

Preface

I met Raquel Tardin in the beginning of 2004 in Barcelona at a bookstore café called Laie, a nice place where the aroma of coffee wafts through the bookshelves and tables of magazines and newspapers. The Landscape Observatory of Catalonia was being constructed at that time, and Raquel was interested in the functions and composition of this institution, which would open its doors in a few months. For my part, I wanted to know in more depth the content of the research that she was conducting and what was spoken of so well. I clearly remember that first meeting and all that followed because the exchange of information and points of view were so plentiful.

Raquel is an excellent professional who has as a virtue her strong belief in trans-disciplinarity (which is unfortunately not very common), which allows her to integrate ideas, concepts, and derived perspectives of other areas of knowledge with incredible ease, and it can only be attained with an open and curious mind like hers.

The research that Raquel was undertaking at the time of our first meeting later became the material of an excellent Ph.D. thesis completed at the Technical School of Architecture of Barcelona in April 2005. This thesis, which I had the privilege of reading and evaluating with the highest grade as a member of the examining board, is what the reader has in their hands today in the form of a book. Although there are several reasons why this work has interested me from the moment I first read it, I believe its greatest contribution is that it gives open space a title role in spatial planning and urban intervention.

Raquel proposed “reading” open spaces in a unique way to understand them as a system and as active agents of spatial planning, distinct from simple mute spectators that are passive and isolated in their expectation of protection or occupation. I believe that this is a perspective that is not just suggestive but also necessary, one that can give excellent results both for Rio de Janeiro, which the author examined in a case study, and many other territories. The author is also conscious of this aspect of her work and proposes a method that can easily be extrapolated and applied to other cases. In considering open spaces to play the role of the protagonist, they need to be well understood and defined to allow for concrete project strategies for the planning of their spatial system and the restructuring of the territory. Hence, the author presents an exhaustive list of attributes and indicators and describes their

relevance to fundamental aspects of the system of open spaces and its planning, such as urban, biophysical, visual, and social functions.

The perspective advocated by Raquel further interests me because it coincides with what we are carrying out at the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia, namely, landscape catalogs,¹ although they are obviously on another scale and more directed toward political interventions than physical interventions in the landscape. In coming to understand the current work, I could not avoid drawing a comparison between our approach and that proposed by the author. I found myself pleasantly surprised that, disregarding the differences in scales and objectives, there were many points of contact: the integral vision of landscape, the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach, and, above all, the handling reserved for open spaces.

Additionally, these areas are considered priority agents in spatial planning. According to the European Landscape Convention, “Landscapes are an important element in the quality of life of populations, urban and rural areas, degraded and high quality territories, as well as special and everyday spaces.”

I sincerely believe that contributions such as the work in this book are fundamental to extending and spreading *a new culture in spatial planning and urban project design* and the careful management of natural resources based on innovative management of land that cannot be urbanized and of the landscape as a whole, and such contributions present a new method of territory administration and management based on dialogue and social participation. In this new desired context, open spaces—and landscapes—will play a key role in policies of spatial planning and in proposals of urban projects, and they will be included in specific policies whether urban, environmental, social, cultural, or economic.

Barcelona, Spain

Joan Nogué

¹ The landscape catalogs are documents of a technical nature that the Catalan laws for the protection, management, and planning of landscapes consider as tools in the planning and management of landscapes from the perspective of spatial and sectorial planning. The catalogs determine the types of landscapes of Catalonia, their values and conservation status, the goals of quality that must be met, and measures for achieving these. They are therefore extremely useful for implementing landscape policy, with the complicity and active participation of all social agents that take part in the territorial interventions through intensive public participation.

System of Open Spaces

Concrete Project Strategies for Urban Territories

Tardin, R.

2013, XV, 216 p. 113 illus., 108 illus. in color.,

ISBN: 978-1-4614-4352-0