

Annalisa Metta
Maria Livia Olivetti

**Wild &
The City.
Landscape
Archi-
tecture
for Lush
Urbanism**

L I B R I A

L&SCAPE series

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L&SCAPE is an international series that investigates the landscape according to elements and phenomena that characterize its transformation and the dimension of process rather than product. This series emphasizes the inclusive attitude of the 'AND' present in the word and the concept of 'LANDSCAPE', looking at what is conceptually added to it. L&SCAPE seeks not only landscape as design, as a strategy of intervention aimed to quality, but landscape as a sharing phenomenon, in the distinct forms of inhabiting it: dimensions, conditions, modalities, and outcomes made to interact with the strong changes taking place in the cities and in our territories. These changes ask for design responses with a greater complexity, with culturally transversal and multidisciplinary implications. L&SCAPE is a collection of books which are all critical investigations, moving on the conceptual limits of the field to offer outwards points of view and perspectives, within a social dimension of living from which new expressive values emerge.

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Ordinary

Daniela Colafranceschi

Culture and nature are complex concepts, especially when related to one another. Culture is not only an opposing and dominating force with regards to nature. When culture and nature meet, landscape 'emerges'. In many cities the Wild plays a very important role, but only minimally from a social and cultural perspective, within the general urban landscape. These wild areas can make absolutely clear and evident the potential that they have in store for the future development of our cities and territories. The Wild can develop and realize a close dialogue between natural landscape and local urban society if we are able to work in the wildness, with the wildness and learn from the wildness, making this way of designing not just an attitude, but an ethic. It implies the conquest of 'Wild landscapes' like 'Ordinary landscapes'. The European Landscape Convention expresses well the need to think about the landscape not in reference to single valuable parts of the territory, but to the entire territory and its resources, as a result of the centuries-old influence of the cultures that have followed and stratified there. This new instance brings with it two fundamental consequences. The first is that it therefore allows us to understand, extend and ideologically overturn a concept of 'landscape of quality' towards the idea of 'quality of the landscape': evidently quality of the whole landscape, as a product, image written on the soil of a society and of different cultures. The second is that it identifies in the landscape an area that in itself is not homogeneous, but a mixed, complex, hybrid entity; it is an open system, for which there are no boundaries, limits, borders and where an inside is not distinguished from an outside. So it evolves a concept of a special and 'beautiful' landscape into that of everyday, normal and just 'ordinary'. The Landscapes become ordinary landscapes when they are receptive and inclusive of our everyday life, of a habit of living and inhabiting them. It has been a long time since we have dealt with the landscape as a concept, as design, as a cultural setting that moves on ridge terrains, placed at the edges of a dimension that assumes in terms of scale – physical and conceptual – progressively more difficult meanings to interpret and understand. A disciplinary field – as wide and transversal as ever – which implies values and urgencies that are by now inescapable, where architecture, urbanism, geography, anthropology, agriculture, nature, environment and politics converge, in agreement with the polysemy value of our cultural realities. A change that has evolved the concept of landscape over the last few decades, operating an ideological reversal – in the forms and in the thought of its transcultural dimension – by offering us a new point of view, which helps us to interpret precisely from the landscape, from the logic of

the landscape, the contemporary phenomenon, the cultural values that inhabit our territories, our urban, geographical and social realities. Here the Wild goes from an exceptional value to that of possible meaning for our cities, precisely because of the passage of the ordinary value from ethical to aesthetic. The ordinary offers writings that tell other types of cartographies, immaterial and un-representable such as relationship spaces, the forms of existence, the many realities of the urban phenomenon, the appropriation of a collective imagery. To include and welcome the Wild as an 'ordinary' is the idea of finding in the anonymous and banal, in the silence of the unknown, in the abandonment, our usual condition, a relationship of complicity, of adhesion, of understanding of that 'beauty' that we do not know how to recognize. A non-canonical beauty, but loaded with other meanings that touch the deep chords of our soul of a fascination, of a poetic, as attraction and involvement; a kind of beauty – even this ordinary – sought in the clues and found in the interstices of our landscapes. Talking about the Wild in relation to the ordinary means exploring a condition of the real within spaces of transition, of suspension; it means building a new semantic model that overturns the meaning of this suspension and makes it a storytelling tool. The narration of stories in the urban or peri-urban ordinary, where the condition of the wild opens, selects and contains within itself many other micro tales of realities of life, habits, events and situations.

