be emphasized and enlarged upon. It should be reinforced. It should not be blurred’.*

Also their contemporary and compatriot William H. Whyte, sociologist and people and landscape watcher, has clear references in defense of the park-system. In view of the amorphous open space drawn in second third of XX century plans he said in his book “Last Landscape”, 1968: *‘By linking open spaces... we can achieve a whole that is better than the sum of the parts’* (and added: But its important to remember that the parts come first. Each has to be functional in its own right).

We could continue with more and more past quotes. Has it all been said? Obviously I don’t think so, but there are a lot of things said, and a lot of forgotten about park-system, a lot of vain attempts, together with a lot of experiments specifically related with one place and one era. All of that can give us renovated signs and traces for our own systems, or for some of the existing systems, enlarged, and with up-date languages, sciences etc). I read recently *‘The greenway story is the story of a remarkable citizen-led movement to get us out of our cars and into the landscape –on paths and trails through corridors of green that can link city to country and people to nature...’* (Little, 1992)⁴

4. A few references for some contemporary cases.

New last decades proposals could be incorporated to one or another “system” – to one that exists already, to new one, or to belong to existed or new type-: The New Yorker High Line, the Parisian *Promenade Plantée*, the cover of the Bostonian Big Dig by a succession of trade designs conforming the Rose

⁴ Little, C. (1992), in “City of Vancouver urban landscape task force, Greenways: Public Ways”, Vancouver, 1992, p.49

Kennedy Greenway...; or the generous attempt of recovery and integration of West Philadelphia water system by the landscape professor A. Whiston Spirn with her university pupils and the applied local students, beyond but in true line with Penn squares. But also general, global and extensive studies or plans count on the park-system as leitmotiv of their approaches: for example, the London *Green Strategy* since 90s, a research European Union program (*COST Action C11*, elaborated between 2000 and 2005) called “Green Structure and Urban Planning”; or the ambitious “*Sistema Ambientale*” and “*Rete ecologica*” belong to the last *Piano Regolatore Romano* (from 2000); or the launch of “*Seattle Open Space 2025-2100*”, by the city of Seattle, with direct participation of State University, (perhaps this was the most ambitious I’ve found:) ja “*Living Lattice*” for the city of **XXII** century!...⁵

There could be hundreds of worldwide contemporary cases for the analysis, in every part of a global urbanized world, but precisely due to the application of this tool under “logic” parameters (they must be without remedy or renounce native in order that come to fruition) it can be emphasized its rich, and necessary for life, diversity: From America, the continued and bottom-up/ top-down work of landscape architect and professor A. Whiston Spirn⁶. Or the Works of other much more mass-media desingers, but rooted in the same “Olmstead” past and in every case defenders/supporters/advocates of a tradition and a “walked” space: J. Corner/ Field Operations with its High Line, Hargreaves team, etc. And also here, in the old Europe, we can continue to find renovated bets: The Italian architect and urban planner Vittoria Calzolari, whose philosophy is implicit around the basic guides for last *Piano Regolatore Romano* (2000...) and its “*Rete ecologica*” (Ecological Web); the English landscape architect John Hopkins, who participates in the extensive program for the London Thames Gateway –at the same time belonged to another more global for the London Thames Basin, possibly one of the Abercrombie’s urban London dreams-. In some Hopkins speech I could listen how he related specifically principles for his contemporary work with compatriot and foreign past masters of landscape, of park-system landscape, because they began to check out design relations urban-nature, “rus-urbe”, in the XIX century, from English Loudon to American Olmsted.

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⁵ See for example www.open2100.org, or the document www.smartgrowthonlineaudio.org/np2008/213-c.pdf (February 2007)

⁶ Her goal was ‘to explore how to combine a comprehensive, top-down approach with a grassroots, bottom-up approach to urban planning and design’, organized around “urban Watersheds”. In this way learning, community development, and water resources management could be integrated. There are a lot of information about the process in both webs: <http://web.mit.edu/spirn/www/> and <http://web.mit.edu/wplp/index.html>

The greatest importance of the Emerald Necklace ‘... lies in its influence on the design of park systems for other cities ...’ (Garvin, 1995). And Hopkins defines his proposal for the Thames Gateway as ‘a radical vision which places: Landscape at the heart of the development process; and Environmental process at the heart of sustainable development and the economy. He actualizes the park-system as an “Environmental Infrastructure”. We have other titles, Green Structure etc Perhaps Hopkins terms are more efficient to remember us that we are in the age or stage of “Design with Nature” and to understand Landscape as systems, as processes not only as a product. As he insists, with European Landscape Directive: *The greatest opportunity this generation has is to take the individual urban, suburban and rural landscape legacies and fragments, and join them together in a vast 'working landscape' that meets social, economic and environmental imperatives. In doing so we would create our own legacy of connected, fully functioning environmental systems on a scale that has never been seen before*’ (Hopkins, 2006).

