Landscape Journal

DESIGN, PLANNING, AND MANAGEMENT OF THE LAND

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Front cover
Dessau Landschaftszug Diagram(Courtesy of StationC23). Figure 11 in **From Planned Shrinkage to Formerly Urban Staking: Landscape Architecture's Claim in the Shrinking City Debate** by Jill Desimini.

From Planned Shrinkage to Formerly Urban
Staking Landscape Architecture's Claim in the Shrinking City Debate

Jill Desimini

ABSTRACT The perspective of the landscape architect is often missing from scholarly literature and media accounts that address the conditions of the shrinking city. This absence stems from both an alternative, cyclical reading of the urban condition within the discipline and a failure to develop theory and practice specific to different political, economic, and demographic situations. Landscape architects, through their process-based understanding of development, offer an important lens on the phenomenon. They recognize value in the abundant, cleared land; are comfortable with the slow process of its transformation; understand land management and maintenance as tools of design; and routinely operate across the multiple scales, from parcel to region, required for visionary restructuring. Here, I put forth the argument, through an expanded literature and project review, that there is an essential role for landscape architects in shaping the future of the shrinking city.

KEYWORDS Shrinking city, de-densification, urban wilds, land management, landscape architecture

INTRODUCTION

Landscape architects are engaged in influential work related to depopulation and vacancy in urban areas. This work is effective at the local level, tied to specific cities, issues, and sites. However, broader theories have yet to be extrapolated that could form the foundation for scholarship and practice related to the urban shrinkage as a complex, chaotic, and ultimately dynamic phenomenon. In this paper, I argue through literature and project review for the formulation of a more holistic landscape approach that extends beyond individual projects to develop a conceptual framework for physical design in places with high levels of abandonment. This approach recognizes changing attitudes about urban shrinkage and emphasizes specific cultural interpretations of landscapes to re-frame the dialogue from one of loss to one of opportunity. Alternative site interpretations reveal a reconfigured, multi-scalar context for restructuring landscapes that respects emergent vegetation and perforated lands, embraces time as an asset, recognizes maintenance and management as important design factors, and accepts the need to plan and design for de-urbanization.[1]

The debate over the future of the shrinking city in the United States is no longer limited to those cities that have lost population, nor is it merely a matter of academic discussion. The term shrinking city points to a specific phenomenon defined by loss of overall population, tax revenues, political representation, and federal dollars that are occurring within the defined jurisdictional boundary of a city. It is a term used for its international recognition rather than its precision or descriptive quality.

National Public Radio regularly discusses the topic. The *New York Times* has published numerous articles in the past few years, and has invited outside

experts to discuss the topic in on-line forums.[2] *Time Magazine* (2009) embarked on a year-long piece, *Assignment Detroit,* covering both the "tragedy" of the city and its potential "unlikely saviors." With the city currently in receivership, coverage and debate about its future continues. These media accounts, at times sensationalist, draw attention to an issue that has long been a preoccupation of planners, policy-makers, city advocates, and designers alike.

A seminal event for English-language literature surrounding the shrinking city debate was the publication of *Shrinking Cities: Volume 1 International Research* and *Volume 2 Interventions* (2005 and 2006, respectively). Edited by Philipp Oswalt, the two volumes stem from a 2002 to 2008 German Federal Cultural Foundation project. The 1,600 pages of text and 981 images remain the broadest and most comprehensive global exploration of shrinking cities. The project responds to the concern that too much attention has been given to the superficial physical ramifications of population loss: vacant lots, decaying infrastructure, and crumbling buildings. It seeks to understand the complexity of the underlying causes and conditions of urban shrinkage. The work remains groundbreaking—an invaluable resource that raises the social and cultural awareness of an underrepresented global phenomenon. It draws widely from the fields of architecture, art, planning, history, sociology, geography, anthropology, political science, economics, and journalism. However, among the nearly 250 contributions, only five were written by landscape architects, designers, or planners, and none were written by ecologists, geologists, or members of the other disciplines addressing the bio-geophysical aspects of cities with population decline.

Similarly, The Incredible Shrinking City conversation in the New York Times garnered opinions on future directions from a number of experts engaged in the field. It covered important and relevant topics: promoting un-growth, developing a growth policy at the national level, bottom-up revitalization, policies based on people, the perpetual spreading out of the city, regional tax reform, innovative policies to transform land excess, and creative vacant lot reuse. Yet, the series ignored the larger question of why the issues surrounding shrinking cities remain rooted in planning and policy as opposed to the role of physical design, and especially landscape architecture.

Margaret Dewar and June Manning's (2013) The City After Abandonment, Brent Ryan's (2012) Design After Decline, Julia Czerniak's (2013) Formerly Urban begin to probe a role for physical design. The shrinking city is no longer viewed as an inherited problem to be addressed through policy based on existing condition. Rather, it is viewed as an alternative form of urbanism requiring a projective stance.[3] With limited resources, unstable economies, and declining populations, the design process, which begins with a proposal to build something and follows with implementation, seems counter-intuitive, or even oxymoronic. Why build in a place that is in a state of un-building? A new language and unconventional design tools in landscape architecture are emerging to address this condition. Landscape is an inevitable part of the equation. Landscape architects have addressed issues of urban abandonment and offered perspectives on the found wild condition, the inevitable change over time, the important role of maintenance, and the need for multi-scalar interventions. These ideas augment critical discourse and inform future practices in the shrinking city. After discussing concepts associated with shrinking cities and examining changing attitudes toward the topic, this article explores the potential contributions of landscape planning, management, and design to the shrinking city debate. In addition, it suggests that the unique cultural perception of the shrinking city held by landscape architects positions the discipline to contribute significantly to the intellectual debate about the future of shrinking cities, as well as the development of physical design strategies for repurposing landscapes that were formerly urban.

DEFINING SHRINKAGE

Shrinkage of urban areas is most easily described in quantitative terms. Using decennial census data, shrinking cities are measured by population loss over time with each scholar offering a different list of qualifying cities (Beauregard 2009; Dewar and Manning 2013; Oswalt and Rieniets 2006; Pallagst et al. 2009; Ryan 2012).

One of the first discussions of "shrinkage sickness" (Heffernan, 1947: F1) appeared in a 1947 *New York Times* article warning of the fiscal implications of urban decentralization and population loss afflicting US cities. Urban economist Mabel Walker

informed readers that cities were shrinking: "None of the ninety-two largest cities showed any decline from 1910 to 1920. Only four declined from 1920 to 1930, but twenty-eight of these cities lost population from 1930 to 1940" (Heffernan, 1947). Walker correctly predicted a trend that would continue, with eight of the largest 50 cities losing population every decade from 1950 to 2010. Those dramatic declines in population have become a popular subject of exploration in the media. It is easily understood and, therefore, used frequently in the media. However, that media coverage often misses the underlying processes at work in these cities: de-industrialization, political and economic restructuring, suburbanization, aging population, emigration, segregation, dispersal, abandonment, demolition, disposal, and stabilization (Oswalt 2005).

While unlike the lexicon of planners, architects, artists, sociologists, and even ecologists, the work of landscape architects rarely mentions the terms "shrinking city" even though the underlying vantage is fundamental to the way in which landscape architects view cities. Rather than a figure-ground of built and non-built environments, landscape architects conceptualize cities as an interweaving of complex systems. The philosophical and operational bases of the profession emphasize understanding and intervening in these systems using gradual, often cyclical processes. The landscape architect is analogous to a director or conductor, orchestrating complex systems that evolve with time. The site and medium are ever changing. To the landscape architect, it goes without saying that all cities have the capacity to expand and contract.

