SEEING THE MIDDLE LANDSCAPE

by

JACOB LANGE

(Under the Direction of Judith Wasserman)

ABSTRACT

Conventional urban conceptualizations institute a dichotomic hierarchy between city and suburb, and perpetuate a design discourse preoccupied with stability and permanence. In a Contemporary Metropolis where the characteristic spaces are no longer accessible through the binding language of the city, and no longer susceptible to the static design gestures it proliferates, new conceptualizations and representations must be devised that harness the Metropolis' increased dynamism and temporality. Understanding the Metropolis as a collision of city and suburb, this thesis characterizes a new and indeterminate type of urban site, the middle landscape, and devises an imaginative mode of representation capable of *seeing* the tensions and dynamic processes that define it. That mode, enacted through intuitive perception, subjective experience, and critical image-making, reinstitutes a poetics of becoming into landscape conceptualization, and, when enacted in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, illuminates the imaginative potential for the Metropolis' future design.

INDEX WORDS: Contemporary Metropolis, Middle Landscape, Landscape Representation, Urban Design, Urban Theory, Critical Visual Research, Image-Making

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DEDICATION

To those who will read. To those who will not. And to those who will never have the chance.

It is you who bring these pages to life.

and

To my parents, for it is you who brought me to life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Special thanks to the committee members: Douglas Pardue, Richard Siegesmund, Leo Alvarez, and Ian Firth. I am forever indebted to the patience and flexibility that you demonstrated throughout. Not only did you provide enhanced clarity to the ideas set forth, but you cleared the cloud of doubt that loomed since those ideas moved over my head.

Finally, to my classmates: whatever glimpse of knowledge and understanding the reader may discern from these pages will never stand up to all that you taught me over the past three years. This thesis is debased by the fact that your names are not included on the title page.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE METROPOLIS RISES

PROLOGUE:

Twenty-eight floors above Houston at the dusk of the twentieth century, Lars Lerup looks out from below the night sky. The vision before his eyes is not that of a city. Scattered, flickering, moving lights stretch across a pitch black field with varying degrees of brightness and density. The city's "solitary light source" disperses into "streaks, zones, and clusters of lights that threaten the supremacy of the darkness they occupy" (Lerup 2001, 46). No, this is not the vision of a city. This is but a trace of the metropolitan galaxy. And amidst its sprawling field of lumens, "somewhere in the middle of the spectrum from bright to faint," the middle landscape looms (Lerup 2001, 46).

Here the city disappears, then reappears many times over until the observer is unsure as to whether it is a city at all. It has no center; it has no periphery; the traditional structural components of the *city* – order, density, formal continuity – no longer apply. The middle landscape is not bound to discrete and identifiable objects or spaces; the coordinates of its existence are not easily plotted. It is an indeterminate urban condition struggling between defined domains. Urbanism and sub-urbanism, and the cultural presuppositions that constitute their formation collide, spreading indeterminate forms and spaces across the metropolitan surface. That surface, according to Lerup, is "unfinished, incomplete, waiting somewhere between development and squalor" (Lerup 2001, 47). It is elusive yet ubiquitous; it is at times permanent, others fleeting. The middle landscape remains *unseen* and yet it exists everywhere.

705 miles to the northeast at the dawn of a new century, a similar vision appears. Only the lights have brightened. Concentrated here, disparate there, others move in anticipation; restless, eager,

rapidly seeking their opportunity to displace the night sky. Somewhere in the shadows of this galactic field resides Atlanta's middle landscape; and amidst its indeterminate constellation of forms and spaces endures the potential (bleak as it may be) for critical and imaginative discovery. Where might it be found? In the tensions created by colliding cultural forces; in the ambiguous formal and spatial patterns subsequently manifest; in the men and machines who streak incessantly across their surfaces? Perhaps the answer lies somewhere in between.

THE CONTEMPORARY METROPOLIS

Figure 1.1. The Contemporary Metropolis

The entire agglomeration of varying development types occurring in and around the traditional city center will be referred to here as the 'Contemporary Metropolis.' For one, Metropolis is used by a number of contemporary urban theorists whose theses are broad, divergent, and at times oppositional. It should, therefore, retain enough neutrality to resist the biases and preconceived valuations that have been attached to the particular types of urbanization throughout their evolution. Furthermore,

Metropolis has been widely appropriated by municipalities and other policy-making entities to describe the imaginary boundary of an entire urbanized region. Here, imaginary is the operative word, as it is precluded that the metropolis has dissolved any such notion of, or relevance to, jurisdictional boundaries.

The Contemporary Metropolis is perhaps best characterized by the definition that Lerup provides in *After the City*: the Metropolis has "no definition" (Lerup 2001, 47). It is a palimpsest of indivisible patterns made up of many individual and various parts constituted by the collision of the traditional Euro-American city and the more recent suburb. According to Lerup, the Metropolis' particular "stabilities are not characterized by their firmness," as the forms of the city once were, "but rather by their dynamic, unpredictable instability" (Lerup 2001, 180). The Metropolis has morphed into an increasingly ambiguous collection of forms and spaces and can no longer be described using the binding language of the city. Thus, new conceptualizations of the Metropolis must be devised that rely not so much on stability and permanence as they do on temporality and dynamism. These new models must break free from the conceptual boundaries representative of conventional urban theory in order to respond to the dissolution of actual boundaries within the contemporary urban landscape.

In order to confront these new *(in)stabilities*, Lerup suggests that designers and theorists must "close the book on the City and open the manifold of the Metropolis" (Lerup 2001, 178). He expresses a necessity for urbanists to abandon their collective valorization of 'the City' (referring to the European notion of the city that persists in urban theory despite its increasing irrelevance) for it obscures the fact that the Metropolis is, in actuality, an amalgam of both city and suburb. As such, the Metropolis is infinitely more complex than its predecessor. No longer is it a logically ordered, cohesively arranged assemblage of interrelated components with a clear beginning and end. On the contrary, the Contemporary Metropolis is a boundless compilation of numerous and varying parts that are always in flux and perpetually colliding to form new and indeterminate spaces. So, if the Contemporary

Metropolis is a completely new and unique organism that imbues a tenuous relationship between the opposing cultural values and constitutive spaces that contributed to its formation – the city and suburb – then how do designers conceptualize and represent it?

THE CITY/SUBURB DICHOTOMY

The streaks, zones, and clusters of light observed from Lerup's Houston window are as incessant as they were a decade ago. And perhaps, just as blinding. The Contemporary Metropolis and its characteristic landscapes, according to Lerup's colleague Albert Pope, "remain virtually unseen and under-theorized…inaccessible not only to those who live in it, but often to those who specify its design" (Pope 1996, 5). Much of the sustained blindness can be attributed to the fact that those landscapes are indeterminate, unquantifiable, and unseen through the lens of the traditional city/suburb dichotomy. Although serious blockages remain, that dichotomy must be reconsidered.

Figure 1.2. City/Suburb

The suburb, the primary urban development type of the last century, must be seen not as a mere expansion of conventional urban form, but as an entirely unprecedented type of development. Paramount to successfully shifting perspectives is to first abandon the long-held belief that the suburb is subordinate to the city. As Pope intones, the Contemporary Metropolis "is much less about an extension of known convention than its antithesis, an inversion driven by rapidly accelerating curves of development, unprecedented demographic shifts, unique political catastrophe, and exotic economies of desire, all foreign to the forces which drove traditional urban development" (Pope 1996, 3). And yet, theorists and designers continue to view suburbanization as a sub-set of urban conditions that carry, in premature formation, the qualities and characteristics of the conventional *city*.

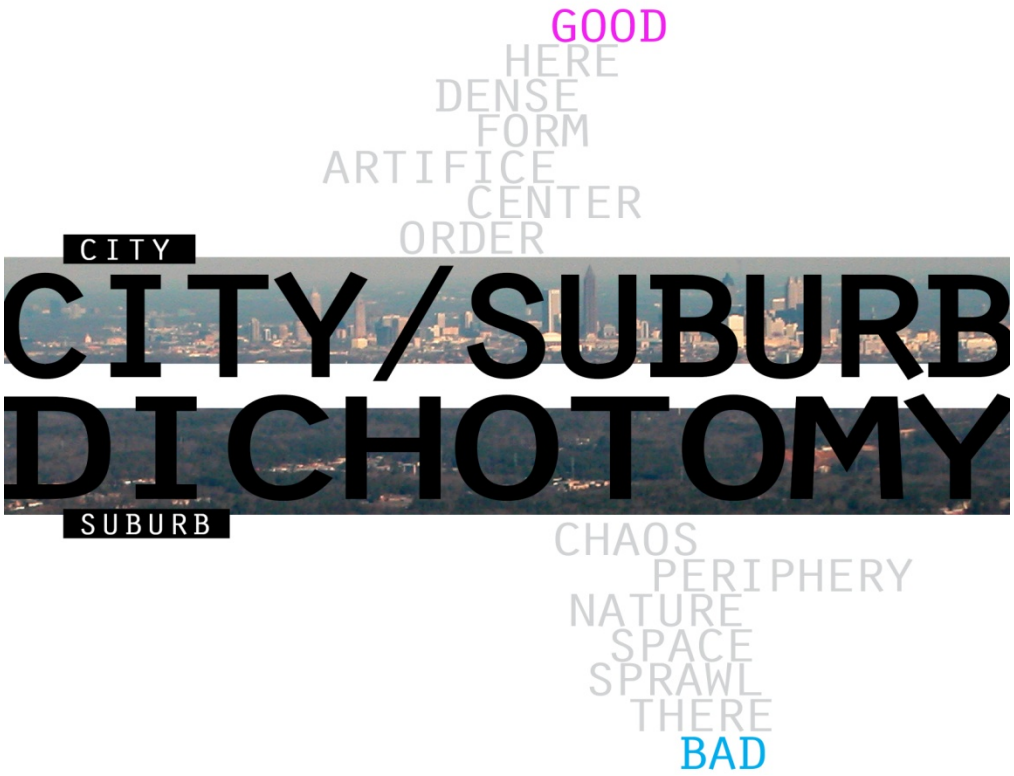


Figure 1.3. City/Suburb Dichotomy

Urban historian Dolores Hayden suggests that the ignorance by theorists and designers to raise the patterns of contemporary urbanization into discourse has led to an intellectual unpreparedness within the architecture and planning disciplines as a whole. She contends that "because of prejudices

about density, high culture, and gender, suburbia resists scrutiny" (Hayden 2003, 14). The suburb has eclipsed the city as the dominant metropolitan development type, yet "city biographies" continue to emphasize just that: the "city." The skyline, the downtown, the massing of forms that, through a conventional lens, appear to be urban remain in the foreground. The suburb, on the other hand, is viewed as a subordinate urban phenomenon. For one, it is composed at a much lower density. As a result, its primary attraction is nature not architecture; space not form; soft not hard; women not men. These hard versus soft, artifice versus nature binaries have inevitably led to a here versus there, good versus bad division that further obscures theoretical access to the Metropolis' characteristic landscapes.

In the last two decades, however, there have emerged several declarations by urban theorists to break free from the Modernist binary logic that pits the city against the suburb. Nan Ellin suggests that the city and suburb should not be considered oppositional, nor should the goal be to reduce the tensions between them. Rather, Ellin advocates that they be seen as complementary; each embraced as a means to "generate places of intensity with the lovely tensions they embody" (Ellin 2006, 93). Adopting such an approach concludes Ellin, will "bring our subjective, transactive, qualitative, and intuitive ways of knowing back to complement the objective, autonomous, quantitative, and rational ways of knowing" (Ellin 2006, 93).

As such, both city and suburb should be considered equal variables in the equation of contemporary urbanization. Or rather, as colliding bodies that, upon impact, create a host of cultural and spatial ambiguities that defy traditional urban definitions. In order to grasp those ambiguities, in order for the resulting tensions to manifest in culturally productive ways, Alex Wall demands that "new techniques of practice, new modes of representation, and new kinds of conceptualization" must be devised (Wall 1999, 246). Here, away from the actual making of landscape architecture, the latter two are confronted.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE MIDDLE LANDSCAPE

The middle landscape, as was suggested from the outset, is an indeterminate landscape condition formed from the collision of city and suburb. In order to conceptualize its constitutive spaces and forms, the cultural trajectories from which it was originally formed must first be understood. As James Corner intones, that landscape is "characterized by a general confusion of meaning and relationship between art and science, culture and nature, and objectivity and subjectivity" (Corner and MacLean 1996, 25). The tensions created from that confusion are none more apparent than in the throes of contemporary urbanization.

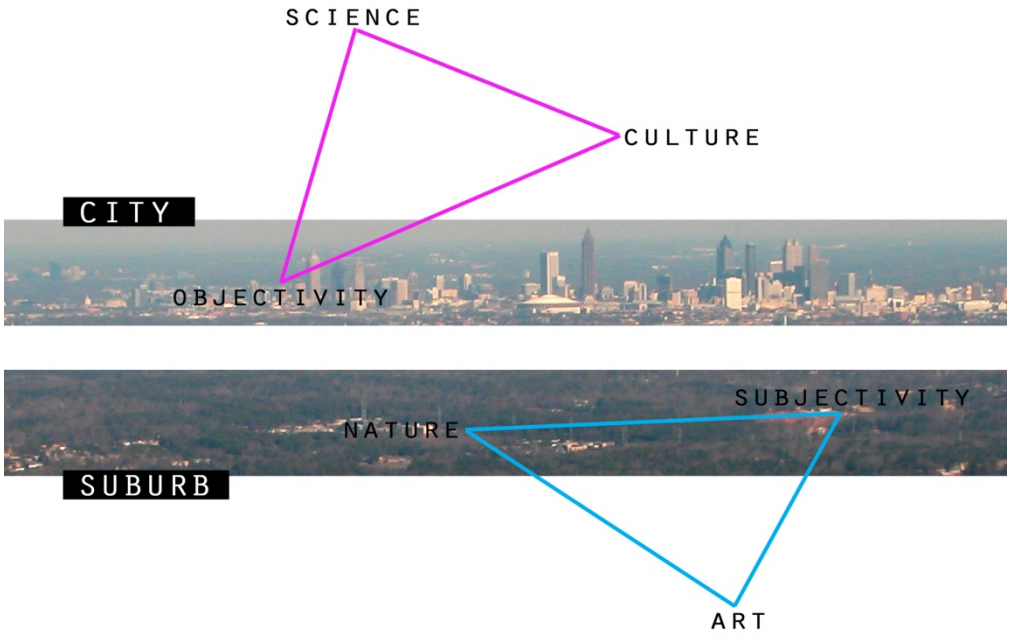


Figure 1.4. Cultural Trajectories

The city was assembled with geometric order and mathematical precision allowing humans to construct selective lattices between the intuitively perceived and scientifically known aspects of nature. In direct opposition to that scientific certainty, the suburb was formed from a desire to reconnect with nature in order to enhance physical health, facilitate spiritual enlightenment, and project social standing. In the last century the rapidly evolving Contemporary Metropolis has largely erased those

distinctions and become an admixture of both city and suburb, as well as the cultural proclivities upon which each was founded.

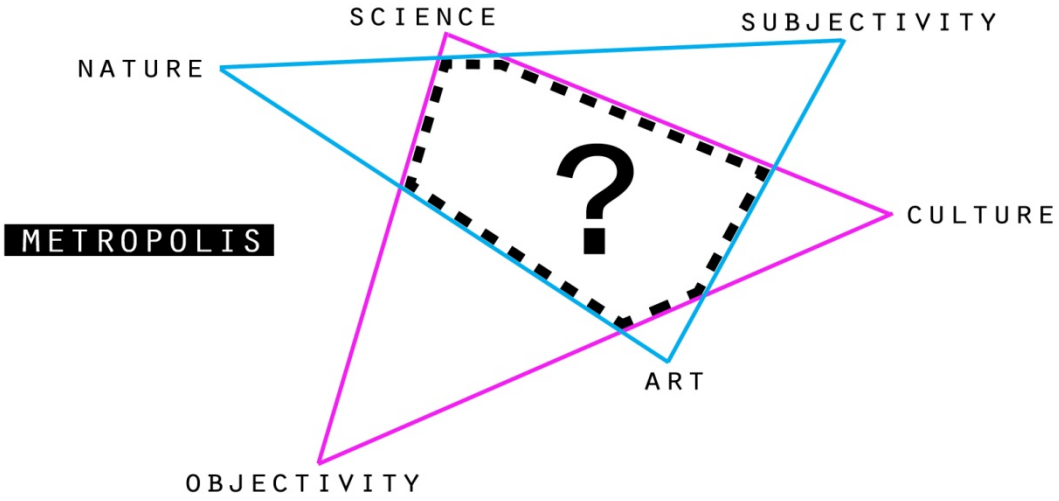


Figure 1.5. Metropolitan Admixture

No longer can the hand that forms its surface imprint the objectified (and, at times, nostalgic) gestures of order, permanence, and stability reminiscent of the city; nor can it rely on the isolated, organic, and picturesque forms of the suburb. The Contemporary Metropolis requires that each be embodied so that the characteristic spaces of its production respond to the complex values and processes of its culture. As Raoul Bunschoten suggests, "the hand forming the city must be a thinking tool…[making] representations of the world in which cultural differences are mapped out as both sources of conflict and sources for new forms of society" (Bunschoten et al. 2001, 32). The middle landscape provides the means by which those differences can be plotted; a mode of representation must be devised by which those new forms of society can be *seen*.

The middle landscape should be considered as much a framework for conceptualizing today's urbanized landscape as it is a physical place occurring on the surface. However, the agency of the middle landscape idea will not fulfill its operational potential unless its physicality is envisaged. Because its formation is the product of conflicting sources that are most often subliminal, ambiguous, or as

Bunschoten calls them “proto-urban,” how might designers begin to represent these dynamic processes in order to adequately project them back into the landscape? Bunschoten (as well as Corner) promotes a manifold approach that is “rational and intuitive, straightforward and devious, an approach which requires many means of operation, many techniques of communication, an approach which borrows from many different disciplines” (Bunschoten et al 2001, 34). The proceeding exploration situates itself precisely there: in between multiple and diverse sources, modes, and experiences.