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The Spanish architect and landscape architect E. Batlle (from Catalunya), has reflected several years about all of these themes, both in global and local projects, own and foreign. With his own works he insists on the park-system idea, on thinking beyond the park, or court limits: For example, there had been more global proposals for a green-corridor between the towns of Sant Boi and Viladecans (Barcelona) that didn't come true due to different conflicts regarding to the location of already approval industrial sectors etc. However, when Viladecans city council discusses a similar approach, and they focused on one resource apparently of much lesser degree/extent, the “riera” (seasonal water course), but which runs through half of the municipality, it's achieved that ‘a much more detailed urbanism and landscape work sets/fix the possibility of transforming this small thread... in the most important geographic fact in the area, capable of leading the most ambitious municipal planning and of obtaining the enough strength for becoming the urban open space system that the city was looking for’ (Batlle, 2007). And recently, Batlle optimistic said: ‘The municipal boost for recovering the riera of Sant Climent is turned to a frame plan which guides all the interventions to xxx along its course’. The park is designed from the logic of the rieras's natural systems and it's achieved to draw a park-system which flows along the city. *This park makes the most of all the spaces which it finds, and for that it turns into the green junction between the mountain and the sea...* Neither the global approach nor the partial plans have imagined these options ‘The result is a sign/sample of capacity that these ideas have to transform (the environment, the plans...) keeping all the rest of urbanistic parameters’ (Batlle, 2008). He even speaks about the system as “personal attitude” (Batlle, 2000).

In these and other up-to-date plans is very evident that the system is pluralized. They all don't speak only about maintaining a container, a channel "riverbed", even though these were green plans, or linear plans, like the –urban- river master plans: Portland and its rivers; Seattle, its sounds...; Denver, its mountain...; Roma, its history...; Berlin; London... But the net comes back to appear over and over again, as an illusion, as a useful guide... and "we" have a lot to do in its good design.

figure 3. Some sketches of different park-systems in history.



5. Searching a park-system with future from one small lot of a necessarily inter-disciplinary principle.

Today the park-system is as alive as it was in its golden age, in the urban practice and in the theory. That small sample of cases has already shown the interest about that, and we can look at almost every new argument in favour of urban open space with "systemic" eyes: Reviewing some articles of the past edition of this forum I found, for example, one entitled "*The Continuum of the Landscape: Promoting a Livable Network Strategy*", by G. McDonald. A priori that suggests an understanding much more comprehensive for the "problem" of the nature and open spaces in the urban medium than "my" simple park-system. However, reading his developed paper, I found statements that refer to one or another system, to a specific net, etc: 'A *redefinition of space through a reconnection of the built and natural landscape can create a network of flowing and responsive spaces that can assist in creating an understanding of the*

current sprawl type patterns and enhance the overall quality of life' (McDonald, 2004). Besides, before having my paper completed, I've realized that in other communications, in other tracks, in other sessions of present conference edition, there are too suggestive titles about green open space. Then, why do I want to introduce the park-system here, in the ambiguous field of urbanism arriving from the architecture, that which deals with the urban space form? (Track 5: "Architecture, design and planning of the public realm") Because here we try to defend also this tool as a material container, and other thing which is still more important: because, the system must be a true public realm, as I'll try to define a bit later.

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In other recent article called *Retrofitting the City: Reclaiming Liminal Territories as Public Space* (Crosby, 2007), his author said that he was 'interested in that term "Liminal", mediator instead of barrier, frontier, divider, "median strip". Can we learn to "create" this type of places?' A lot of these locations only need to be understanding in system, in net. As I said at the beginning of section 2., deep down there was always someone in our modern-contemporary cities who dared to look at residual space, from the dump and quarry which was the Parisian park Buttes Chamount, to the mud of Bostonian Muddy River and Fens, even above and below urban highways (Freeway park...), for trying to change its role in the urban system. We have to consider that not everything works, but if, like Olmsted said, look at beyond the limits, there will be more possibilities. It's enough to put together some seen approaches for realizing that we count on a few guidelines for beginning to act: - cooperation, multidisciplinary, bottom-up and top-down work; - principle of accessibility to the natural open space; -need of landscapes of experience –as Halprin defended-; -need to preserve, restore, enhance or even to create, the natural resources...