CHANGING ATTITUDES

Shrinking, as a term, is losing favor with planning and architecture disciplines as the policies and literature become less defeatist. Historically, the mentality of the United States has focused on growth. Politicians and the media now talk publically about making cities smaller, more viable economic and governmental entities. The Youngstown, Ohio 2010 plan "provides for a City that is smaller, greener, cleaner, makes efficient use of its available resources, and capitalizes on its many cultural amenities and business advantages" (City of Youngstown 2011). While the plan has garnered much interest for its

direct approach to shrinkage, many of these issues were raised by the US Congress over 30 years ago in a report entitled *How Cities can Grow Old Gracefully* (U.S. Congress 1977).

In this report, the Subcommittee on the City of the US House of Representatives Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs (U.S. Congress 1977, xii–xiv) identified the following themes in its report on aging cities facing de-industrialization and population loss:

- Cities need to learn how to anticipate and manage change, and make it work to their advantage
- Federal and State fiscal relief should be provided to help cities through transition
- As cities become smaller, they will need to find new uses for land and infrastructure no longer required for industrial activities or dense residential population
- Jobs are the most critical need for residents of older cities
- If we direct more of our existing investment incentives and loan programs to small business and neighborhood-based entrepreneurs, we can create income and jobs, and foster the social networks that make communities out of the places where people live
- Federal aid programs must be carefully evaluated at the end of a definite period

These points remain relevant in the contemporary climate, indicating that the basic dialogue around the shrinking city has not changed, especially as it remains rooted in policy. However, the translation of policy proclamations and findings into action items yields disagreement and controversy.

Rooted in the legacy of urban renewal from the mid-twentieth century, this controversy continued with the writings of planner and journalist Roger Starr. One of the contributors to the congressional report, Starr was an early adopter of the term "shrinkage" in reference to an urban condition. He developed a theory of "planned shrinkage" (Starr 1966), and in 1976, advocated for the withdrawing of government services from areas of New York City suffering from blight, poverty, and crime. His policies were

undoubtedly discriminatory; in fact their very nature necessitated discrimination. He employed an economic rationale based on efficient resource allocation and dense development: "a national program could encourage people to move voluntarily, and with proper preparation to places where economic opportunities are opening up . . . Gradually, the city's population in the older sections will begin to achieve a new configuration, one consistent with a smaller population that has arranged itself at densities high enough to make the provisions of municipal services economical" (Starr 1976, 99). Starr believed that stimulating economic activity in shrinking areas was futile. His views on consolidating and withdrawing investment in certain urban areas were shared by economist James Heilbrun, who wrote: "political obstacles to neighborhood consolidation are formidable. However, such a policy would be more humane than the alternative of letting neighborhood depopulation run its course while wasting rehabilitation funds in the fruitless gesture of even-handed distribution" (Heilbrun 1979, 417). Heilbrun argued that because the shrinkage was due to "forces of technological change and differential regional growth," it cannot be reversed (Heilbrun 1979, 418).

These early ideas of consolidation and selective decommissioning remain part of the debate of the future of these cities facing declining populations. In suggesting planned withdrawal of services, de-annexing of urban areas, land-banking, and provision of privatized services only for those who could pay, Rybczynski and Linneman's (1999) work continues the tone of Starr's earlier writing: "In our view, consolidation and de-annexation are not a 'desirable' option for the city; however, for many shrinking cities, we see no other viable alternative. When population loss has passed a certain point, urban revival is likely to require drastic measures" (Rybczynski and Linneman 1999, 43). They believed that population loss was no longer an episodic condition but rather part of a steady decline. This marks the nadir in shrinking city morale. While many people found the prospect that these proposals could become policy to be alarming, the reality was stark. These reports saw urban shrinkage as a purely negative phenomenon in which the loss of land value and population would lead to an inevitable loss of accompanying city services.

Recent discussion of issues associated with declining cities presents a more positive position. According to urban theorist Robert Beauregard, the constant portrayal of doom that surrounds these cities has had consequence: "By reading, listening to, and speaking the discourse on urban decline, Americans shrink the distances between individual experience and join the public debate about how they should live their lives and in what manner of society. At the same time, they are burdened with the language of fear and loss, sacrifice and purported progress. The discourse smothers the actual causes of discontent. It stifles an awareness of how cities might be different" (2003, 245).

Recent literature asks both for multiple readings on declining cities, and more importantly, for physical design responses that emphasize innovative physical transformation (Ryan 2012; Czerniak 2013). Ryan (2012) posits a five-pronged approach developed from analysis of positive examples, including the Yorkville Development in Philadelphia and the recent investment in Medellin, Colombia. This approach recognizes the limitations of trying to revert to past development levels, and offers a "palliative" approach to improve the quality of life for existing and future residents. He believes policies should promote physical intervention, as has happened in Philadelphia, moving beyond the post-urban renewal policy-driven approaches of the 1970s. He argues for a democratic focus at the city-wide scale, rejecting the idea that investment should be concentrated in the strongest areas of the city. His approach is patchwork, calling for bold physical proposals that embrace Modernism's daringness but reject its disregard for social planning. The response is sensible, if unproven.

In formulating his approach, Ryan dismisses three schools of planning: everyday urbanism, new urbanism, and landscape urbanism. Everyday urbanism—individual-driven, small-scale change—does not match the scale of decline in North America's shrinking cities. There is not enough human capital to conquer the widespread physical abandonment, let alone engage greater social problems of education, health, and the provision of basic services. New urbanism is a backward looking, historicist approach that has proven ineffective in addressing existing fabric to build within the perforated, unplanned condition of a city experiencing population loss. While

Ryan offers no clear definition of landscape urbanism, he identifies its fuzzy contradictions that try to merge flexibility over time with precise design proposals. He cites the promise of considering landscape as a driver of urban form in places with growing inventories of open space. However, Ryan criticizes landscape urbanism for its overly-formal and precise schemes that are more suited for use in vibrant cities, where land values can support expensive, highly maintained landscapes. His critique of landscape urbanism leads to a near-dismissal of landscape architecture as a component in his five-pronged social urbanism agenda. He argues for a patchwork of open and settled areas, but the narrative reads as if the settled areas are planned and designed, while the open areas are a *de facto* un-designed landscape upon which the designed structures are placed.

Czerniak (2013, 29) argues: "Probably no other discipline is so called to arms to assist in projecting futures for the Rust Belt city as landscape, given the abundance of vacant or underutilized land that has emerged in deindustrialized cities." Her "call to arms" alludes to how an on-the-ground reading of existing landscapes in Cleveland and Youngstown (Ohio), and Detroit and Flint (Michigan) might point to a more sensitive, yet undefined practice. While Czerniak offers a framework for thought, there is little in the way of design strategies and models for practice.

LANDSCAPE PERSPECTIVES

This section focuses on two phenomena facing cities that are losing population: the changing density of the built environment and the increasing wildness of the emerging landscapes. These two phenomena are often linked to loss and neglect, perceived as negative by-products affecting the physical form of the city. However, they also represent opportunities for restructuring that balances ecological and civic function. By embracing the potential to have urbanization without density, wildness, and loss of economic and cultural value, an alternative theoretical context for the design of formerly urban landscapes materializes.