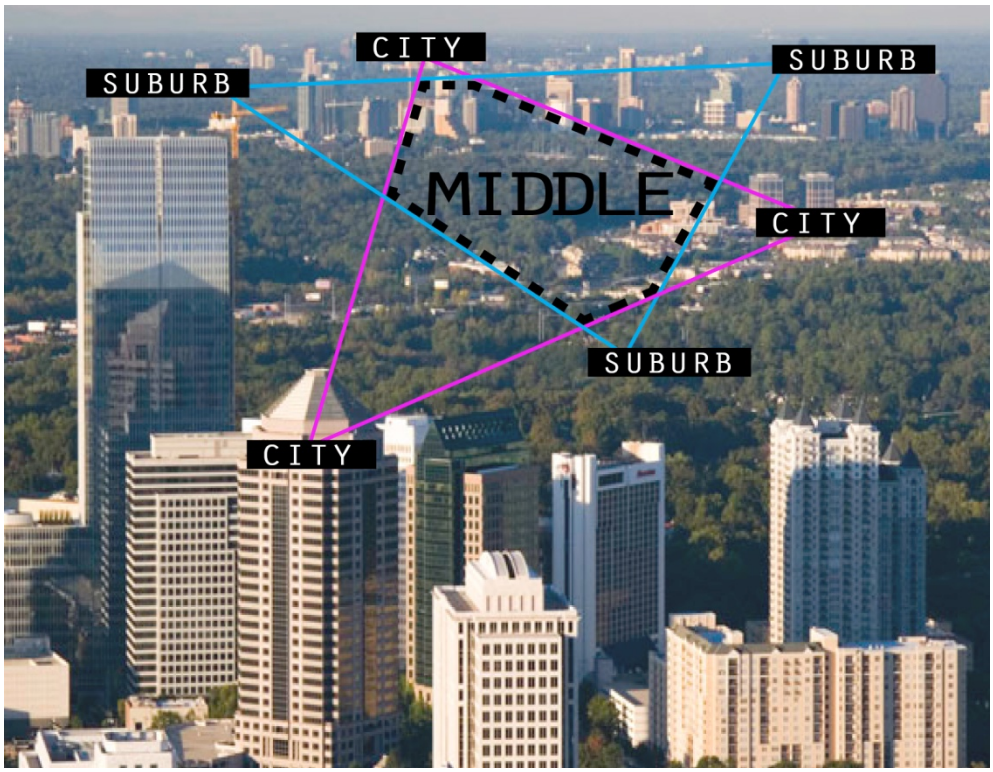


Figure 1.6. The Middle Landscape

REPRESENTING THE MIDDLE LANDSCAPE

The conceptualization of the middle landscape operates on the pretense that representation is fundamental to understanding its agency, and that a more subjective and imaginative mode than those traditionally employed by landscape researchers and designers must be developed. Presenting such an argument requires that a similar mode must be carried over to the document’s structure and formatting. This thesis is a compilation of image and text (and in most cases, images imbedded with

text). While verbal language has often been privileged as the optimal means of representing knowledge within the broader research culture, this manuscript synthesizes verbal thinking with image-based thinking as a means of engaging the more perceptual and subjective faculties of cognition. Thus, the images and text contained within were conceived and constructed with the same level of critical engagement and should be received and examined with an equal amount of analytical attention.

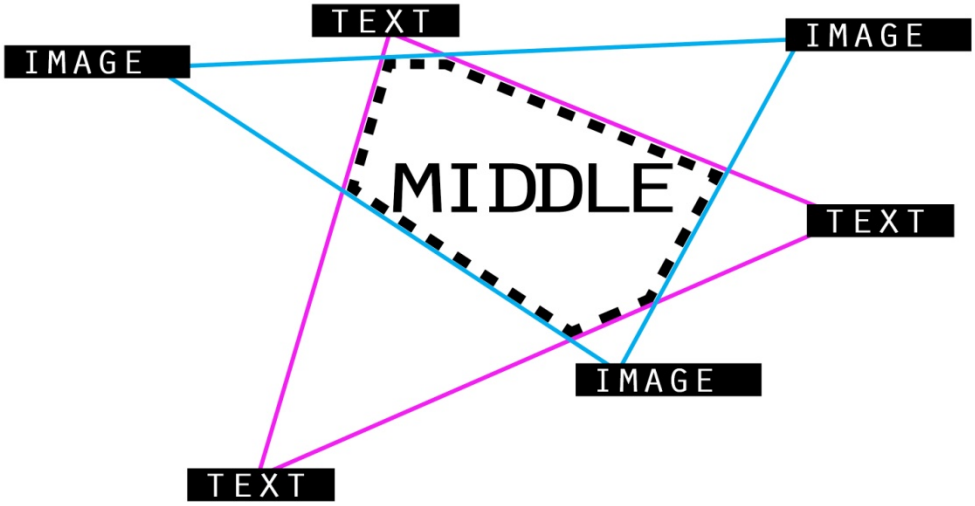


Figure 1.7. Image and Text

Such a format requires that both author and examiner discard the supplementary position that images have traditionally assumed in cultural research (just as they must discard the notion that the suburb is subordinate to the city), and instead, consider them complimentary. Therefore, each mode (image and text) can be read together in a linear progression, but each should also imbue the narrative capacity to stand on their own. The intent here is to enhance the perceptual and subjective faculties of the examiner so that multiple and varied readings are facilitated. In shifting between image and text, a reflective dialogue should emerge (in both its construction and reception; in both its maker and examiner), and amidst their synergistic unfolding, two questions prevail: how can an enacted mode of representation contribute to the re-conceptualization of the Contemporary Metropolis? And, how can

that mode, when enacted in Atlanta, Georgia's middle landscape, illuminate the imaginative potentials for the Metropolis' future design?

DESIGNING A METHODOLOGY

This thesis is structured linearly around two simultaneous threads: the chronology from city to Metropolis and the progression from text-based research to image-based research. The former establishes the cultural values that led to the inception of city and suburb, as well as the conceptualizations devised to describe their trajectories over time. The latter expresses the efficacy of a more perceptual and visual mode of representation, and becomes more and more operative as the former unfolds.

Because it is precluded that the Contemporary Metropolis demands new modes of representation, Chapter 2 establishes a visual language capable of *seeing* the ambiguities and tensions characteristic of contemporary urban production. Attention is paid to the cultural values that have been associated with text and image throughout modern history, thus, establishing a metaphorical linkage between those representational media and the cultural values that constituted the Metropolis' formation. Chapter 3 explores city and suburb through those same cultural undercurrents as they progressed from isolated environments to equal and indistinguishable variables in the equation of the Contemporary Metropolis. In Chapter 4, a synthesis of contemporary urban discourse is accompanied by visual interpretations of those concepts as applied to Atlanta, Georgia. The visual research gains equal footing with the more conventional textual research since the complexity of the Contemporary Metropolis is deemed inaccessible through verbal description alone. A revised equation for conceptualizing the Metropolis' indeterminate product – the middle landscape – is established. Chapter 5 enacts that equation through direct perceptual experience of, and critical engagement with, Atlanta's middle landscape. The visual language established in Chapter 2 is synthesized with the metropolitan theory presented in Chapter 4 culminating in a series of dialectical images accompanied by an

expressive, stream-of-consciousness dialogue. The images and text are then reflected upon, and the imaginative potentials and future realities that would have otherwise remained *unseen* if the conventional urban conceptualizations and written modes of representation were maintained throughout are set forth. Finally, in Chapter 6, a brief discussion on how those emergent potentials might be projected back into their original environments as direct design interventions, as well as the possible trajectories for future research, are posited.

Throughout, the notion of in-between permeates. Between the ambiguous landscapes manifest by the collision of the downtown and suburban domains; between the conceptual frameworks drafted throughout the history of that collision; and between the representational processes synthesized from a number of different disciplines. As such, this thesis is best interpreted as a collage of theory, experience, and expression that offers each individual examiner greater freedom of interpretation through their own theoretical, experiential, and representational subjectivities. By collaging the theoretical and existent dualities of the Contemporary Metropolis' middle landscape, new relationships and realities, or rather, new understandings of those relationships and realities will emerge.

CHAPTER 2

THE IMAGETEXT: REALIGNING MODES OF REPRESENTATION

In order to see we had to think; and we had nothing to think about if we were not looking.
-Rudolf Arnheim

REALIGNMENT

The discussion focuses presently on matters of representational theory. As a means of ensuring the relevance of the newly devised mode, a metaphor linking text to city and image to suburb is initiated. Verbal language (text) is equated to the city since each has been privileged throughout the modern era for their rationality, objectivity, and supposed clarity. Image parallels the suburb as it is based on many of the same perceptual and experiential tenets that provoked the earliest examples of peripheral urbanization. The collision, or rather, the collage of text and image emerges as the optimal means of representing the Contemporary Metropolis just as the city and suburb merged to form its middle landscape.

A visual language is distilled from the representational theory establishing a set of four principles that inform a new mode of representing the Metropolis. The images that accompany those principles are drawn from authors that represent a number of disciplines and time periods. They are intended to not only illustrate the concepts set forth, but to serve as independent research materials that give precedent and inspiration to the images made for subsequent chapters. Justifying the relevance of employing an image-based research method within the Contemporary Metropolis requires that its theoretical foundations always be linked back to the cultural foundations of American urbanization. Those foundations are hinted at here, but will be considered in much greater detail in the following chapter.

PRIMACY OF TEXT

Just as the Euro-American city was being formed from the objective and scientific rationale of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, similar concepts were being applied within the realms of philosophical and psychological research. These rationalist interpretations of the world led to a detachment between human perceptions and the environments on which they were impressed. By isolating any place, occurrence, or thing from its contextual system, the Enlightenment philosophers could reduce its existence to a set of quantifiable and objective truths. Reality came to be *seen*, not as natural phenomena perceived through human experience, but as a world comprised of static and inert objects accessed through measure, certainty, and control (Corner 1991).

The rationalist philosophers defined man's capacity to reason as a completely separate function from sensory perception. According to Descartes, the activity of the senses, man's perceptual capacity to imagine, was the operation of a passive and inferior capability. Receiving and processing perceptual information required the function of a superior faculty, and as Rudolf Arnheim suggests of the Cartesian perspective, one that was intellectually adept enough to "correct[ing] the errors that derive from sensory experience" (Arnheim 1980, 489). Perception, while accepted as a base cognitive tool, remained inferior to reason because of the *perceived* indistinctness of its resultant.

In the middle of the twentieth century the normative models of modern philosophy and psychology continued to promote the disassociation between sensory perception and thought. Such reluctance towards imagery as a cognitive tool is well represented by Jerome S. Bruner's *The Course of Cognitive Growth* (Bruner 1964). Bruner, from a Cartesian perspective, asserts that the terminal mode of processing the environment is "symbolic representation," or verbal language. Linguistic encoding, to Bruner, allows humans to construct selective lattices between the perceived and the known as a means of instituting order out of perceptual chaos. The use of imagery for cognitive processing, or "iconic representation" as he calls it, is little more than a transitory means of representing reality while the

linguistic operations of the brain develop and mature. This, of course, is not to suggest that iconic representation is expulsed by the human mind upon development of symbolic representation; just that, with the assumed prominence of the former, the latter is devalued.

The disbandment of visual perception as a cognitive tool, while initiated in the realms of psychological and philosophical research, is reinforced by the broader research culture. Arnheim, an early proponent for the union of perception and thought in academic theory, cites the negligence of visual arts within the academic system as a sign of the widespread disdain for visual thinking (Arnheim 1969). The arts are too often considered supplementary and they lose educational status. Concurrently, the "ruling disciplines" become more and more objective – concerned with the study of words and numbers – despite the fact that the arts play a fundamental role in developing reasonable and imaginative minds no matter the discipline. Arnheim suggests that such neglect stems from the tradition of describing perception as an inferior mode of cognition, and that there exist enumerable more symptoms in nearly every field of academic study.

W.J.T. Mitchell, in accordance with Arnheim, states that the departmental structures of universities "reinforce the sense that verbal and visual media are to be seen as distinct, separate, and parallel spheres that converge only at some higher level of abstraction" (Mitchell 1994, 85). Most often, the visual arts are included in this divisive categorization of human expression, and their intellectual prowess diminishes. As a result, the myriad of disciplines in which perceiving and thinking are intertwined, and that could otherwise benefit from the intellectuality of artistic thinking, are denied the opportunity. This despite Arnheim's argument that the union of perception and thought are not distinctive of the visual arts, but that, in fact, "truly productive thinking in whatever area of cognition takes place in the realm of imagery" (Arnheim 1969, v). Nevertheless, the written word has always been, and continues to be, the normative media within the broader culture of academic research.

THE ONLY PROBLEM WITH PERCEPTION IS A FEAR OF NOT KNOWING

***Bicycle Wheel*. Marcel Duchamp, 1913**
[Source: www.Picasaweb.google.com]

***Swans Reflecting Elephants*. Salvador Dali, 1937**
[Source: www.Fanpop.com]

Figure 2.1. The *Problem* with Perception

Characterized as a mechanical processing medium, a reflection of the mind's refinement of perceived information, verbal language is exalted as the essential instrument for intellectualizing sensory information (Bruner 1964). No doubt it is a powerful tool for describing perceptual information, but the implication that it is a necessary instrument for productive thought obscures the original traces of vision. In fact, it assumes that text, because of its instrumentality and precision, has the capacity to make the otherwise ambiguous and indiscernible images of reality accessible to human understanding. However, as has been set forth by Foucault (1972), Deleuze (1988), and Bogue (1996), the visible and sayable (or writable as the case may be) represent parallel forms of knowledge that, in actuality, are inaccessible by the hierarchical delineations imprinted on them throughout the modern era. Bogue, writing on Deleuze, stresses this modern misconception:

> the forces of the visible and the forces of the sayable are not the same, nor do the visible and the sayable directly relate to one another as referent to sign or signified to signifier. Each has its separate configuration of forces, even though the two do impinge on and influence one another. (Bogue 1996, 266)

As such, text is not a heightened refinement of the visible world; it is not without its representational inadequacies. The experiential and phenomenological aspects of the world (particularly relevant to the visual arts as well as the architecture and planning arts) are generally underrepresented by the linearity and one-dimensionality of written research, just as they were obscured by the order and precision of the city. As a result, the object world is oversimplified into a set of remote and arbitrary concepts that run the risk of alienating sensory perception and dynamic processes from the faculties of cognition. Congruous to Downing and Olmsted's promotion of natural experience as a means of enlightenment – as a means of counteracting the harshness and hardness of the city – images hold a representational potential that might free the mind from the objective and rational premonitions of written theory.

Challenging the sustained dominance of written research throughout time, Arnheim suggests that "language has been designated as the place of refuge from the problems incurred in direct perceptual experience; this in spite of the fact that language, although a powerful help to our thinking, does not offer in and by itself an arena in which thinking can take place" (Arnheim 1980, 490). The very belief that direct perception is problematic leads to the primacy of text rationale in representational theory, and it diminishes the power of the image for capturing the more expressive and subjective sensations of being in the world. So, just as the values of the city or suburb should not be privileged one over the other, the effectiveness of verbal language and imagery as representational tools should not be exalted or discredited. Instead, both text and image – along with the distinct cultural values of their products – should be considered equally as effective, just as the city and suburb have become equally as operational.

EQUALITY OF IMAGE

In the last half-century, the scientific and objective notions of truth and knowledge have begun to be challenged, and may provide some insight into the immediate task of representing the Contemporary Metropolis. Referring to the perceptual faculties of the human mind, Maurice Merleau-Ponty highlights the importance of images (both perceived and projected) in discerning truth and knowledge (Merleau-Ponty 1964). All that is seen and known and existent in the world is a product of human visual perception. It is image. Whether the reality is perceived for the first time by one mind's eye, or it is the reflection of a percept by another mind's eye (as in a landscape or any other cultural artifact), Merleau-Ponty's "image" holds more truth than any mere mechanical recording of sensory material. Hence, an image should not be seen as "a tracing, a copy, a second thing," that exists in some external realm, but the very arena in which thinking takes place. As such, Merleau-Ponty's establishment of reciprocity between the mind's eye and the object world creates a dialogue between *inside* thought and *outside* making that enables the development of new and emergent ideas.

REPRESENTING
EXPERIENCE
MUST TRANSCEND PURE
OBJECTIFICATION

***Live with Objects, Not for Objects*. Superstudio, 1972**
[Source: www.Flickr.com]

***Supersurface*. Superstudio, 1972**
[Source: Archone.tamu.edu]

Figure 2.2. An Objection to Objectification

Recent efforts by visual artist/researchers aim to give precedence to Merleau-Ponty's ontological speculation that imagery (both perceived and made) projects truth and knowledge. A 2001 conference held at the University of Plymouth entitled *The Enactment of Thinking: creative practice research degrees* focused on the value of visual intellectuality in research. As Macleod and Holdridge state in an editorial of the same title, "the conference was designed to advance nationally-based research into the complex intellectuality of creative practice and to acknowledge its potential contribution to the broader research culture" (Macleod and Holdridge 2002, 5).

By translating research into imagery, each featured artist based the intellectuality of their work on the theoretical premise of 'live time.' The theory upholds that the ontological interpretation of any creative practice cannot be predetermined or prejudged, and that knowledge is transmitted to both maker and examiner *a posteriori*. An inductive process derived from experience, 'live time' provides the occasion for the subjective interpretation of perception, and thus, meaning is allowed to shift, evolve, and grow over time. As such, 'live time' as research method, according to Macleod and Holdridge, "involves an intellectual process which is unconventional and, perhaps, unacceptable to the broader cultures of higher degree research" (Macleaod and Holdridge 2002, 7). However, if executed effectively, it "holds an intellectual persuasiveness that is constituted by the tension created between the normative academic culture and the broader culture of the life world" (Macleaod and Holdridge 2002, 7).

The "tension" that is embodied in the artist/researcher's work is particularly intriguing when considered within the realm of the Contemporary Metropolis. Because the Metropolis is constituted by the cultural and spatial tensions created from the collision of city and suburb, it requires a mode of representation that does not seek to neutralize those conflicts, but instead, revels in them. Image-making may imbue that potential since landscapes are inextricably tied to image. They are inseparable,

and as James Corner declares, “without image there is no such thing as landscape, only unmediated environment” (Corner 1999, 153).