Previous McDonald quotation (2004) spoke about creating a net for understanding that chaotic urban sprawl, here I set out, a priori, the utility of understanding and then thinking the whole of natural open spaces "like a system" (or if you prefer, "like a net", without going further in the systems theories, to some degree, belonging to other context than this concept of the park-system, which is previous to that) for acting and improving them, looking for more and more links. But even he, a priori, gives more strength to a material net than me. Verification of my hypothesis (historic but not only, regarding to its conscious or unconscious application along history in the modern city and in the "urban sciences") confirms the validity of both versions. Taking words of already quoted L. Halprin, (he used these for his RSVP cycles), we could say

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that the park-system can become *a medium*, or *for permitting*, or encompassing *the creative process*, both human and natural processes.

A park-system for tomorrow will have to approach to define and compose with its pieces:

- A public, and of public use, spatial structure, we could take into consideration different ranges of “publicity”, private or community spaces, places that add, “sum” in the “green land registry”. However, it is much more difficult that we can regulate their permanence, because of that, in any case I advocate the approach to one or another type of public structure;
- if it is possible, with an elevated degree of “connectivity” –because the nature “works” in net, and because for a lot of time the human being uses the park as “Promenade” “Walk” “Paseo” “Passeio”..., the sauntering, or wander about outside or inside oneself...; and because the net increases the access capacity...-;
- A net where the presence of the natural component –most of all alive- would be principal, instead of bus, cycle and of course automobile lanes, sportive “tracks”, kiosks, billboards or fences...; and besides, they will be places where the nature it’s permitted to work, and where people are able to enjoy, in active or passively implication, in big or small groups, or alone (as Olmsted would say, there could be two types of social interaction: gregarious or neighbourly);
- and, of course, on the middle of urban fabric, where people live.

It can be a simplification to try to introduce in simple veins, in a circulatory, respiratory etc system, diverse landscapes, that is, to try to put there the natural and human complexity, which elaborate, among other things, the open space –transformed in places-. But that “principle” can also be a beginning, a way of looking at, and ordering the urban collage, a score or guideline of action for aspiring to the utopia of the planetary garden, without moving on the amorphous green and on the dissolve and at the same time rigid functionalism. In a sense the park system gets visible the Landscape, the society’s capacity to appreciate it. In global and in crisis today’s world, why could not the park-system be a good allied in farming functions and of course social, spatial, ecological... urban uses?

I think we can defend the CONTAINER –or hub, well placed and located, well ranked, with capacity to be reproduced and diversified...-, since I was going to confirm: –its permanence along the History; -and its stay in the cities. This stay, if it’s real, should also be enlargement and ramification, together with the city in which roots. Sybrand Tjallingii –outstanding authority in environmental planning, Dutch author of Ecopolis- summarizes in the COST C-11 Program: *The story of cities and nature is both a love-story and a battle and in both, green*

structure may be a useful concept. Structuring the scattered archipelago of green areas means joining forces in a battle to defend vulnerable green spaces against increased pressure from busy traffic, construction works and other dynamic urban activities. But green structure may also describe a policy to create conditions for the love-story between urban citizens and their parks and playgrounds. Both the rich and poor benefit from the presence of a green network, a green structure that links small gardens and neighbourhood greens to the green fingers and green belts of the urban landscape. Moreover, bringing landscape to the heart of the city, green structure planning strengthens the attractive green image of the city and creates a link with the identity of the historic landscape in which the city has developed (Tjallingii, 2005).

We can -or better “should” or “must”- look at past stories (or History), besides present or only drawn, imagined stories; big and small stories; from the most avant-garde and select design to the cooperative interaction on minimum standards, in order to learn about one mechanism of design and understanding and management, which can remain relatively apart from fashions and modes, crisis, seasons, or different urban orders; and which can get over adverse ideologies to that “Utopia”, that aspirated city, that more “sustainable”. The “Urban Nature” needs History and shared work. The multidisciplinary is inalienable, the History itself is a witness. Due to this necessary cross-cutting, I do not try to snatch fragments of depth from disciplines in which I am an intruder.