Dismissing Density

Architecture and urban design have a fraught relationship with the voided landscape. There is an anxiety associated with abandonment that calls for transformation, filling, and building. Ignasi Sola-Morales Rubió described it well: "In essence, architecture acts as an instrument of organization, of rationalization, and of productive efficiency capable of transforming the uncivilized into the cultivated, the fallow into the productive, the void into the built" (Sola-Morales Rubió 1995, 22). As the city empties of inhabitants and structures, the need for new building is limited and ideas of density questioned. Urbanized form is no longer measured effectively by the number of people dwelling in a given area. Instead, an urban condition emerges marked by horizontal expansion at the periphery and abandonment of older, previously developed core areas. This condition—decreasingly dense, car dominated, highly vegetated—is central to the landscape urbanism manifesto: "in this horizontal field of urbanization, landscape has a newfound relevance, offering a multivalent and manifold medium for the making of urban form, and in particular in the context of complex natural environments, post-industrial sites, and public infrastructure" (Waldheim 2006, 15). Numerous scholars have investigated this condition—void plus sprawl—arguing for their interrelationship (Berger 2006), for dispersal as an opportunity to reinvent urbanity (Segal and Verbakel 2008), and for the *città diffusa* as a way to conceive of and spatially articulate urban form (Viganò and Secchi 2008). Landscape architecture is comfortable in the reinvention of the city through the articulation, deployment, and organization of the void within a growing horizon of urbanized ground. While decommissioning of infrastructure and demolition of abandoned structures needs careful consideration and clear planning, it is not a direct affront to the discipline.

A critique of the urban density prerequisite was at the core of the *Stalking Detroit* project. Drawing from the findings of the 1990 Detroit Vacant Land Survey, an unsentimental and clear-sighted assessment of post-industrial de-densification, Charles Waldheim and Marili Santos-Munné proposed their *Decamping Detroit* project (Waldheim and Santos-Munné 2001).[4] Here, the call for drastic measures is translated into a proposal, marking an early propitious moment in the evolution of the urban shrinkage debate. The territory is prepared for "ecological re-constitution" through tree farming and flooding, making it available for further re-appropriation. The project presents several visions for the decommissioning of vacant city land and
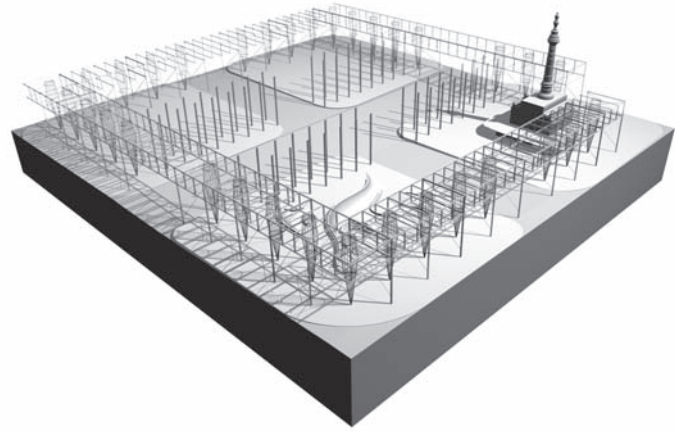
Zone 6 Experimental Agriculture Cooperative Homestead
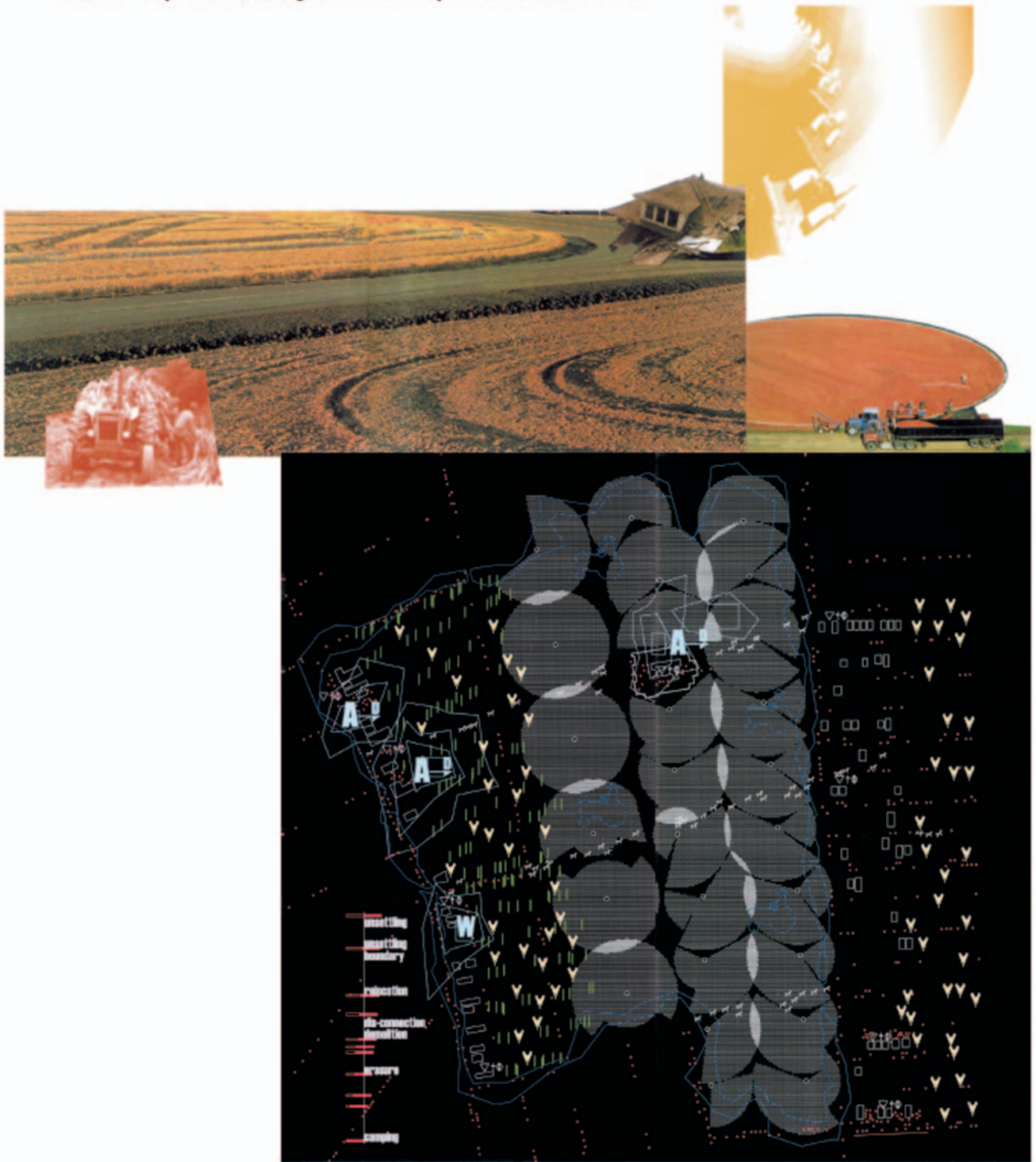
Figure 1
Experimental Agricultural Cooperative Homestead from the Decamping Detroit Proposal,
where iconic crop circles collaged onto available urban lands propose an alternative
urbanism for Detroit (Courtesy of Charles Waldheim).

Figure 2
Cleveland Public Square Frame, a conceptual and physical scaffold to accommodate flexible uses (Courtesy of James Corner Field Operations).

the staging of programs that support long-term indeterminacy. These include a plan for a suburban campground, an Immigration and Naturalization Service Refugee Center, multiple types of homesteads (Figure 1), and a firefighting center, to combat arson.

In contrast with previous de-densification schemes, *Decamping Detroit* presents an alternative, if under-articulated, urban future. Meant as a provocation, the project does not depict the newly vacant territory as a problem to mitigate or escape from, nor does it present the proposal as a drastic, last-resort attempt to salvage a weak city. Rather it finds opportunity in the vast lands cleared within the city. A decade later, as cities turn to urban agriculture and refugee or immigrant recruitment as ways to reinvigorate their extensive lands, the proposals do not even seem far-fetched; in fact, they have become almost mainstream as these issues gain momentum.