Despite landscape’s propinquity for image, experience, and perception, Catherine Dee asserts that image-based studies “remain isolated and infrequent expositions in landscape research” (Dee 2004, 19). In terms of urban theory, one could argue that an image-based research method is more readily adaptable to the Contemporary Metropolis, because the very middle landscape idea is one of multi-dimensionality and tenuous collisions. Urban and landscape researchers, however, continue to rely heavily on the written word. While writing, according to Dee, “privileges [the] textual, semiotic and narrative dimensions” of landscape, images are more adept at examining its spatio-social, philosophical, and cultural dimensions (Dee 2004, 14). In the Contemporary Metropolis, an environment cloaked in spatio-social and cultural tensions, image-making must be reinstituted as an equally effective mode of representation as its textual counterpart.

Catherine Dee, along with Rivka Fine, is credited with drafting a method that constitutes the use of imagery as an investigative tool in landscape research. A *critical visual research* approach, according to Dee and Fine, “can be defined as one in which images are made to investigate a topic, attention is paid to a reflective visual process, and the final images form the main body of the research” (Dee & Fine 2005, 75). While images have long been used as a supplement to textual research in the landscape disciplines, Dee and Fine promote the use of imagery as an independent research material that establishes a reflective dialogue between maker and examiner. As Dee and Fine suggest, the true value of a critical visual research process “comes from [the researcher’s] engagement in the dynamic interaction between making and understanding” (Dee & Fine 2005, 76). Returning to Merleau-Ponty’s reciprocity theory on *inside* thinking and *outside* making, the critical visual researcher transcends the one-dimensionality of the conventional researcher in that they are able to assume the role of both maker and examiner.

But a fundamental difficulty in establishing critical visual studies within the realm of written research is a cultural presupposition that images are ubiquitous and have a primarily decorative purpose. The efficacy of imagery for the purpose of research requires that, as image maker, the images are imbued with clarity, consistency, and authenticity; and as image reader, the notion that images give instant access to meaning is discarded and replaced by a philosophy that they require critical engagement and analysis. According to Dee, serious engagement with images in a research setting is initiated by the researcher's inclination to seek out other images as source material. She asserts that propagating visual studies is closely related to a traditional research approach because

> [j]ust as researchers use literature reviews, contextual studies and text references, so the visual researcher will search, use as context and refer to visual sources. The very act of making images in response to both text and other images, or as the vehicle for studying a subject, changes understandings. (Dee 2004, 29)

Constructing critical imagery requires the researcher to make decisions that result in authentic representations of an idea. While they must involve the convergence, consistency, logic, coherence, and clarity assumed by conventional written research studies, they must also embrace the fact that images are ambiguous and that each reader brings their own unique perspective to the reading. This is not to say that the reader of written material is without subjective interpretation, but that imagery, in particular, incites heightened tensions between the intent of the maker and the interpretation of the reader. The convergence of intent and reception is that which makes images so culturally and critically dynamic in the representation of landscape, since each individual, in experiencing landscape, derives meaning based on their own memory and subjectivity.

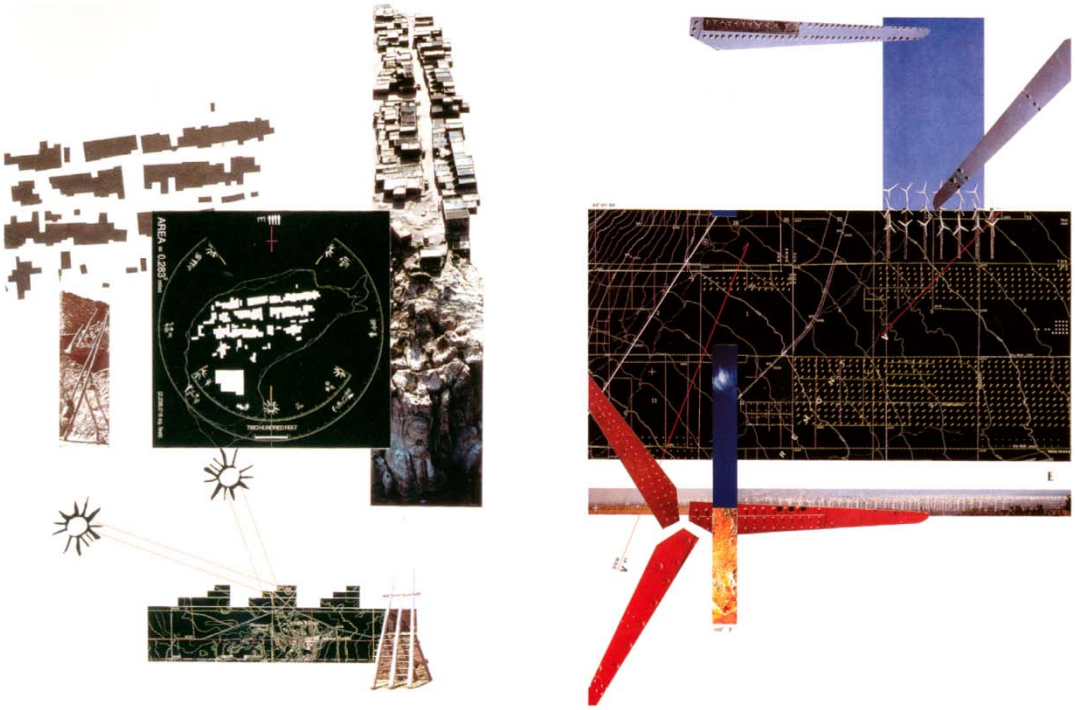
Critical visual thinking is well-suited in dealing with a subject matter that is rooted in the experiential and phenomenological qualities of space. The power of the image in critical thinking projects is its ability to explore the third dimension. Dee argues that "working visually stimulates spatiality in thinking," and it "enables aspects of landscape experience to be examined and communicated in ways that writing precludes " (Dee 2004, 28). The spatial and experiential

components of landscape are generally underrepresented in written research studies (if only because of the constraints of media), and, thus, image making as a critical exercise "enable[s] a stronger connection to the physical sensations of being in landscape" (Dee 2004, 28). Such an approach requires that the sensations of thinking, feeling, making, and looking must be integrated into the research in order for the topic to be better understood.

The experiential quality of an image-based approach relates closely to James Corner's concept of "eidetic operations" (from Greek eidetikos "pertaining to images," also "pertaining to knowledge") (Dictionary.com). Here, Corner advocates the need to represent landscape – a living and breathing thing with sights and smells and feelings and experiences that are largely determined by the observer – with more subjective and expressive forms of imaging. He believes that the architecture and planning arts (landscape architecture at the forefront) must shift their representational emphasis "from object appearances to processes of formation, dynamics of occupancy, and the poetics of becoming" (Corner 1999, 159). Underlying his charge is a philosophy that landscape architects should be less concerned with picturing the formal manifestation of their work, and focused more on facilitating and instigating its effects over time.

Here, Corner draws clear distinctions between the acts of picturing and imaging. While a picture seeks to capture or reflect reality, an image conjures up the invisible and subliminal forces constituting its existence. Therefore, understanding images "as idea formation," says Corner, "is integral to the conception and practice of landscape" (Corner 1999, 161). Imaging not only allows the image-maker to see (or imagine) otherwise unpicturable ideas, but it frees him to employ any number of representational media in tandem – whether it be verbal description, pictures, symbols, gestures, or measurements. Corner ultimately concludes that these types of composite images hold a greater potential for expressing matters of landscape than the "still-life vignettes" and technical working documents conventionally employed by landscape architects.

PICTURING IS TO MAKE RECORD OF; WHILE IMAGING IS TO THINK CRITICALLY ABOUT



***Acoma Pueble*. James Corner, 1996**
(Corner and MacLean 1996)

***Windmill Fields*. James Corner, 1996**
(Corner and MacLean 1996)

Figure 2.3. Image Don't Picture

COLLAGING IMAGE AND TEXT

So, what potential does a composite mode of representation hold for conceptualizing the Contemporary Metropolis and its host of middle landscapes? What specific types of imaging are best equipped to capture the dynamic cultural amalgamation of rational and subjective forces upon which these landscapes are formed? How can designers and theorists complement their established, instrumental modes of representation with more expressive and experiential techniques? Perhaps the answer is found between the colliding cultural values representative of verbal language and imagery, and in turn, city and suburb. Perhaps a collage of these forces will illuminate the yet unseen potentials – the invisible and subliminal forces – embodied by the Metropolis.

In all its elusiveness and ambiguity, the Contemporary Metropolis is a particularly appropriate subject for employing these more hybridized and composite types of imaging because it is, in and by itself, a montage of multiple and diverse ideas. In order to adequately represent it, those multiple and diverse components must have an equal bearing on its imaging. Thus, techniques such as composite montage, collage, and ideograms should be applied. Because the distinctions between these methods are blurry, and this exploration combines both written and image-based research, a term borrowed from Mitchell, "imagetext," will be considered as an all-encompassing technique.

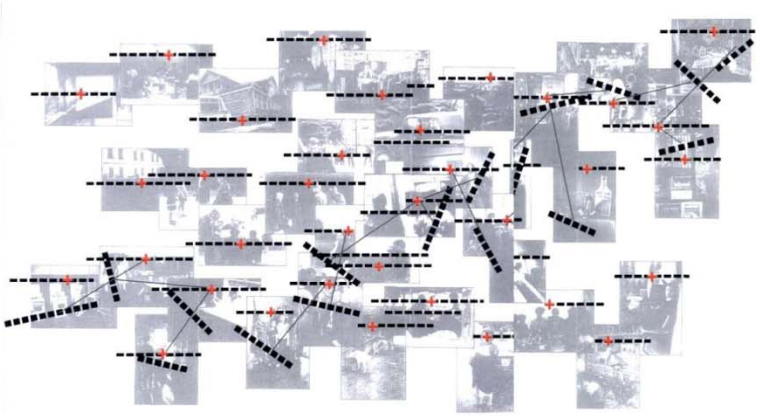
Imagetexts are, to return to Corner, "synthetic and dialectical composites of words and pictures that together contain and produce an array of striking and otherwise unpicturable images" (Corner 1999, 167). By combining two or more otherwise disparate or conflicting elements into one single image, new realities and imaginative potentials emerge – just as the Metropolis' (un)characteristic landscapes have ushered in new (and yet to be fully understood) meanings and values. Because imagetexts encompass multiple elements and representational media they transcend pure representation and picturing; instead, they have the capacity to body forth things and ideas that are neither foreseen nor prejudged. According to Mitchell, "the imagetext reinscribes, within the worlds of

visual and verbal representation, the shifting relations of names and things, the sayable and seeable, discourse *about* and experience *of*" (Mitchell 1994, 241). As such, the imagetext provides an avenue by which the designer/researcher can create "dialectical" images (dialectical in the Platonic sense, meaning "things that are provocative of thought") rather than immediately comprehensible objects.

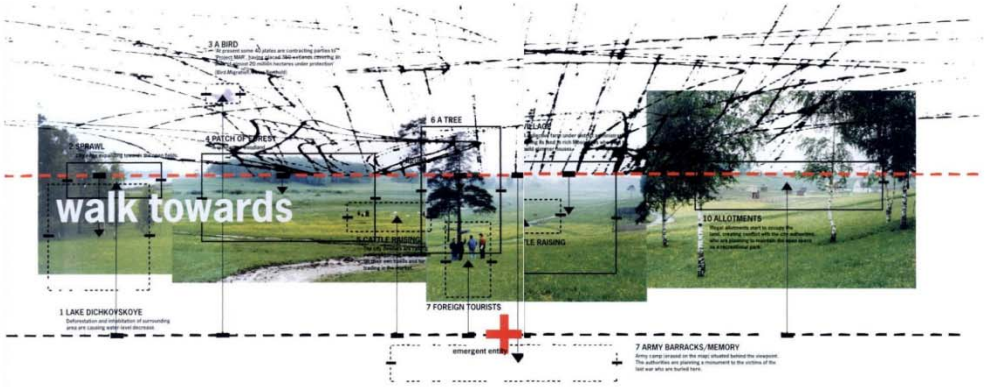
The true efficacy of such a mode, then, is two-fold. First, it requires critical engagement by the image-maker that, in turn, focuses his attention toward the durational experience of *creating* rather than on *the created*. Second, it provides the examiner an occasion for experiencing difference and contradiction, and thus, encourages him to project his own experiences and subjectivities back onto the image as meaning is being discerned. As Mitchell concludes, the imagetext represents "a shift from an epistemological frame to a poetics or metaphysics of experience" (Mitchell 1994, 254). In this sense, it can be seen as a divergence from the objective and scientific rationale of modern description, and instead, as a realignment with the pre-modern notions of nature and art (*nature* in the sense of 'being in the world'; and *art* as 'a reflection of that being'). Its ultimate product, then, is less a static, objectified conception of reality as it is a critical interpretation of the poetics of becoming.

Because the constitutive spaces and forms of the Metropolis defy the definitions of the city, and no longer imbue the nature and harmony of the original suburb, it is unlikely that complete understanding will ever be achieved through the lens of an isolated perspective. As such, experience and subjectivity must be collaged with established objective knowledge as a means of obtaining clarity from the otherwise elusive environment. Experience initiates the process towards enlightenment, and only after the visible is envisioned, can objectified forms be imprinted back onto the metropolitan surface. The exploration at hand, both that which has been drafted and that which has yet to unfold, remains in the realm of experience and subjectivity. It operates on the pretense that the subject of discourse has yet to be *seen*, and thus, it devotes itself to illuminating it.

THE ACT OF
CREATING
ILLUMINATES
OTHERWISE UNSEEN
POTENTIAL



***How to See*. Raoul Bunschoten, 2001**
(Bunschoten et al. 2001, 98)



***Walk Towards*. Raoul Bunschoten, 2001**
(Bunschoten et al. 2001, 82)

Figure 2.4. Illuminate the Unseen

As was mentioned earlier, the Contemporary Metropolis requires, not only new modes of representation, but new types of discussion and conceptualization. Having delineated the theoretical foundations of an adequate representational mode, the succeeding chapter reconsiders the conventional city/suburb dichotomy as a means of initiating a new conceptual framework. The same cultural values associated with text and images remain at the forefront of the discussion, only now they are considered in the context of urban transformation.

CHAPTER 3

THE CONTEMPORARY METROPOLIS: RECONSIDERING THE CITY/SUBURB DICHOTOMY

There were a hundred thousand shapes and substances of incompleteness, wildly mingled out of their places, upside down, burrowing in the earth, aspiring in the earth, moldering in the water, and unintelligible as in any dream. –Charles Dickens

RECONSIDERATION

In order to understand the indeterminacy of the middle landscape as manifest in the Contemporary Metropolis, the cultural values that originally constituted its bipartite amalgamation must first be characterized. As such, this chapter explores the historical formations and subsequent conceptualizations of the city and suburb, and their ultimate collision to form the Metropolis. The discussion begins with an account of the American city and suburb as they were originally formed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their collision, in terms of both constitutive cultural values and spatio-formal manifestation, is set forth as the primary force driving urban development in the early to mid twentieth century. It is then posited that urbanization in the mid to late twentieth century resulted in an eclipse of the conventional city/suburb dichotomy, despite the fact that most theoretical frameworks failed to recognize it. Finally, as a result of these evolutions, it is determined that the Contemporary Metropolis requires new types of conceptualization (along with the new mode of representation already devised) in order for its full, liberating promise to appear.

THE CITY

In 1926 sociologist Ernest Burgess drafted his classic monocentric model of describing the American city (Burgess 1926). Using Chicago as a case study Burgess divided the city, moving outward from the downtown core, into a series of concentric rings that followed a gradated pattern from dense to sparse, vertical to horizontal, commercial to residential, lower income to higher income. The

downtown business district constituted the core; it was immediately surrounded by warehouses and factories, which were surrounded by the working class homes that powered those industrial entities. Towards the outer edge a zone of upper middle class neighborhoods were surrounded by a ring of luxury residences that constantly pushed the boundaries of the city.

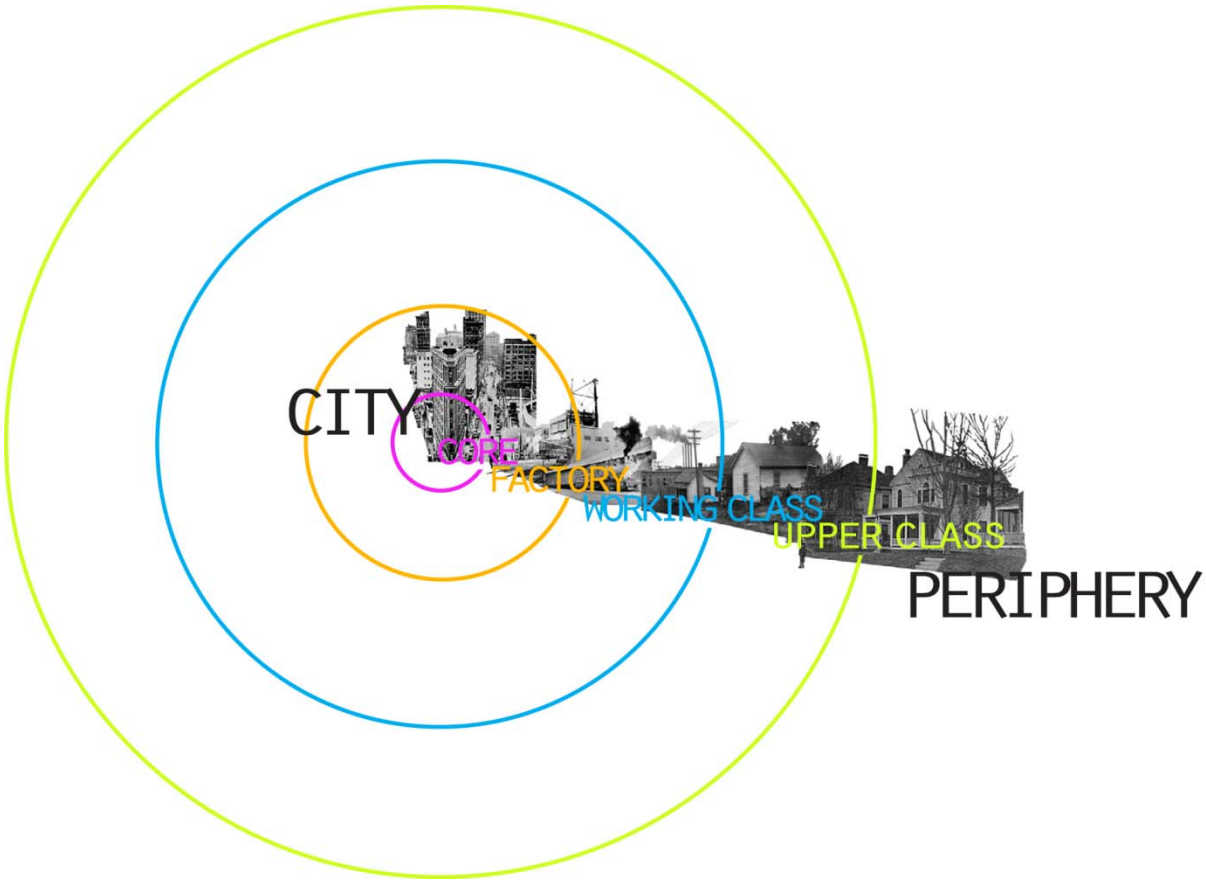


Figure 3.1. Concentric Zones

The "concentric zone" model operated on three basic assumptions: cities expanded from a centralized point, their components could be objectively defined, and each supplementary ring could be classified based purely on its distance from the centralized core. Burgess' neatly arranged zones were hard-edged. The rigidity of the edges served to delineate clearly defined boundaries allowing the city to be objectively measured. They were derived from empirical and statistical data that measured the proximity, scale, form, and function of Chicago's culturally conceived artifice. The zones proved

effective in conceptualizing the spatial patterns of a stable and rationally ordered city; for it was those very same values upon which that city was originally built.