I tried to weigh the system validity in three stages: as a “principle”, as a “landscape urbanism” tool, and as a reality that designs for the future. The analyzed cases assume the historic moments, but what I tried, above all, was to value how the system remains and how it can get complex together with the city from which this put down roots and grow, and how it can survive to modes and fashions. From the seed or the germ (virus) to the rigorous and rigid order, to the abstract green to the grey, for ending juxtaposed, or better, integrated and recycled in the urban complexity, and with the possibility to go on incorporating to that complexity more of “our” “principle”, more system, more brunches, seeds...

6. Some Conclusions

Inside this urbanized/ built-up territory, how far away is the country, where and how is it like? We can contribute to do at least “landscapes of natural experience” (as L. Halprin would say), natural... and urban experience in this sum of courses (“beds”). If we incorporate these nerves –or better anti-nerves-

the pieces of the system, to the vital structure of the cities, we will probably humanize it, save it!

Establishing a net is a matter of priorities, and much many factors take part in the selection of these priorities, about demand, cultural, historic, objectively possible factors... However, this or that priority is just a punctual decision, an inspired moment of creation. A project of Park system and Green corridors for a city, for a metropolis or for the influential environment of an urban area – middle or big- is not more than that, a priority..., also today.

A true, powerful and efficient park system, regarding to the Nature and Society, it's made for both its Nature and its "Architecture", its civic environment, its integrative and comprehensive capacity.



figures 4 y 5. Two nearby images:

Valladolid, the river...way, a hypothetical park-way (Salamanca Avenue), and a paved central street in a rainy day.

Salamanca, two small "plazas" in the historic (or "Old") city and two hypothetical green ribbons in a outlying neighbourhood



Most of all I think that, with this renovated tool, we count with an effective pattern. And we have a few stories with which we can deal with new landscapes, and Places of Nature in the City.

A physical –public- system fixed in advance –better if fixed “well”, however, with the possibility of reinventing itself and adapting to the changing situations- can be an allied faced with management problems. And even if it was well-balanced, and kept/supported around all urban territory, it could be a well tool for problems of land values. I could almost predict for it, or at least for its dorsal

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spine, as if it was another type of TOD (transit oriented development, but a “walk transit”), a greater human density on its edges, although it can shelter inside wild, well protected, hearts (of course here we cannot waived to the scientific valuation of contents, their values and debilities. At the same time this physical system could fullfill the demand of –urban- pedestrians and cyclists, the urgency of the sport, or that of **‘resting our sight while we put it on the vegetation, sky, or horizon’** (Soria y Puig, 2001) . Or, like W.H. Whyte said in his “Last Landscape”, it is not the same the open space and the effect of open space, and with a real park-system in net, we can catch at least the second one.

L. Mumford defined the unshakeable utility of open spaces with so much simplicity as perfection, in their functions: biological and social (a good double criteria for weighting up their validity). This pair has been unbalanced in different ways in different territories, for example, perhaps here we have got more problems for doing identifiable and necessary the first face, in other contexts there are hardly signs, or simple imitations of a real social life. Today voices are back that looking at both faces with a latent park-system in the middle, to say that only in nature there are true possibilities for maintaining a public realm. **We can better argue the strength of such pieces if we attempt that the continuities exist/happen, biological and social continuities.** Between the ecological corridor and the green way there are room for the future urban thing. Of course, the container is not infallible, history itself has shown us almost all signs of that: What fits in the system, or what does the system hold? I think there are a lot of more advantages than objections for proposing, setting out that, because, as I have already said, the nature works in net, and the human being – and much more, urban being- uses from old time the walk as a place and as an action, from where to be able to recompose his spirit..., transforming himself and not to be a simple spectator or consumer....

Thoreau already said that all of us walk or want to walk⁷, and that when we walk, we naturally go to the fields and woods...⁸

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⁷ ‘We have felt that we almost alone hereabouts practised this noble art; though, to tell the truth, at least, if their own assertions are to be received, most of my townsmen would fain walk sometimes, as I do, but they cannot...’
Thoreau, H. David, 1862, *Walking*, 5° paragraph.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 13° paragraph

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