Landscape architect James Corner underlines the merit of undetermined, un-named, and indefinable territory revealed in the *Decamping Detroit* project as a strategy for the future of "ex-urban" land. He writes, "Instead of 'scraping' the land into a formal composition of meaning and presence, I am suggesting the possibilities for 'scraping' the land of its various residues: symbolic, political and material. The scraped ground then becomes an empty field of absence that accommodates multiple interpretations and possibilities" (Corner 2001, 123). The idea is not to clear the land physically, or to remove the inhabitants, but rather to liberate it from past associations and allow for contemporary re-interpretation. The shrinking city and its lands will never return to their former uses; yet without further disassociation, these glorified

narratives of past occupation hinder future adaptation. Nostalgia and the desire to somehow return to the good old days become insurmountable. Corner argues further for a tactical approach to address the de-industrialized and de-populated lands as well as for the introduction of a framework with multiple possible outcomes. This does not mean simply abandoning land, but rather guiding it towards the creation of deliberately un-prescribed design that is imbedded with clues for future use.

Corner revisits the idea of a framework in his firm's more recent set of proposals for Cleveland's Public Square (2009), a key civic space project in the center of a shrinking city. One early proposal, ultimately rejected by the client, was literally a flexible frame or scaffold, modeled after Zurich's MFO Park that encompasses the central space (Figure 2). The translation of the framework is literal yet iconic, creating a form for future programming and development. It provides a space-defining physical edge and an idea about incorporating temporal change as a vehicle to host indeterminate future programs.

Embracing Wildness

In addition to dismissing density as an urban prerequisite, landscape architects embrace emergent wildness as a potential restructuring tool rather than only a sign of neglect. Urban wildness[5] generally refers to places where human agency is no longer shaping the landscape resulting in unorganized voids of ecological succession within the urban fabric. Both urban wilderness and urban shrinkage are thought of as unplanned, uncontrollable results of greater structural processes (Rink 2009). These outcomes are linked. With
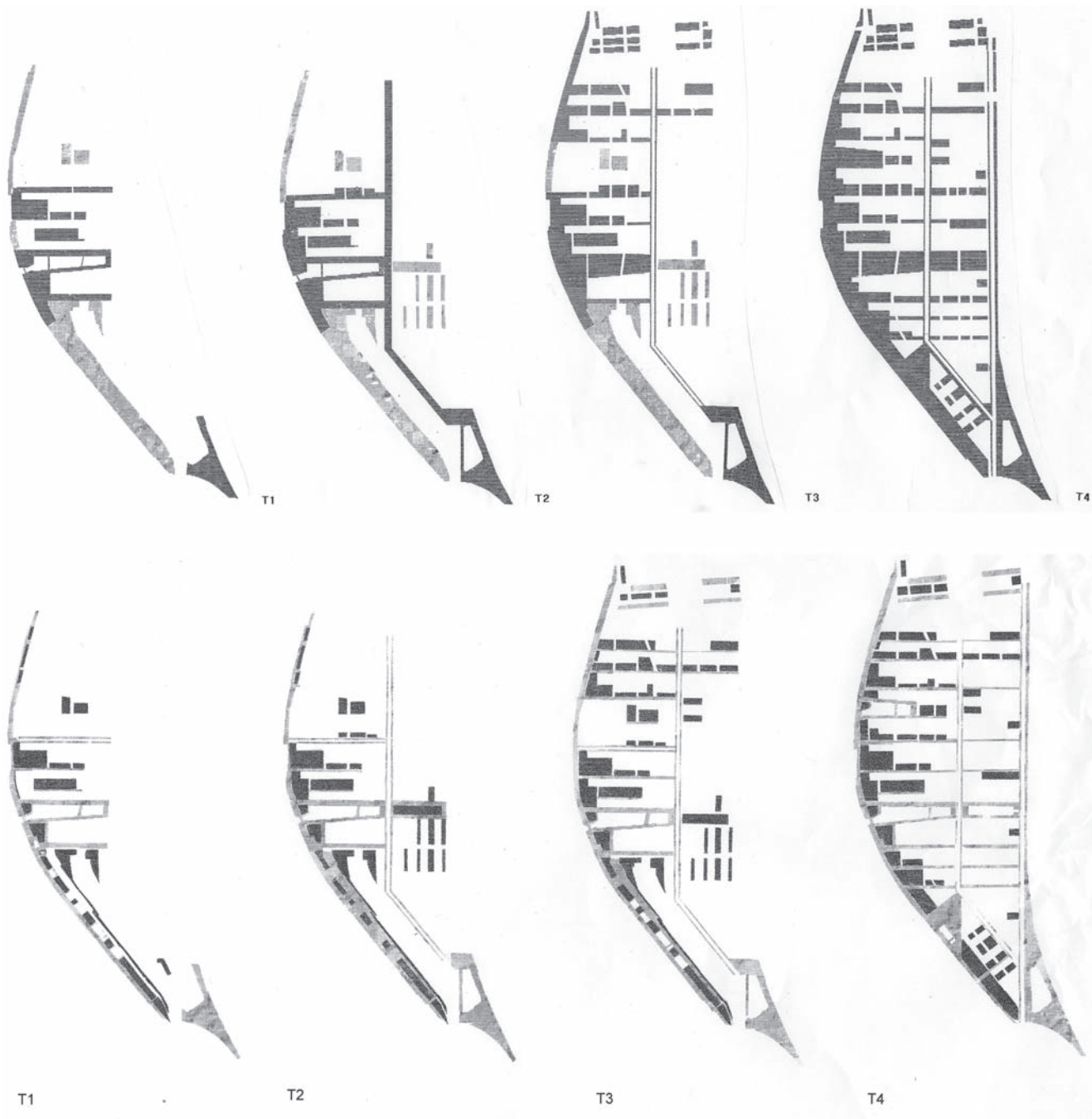
Figure 3
Lyon Confluence Landscape Structure, indicating the availability of public lands to serve as
the backbones for future development (Courtesy of Michel Desvigne Paysagiste).

decreased resources and increased abandonment, spontaneous vegetation becomes more prevalent. In the *Feral City* section of *Shrinking Cities: Volume 2,* the process is described thusly: "Urban withdrawal creates vacant spaces. Wasteland, forests, and fields creep back into the city and increasingly determine its look and its structure" (Oswalt 2006, 143).

Stakeholders hold varying opinions about the value of these wild lands. On one hand, they are associated with neglect and seen as manifestations of decline and abandonment. By contrast, since the 1970s, urban ecologists—especially in Berlin—have been studying these wastelands, finding them to have high biodiversity due to heterogeneous land use (Langner and Endlicher 2007; Rink 2009; Lachmund 2013). The "novel ecosystems" are self-sustaining and reproductive. They have cyclical rather than linear time structures (Hofmeister 2009). Species found in these ecosystems have the advantages of being well adapted culturally and biologically to abandoned urban sites, reflecting local character (Spirn 1984) and requiring fewer resources for maintenance and survival (Kühn 2006).