The early American city was built in the wake of the scientific revolution, and its expression as cultural artifact responded to the values of that time. It was formed from a technocratic rationale that privileged scientific certainty and mathematical precision as a means of instituting order from nature's perceptual chaos (Upton 1998). Its formal manifestation was most often a gridded street pattern that emanated from a centralized point of origin symbolizing the stability and immanence of the polity. The first formalization of this practice, prescribed by words only, appeared in the *Laws of the Indies* – legislation by Spanish Kings to dictate town form in colonial America (Figure 2.2). The grid organized space around the central authorities of the city – government, commerce, religion – and its spatial and organizational ideals established what Dell Upton posits was "a legible centre-periphery, public-private, or authority-subject relationship" (Upton 1998, 59).

The resulting system of continuous and congruous rectangular voids were easily subdivided and sold envisaging a socially integrated landscape that was politically and economically orderly. Highly formal, equally as efficient, the compounding city became a densely packed agglomeration of buildings centered on a plaza or square and cemented together by the continuous network of streets. The city's characteristic open spaces were not parks, and certainly not remnants of the chaotic nature that loomed beyond its edge. On the contrary, nature – or the unmediated environment – was a threat to the authority of church and state, for it lacked the order and discipline upon which the American politico-religious doctrine of civility was founded. Instead, those open spaces were most often a treeless plot of land; the negative – or void – created from the architecture flanking its edges. Their order and stability was not only a product of the surrounding architectonic structures, but also a result of their function as they hosted a multitude of highly intentional and authoritative activities – military training, religious ceremony, and public council (Upton 1998).

Figure 3.2. Imprinting Order from Chaos

By the mid nineteenth century, the American city underwent rapid expansion in terms of both density and total land area as rationalist scientific principles were appropriated by industrial enterprises. Cultural undercurrents consumed with conquering and subduing nature evolved from being a purely socio-political/politico-religious phenomenon to a means of ensuring human productivity and autonomy (Rogers 2001). An industrial or machine-like society was born. The techniques, technologies, and engineering solutions that were developed to ensure the expedience and efficiency of material production were thus applied to formal cultural production. That is, the buildings and infrastructures of the city increased in scale and operative potential further blotting out the natural environment on which they were built. While this technocratic city was seen as engendering increased economic efficiency and thus, social freedom, it also led to the tragic and inhuman disregard for people's lives – primarily, the more phenomenological and perceptual qualities of being in the world.

As the objectified rationale of the early American city evolved to represent not only order and stability but also productivity and commodity, any previously upheld union between culture and nature was completely and utterly admonished. This shift in reason begot the separation of the human from his phenomenal world, and for the first time, cultural intervention subsumed dominance over nature

(Corner & MacLean 1996). The world came to be understood and measured not by cosmology, not by human proportion, not by the phenomenal and imaginative dimensions of reality, but by the rational, economical, and technological precision of objective and scientific truth.

Burgess' concentric framework, drafted at the peak of American industrialization, was directly influenced by this rational and technocratic conception of the city. However, as was mentioned earlier, the outer edge of his framework had already begun to show signs of divergence. While Burgess interpreted the city's outer zone as the inevitable expansion of a burgeoning economy, he failed to recognize a divergent cultural manifestation underway for at least a half-century prior. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the city center became increasingly urban – dense, crowded, hard. Born from a discontent with these harsh urban conditions, cultural countercurrents began to emerge on the periphery (of both the city and cultural discourse) that threatened the efficacy of Burgess' model and the order and stability that had been maintained throughout the young history of the American city.

THE SUBURB

The suburb, to use social scientist Robert Lang's definition, "began as an ambiguous urban subcategory wedged between city and countryside," and its inception, according to Hayden (2003), can be traced as far back as 1820 when the development of borderlands and picturesque enclaves began to dot the periphery of the city (Lang 2003, 29). As the nineteenth century wore on the city became congested with a growing population and an intensifying industrial presence. These "undesirable" living conditions incited a cultural desire to engage with, and live amidst, nature. Propagated by the upper echelon of society, dwelling amidst nature became not only a sign of good taste, but also of intellectual and spiritual enlightenment (Hayden 2003).

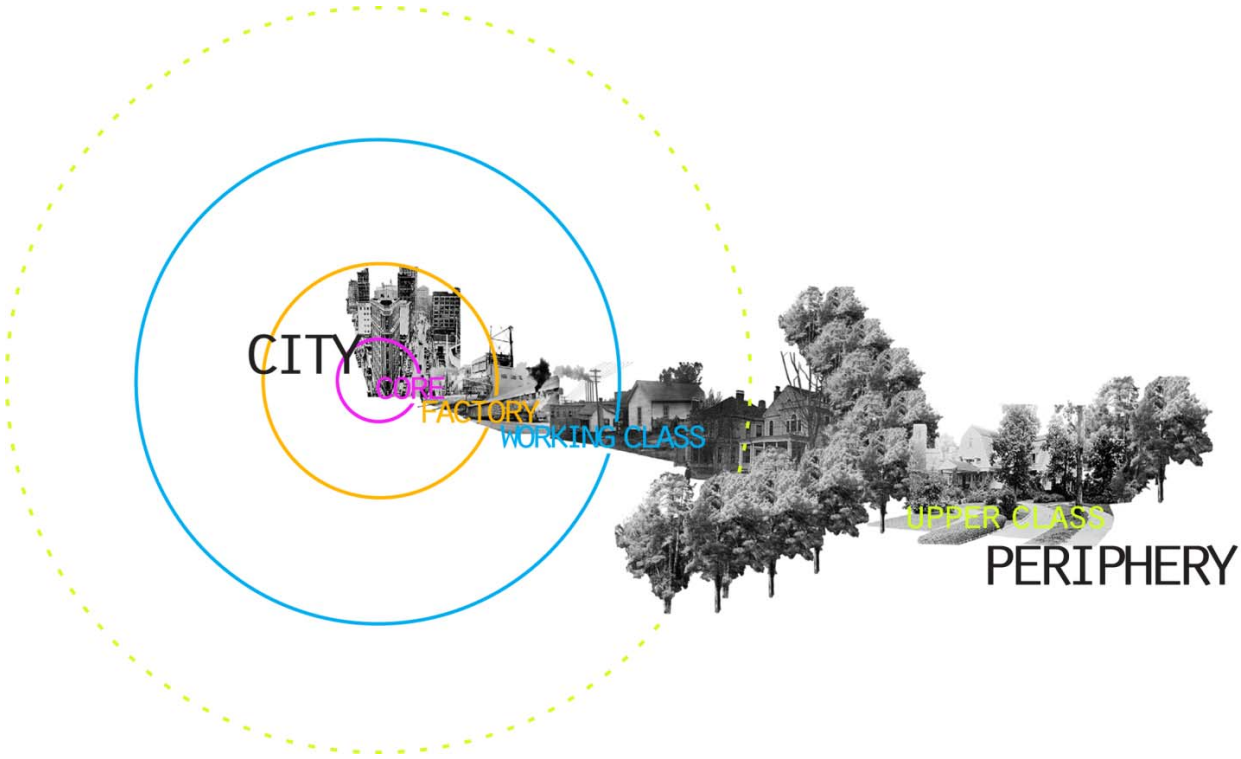


Figure 3.3. Peripheral Push

Popularized in the literature of Andrew Jackson Downing and later, the town planning of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, the idealized notion of civilized dwelling took on the two part articulation of house amidst nature. Downing's treatise presented a romanticized vision of domesticity that imbued a sense of socio-cultural status allowing privileged citizens to cleanse themselves of the day to day operations of the city. Essential to his charge was an attempt to reinstate the pre-modern notion that truth and harmony were derived from *being* in nature. Embracing the natural world in everyday life, according to Downing and the Romanticists of the nineteenth century, could enhance an individual's access to intellectual and spiritual enlightenment. As such, the idealized notion of domesticity – the single family cottage surrounded by picturesque parkland – was adopted by the city's prosperous families as a means to offset the harmful side-effects incurred from the city's urbanism, capitalism, and industrialism (Upton 1998).

This desire for domestic separation from urban life required that a sufficient *natural* buffer be instituted between the home and the city. Considering the divergent forms and isolated proximity of Downing's borderlands alone would suggest a complete separation from the city. However, because isolated domestic life was still infinitely tied to the functional agency of the city – its basic services, day to day business transactions, and cultural activities – complete separation could not be sustained. What Downing failed to recognize in his romanticized version of the American dream was the paradox inherent to fleeing a constantly advancing city while remaining intrinsically tied to its daily processes and operations. Sooner than later, those isolated borderlands would not be so distant, and the spatial and formal rationale of the city would begin to contaminate the purity of his picturesque dwellings.

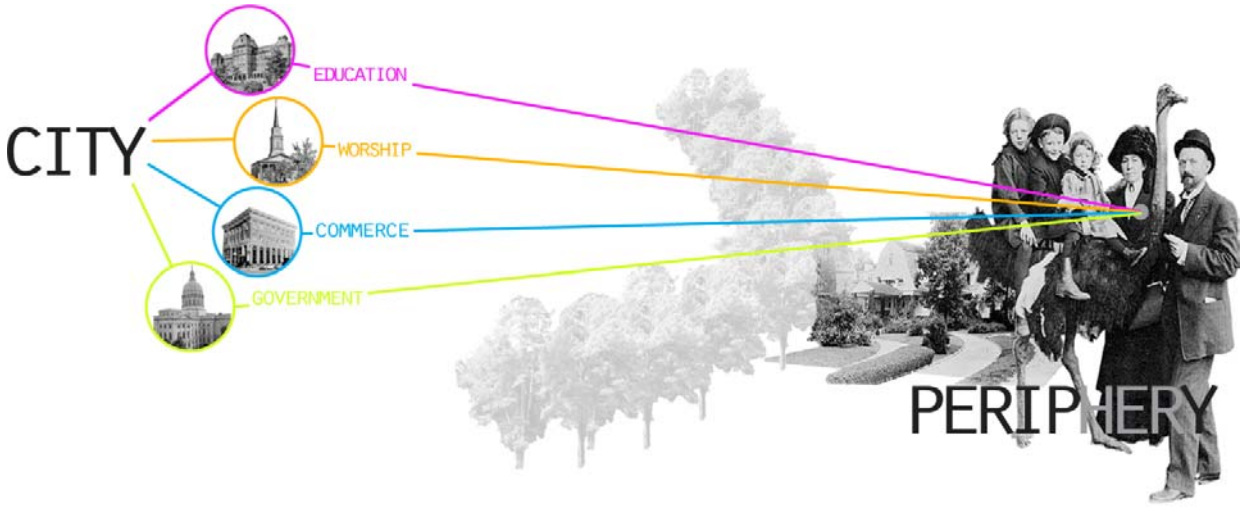


Figure 3.4. Incomplete Separation from City

Olmsted and Vaux, however, rejected the isolation promoted by Downing. In an attempt to cater to "the strong tendency of people to flock together in great towns" while also offering them "the special charms and substantial advantages of rural conditions of life" their master plan for Riverside, Illinois (1869) was perhaps the earliest attempt at integrating the city with the domestic ideals of the periphery (quoted in Upton 1998, 73). Diverging from the order and stability of the grid, Riverside was laid out with curvilinear streets that responded to the natural topography of the land without inhibiting the creation of sub-divided parcels. The houses were set amidst heavy plantings harkening back to

Downing's borderlands, but their philosophical equation for dwelling amidst nature added a third variable. Community was fostered as a means of providing residents the social functions of the city while maintaining the purity of the country.

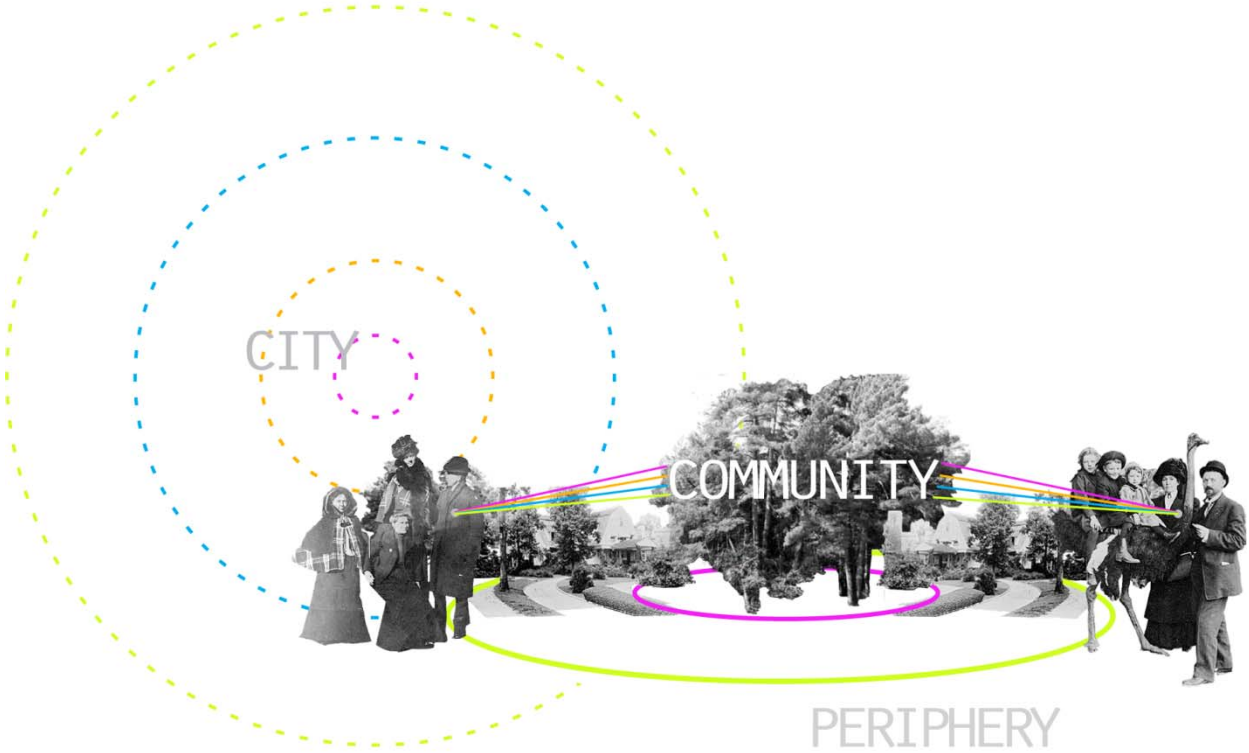


Figure 3.5. Preserving City without City

Community was imperative to the theoretical and spatial foundations of the picturesque enclave. Riverside, as well as Llewellyn Park in West Orange, New Jersey, was patterned around shared open space that Hayden suggests was a "manifestation of a wider communitarian movement whose adherents believed that building a model community in a natural setting led to the reform of society" (Hayden 2003, 45). This point is particularly salient in considering suburbanization as a completely divergent type of urban development. As such, it represents a taming (as opposed to conquering) of nature to facilitate the social assets of the city within a newly devised type of environment that was intentionally and explicitly not the city. However, due to domestication, neither was it country. In hind

sight, these attempts at socializing nature actually opened the doors for the city to encroach upon the country. The American suburban experiment was set in motion.

THE COLLISION

No longer was the periphery strictly a place for people who worked in and profited from the city to retreat to greener pastures. Instead, they also became a place in and of themselves where a profit could be made. As such, opposition over land became the defining force of the suburbanizing American landscape throughout the early to mid twentieth century. As Hayden notes, the "contest began as a cultural tension between rural farmers…and more sophisticated residents who worked in the city," but as economic growth continued, the inexpensive and available land outside of the city began to be overtaken by speculative real-estate developers, which were soon followed by industrial and commercial enterprises alike (Hayden 2003, 22).

