

The New Agenda

The landscape architect's field of activity is at present undergoing a redefinition, and with a much more comprehensive agenda than before.

Not only has the spectrum of assignments been broadened, but the very role of the landscape architect has been supplied with a new kind of autonomy.

Today, the landscape architect is also 'the green urban planner' whose job it is to cement and visualise the broken, inherent urban environments of industrialism, still favoured by urban planners and 'ordinary architects'. Or, to quote from the book: 'The landscape architect is no longer just an extension of the architect or the comforter who softens the edges of the architectural concrete deserts.

Landscape architecture has 'as it will appear from the chapters of this book' taken up the role as creator of urban landscapes, a separate position which overlaps or liaises between conventional planning and architecture's still incompatible buildings. To put it polemically, the harder it seems to be for architects, clients and other decision-makers to create coherence and harmony, the greater demand there will be for landscape architects and the services they provide. Even in the eye of the political decision-makers, the active processing of urban space is now considered a constituent part of the good urban life. And so landscape architecture becomes a powerful parameter in the intercity competition to attract activity and labour, seeing that landmarks à la Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao rarely turn out to have the branding effect the politicians were hoping for. A much deeper recognition of the cities' multifunctionality is called for in an age which has been labelled anything from information to experience society, but in any case: post-industrial society, although it still suffers from a force of habit. The new model is often called 'multi-string planning' or 'cultural planning'. Its aim is on one hand to promote diversity and more options for the inhabitants of the city, and on the other to create beautiful and diverse urban spaces. Urban life is now perceived as a flow, as something varied and fluid, a dynamic and intervening function which forms part of the new landscaping agenda. The object is the very remodelling of the mechanical era's rigid, zone-planned, industrialised cities, which are being transformed into active, eventful urban spaces, with a variety of options for

physical activity, which go hand in hand with spaces for peaceful contemplation, but now no longer confined to the romantic enclaves envisioned by the Danish landscape architect G.N. Brandt. In this way, landscape architecture becomes not just the putty that cements the city but a dynamic protagonist who, in addition to passive beauty and nature consumption, offers to actively intervene with the lifestyle and function of the city, supplying a reinterpretation of urban life of which we are only just discerning the outlines. This is often developed in cross-disciplinary collaborations with architects, anthropologists, philosophers, doctors and other professions. The innovative liaisons are emissaries of a new role for the landscape architect, who ó with the growing ecological awareness ó is about to become the central player who deals with urban life and space in a positive and dynamic way.ö

The book suggests a definition of this paradigm shift ó and here the landscape architect is at the forefront. In an era which calls for green planning, the landscape architect figures as the only player with a long experience of working with the green element, with balancing the elements of the city and the countryside.

The case studies, which cover a period of five years from 2003-2008, are selected from more than a hundred submitted projects, which have all been implemented. The selection was made by the landscape architects Knud W.Ø. Larsen, Peter Raaschou-Nielsen, Ib Asger Olsen, Kirsten Lund Andersen, Thorbjørn Andersson and Annemarie Lund, who was also the editor of the publication. Their hope is that the book, rather than a one-off thing, will serve as the first step of a recurrent stocktaking of a field which, in spite of the recession, seems to have the megatrend on its side.

The book reflects a very high standard in Danish landscape architecture, so high that it is bound to attract international attention.

It was published by the new company BOGVÆRKET, which was initiated by two old hands in the business, Kristian Berg Nielsen, who for many years was the head of the Aarhus School of Architecture, and Kim Dirckinck-Holmfeld, who for 24 years was editor-in-chief of the journals Arkitekten and Arkitektur DK, and head of The Danish Architectural Press.