Landscape architects fall between these two poles: they see the value in the richly vegetated landscapes, while also recognizing that simply letting the flora and fauna grow unabated ignores crucial social and cultural problems. Open urban land is complex, with simultaneous pressures to be a civic amenity, an infrastructural link, an environmental asset, and an economic driver. Cultural scientist Dieter Rink summarizes: "It is yet to be seen whether the 'controlled,' 'cultivated,' or 'planned' urban wilderness is able to give the shrinking city new aesthetic and ecological qualities and to turn back or stop the devaluation process. The use of the concept of urban wilderness in shrinking cities should be made dependent on this" (Rink 2009, 289–290). To this end, Jorgensen and Keenan (2012, 169–235) push to link the initial theoretical construct to case studies—like the spaces unearthed by the Berlin urban ecologists—and to suggest "implications for landscape practice." Cited cases highlight process over fixed form while suggesting a place for the wild and disorderly. This idea of process both underlies the discipline of landscape architecture and the condition of the shrinking city, as a phenomenon with "various causes, processes and effects that words themselves do not reveal" (Oswalt 2005, 12).

DESIGN PROCESS

The preceding paragraphs describe the evolution of thought surrounding the shrinking city and establish a basis for restructuring an agenda that extends previous readings on density and wildness. To move forward, a process-based approach, specific to the context of shrinkage, is crucial. This process has four key criteria: it finds value in the existing condition, respecting past construction, while not fearing radical transformation; the process welcomes slow transformation, taking advantage of time as a design mechanism; it relies on maintenance as a driver, developing land management techniques for former urban lands; and it oscillates between scales, simultaneously addressing individual properties, neighborhoods, cities, and regions. The following paragraphs build on Czerniak's "call to arms," Corner's "frameworks" and Jorgensen and Keenan's "implications" towards an alternative way of physically addressing urban abandonment. Together these criteria move towards a middle ground between development and ecology.

Constructing Context

The first step of the design process is to transition from redefining perceptions about abandoned land towards developing a proposal for an alternative, physical urban form. Through a re-mapping and drawing of the site, opportunities are framed as sites of intervention. The uncovering of an intrinsic structure from the perforated base condition allows a different urban identity to surface. This idea—transforming site reading, writing, and perception into strategy—is exemplified in the projects of landscape architects Michel Desvigne and Bas Smets. For example, in the Lyon Confluence, Desvigne develops a way to claim a site awaiting a several decade-long transformation from industry to neighborhood through a mapping of probable changes over time. The proposed new ground is found through the redrawing of the site. He develops a landscape structure—devised from existing and projected land ownership and use—that extends from the river's edge into the city, knitting water with neighborhood through a series of finger-like, linear civic landscapes (Figure 3). The idea is to give shape to the terrain vague over time and to provide groundwork to entice people to come back and live in the city (Tiberghien and Desvigne 2009).

In the Brussels 2040 plan in Belgium (Smets 2012), Smets—through an arduous and sensitive cartographic endeavor—redraws the city of Brussels at multiple scales, extending from the North Sea Eurodelta to fluvial hydrology of the city proper. Through this work, an alternative reading emerges for a regional-scale floodable park landscape (Figure 4). Through the redefinition of the image of Brussels, a landscape emerges—one that exists largely unnoticed and can be enhanced with simple insertions. "[W]hereas it seems common sense to try to reestablish the Zenne River as the backbone of the city, this new image suggests a radically different approach. The ensemble of the eight tributary valleys could become the defining image of Brussels" (Smets, 2012). From reading to reformulation, a hidden territory is revealed within the existing city. It requires modest physical intervention, promotes an integration of social and ecological systems, and transforms the existing urban structure.

At the individual project scale, landscape architect Gilles Clément has developed a treatise for seeing the wild as valuable design material. Through his work on the Third Landscape, Clément argues that the residual urban and rural sites, transitional spaces, neglected land, swamps, moors, bogs, infrastructural right of ways, shorelines, and other unattended landscapes are the "genetic reservoir of the planet" (Clément 2003, par. 3). Together, these spaces can be considered a potential "fallow forest," capable of hosting successional woodlands. Individual scale is inconsequential. As long as there is enough room for the trees to grow, the land can be converted into a valuable biome. His work should not be misinterpreted as a laissez-faire approach but rather as new material to be used in design implementation. He argues for these "unorganized spaces" to be designated "public amenities" (Clément 2003). He has tested the idea in the Ile Derbordence at the Parc Matisse in Lille, a spectacular extruded mass of vegetation framed by high rammed earthen and rubble walls created from material removed during the excavation of the train station (Gandy 2013). It is a cosmopolitan mini-forest, set in motion by Clément's initial plantings, standing provocatively against a backdrop of lawn and building. It is a designed, articulated, and framed wilderness: a prescribed "unorganized space."

Benefiting from Slow Time

Underlying these projects are the concepts of slow transformation and time. Rather than viewing the gradual evolution as evidence of stagnation, the elongated time scale allows landscapes to form and cities to alter their physical trajectory to better accommodate current and future social trends. In terms of landscape growth, Clément writes: "The time needed to cover the ground is about seven years; to cultivate it for trees, fourteen years; and to cover it with a forest, thirty to forty years" (Clément 2009, 41). This represents the time required for a woodland to evolve. The time of city-making and un-making is longer, requiring a patience that is foreign to the fast pace of contemporary life. Cities evolve in a cyclical manner over decades and even centuries, with periods of colonization, consolidation, evacuation, and repopulation. In the shrinking city literature, ancient Rome often appears as the example of population loss and recovery, taking place over the course of centuries. Rather than being the source of frustration, the time lapse is necessary both for the establishment of robust and viable landscapes and the evolution of urbanization.

Economist Joseph Schumpeter and landscape historian J.B. Jackson argue that this cyclical development is part of a process required for progress in a capitalist context. Schumpeter notes "the . . . process of industrial mutation—if I may use that biological term—that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one." (Schumpeter 1976, 83). Competition drives both destruction and innovation. As Jackson puts it, "there has to be that interval of neglect, there has to be discontinuity; it is religiously and artistically essential. That is what I mean when I refer to the necessity for ruins: ruins provide the incentive for restoration, and for a return to origins. There has to be (in our new concept of history) an interim of death or rejection before there can be renewal or reform." (Jackson 1980, 101–102). Incessant unidirectional progress does not exist. There is a contradiction embedded within the capitalist imperative: on the one hand to amass, consume and build; and on the other, to destroy, dislocate, and destabilize. Out of this emerges the cultural anxiety associated with loss and abandonment especially prevalent in the shrinking city. Through an emphasis on process over object, landscape architects can approach this paradox with

greater freedom and creativity. Instead of seeing abandonment as a paralyzing hurdle, they approach it as a necessary part of development, a design inspiration that enhances future landscapes. The past becomes something to work with rather than bury.

From a projective standpoint, the elements of history and time underlying the formerly urban provide a context for new landscapes, coexisting and overlaid with past disturbance, and they yield ripe and interesting juxtapositions (Latz 2000). The concept of time is enhanced in the perforated conditions of the shrinking city. Working in slow time, design responds in numerous ways: translating old "useless artifacts" into new uses in Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord (Latz 2000); figuring the "Third Landscape" in Parc Matisse; or developing landscape structure to guide a transforming urban environment in Brussels and Lyon.[6] In each of these examples, there is a deliberate design process to determine what to keep and repurpose, what to insert, and what is likely to change with time. Absent the acceptance of this new temporal regime in design, the slow process of transformation can be excruciating. Slow time must be made visible to be appreciated. Girot writes: "Time versus contempt juxtaposes the earlier contempt for space at the urban periphery to the present contempt for time and slowness in our cities. If anything positive could be derived from such a juxtaposition, it would be the reinstatement of the subtle art of modulating time in landscape space to gradually slow down the pace of our hectic lives" (Girot 2005, 31–32). There is a chance to find this slowness in the context of urban shrinkage and to use it to design a more livable urban environment than that found in the congested cities of our past.