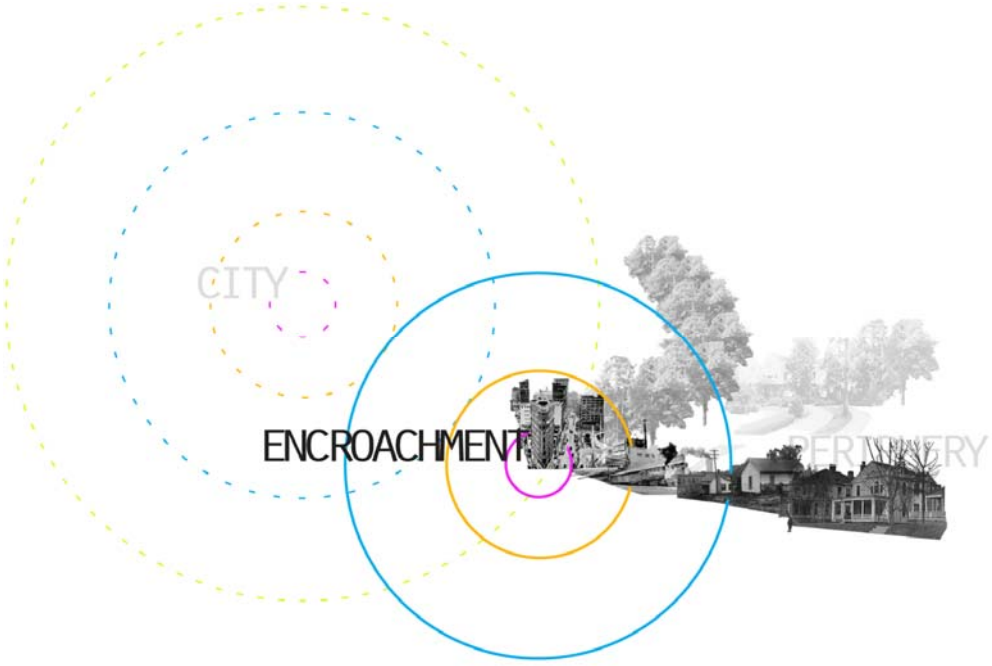


Figure 3.6. The City Encroaches

At the peak of American industrialization the encroachment of the city into the periphery began to occur more rapidly and with less spatial stability. The cultural values constituting the creation of

borderlands and enclaves were maintained as a means of marketing suburban development, yet the forms and spatial arrangements that were actually manifest represented a complete divergence. The primary suburb types of the early twentieth century were subdivided real-estate developments that followed the major transportation corridors out of the city. (Hayden 2003) These suburban buildouts, which were primarily residential in the beginning, were created by owners of large tracts of land and marketed as an antecedent to the borderlands and picturesque enclaves preceding them. They promised to fulfill the dreams and desires that had spurred the initial peripheral push – freedom and enlightenment through nature, idealized domesticity, property ownership, community – and yet they too often resulted in a distilled and objectified type of settlement that was inert and homogenous.

The *natural* buffer that had once differentiated peripheral development from the city remained, but became increasingly sterile and protective. This nature was preternatural. The requisite *cordon sanitaire* surrounding subdivisions, and the well-kept lawns contained within, became the nature of the early to mid twentieth century as owners of large-tracts of peripheral land marketed a cut-rate dream of idealized domesticity. In actuality, they promoted the capitalism and commoditization of the city. Only now it was disguised by the acreage and spreading spaciousness reminiscent of the periphery. (Hayden 2003)

This preternatural alloy of nature and artifice (to borrow yet another phrase from *After the City*) became far more detrimental to the American city than its misleading portrayal of the domestic ideal. Instead, it set in motion a completely new type of urban growth that dissolved the traditional city-suburb/center-periphery dichotomy and thus, perpetuated rapid and rampant horizontal expansion. Coupled with evolving transportation technologies (the progression from carriage to streetcar to automobile) urban development set out on a collision course of consumption, construction, and haste. With large populations abandoning the airless, unhealthful city centers, it was inevitable that industrial and commercial enterprises were soon to follow.

As these economically driven developments began to dot the periphery, there emerged heightened tensions between multiple domains. The occupants of these newly devised quasi-borderlands were now confronted with the urban functions that they initially sought to escape. The forms of the city, albeit at a lower density, began to swallow up the nature of the periphery's fields, woods, and meadows. That initial dream of isolated domesticity was commercialized making it more accessible to the middle and working class populations. While these new iterations of the suburbs became inherently more urban in function, their characteristic landscapes maintained the spaciousness reminiscent of the periphery (Hayden 2003). With every subsequent development adopting that model, urban growth began to leapfrog its way further and further from the hard urban core. However, new edges that were foreign to any previous conceptualization of city subsequently emerged.

Figure 3.7. Leaping Toward Collision

Burgess' framework became less and less relevant as the commercial and industrial developments increased along the major transportation corridors out of the city. Here, the characteristic functions of the urban core collided with the characteristic spaces and forms of the periphery resulting in new types of urban development that manifested at a very different scale and density. Increased ambiguity between the dynamics of the conventional city/suburban dichotomy

subsequently emerged, and the divisions between them took on a finer-grained complexity. The linear nature of these suburban developments disrupted the gradated order of the city's spatial structure. Land uses that were historically contained in the core began to cut perpendicularly across the concentric zones. A new layer of urban edges were introduced to the city that defied the concentric models previously used to understand them. The city dispersed and collided with the suburb.

Several revised conceptualizations were drafted that sought to capture the multivariable structure of the accelerating city, but failed to completely abandon Burgess' primary tenets. Economist Graham Taylor, a contemporary of Burgess, developed his "Satellite City" model to account for these structural changes (Taylor 1915). By acknowledging the emerging peripheral nodes of urban operation, Taylor describes the Satellite as a "city trying to escape the consequences of being a city while remaining a city" (quoted in Lang 2003, 28). Despite their initial divergence, Taylor argues that these urbanizing nodes could be individually characterized in terms of proximity, scale, form, and function, just at a slightly lower density and on a smaller scale.

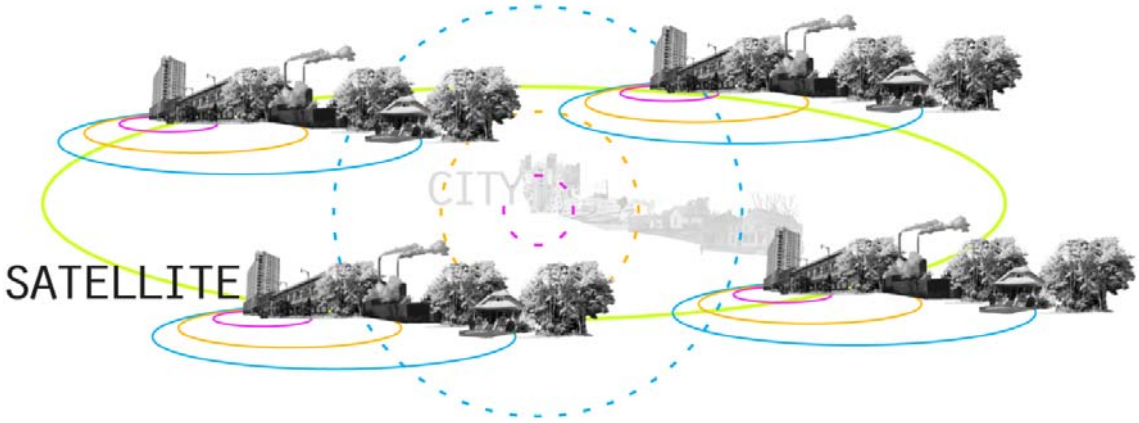


Figure 3.8. Orbiting Satellites

Taylor's satellites contained all of the socio-economic and functional features of the city, while retaining only some of the spatial and formal characteristics. There were main street commercial

districts, warehouse and factory districts, and relatively dense residential neighborhoods. He even noticed the emergence of taller office towers that began to express the satellite's supposed mimicry of the city. These secondary cores, while they remained dependent on the traditional downtown, were implied by Taylor and others to be landscapes in transition. According to these conceptualizations, the suburb was a premature development type on its way to becoming a downtown core. As such, suburbanization was not assumed to be an unprecedented type of development, but instead, as an early and incomplete iteration of the centralized type that came before it.

These development patterns of the early to mid twentieth century ensured that the nature inherent to the original borderlands and enclaves would never be sustained, but also that Taylor's peripheral nodes would never reach their presupposed state as cities. With increased mobility, the greener pastures beyond the urban edges (plural, since there were now many) became more and more accessible. And by 1950 the peripheral nodes had yet to assume the density, infrastructural foundation, or formal character of the more mature urban core. Urban growth, instead, continued to expand horizontally. The result was more and more individual nodes of less intense urban operation scattered around the periphery. The boundaries essential to Burgess and Taylor's conceptual frameworks began to dissolve at an increasing rate. A complete conceptual overhaul became imperative.

THE ECLIPSE

In 1958 William Whyte, along with a number of other urban theorists, published their seminal compilation of editorial essays entitled "The Exploding Metropolis." Originally featured in *Fortune* magazine, their discourses on urbanization animated the post-World War II metropolitan boom in ways that were completely divergent from any prior conceptualization of the city. In his introduction to the series, Whyte suggests that "there seems to be a growing alienation between the city and what most people conceive of as the American way of life" (Whyte 1958, 8). His statement implied, for the first time in popular discourse, that the city's traditional strength as a unifying force had all but disappeared.

The lines of separation between the urban core and the suburban growth occurring around it became, at best, hazy. The metropolis had eclipsed the city.

In the eight years prior to the publication, the areas of the metropolis that were conventionally referred to as the suburbs experienced a twelve-million person increase, while in contrast, the traditional city only acquired an additional two-million (Whyte 1958). Many inner-cities even saw a decrease in population as people were no longer drawn inward by the commerce and services that the city center once exclusively offered. That center, as Whyte pessimistically declares, "seems useful to most citizens [only] as a way to get from one freeway to another" (Whyte 1958, 9). As the virgin lands outside of the city were developed at increasing rates, the city, too, began to look and feel more like a suburb. Here the spreading spaciousness was not created from a desire for preternatural domesticity, but as a byproduct of those desires. As the periphery populated, the downtown vacated. Old neighborhoods were cleared for apartment houses and parking lots, uninhabitable residential towers were proliferated, and the streets emptied (Whyte 1958).

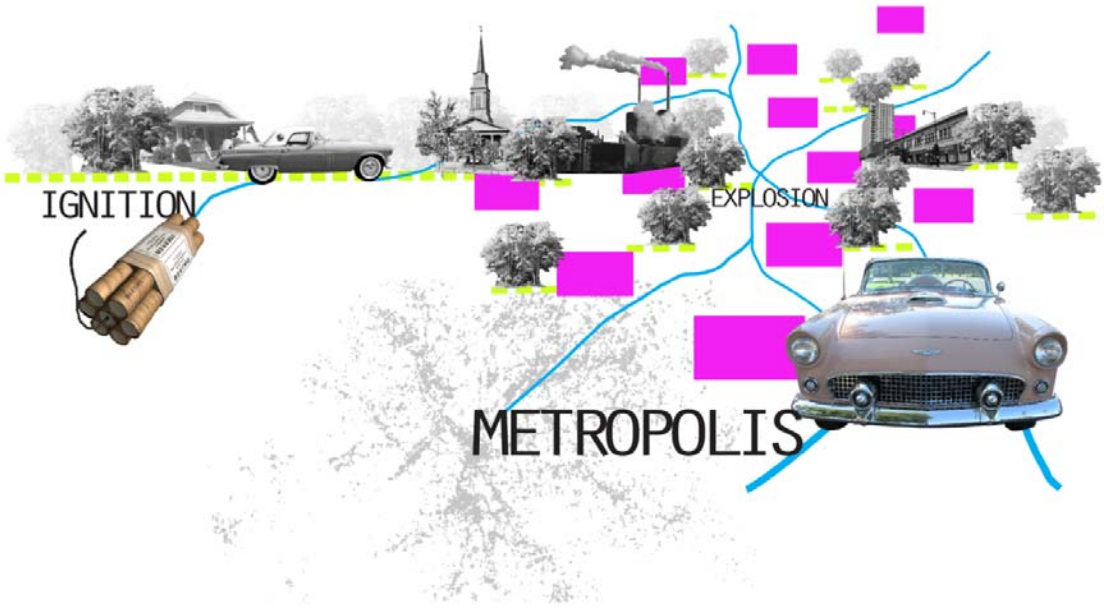


Figure 3.9. Detonation

The essays appearing in "The Exploding Metropolis" were unprecedented in the fact that they recognized suburbanization as the predominate type of urban development. However, since Whyte and his colleagues were all proponents of the traditional Euro-American city upon which the country was originally built – its human scale, heterogeneity, entrepreneurial spirit, and cultural diversity – their conceptualizations were still largely based from that perspective. The ultimate result was the initiation of an anti-sprawl rhetoric that heightened the dichotomy between city and suburb, and that has led to stagnation in urban discourse today.

At the time, their reactionary criticism was well-intentioned, well-informed, and immediately relevant as the farmlands and forests of the periphery were being swallowed up by unbounded, unprecedented, and increasingly wasteful "progress." Their forward thinking was perhaps just a bit too late; their voices a decibel too low. Whyte certainly expressed such concerns as he opened his essay "Urban Sprawl" with this warning:

> [i]n the next three or four years Americans will have a chance to decide how decent a place this country will be to live in, and for generations to come. Already huge patches of once green countryside have been turned into vast, smog-filled deserts that are neither city, suburb, nor country, and each day – at a rate of some 3,000 acres a day – more countryside is being bulldozed under (Whyte 1958, 133).

However compelling their admonitions were at the time, their anti-sprawl advocacy did little to slow the economic forces driving suburban development. Horizontal expansion persisted throughout the next two decades at a pace equivalent to the one prior, and by 1970 more Americans lived in suburbs than in central cities and rural areas (Hayden 2003).

Although Whyte and his colleagues raised the suburb into urban discourse, they refuted its cultural value. As a result, its place within the broader culture of design discourse was diminished. Rather than inciting widespread concern by design critics and art historians, their haste provided the occasion for negligence. Hayden attributes that ignorance to a host of prejudices including a premonition towards density, aesthetic assessment of outstanding buildings, high culture, and gender

divisions (Hayden 2003). The compounding result was a collective gasp of surprise by urban historians when "the consistent spatial push for residential development at the very edge of the city finally brought about the dominance of the suburban pattern in the metropolitan landscape as a whole," says Hayden (Hayden 2003, 15). Dominance alone would seem enough to incite a reconsideration of the traditional city/suburb dichotomy, and yet the discourses and conceptualizations of the 1980s, to some extent, reverted back to those drafted in the earliest decades of the century.

In 1985 Kenneth T. Jackson projected that "the long process of suburbanization…will slow over the next two decades" (Jackson 1985, 299). Six years later Joel Garreau, in his influential book *Edge City*, provided this headline: "the bulletin is this: Edge Cities mean that density is back" (Garreau 1991, 7). With *this*, Garreau harkens back to the conceptual framework that Taylor offered up some seventy years prior. Edge Cities were the depiction of a standard, reasonably well-ordered node of urban operation within the polycentric metropolis. More specifically, they were any place that had five million square feet or more of leasable office space, 600,000 square feet or more of leasable retail space, more jobs than bedrooms, and perceived by the populations as being one place (Garreau 1991). They were in transition to become new downtown cores.

Similar to Taylor, Garreau viewed his Edge Cities as an incomplete and transitory form of the city. He attributed their spatial disorder to the fact that "all new city forms appear in their early stages to be chaotic" (Garreau 1991, 9). Essential to his Edge City was the problem of history. More pointedly, Garreau proclaims, "the fact that it has none" (Garreau 1991, 9). By refuting precedent Garreau considered his conceptualization to be released from the shackles of nineteenth century urbanism. He accepted the fact that the new American city was to be built with much less order than its predecessor, but he maintained that it was a city nonetheless, and, therefore, density could be expected to return. However, suggesting a return of density assumed that the center-periphery relationship would be

maintained, that objectified spatial order was still relevant, and that the city/suburb dichotomy was (at least to some extent) preserved.

Garreau's "centrist view," was contemporarily challenged by what Lang appropriately calls the "decentrist view" (Lang 2003). Robert Fishman, an urban historian and perhaps the most well known decentrist, contended that the traditional patterns of urbanization were becoming increasingly irrelevant. He asserted that America's sprawling metropolitan regions require new valuations since the new urban forms "lack any definable borders, a center or a periphery, or clear distinctions between residential, industrial and commercial zones" (Fishman 1987, 189). The center had, instead, become that of the "household network." Or rather, the household networks (plural), since each family (or individual as the case may be) and their personal contacts, consumptive desires, and productive requirements determined the structural framework and spatial logic of the urbanized region.

Figure 3.10. Household as Center

To Fishman, the city was not bound by any spatial logic or organizational hierarchy, but was, instead, embodied in each individual urban dweller. As such, the Contemporary Metropolis, to Fishman, was a subjective entity, an individuated body, a completely new and unique organism that required

equally as new conceptual frameworks and modes of representation in order to re-value its (un)characteristic and indeterminate spaces. Because of that indeterminacy, a single, objective framework has yet to be solidified in today's fluid urban landscape. Because of the complexity and individuated subjectivity, it most likely never will.

THE EMERGENCE

What has emerged is an urban condition that still requires additional understanding. This is the middle landscape, and in Atlanta, Houston, Orlando, Phoenix, and most everywhere in-between, opaque and stubborn places remain. Opaque through the lens of the traditional city/suburb dichotomy; stubborn because of their defiance to the objectified and commodity-bound words of the city; these middle landscapes, and the tenuous relationship between art and science, culture and nature, and objectivity and subjectivity that they exude, must be "critically appropriated and imaginatively redirected," declares James Corner, "for [their] full, liberating promise to appear" (Corner and MacLean 1996, 25).

How might contemporary urban theorists and designers confront this individuated and decentralized eclipse of the traditional city? How do they begin to conceptualize a Contemporary Metropolis that is edgeless, fluid, always in flux? What actions should they take when the characteristic landscapes are, to return to Lerup, "unfinished, incomplete…hard to grasp, hard to write, even in [their] most rational and technical aspects…neither here nor there" (Lerup 2001, 159)? Perhaps they should turn directly to those unfinished, incomplete spaces; those half city-half nature middle landscapes. Perhaps it is precisely here, or there, or in-between, that the imaginative potential and future realities of the Contemporary Metropolis will emerge.

Over the last ten to fifteen years, a host of urban theorists and designers have initiated that charge. Considering the discourses presented by Lerup, along with Rem Koolhaas, Albert Pope, Alex Wall, Raoul Bunschoten, and Alan Berger, the middle landscape as both physical place and conceptual

framework begins to emerge. These authors have been chosen because each resists the binary delineations of the traditional city/suburb dichotomy, and instead, recognizes the Contemporary Metropolis as an amalgamation of those once competing forces. Furthermore, they each do so in multiple and varied ways that consider not only the spatial dominance of contemporary urbanization, but also the dynamic processes and cultural values that have led to those formations. Their theses are synthesized in the proceeding chapter as a means of revising the equation of contemporary urbanization.