Place

Daniela Colafranceschi

Cities shape people whilst people shape cities. With the urbanization new patterns also emerged for disposing of space, where many areas are abandoned, marginalized and left to their fate. Urban space does not just 'exist'; it's produced, reproduced, and shaped in people's actions. It's very interesting analyzing the interactions between people and environments, namely those of 'place' and 'space', where 'place' is more referred to home, to safety, to 'daily life' and 'space' represents the unknown, the adventurous, and the wild. So our ability should be to reshape the urban environment, designing wild areas, and transforming them from spaces to places, so as to convert the 'wild space' in 'wild place' as ordinary landscapes. Thus, attention and our sensitivities move from an objective, defined and definable scientific knowledge, made up of measures and technicalities, towards completely intangible characters such as emotional, relational, collective, identifying ones, to understand the landscape in its complexity of 'system'. A more humanistic than scientific attitude, to better interpret the 'city' phenomenon or the public and cultural quality of the territories we inhabit. Streets, parks, gardens, squares, characterize the public places of the city, those where life is shared: the collective spaces, once defined as 'external'. The dualism of the built volumes as opposed to the open spaces has, in an equivocal way, identified and weighed in the urban fabric the 'full' and the 'empty'. What is more, this is emphasized in the wild areas: the woods, the ravines, the abandoned areas, the uncultivated fringes, mistakenly defined as empty, if not neglected or rejected. And yet it is precisely these 'empty spaces' that give meaning to the 'full' ones, because these empty spaces are instead full of meaning, of potential, precisely because it is there, in the public, common and collective areas, that the citizens inhabit and substantiate their identity of belonging. The public space is therefore not the 'negative' space of the buildings but the 'positive' space of the city. It is the existential space that tells the thousand stories and the thousand feelings that accompany our lives: every street, every square, every garden, every corner of our cities is densely imbued with it. They are emotional spaces of our existence: it is for this reason that they are places. Its cultural sphere, capable of better including those anthropological, philosophical and social characteristics that imbue the condition of contemporary landscape; values, qualities and feelings capable of welcoming, by extension, the meaning of a scale that is more and more open and complex and records the intangible and immaterial characters that feed and substantiate the collective forms of living in it. This reflection focuses on the need to return to speaking of a 'collective', of 'common', of 'sharing' as expressive values of a

social dimension of living, which is so interesting in design thinking; to return to putting at the center states of mind, perceptions, ways of relating and becoming attached to space, practices in participating in it; return to making people ('people' and less 'individuals') as the real protagonists. It is an invitation to look at the project of public space according to the value of a transversal and cross-cultural thought that is now more urgent than ever. It's an aesthetic and ethical thought at the same time; a truly democratic thought, representative of the life that takes place there and of which the place is imbued. Anthropology, philosophy, social issues, merge with the most reassuring field of architectural composition and urban planning, to feed a concept, an awareness, a careful projection towards a more conscious and complex landscape project that addresses the reasons for an intervention strategy towards those social and collective phenomena that, although intangible, determine its quality and success. It is an aspect that is far from simple to investigate: levels of identity and appropriation; perceptive and dynamic relationships; flexibility and plurality of functions; trajectories and times that articulate ways of living and living in cities, when from 'public', urban areas become collective, domestic, shared, daily, when from 'spaces' they become 'places'. Because a place is never an ordinary place.