Creating Maintenance Gradients

When the operational costs of constructed sites are faced with the declining resources and budgets found in the shrinking city, stewardship and maintenance become fundamental design considerations. The establishment of a gradient of maintenance—from the barely tamed wild to the cultivated garden—becomes the foundation of a multi-scalar management strategy. Urban and designed landscapes depend on on-going care and stewardship for survival. Neglecting long-term management often results in the landscape's failure, through under- and over-use and the degradation of the plant and mineral materials. Yet, maintenance
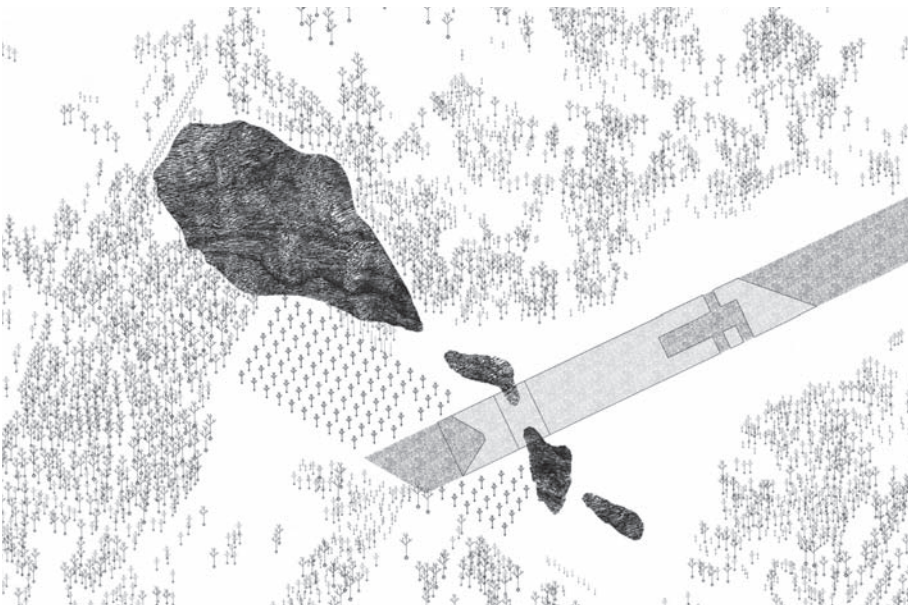
Figure 5
Former Nursery Seedling Patch in
Red Ribbon Park, with the signature
red pathway winding through
remnant vegetation in winter
(Courtesy of Turenscape).

Figure 6
Riverine Marshes in Red Ribbon Park,
fostering the intersection of vegetal,
animal and human occupation in a
cosmopolitan urban environment
(Courtesy of Turenscape).

Figure 7
Estonian National Museum
Landscape Plan, showing the
proposed lakes and formal gridded
plantings juxtaposed against a field
of existing spontaneous birches
and ashes (Courtesy of Bureau Bas
Smets).

budgets are frequently the first to be reduced. Designers walk away from their newly built works, expecting spectacular growth but often find them perishing without adequate maintenance (Van Valkenburgh and Saunders, 2013). Considering maintenance in the design process becomes fundamental to lasting success. Given this, however, the intensity of management, maintenance, and resource allocation can vary greatly, and this gradient is crucial when approaching the growing inventory of abandoned lands.

The idea of stewardship and care is evoked often with regards to vacant parcels. Municipalities and non-profits devote resources to cleaning-and-greening lots, providing fencing and periodic mowing. These efforts aim to stop disinvestment and devaluation, and it has even been shown that they can reduce crime and violence (Branas et al., 2011). However, the cultural contributions and long-term design aspirations are minimal. They are seen as temporary palliative improvements, holdovers for future development. Further, they reinforce a reactive climate of low expectations. Now is the time to move beyond this simple "orderly frame" (Nassauer 1995) and embrace the full design potential, at multiple scales, of a juxtaposition of the tidy and controlled against the wild and unruly.

The work of Chinese landscape architect Kongjian Yu and his firm, Turenscape, attempts this—testing ideas that remain largely theoretical in the Western world—with mixed results (Saunders, Yu, and Beardsley 2012). Yu's work is a critique of expensive, high-maintenance, ornamental urban landscapes. Yet, it is not a simple embrace of the counter idea that ecologically driven, self-sustaining landscapes are inherently good. Rather, Yu argues for "a new aesthetic grounded in appreciation of the beauty of productive, ecology-supporting, survival enhancing things" (Saunders, Yu, and Beardsley 2012, 43). In doing this, the work of the landscape architect needs to be visible. In fact, it is through design that the "beauty of the weeds" is rendered culturally accessible. The results—perhaps best exemplified by the Red Ribbon Park in China (2007) (Saunders, Yu, and Beardsley 2012)—are insertions into an existing spontaneously vegetated landscape of design elements that stand in contrast to larger swathes of existing and cultivated wilds. Mature willows and poplar seedlings were preserved (Figure 5), invigorated by new plantings of marsh grasses, forbs, and wetland trees (Figure 6). Three paths were

introduced: a riverine boardwalk, an upland promenade, and a sinuous signature route lined by a calligraphy-inspired, flexibly-programmed, red, fiberglass "bench." It is extremely popular for sitting, lounging, playing, and socializing (Saunders, Yu, and Beardsley 2012). In the project, decisions have been made carefully about what to keep, what to frame, and what to let go wild. Intrinsic to this process is a deliberate strategy about the long-term management of the site. Maintenance matters. The design considers the gradient of investment respecting future limitations: small areas are highly maintained with large patches less intensely controlled. This is necessary both for reasons of resource scarcity and cultural appreciation, and can be applied both to small sites and larger territories.

Bas Smets employed a similar tactic in his winning Estonia National Museum proposal, designed for an abandoned Russian air base in Tartu (Smets 2012). Captivated by the emergent vegetation of birches, ashes, and meadow flowers between the runways, Smets convinced the client to make this an integral part of the proposal. Against the nascent woodland, he introduced a strong, formal, gridded planting and created two lakes to address hydrological concerns on the site (Figure 7). Contrasted with the formal planting, the spontaneous woodland growth is revealed, appreciated, and framed. At the same time, the project is economical both in terms of construction footprint and long-term maintenance, leaving a large portion of the site untouched.

Both the Turenscape work and the Smets project point to a hybrid typology with great relevance for the growing inventory of abandoned land in North American cities. They are resource and design smart; their intentions are clear while respecting limited means. Through restraint, the landscape strategies provide the potential for enhanced ecological and social civic spaces in places of greatest need.