CHAPTER 4

THE MIDDLE LANDSCAPE: REACTIVATING THE METROPOLITAN EQUATION

What is known to us about cities and landscapes is partly a matter of our own experiences and partly what has reached us in one form or another from other sources.
– Peter Bosselmann

REACTIVATION

Having defined the cultural forces that contributed to the Metropolis' formation (in terms of both urban and representational theory), their manifestation will now be presented through a compilation of text and image. A host of contemporary theorists and designers have initiated a line of discourse that is divergent from conventional conceptualizations, and that recognizes, first and foremost, the emergence of a new type of urban site – the middle landscape. Their concepts serve as the topic *of* discourse while metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia constitutes the subject *for* discourse.

This chapter operates on multiple fronts. A synthesis of contemporary urban theory is presented that highlights the ambiguity and tension created from the eclipse of the city by the Metropolis, and that synthesis informs a framework for grasping the resultant middle landscape. By complementing the written theory with image-based thinking, the tenuous relationships embodied by the middle landscape begin to emerge. Text and image become equally as operational since many of the concepts set forth are deemed inaccessible by textual research alone.

More importantly, this exploration envisions and substantiates the agency of the middle landscape as a means of reactivating the Contemporary Metropolis and its (un)characteristic landscapes. As was earlier stated, the Contemporary Metropolis is infinitely more complex than its predecessor, and "the challenge," asserts Lerup, "is to rethink and reactivate the equation" (Lerup 2001, 23). Thus, a

symbolic language is devised to structure the proceeding discussion, and together, theory and image inform a new set of equations for deciphering the Metropolis. First…

NO CENTER + NO PERIPHERY = NO HIERARCHY

Critical to this charge is an acceptance that the conventional hierarchical delineations of urbanization are no longer relevant. Atlanta, in particular, embodies the boundlessness, the ambiguity, the indeterminacy that ensues from the dissolution of such boundaries. In every decade since the 1970s Atlanta has experienced population growth at an increasing rate. That growth, according to urban geographer Tim Hall, is characteristic of a 'post-Fordist' development pattern in which production units are no longer tied to the operations of the city center. Thus, any type of development can occur anywhere and at any time (Hall 2001). As a result, Atlanta's spatial structure and development patterns are no longer bound to the traditional ordering components of the city – centricity, proximity, and scale. "Atlanta is not a city," intones Rem Koolhaas, "it is a *landscape*" (Koolhaas et al. 1998, 835).

Figure 4.1. Atlanta's Growing Population
[Percentages taken from (Yang and Lo 2003)]

It was this rapid and rampant decentralization that led Koolhaas to Atlanta in order to find out what the "real city at the end of the twentieth century" looked like, how it operated, and where it could be found (Koolhaas et al. 1998, 835). His choice to seek answers in Atlanta was based on an intuition that the most critical shift in contemporary urbanism over the last two decades – the shift from center to periphery, and beyond – was well represented in the rapid and rampant growth that had occurred there. Koolhaas speaks to that shift in his 1994 editorial entitled *Atlanta*:

> Atlanta has changed at an unbelievable speed, like in a nature film when a tree grows in five seconds…No city illustrates this shift, its reasons and its potentials, better than Atlanta. In fact, Atlanta shifted so quickly and so completely that the center/edge opposition is no longer the point. There *is* no center, therefore no periphery. Atlanta is now a centerless city, or a city with a potentially infinite number of centers. (Koolhaas et al. 1998, 836)

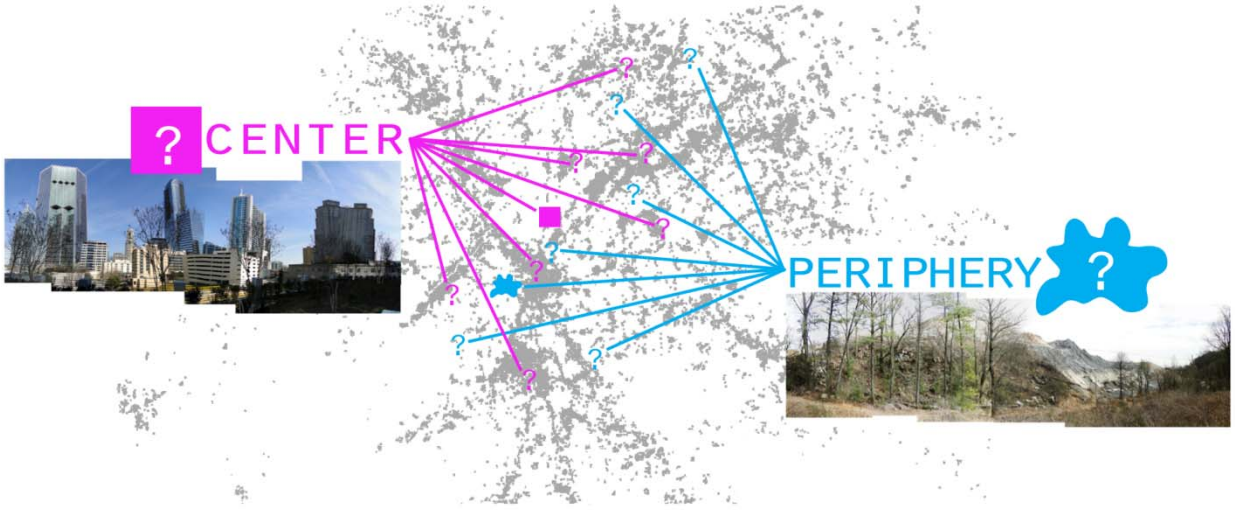


Figure 4.2. Center? Periphery?

If the absence of center and periphery affirms that Atlanta is no longer a city, then the reciprocal nature of the center-periphery relationship suggests that the horizontal development occurring over the last several decades is no longer *sub*-urban (in the sense that suburbanization is a parasitic, subordinate type of growth that occurs on the periphery of a city). This, despite the fact that demographers and policy-makers continue to describe the so-called suburbs as 'the non-central city parts of metropolitan areas' (Hayden 2003). Not only is this a negative definition, but it is based on a location (the center) that

is no longer relevant to the Metropolis' overall structure. Especially since the areas long considered suburban, concludes Hayden, "have become the dominant American cultural landscape, the place where most households live and vote" (Hayden 2003, 3) (Figure 4.5).

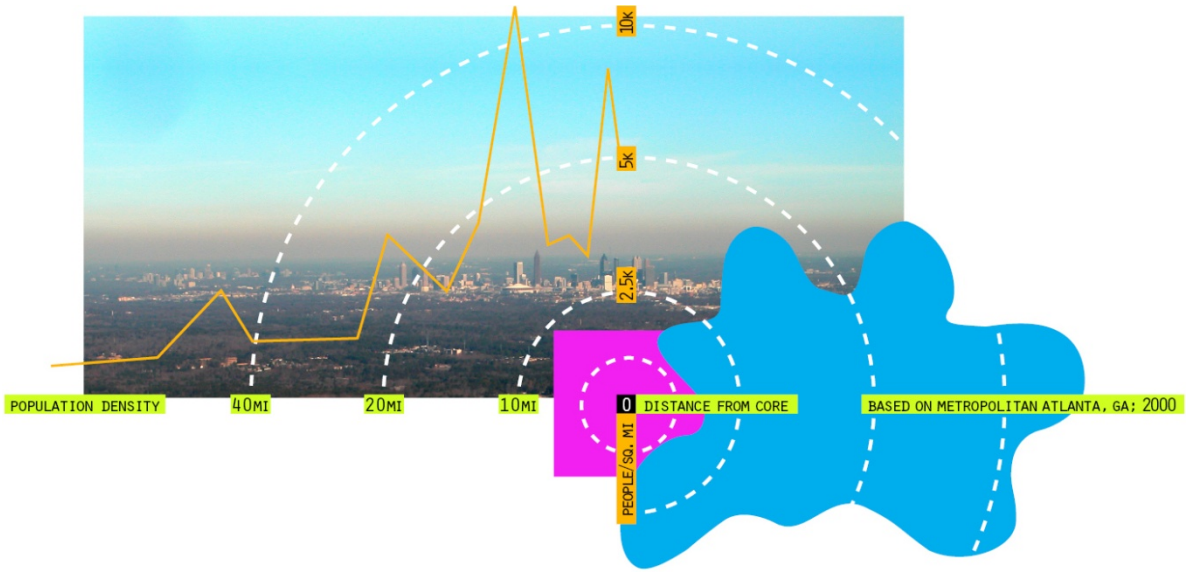


Figure 4.3. Population Dispersal
[Adapted from (Berger 2006, 83)]

Between 1994 and 2002 alone, 1.5 million new single-family houses were constructed in the Metropolis' 'non-central' areas. Those areas, once considered parasitic extensions of the downtown core, have assumed a new role as social and demographic equivalents. Lang's analysis suggests that these "edgeless" areas are on their way to becoming economic equivalents as well – the place where most people work. According to statistical data based on thirteen metropolitan regions (of which Atlanta had the greatest frequency), over fifty percent of all office space is located in areas outside of the traditional downtown core (Lang 2003) (Figure 4.6). The multifunctional nature of the Metropolis' "non-central" areas, then, resists the familiar moniker "bedroom community." In many cases, they have supplanted their former host as the *center* of urban operation despite their geographic location in the *periphery*. Despite their urban functionality these areas are dispersed – composed at much lower densities and with much less spatial and formal continuity. As Lang suggests, they are "not quite the

traditional city, suburb, or exurb, but [contain] elements of all three" (Lang 2003, 9). A new form proliferates.

Figure 4.4. Office Space Dispersal
[Adapted from (Lang 2003, Table 4-2)]

The combined shift of population and office space demonstrates an increasingly decentralized composition rendering the old notions of concentric growth, functional proximity, and population density gradients insufficient. The hierarchical delineations of living space that accompany those frameworks – urban, suburban, exurban, rural – have become equally as inadequate. The compounded result is a metropolitan environment constituted by indeterminate landscape types that defy the hierarchical definitions long employed by urban theorists and designers. If center and periphery are meaningless, city and suburb indistinguishable, and all that is left is in-between, should theorists and designers continue to focus their attention on creating new, more appropriate definitions? Are new names necessary in order for this emergent environment to be registered? To be represented? To be *seen*? In reactivating the metropolitan equation it becomes apparent that…

NAMING ≠ SEEING

Edge city, Edgeless City, Galactic City, Exopolis; Metrotown, Technoburb, Ruburb, Penturbia; the array of names attributed to contemporary urbanization over the last half-century are as inventive as they are obscure. Berger (2006) devotes to them an appendix, Lang (2003) a chapter, Hayden (2004) an entire book. But while each of these authors attributes some importance to the act of naming, they also admit that the ever-increasing number of attempts to do so reveals an inadequacy greater than taxonomy alone. Fundamental to the problem, posits Robert Lang, is that urban theorists and designers are bound to "language that continues to rank living space hierarchically" (Lang 2003, 29). He refers here to the spatial delineations that are conventionally drawn as an attempt to characterize the structure, location, function, and form of urbanized conditions when, in actuality, those "old hierarchies no longer apply" (Lang 2003, 29).

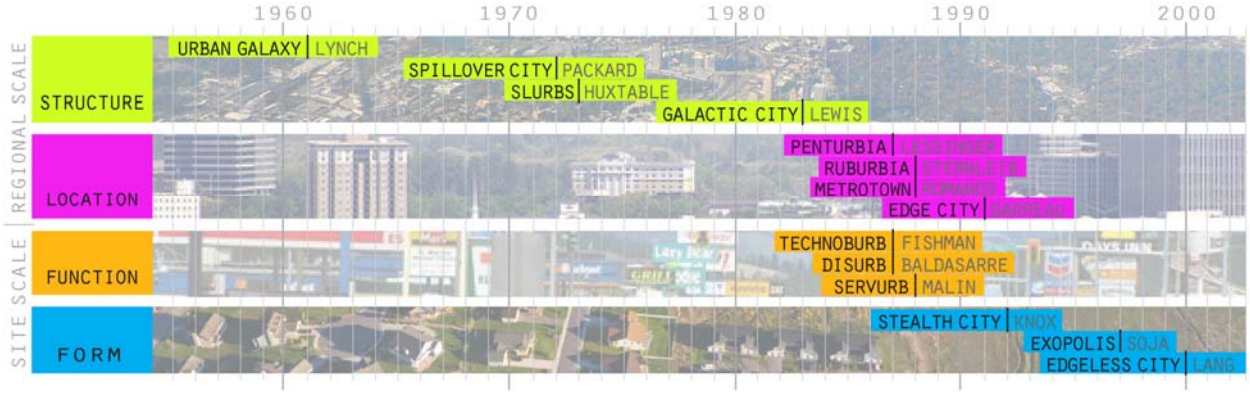


Figure 4.5. Naming the Metropolis
[Adapted from (Lang 2003, Table 3-1)]

The difficulty inherent to naming suggests that these landscapes have yet to be fully understood by the hand that forms them (Pope 1996). It brings to question whether urban theorists and designers might be better served if their premonition towards verbal language were momentarily replaced by the actual imagery that their words attempt to symbolize. In confronting this question, it serves useful to reconsider W.J.T. Mitchell's statement about imagetexts and their representational efficacy: "the imagetext reinscribes, within the worlds of visual and verbal representation, the shifting relations of

names and things, the sayable and seeable, discourse *about* and experience *of*" (Mitchell 1994, 241). The attempt to characterize the Contemporary Metropolis through textual definition is well documented; no single name has yet to be decided upon. This brings to question whether the *sayable* appearing in urban discourses is less relevant than the *seeable* accessed through everyday human experience.

In *A Field Guide to Sprawl* Dolores Hayden argues that the vague theoretical attempts at naming the urbanized landscapes, as well as the bland styles advocated in professional reference books, obscure the visual culture of everyday experience (Hayden 2004, 13). Therefore, she shifts focus from naming the Metropolis to imaging its material manifestation. Armando Carbonell's foreword to *Field Guide* succinctly captures her somewhat satirical charge:

> no longer will intermediate-level "sprawlers" (a title we much prefer to the pejorative "sprawlista") find themselves in relationship-threatening arguments over easily confused species like boomburbs and zoomburbs. And what aficionado of sprawl has not felt a certain taxonomical queasiness upon entering a ruburb? (Carbonell, *Foreword*: Hayden 2004, 5)

Despite its tongue-and-cheek tone *Field Guide* offers to the larger body of urban discourse an invaluable (if not unprecedented) visual index for cross-referencing the signatory forms and obscure taxonomy of the newly urbanized landscape. By providing a visual reference Hayden expresses the magnitude and ubiquity that these forms and spaces have assumed. Considering her pictorial index within the framework of Lang's argument, then this image of "sub-urbanization" begins to suggest that contemporary urban development is no longer *sub*- to anything.

However, because her images are captured from an aerial perspective and concerned exclusively with the environments traditionally considered suburban, they do not fully unveil the dynamics of the Contemporary Metropolis. In experiencing Atlanta directly, it becomes apparent that the forms and spaces captured by *Field Guide* most often occur alongside the forms and spaces characteristic of the more traditional urbanization – the downtown skyline. The boundaries between the once isolated entities dissolve; the city and suburb collide; all that is left is middle landscape.

Figure 4.6. Seeing the Middle
[Terms taken from Hayden (2004)]

At first glance the middle landscape may just seem to be another vague attempt at naming, but in actuality, it is intended to liberate theorists from such efforts. It expresses, in and by itself, an inadequacy of verbal language alone to capture the defining spaces of the Metropolis. Therefore, it should be considered a conceptual interstice that connects the tension and ambiguities of metropolitan reality with the imaginative potential for its future reality. It is a lens by which the Metropolis can be *seen*. In the metropolitan equation, however, theorists and designers must first know what to look at…

SPACE > FORM

In a nameless environment that is neither here nor there, and whose constitutive spaces are rarely seen, understanding urbanism through its form may no longer be a viable option. Objectified definitions, hierarchies, and forms are, according to Alex Wall, "of less use or significance than are the infrastructures, network flows, ambiguous spaces, and other polymorphous conditions that constitute the contemporary metropolis" (Wall 1999, 234). As such, the Metropolis will continue to bewilder urban theorists and designers so long as they fail to *see* it as a spatially dominated environment. A major step in gaining access to the elusive Metropolis is to abandon the "primacy-of-form" sentiments that are preserved by the nostalgic longing for the Euro-American city. As Pope intones:

> [a]ttempts to reinstate the privileges of [conventional] design in the contemporary city do not correspond to the unconstructed kind of absence characteristic of contemporary urban production. This absence, like chaos, is not susceptible to conventional design intervention…Ignoring this situation leads to the familiar, futile…attempt to affect vast expanses of space with ineffectual often pathetic "design" gestures…The quality which is most

> characteristic of contemporary urbanism ultimately remains inaccessible to [these] direct design interventions. (Pope 1996, 6)

The characteristic spaces of the Metropolis are, in terms of both physical location and conceptual accessibility, in the middle. In recognizing their in-between nature, Alex Wall calls them "middle landscapes that are neither here nor there, and yet are so pervasive as to now characterize the dominant environment in which most people actually live" (Wall 1999, 234). Similarly, Pope describes them as "absences, gaps, lacunae, hiatuses, or ellipses that our commodity-bound words, building and 'place' are unable to account for" (Pope 1996, 5). The persistent hegemony of the European city – and the primacy-of-form sentiments that accompany it – perpetuates a condition that is suffused with a set of fundamental misconceptions about urban landscapes, which, in turn, leads to a false understanding of the Metropolis as a whole. Metropolitan spaces are no longer Kantian in the sense that they embody the potential for separation and objective definition; they are instead an indeterminate amalgam of cultural values and the subsequent spatial arrangements created from the collision of city and suburb. They are middle landscapes.

The consummate problem riddling these middle landscapes, again, is the fact that they are rarely seen. They lay flat. As Berger asserts, they are "the exact opposite of a vertical sight for sore eyes (such as a deteriorating building)" (Berger 2006, 28). They are not objectified forms; they are unquantifiable spaces. They surround not only the derelict and abandoned objects of the Metropolis, but also the newly conceived and economically viable ones. From Berger's perspective, these elusive spaces can be defined as "waste." Adapting his conceptualization from Lerup's theory of stimdross – stim (or stimulation) representing the places, buildings, and events of urbanization, and dross the subsequent leftovers and byproducts of those objects and activities – Berger concludes that waste is inevitable, "an indicator of healthy urban growth" (Berger 2006, 36).