Telescoping Across Scales
With vacant land inventories made of individual parcels with complex ownership structure amassing, in the case of Detroit, 40 square miles (Detroit Future City 2012), restructuring strategies must operate across multiple scales. To think of a strategy for each lot (as in everyday urbanism) is daunting. In the case of Philadelphia, this would mean 40,000 strategies. Yet to operate only at the scale of the city would ignore both
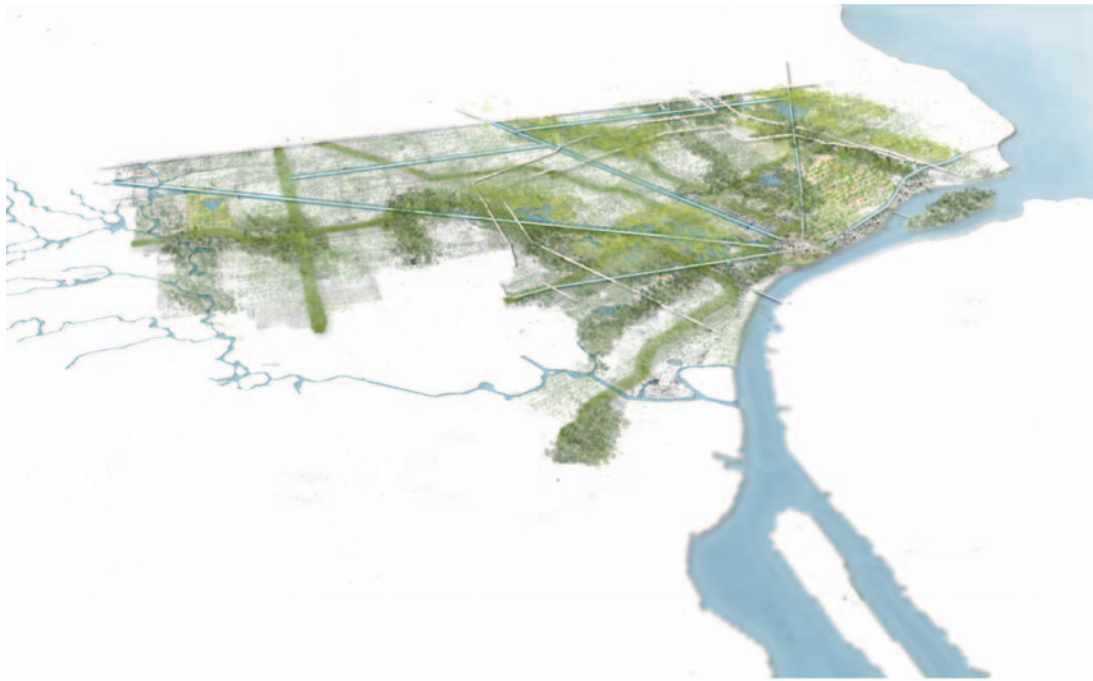
Figure 8
Detroit Future City Overall Landscape View, with blue and green infrastructural corridors radiating from the city's Grand Circus urban structure (Courtesy of Stoss Landscape Urbanism).
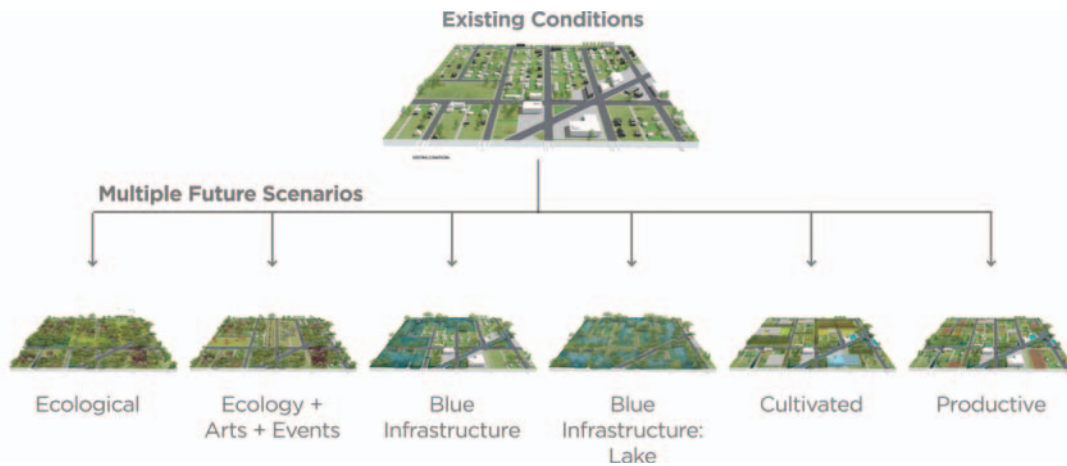
Figure 9
Detroit Future City Landscape Scenarios, showing options for restructuring vacant land dependent on existing parameters (Courtesy of Stoss Landscape Urbanism).

the individual neighborhood-scale parcels as well as the larger regional connections.

There has been considerable landscape investigation at the site and neighborhood scale, with plots slowly transitioning into meadows, 'blots' or adopted yards, community gardens, art parks, exercise arenas, soil farms, stormwater parks, biomass reserves, and woodlands. Many of these interventions happen through individual, local initiative. Designers, including Interboro Partners and Urban Catalyst, are looking into ways to structure and enable this process. The US pavilion at the 2012 Venice Biennale, curated by Cathy Lang Ho, focused on spontaneous interventions and included numerous projects addressing urban abandonment at the lot scale. In addition, as evidenced by the Desvigne, Turenscape, Smets, and Clément examples

given above, individual design projects are looking into ways to incorporate flexibility and wildness at the site and neighborhood scale.

From an implementation standpoint, the planning and design of the Ruhrgebiet conurbation points to the potential of design to reformulate a landscape at both the park and regional scale. Latz und Partner's Landschaftpark Duisburg-Nord marked a shift in attitude towards industrial relics. No longer discarded, artifacts were incorporated into the park design, repurposed for new uses and transformed (for example, a blast furnace conflated with cherry grove) into a signature for the entire region. The 570-acre project is the emblem of a much larger cultural transformation of the mining area, where the 53 towns have come together to support an industrial heritage route,
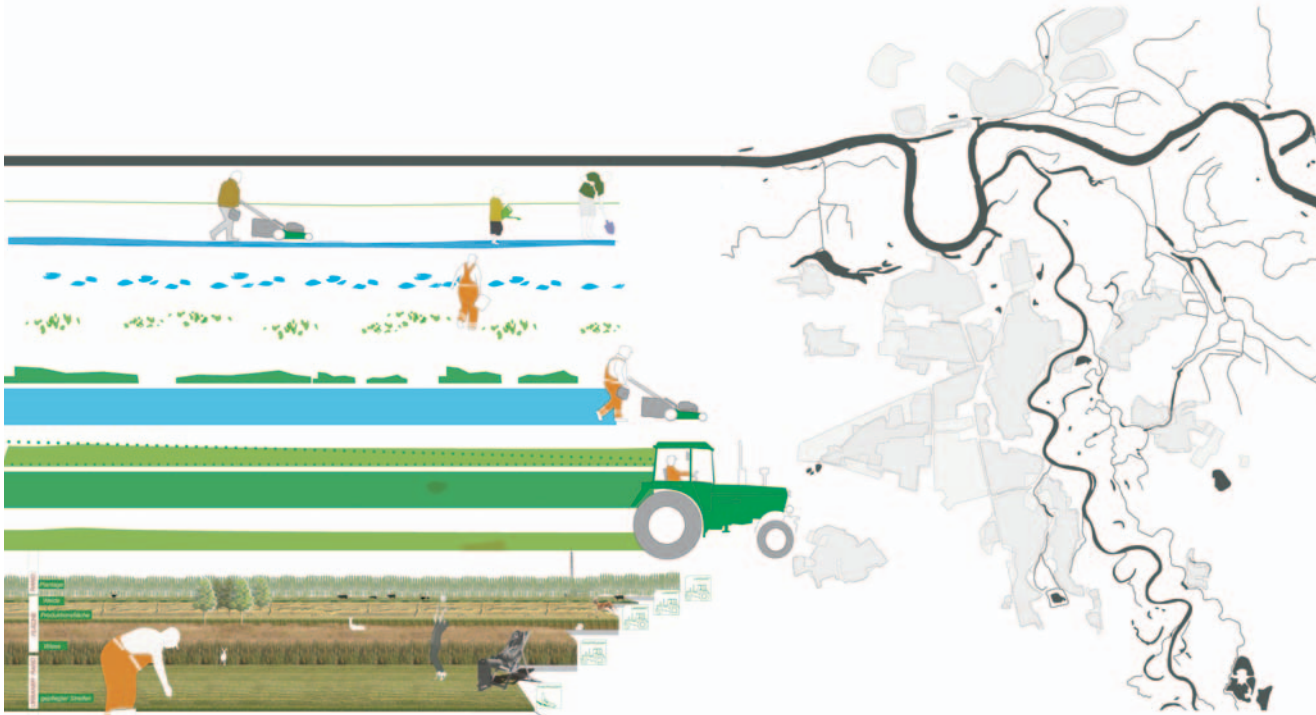
Figure 10
Dessau Landschaftszug 2050 Plan, a delineation of responsive field-dominated vegetative strategies for reclaiming abandoned land (Courtesy of StationC23).

the Emscher Landscape Park, and a series of monuments and working landscapes. The result is a clear transformation of the densely populated region from a place of heavy industry to one of cultural importance (Metropoleruhr 2013).

Christophe Girot argues that site and regional scale design responses to urban abandonment and ecology have been covered, and that the focus should turn to include the intermediate scale of the city itself (Girot 2008). This is beginning to happen with the recent planning efforts in Detroit, where Stoss Landscape Urbanism, as part of the larger Detroit Works team, has proposed a series of blue and green infrastructure to recalibrate the city's physical structure with its demographic changes. The armatures radiate out from the Detroit River, much like the city's

original Grand Circus plan, sending broad fingers to capture stormwater, aid in the sequestration of carbon, and create new parks and civic spaces located in close proximity to habitation (Figure 8). The larger framework creates opportunities for multiple scenarios to transpire at the site level (Figure 9). The scheme presents a strong, if somewhat ambitious, vision for the future, formulated from the city to the parcel scale (Detroit Future City 2012).

In Dessau, the planners for the International Building Exhibition Urban Redevelopment Saxony-Anhalt (2010) also proposed a transformative landscape structure that develops with time. The plan envisions a large landscape zone that is carved through the city, divided into 20 × 20 meter plots, and designed to take shape as future demolition and abandonment

Figure 11
Dessau Landschaftszug Diagram, demonstrating the fundamental role of maintenance by diverse public and private land stewards (Courtesy of StationC23).

occurs. The landscape gains resolution as the scheme unfolds, plot by plot. Unfortunately, to date, only a handful of the plots have been developed into meadows, oak plantings, and community claims. While the citywide planning efforts were well intentioned, implementation, which relied almost solely on community participation, was short sighted, and the concept languished.

Station C23 landscape architects were invited to create a second master plan for the city (Figure 10). Their proposal, Dessau Landschaftszug *2050* (Langner 2010), integrates the 20m² pixel concept, but anticipates de-urbanization on an even larger scale: the buildings on the city's periphery will be demolished to become part of the landscape zone. As a reaction to the failure of community based approaches to landscape maintenance, the Station C23 strategy includes a robust and detailed low-maintenance meadow planting regime derived specifically from soil type. The planning scale and scope of this project extends from the entire city to the edaphic detail (Figure 11).

Abandonment is a piece-meal operation, leaving behind a perforated condition affecting all scales, from the individual garden to the watershed and valley transect. It requires a systems-approach that considers all scales simultaneously as part of a coordinated strategy to respect both isolated parcels and the potential for interconnection. Individual lots are adopted but the project impact must extend beyond the site to consider its potential impact within a larger network. The goal is not to address each scale individually, but to work across multiple scales within each initiative.

CONCLUSIONS
The particular issues of the shrinking city require a resource-savvy approach to design, which values and redefines elements of the existing condition, respects the slow time required for effective transformation, relies on maintenance as a fundamental tenet of intervention, and works at numerous scales. The shrinking city is a place where population, tax

revenues, political representation, and federal dollars are decreasing. At the same time, the city boundary remains static, infrastructure is underutilized, and the provision of services becomes more dispersed. The amount of neglected land and number of unmaintained buildings grows. Old models of efficiency and construction no longer apply. Instead, design frameworks must reevaluate existing site conditions incorporating the construction of new and opportunistic ground for fruitful operation and reconfiguration of urban landscape. Examples of such frameworks include: uncovering multiple tributaries and watersheds in Brussels instead of relying on the image of a city made powerful through one river and waterfront (Brussels 2040) (Smets 2012); inserting a set of landscape fingers in Lyon to reunite neighborhoods with hydrologic infrastructure (Tiberghien and Desvigne 2009); developing landscape corridors that amplify the historic radial street pattern (Detroit Future City 2012); and building on the garden realm tradition with a pixel-driven, meadow-dominated landscape core (Dessau Landschaftszug 2050).

The reformulation of dormant but not necessarily vacant landscape in the shrinking city emerges with time. The transformation itself is a slowly developing overlay, incorporating past influences in its reinvention, and taking time to establish. The lack of inertia becomes an opportunity to cultivate a deliberate landscape, one of cultural significance and ecological service.

Through this extended restructuring, deliberate choices are made regarding resource allocation. The design process is not driven by construction, but by land stewardship and management. Maintenance becomes a tool to shape physical space, and varying degrees of care allow for resources to be allocated more effectively across entire territories. Strategic insertions of highly designed elements—sculptural benches and paths or articulated plantings—are juxtaposed with wild landscapes. The spaces demonstrate cultural sensitivity and offer social programming while exploiting spontaneous growth and ecosystem development to sustain larger areas. Throughout the design process, decisions are made as to the most effective locations, levels, and scales of intervention. This distribution is fundamental in the face of widespread abandonment with little prospect of financial investment.

Shaping the shrinking city is a convoluted process, requiring designers who are comfortable with the disorder that happens with un-building in the realm of weakened municipal controls and functions, and with a process that designs space absent density. It requires an understanding of both the design potential and ecological value of non-contiguous, yet abundant land, and calls for an astute reading and restructuring of this land to create an alternative urban identity. Maintenance must necessarily be integrated into multiple levels of design interventions. Finally, it demands the dexterity to work across multiple scales—from the region to city, neighborhood to parcel. Shrinking cities may not need traditional gardens, parks, and civic plazas but they do need landscape architecture's comfort with a process-based design involving slow evolution to shape successfully their socio-ecological future. These qualities are the hallmarks of landscape architecture.

NOTES

1. Perforated refers to the non-contiguous quality of abandoned land. The abandonment is not planned and creates a piecemeal condition within the existing urban fabric.

2. National Public Radio aired numerous shows from 2007–2011 on issues surrounding shrinking cities, focusing largely on Detroit, Flint and Youngstown. The New York Times has covered the topic extensively, most notably in a March 28, 2011 Room for Debate series entitled "The Incredible Shrinking City" and a November 12, 2013 article called "Blighted Cities Prefer Razing to Rebuilding."

3. Projective indicates forward-looking and propositional.

4. The Detroit Vacant Land Survey, issued by the Detroit City Planning Commission on August 24, 1990, clearly documented the process of depopulation and disinvestment taking place in the city for decades and advocated for the discontinuation of services in the most vacant areas (Waldheim and Santos-Munné 2001).

5. Similar terms include: urban wildscape, urban wilderness, new wilderness, alternative wilderness, industrialized wilderness, second(ary) wilderness, third wilderness, post-industrial wilderness, terrain vague, terra incognita, urban wasteland, third landscape, and fourth nature. These terms do not have identical connotations but belong to a category used to describe the rise of spontaneously vegetated novel ecosystems.

6. Neither Lyon nor Brussels can be considered shrinking cities. However, examples of recent landscape planning in Detroit and Dessau are discussed subsequently.

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