However, the term waste may not capture the utility and operative potential of the middle landscape idea. It is a negative definition – as are those that continue to obscure the "non-central" parts of the Metropolis from critical engagement. Inasmuch, to continue to view it as a negative might engender a culture that continues to ignore its existence. "Posthaste we must move to post-waste," Lerup proclaims in his Postscript to Berger's *Drosscape* (Lerup, *Postcript:* Berger 2006, 242). Shedding a more positive light on the abundance of metropolitan space, Lerup goes on to contend that Berger's 'waste' is, in fact, "the glue that holds all the little rationalities – the subdivision, the shopping mall, the industrial park – together" (Lerup, *Postcript:* Berger 2006, 242).

Whether they are vast parking lots, continuous or fragmented zones of urban decay, undeveloped or razed parcels, massive urban parks, or the *cordon sanitaire* surrounding office parks, industrial parks, and residential subdivisions, contemporary urban spaces are not the traditional form-based entities of the past city. As a result, they "remain conceptually transparent to participants of a design discourse bound to a fetishistic analysis and development of discrete and identifiable objects," says Pope (Pope 1996, 3). This in mind, perhaps an appropriate corollary to Lerup's earlier proclamation, then, is 'post-waste we must move to primacy-of-space.'

Lerup provides a framework that initiates the charge, and, more importantly, gives conceptual access to the abundance of indeterminate urban space. The characteristic space of the Metropolis "demands a special kind of attentiveness," states Lerup, "since it operates on the periphery of everyday vision" (Lerup 2001, 49). As such, he distills urban form and metropolitan space into two discernible shapes, or "megashapes," and establishes a conceptual linkage between them. His intention is not to formalize space, or to pit form and space against one another, but to devise a single language by which both can be grasped.

Figure 4.7. Megashape I: Downtown Skyline

The first megashape is constituted by the downtown skyline. Formed by the tight assemblage of skyscrapers, the skyline is a direct result of the order, density, and formal continuity of the traditional Euro-American city (Lerup 2001). It is an easily discernible shape; partly because of its familiarity, but also because it is easily grasped as a unified entity (as long as an appropriate distance is achieved). However, in the Contemporary Metropolis, and in Atlanta in particular, the downtown megashape is complicated by the fact that there are now many.

Figure 4.8. Many Skylines

The explosion of the traditional downtown core not only created multiple skylines, but left a newly conceived shape in-between. "The zoohemic canopy," as Lerup calls it, intersperses and connects those downtown skylines, and is "constituted by a myriad of trees of varying species, size, and maturity" (Lerup 2000, 49). In contrast to the skyline, it is dominated by space and not form; it spreads outward rather than projecting upward. As a result, it is less discernible than the skyline despite its being the dominant metropolitan megashape.

Figure 4.9. Megashape II: Zoohemic Canopy

The value of the megashape concept, however, is in understanding the relationship between the skyline and canopy – in recognizing their duality. Both skyline and canopy are structured by repetition: one, of a relatively small assemblage of large elements; the other, an expansive agglomeration of many small elements. As a result, they both can be viewed from two points of view: as a whole; and as an assemblage of individual components. The former, and as Lerup calls it, "the more traditional perspective," is more readily applicable to the downtown skyline since the zoohemic canopy, in order to be envisaged, requires a much more distant vantage point (such as the aerial field) (Lerup 2001, 49). However, an apprehension of the whole also suggests a state of completion, which inevitably perpetuates the static and formal interpretations of conventional urban theory. If the megashape is seen from the latter perspective, though, it "may be imagined through a fragment," says Lerup (Lerup 2001, 49). It does not require completion, and, therefore, resists the tendency for objective valuation.

Therein resides the megashape's efficacy in conceptualizing the middle landscape. Not only is it founded on a visual interpretation of the Metropolis' two colliding forces, but it establishes an outlet by which the objective, primacy-of-form sentiments may be avoided. It is a point of access into the spaciousness that has come to infuse, break apart, and confuse the order of the city; an embodiment of the "peculiar sense of ongoing struggle" between culture and nature, science and art, and objectivity and subjectivity (Lerup 2000, 50). By distilling the Metropolis' confused (yet wildly abundant) space into a unified shape, Lerup creates a metaphorical bridge between that which theorists and designers know – form – and that which is imperative they begin to *see* – space.

Figure 4.10. Double Reading

The internal perspective also provides the occasion for instituting human subjectivity (back) into the equation of urban theory and design. Human perception is composed of fragments, or images that together constitute experience and reality. However, the conventional products of design are most often conceived of, and instituted as, completed entities – objects that are whole from inception. Understanding a megashape from within holds the potential for freeing the designer's mind from that wholeness, and instead, allows him to focus on the poetics or metaphysics of becoming. "Once focused on," Lerup concludes, "trees get counted and form with time and repetition a zoohemic appreciation" (Lerup 2001, 49).

When the downtown skyline and zoohemic canopy are considered internally and in tandem with one another, theorists and designers move one step closer to grasping the ambiguous middle landscape. However, recognition alone does not constitute understanding. Both megashapes, from the internal perspective, are complex ecologies in and by themselves. As Lerup admits, "both would require modern mathematics for analytical description" (Lerup 2001, 49). When the human variable is added to the equation – use patterns, consumptive desires, technologies, and digital revolutions – their complexity grows exponentially.

Herein lies the paradox for contemporary urban design: if these middle landscapes are incompatible with the designer's particular strengths and abilities, not to mention their (sometimes misguided and ineffectual) affinity for drafting static and objectified forms, then how does the urban designer preserve the agency of his craft? Wall suggests that it should not require an abandonment of the designer's core values, nor should it diminish the intrinsic value of design in general. Instead, a shift in the designer's focus from the *forms* of urban space to the *processes* that constitute their formation has the potential to actually increase the cultural value of the designer's production (Wall 1999). As such, a new variable must be included in the metropolitan equation…

SPACE × TIME $^{(x)}$ = DYNAMIC PROCESS

Space, more so than object or form, is not an isolated variable. It is constantly being altered, shifted, destroyed, and created. In the Contemporary Metropolis, those transformations are accelerating. As such, place (or 'sense of place' as the case may be) is tied less to the physical forms of the Metropolis as it is to the processes and use patterns occurring across its surface. Alex Wall distills the multiple and dynamic effects of this acceleration into three fundamental phenomena: the emergence of a new type of urban site, increased mobility and access, and shifting form/process dialectics (Wall 1999). A great deal of attention has already been given to the first, as it is the staging ground on which the latter two unfold. But in order to fully grasp the complexity of the middle

landscape, it is imperative that the more temporal forces flowing through them are understood (or rather, because of their complexity, at least harnessed).

Because the Contemporary Metropolis is without a center, without order and stability, or as Koolhaas (1998, 835) would have it, without "the classical symptoms of city," it knows no steady state. This is not a new admonition. As early as 1932, still in the early stages of the city/suburb collision, conventional urban concepts had begun to rear criticism, marginalized as they were. In his book, *The Disappearing City*, Frank Lloyd Wright advocated that urban aggregation of any kind be abandoned. Wright says, "not only have space values entirely changed to time values, now ready to form new standards of movement measurement, but a new sense of spacing based upon speed is here" (quoted in Fishman 1987, 46). He envisioned a world immediately accessible regardless of distance; a world where private aircraft was the standard mode of transportation; a world where density and functional proximity were as foreign as the concept of nature in New York or Paris. Radical, perhaps; polemical, indeed; however, in today's Metropolis, Wright's time/space provocations seem less and less extreme.

Space and time, when factored together, amount to the processes that Wall proclaims are essential to understanding the middle landscape. As time accelerates and mobility increases, physical access is more easily attained. In the Contemporary Metropolis where access is boundless, geographic constraints have a minimal bearing on its spatial structure. According to Pope, that structure is determined more by "the speed of a vehicle on a freeway, of radio and television transmission, or of digital communication…not in relation to a fixed arrangement of places" (Pope 1996, 9). Thus, time as an urban component must not only be *seen*, but it must be understood as an exponential variable.

While increased speed and mobility have led to greater physical accessibility (the ability to occupy space over distances), they have, in turn, blurred conceptual access to the forms occupying that space. As such, the middle landscape, already ambiguous and indeterminate, requires that the accelerating processes occurring across its surface be dually grasped. "Slow time" intones Bunschoten,

"the time of geological movements. Movements of the crust which we call ground. Ground which goes, according to our senses, deep as our imagination" (Bunschoten, Binet et al. 2001, 19). This is not to suggest that they be slowed in real time and space (since the attempt to do so often leads to the static and ineffectual design gestures that Pope and Wall warn against); but slowed in the mental space of the designer so that the "original traces of vision," to return to Merleau-Ponty, may be apprehended and reflected back onto the *ground* in culturally relevant ways (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 74).

Speed is not a new concept to urban transformation – consider the eruption of Mount Vesuvius at Pompeii, or the Black Death across Europe, or even still the dropping of the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. While the effects of speed in the Contemporary Metropolis are certainly not as destructive and violent as in these historical accounts, they are now ever-occurring. They flow subliminally through space. They pulsate through space. They collapse space. Bunschoten speaks on their constant effect:

> [l]ove, life, weather and seasons ripple the second skin. But new techniques of knowing and moving create different ripples, pulses…News can travel faster than the wind. Events on a global scale affect many places in the world simultaneously. Mobility by means of communication and transport technologies reduces distances between different places, bringing them very close together. The effect is a fluid urbanity hard to express through static models or identities. Increasingly, the city's only definable form, its only clear identity, can be found in the manner in which its changes evolve. (Bunschoten, Binet, et al. 2001, 21).

Those changes, continues Bunschoten, "are the substance of the second skin's flux; they create its form in time and space'" (second skin refers to the built environment; the implied first skin is the natural surface of the earth) (Bunschoten, Binet, et al. 2001, 166). Form, already confirmed to be less operative than space, must also be considered subordinate to process. Static models no longer suffice in the process-driven Metropolis, despite the fact that form-givers continually attempt to subdue it with their rational gestures of order and permanence. Dynamic processes, like the zoohemic canopy, are not immediately and wholly discernible; they operate on the periphery of everyday vision. Hence, they too require a special kind of attentiveness.

Whether the operative processes are cultural, political, ecological, geological, or technological; whether they are a result of speed, scale, or function (presumably, they are most often in-between any and all of these), they should inspire and in*form* the products of design intervention. They should help articulate the first skin into the second, or tie the second into the first. In a spatially dominated environment, in a Metropolis that is, to return to the introductory chapter, a boundless compilation of numerous and varying parts that are always in flux and perpetually colliding to form new and indeterminate spaces, how do designers begin to grasp increased temporality and dynamism?

The middle landscape is one such framework. It provides that special kind of attentiveness required for apprehension. It is a fragment of the larger Metropolis, and thus, allows the visual culture of everyday human experience to be instituted back into the metropolitan equation. Intuition, subjectivity, and critical engagement constitute an interpretation of the mind's eye; together, they provide adequate means for representing the otherwise ambiguous middle landscape – its elusive spaces, its temporal dynamism, and the tensions subsequently manifest. The proceeding chapter enacts Atlanta's middle landscape through those means. Having already substituted the dichotomic city/suburb discourses, the textual theories that have traditionally accompanied them are now displaced by perception, experience, and critical imagery, thus, allowing the middle landscape's imaginative potentials to be *seen*.

CHAPTER 5

ATLANTA: ENACTING THE MIDDLE LANDSCAPE

Disclaimer:
Do not consider this exploration as you would a machine: each component assembled individually, building towards a pre-determined outcome; think of it as an organism: whole from its inception, but never complete, constantly shifting, growing, and evolving towards an indeterminate end.

ENACTMENT

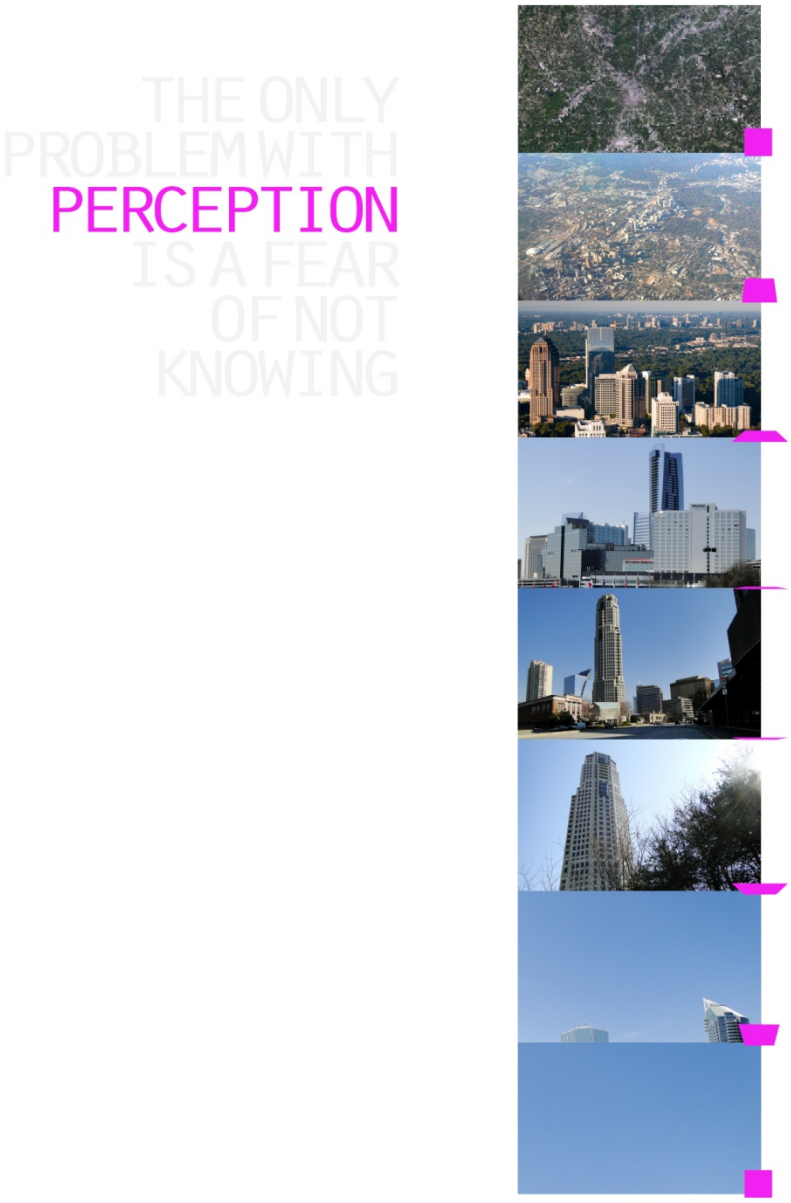
Seeing the middle landscape requires that the culture of everyday human experience, a poetics of becoming, be instituted (back) into landscape conceptualization. Garnering this "inside appreciation," as Lerup calls it, allows the dynamic processes at play in the Metropolis to be grasped. While those processes are many and fleeting, the ones created and perceived on a daily basis by the men and machines that streak across the metropolitan surface will be of primary interest here. Thus, heeding Bunschoten's admonition that "immersion in the city with new eyes means walking through it, entering its flux," the author, himself, becomes an agent of change, experiencing space in time (Bunschoten et al. 2001, 75).

Bunschoten suggests that undertaking an exploration of this type and scale requires both "research with systematic and where necessary scientific precision, and a creative, impulsive and intuitive invention allowing for leaps of the imagination and the vivid portrayal of alternative realities in narrative or symbolic form" (Bunschoten et al. 2001, 28). The latter is of primary interest here, as it has already been determined that the more objective, precise, and scientific approaches are well (and perhaps too well) represented by conventional urban discourses. Furthermore, in privileging the more imaginative faculties of cognition, it is the author's intention that the ideas and representations contained hereafter incite leaps of the readers' imagination.

Structured according to the principles set forth in Chapter 2, this enactment of Atlanta's middle landscape unfolds in four parts. *Perception*: the author explores two perspectives of seeing the Contemporary Metropolis, from a distance and from within, to establish a vantage point through which subsequent experiences are perceived. *Experience*: The author walks and drives through Atlanta, experiencing dynamic processes while simultaneously contributing to them. The percepts of this subjective experience are interpreted visually as a means of distilling the original traces of vision – as a mechanism of memory. *Critical Imaging*: synthesizing experience and theory, the author draws lines of connection between the processes and intuitions that were *seen* in the middle landscape. The act of creating critical imagery gives access to the otherwise ambiguous spaces, allowing their dynamism and temporality to be expressed through a cohesive logic. *Illuminate Potential:* performed throughout the enactment, the author routinely shifts from maker to examiner and reflects on the images through an expressive, stream-of-consciousness dialogue. In doing so, the future realities and emergent ideas revealed through the process of creating are bodied forth.

SEEING **ATLANTA**

Atlanta is an especially relevant subject for enacting the middle landscape. Both the speed unfathomable in 1932 America and the nature foreign to the conventional notions of urbanism are, in fact, its strongest contextual givens (Koolhaas et al. 1998). Its speed is achieved by an extensive interstate system, around which its three downtown skylines project; its nature is constituted by a zoohemic canopy that fills the voids of those interstates, and from which it gets its halcyon moniker 'City of Trees.' From Lerup's perspective it could just as effectively be called the 'Metropolis of Megashapes.' Hence, there are at least two ways of perceiving Atlanta, as there are of any megashape. While the internal perspective may be more efficacious in terms of the middle landscape (and the one from which this exploration routinely finds itself), it will serve useful to first consider the distant perspective, for it is the more traditional vantage point; the one long privileged by conventional urban conceptualizations.



Perception is based on perspective; parallax; a frame of reference. The content perceived within that frame represents intuition; subjective apprehension; snapshots of sensory experience; images that, when strung together, constitute reality. Partly composed of objects, but not, in and of themselves, objects. Instead, imaginations. Glimpses of space in time; incomplete, and at times indeterminate. An embodiment of the very tenets that pervade the middle landscape. Diction in the poetics of becoming...

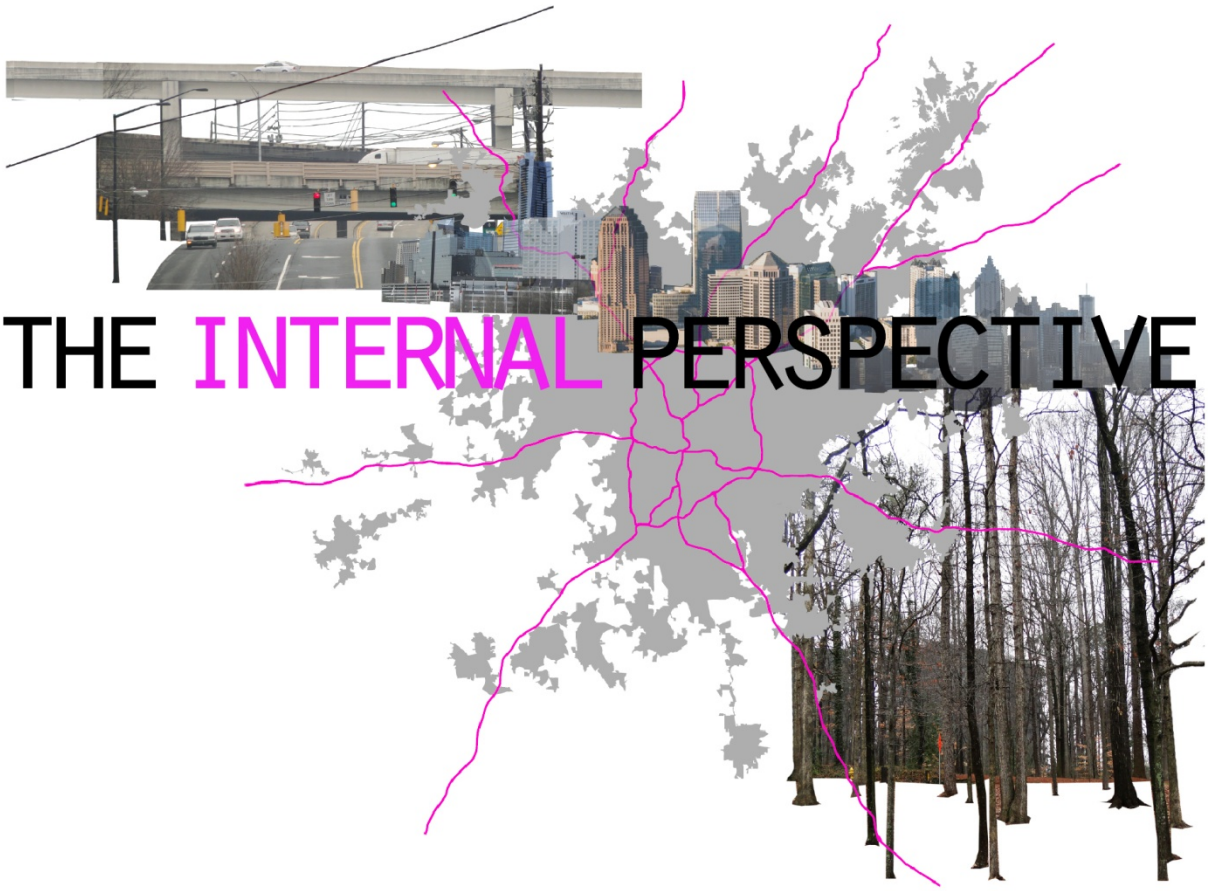
Figure 5.1. Defining Perception

Designer's are accustomed to perceiving the landscape through a distant frame; from the aerial field; in plan. While distance provides access to abstract spatial relationships, hierarchies, boundaries, and distinctions, that which is readily available to the mind's eye, everyday human experience, is obscured. The use patterns, temporal occurrences, dynamic processes, and emotional responses that bring those spaces to life are ignored. Distance isolates the designer from the landscape that he shapes, molds, stages for inhabitation and process. Externality assumes autonomy; neutralizes circumstance; exalts form; grants supremacy over nature - mother and human alike. The external perspective, the objectification of experience, not only establishes perceptive distance, but a distance between the human and phenomenal worlds. Lines on the page, drawn from the external perspective, cannot shift, change, evolve; they may only be erased...

Figure 5.2. The External Perspective

Those lines strive for objective precision. Upon assembly, they form objects. Objects that strive for wholeness, impute wholeness, justify the designer in drafting stable, often static gestures. Purely formal gestures; gestures without regard for human activity, for change, or for dynamism. Not gestures at all; too far removed. Instead, completed entities that preclude change, resist shifts, and disregard evolution. From the external perspective a desire for completion, wholeness, and objectification admonish perception. The original traces of vision are deemed inadequate; they are perceived to require supplementation by a superior faculty. The visual culture of everyday human experience is diminished, completely sterilized…

Figure 5.3. Objective Eyes



The Contemporary Metropolis, largely constituted by infrastructural and vegetal components, is never whole, always on the move, fluid. Growing up, growing out, carving ahead, and abandoning behind, it is inaccessible through a single perspective; through a fixed frame. Instead, it is fragmented. Incomplete. Indeterminate. In the middle. Because of its indeterminacy, its elusiveness, its constant flux, the Metropolis requires a certain level of subjective intuition in order to be seen. Perceiving internally provides that manifold perspective; it provides an occasion for difference, for interpretation, for immersion, for new eyes…

Figure 5.4. The Internal Perspective

By immersing himself in the city, the designer escapes wholeness, resists the desire for completeness, heightens perception. Perceiving internally breeds appreciation - of change, of uncertainty, of instability; seeing from within enhances understanding - of dynamic processes, of temporality, of phenomenology. From within, the world is seen as process; space in time. Fleeting percepts that, when strung together through memory, incite emotion, feeling, sensuous response. Sights, sounds, smells, and textures; men, machines, weather, and geology; all are equal agents in the poetics of becoming; all are imperative to perceiving, to experiencing, to seeing the middle landscape…

Figure 5.5. Seeing from Within

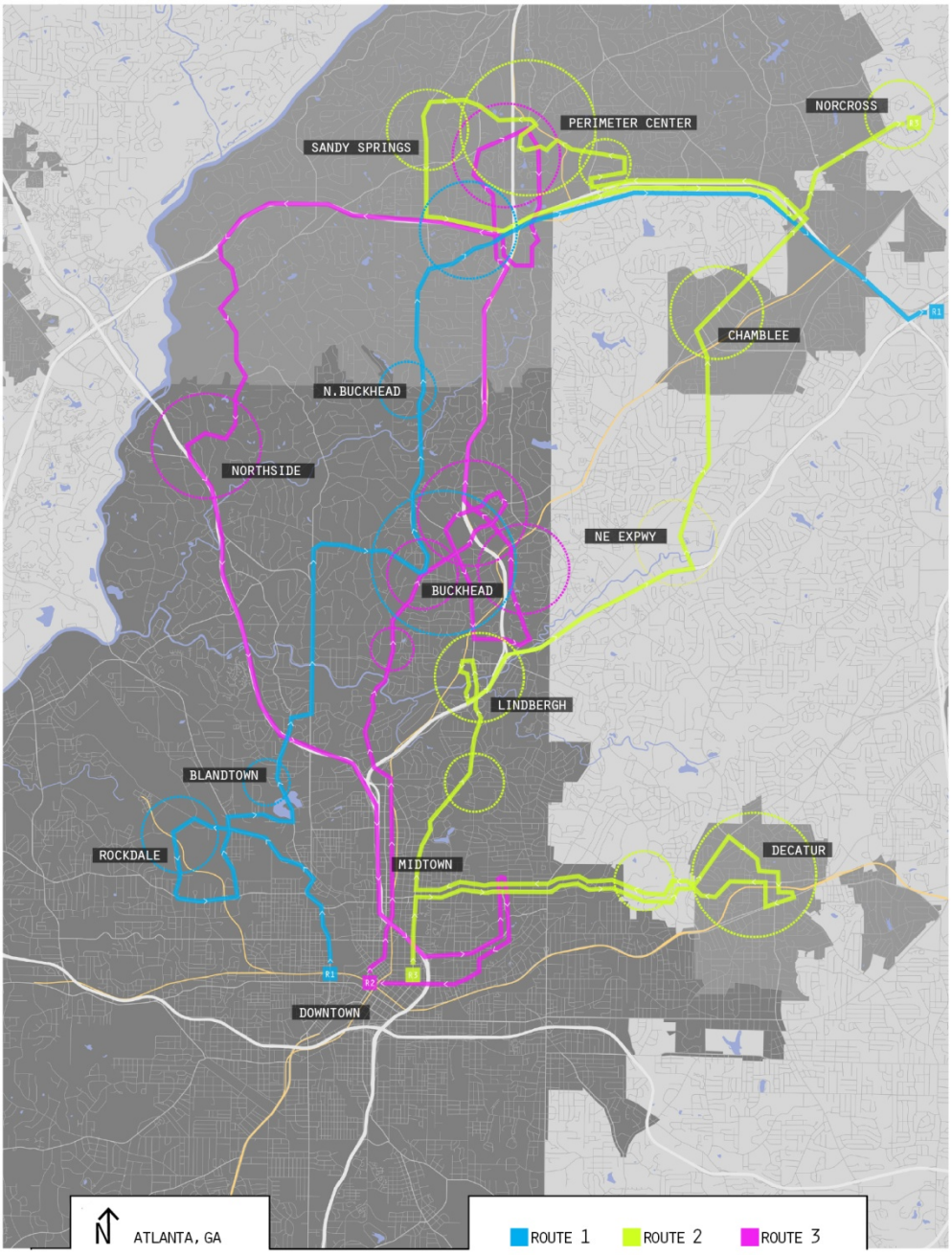
INITITAL PERCEPTS

A catalogue of initial percepts derived from the internal perspective; from the author's sensous immersion into Atlanta. Glimpses; intuitions; emotional responses; assumptions; and interpretations. All pieces of the durational act of perceiving the Metropolis in space and time. Fragments of reality. Diction, now incomplete; now in need of image. Now in need of syntax and stanza - a complete poetics of becoming - in order to imbue truth and meaning...in order to become reality...

Figure 5.6. Initial Percepts

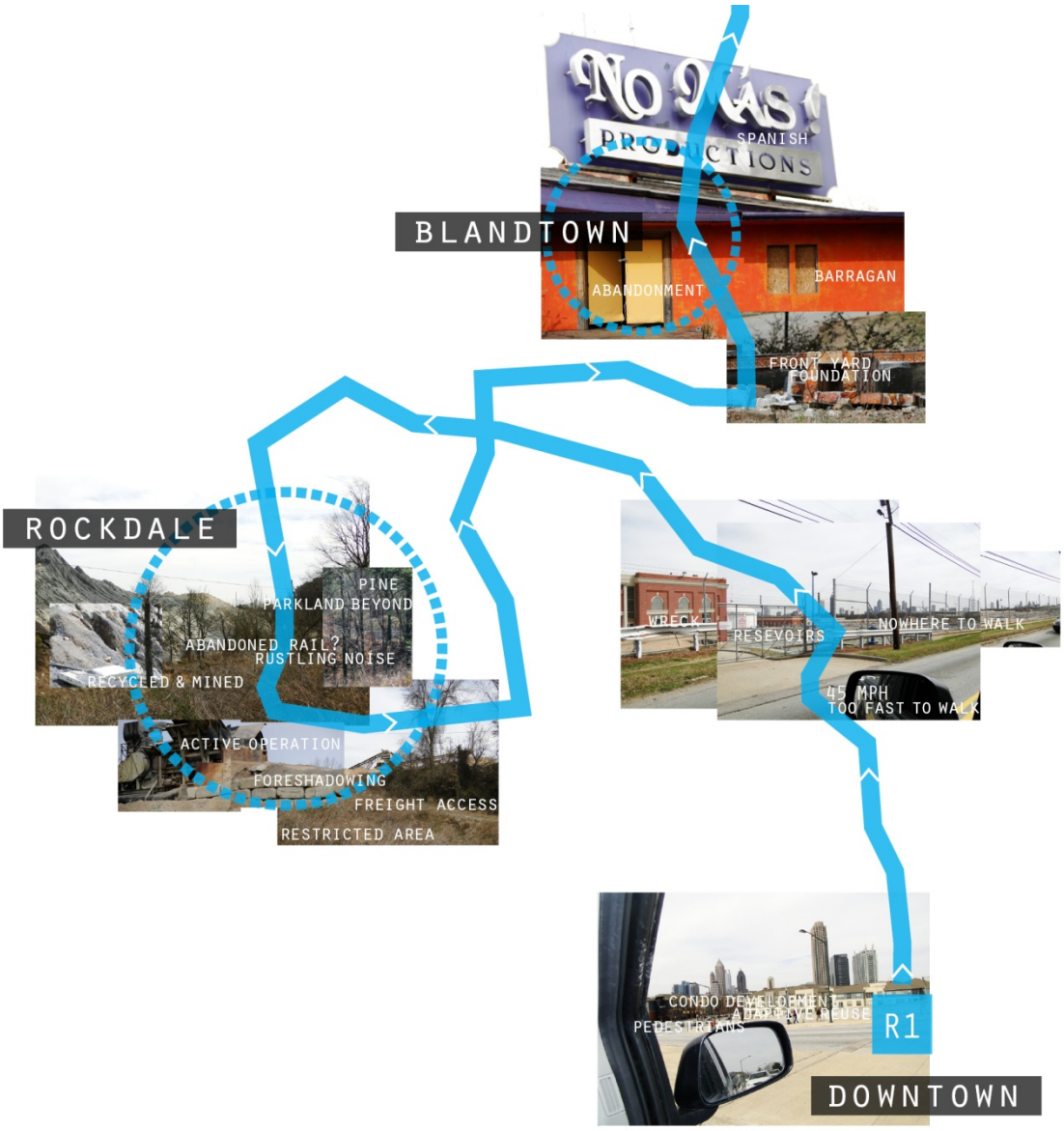
The sum total of percepts taken in over a particular duration; a filtering mechanism for discerning meaning from those snapshots - connecting them through memory. Subjective; unique to each individual; based on the sensory interpretations of that individual, yet also contributors to collective memory. Dynamic; manifold; dictated by and indicative of processes in time and space; a filtering mechanism for grasping those passing processes while simultaneously propelling the formation of future ones. Syntax in the poetics of becoming...

Figure 5.7. Defining Experience



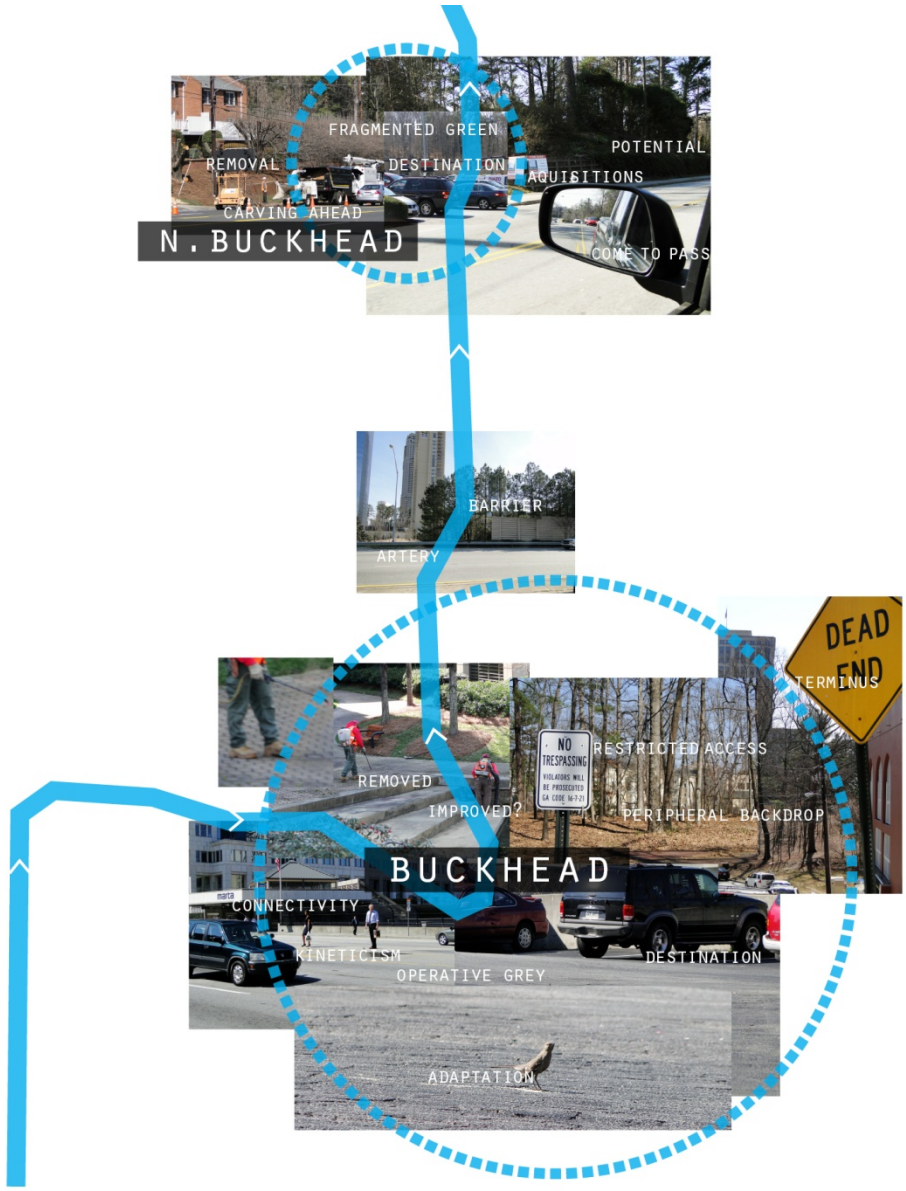
The author's immersion into Atlanta was conducted over a three week period. Four different days of the week – Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday – are represented by three different routes. While all routes of experience originated near downtown, the paths taken were neither predetermined nor prejudged. The intention being: to ensure diversity of human activity, of weather, of unforeseen occurrences, of perception and experience. However, the author, vaguely familiar with Atlanta's recent patterns of development, traveled mostly north of downtown in hopes that the middle landscape could be found in the throes of urbanization that had recently occurred there. What was seen follows...

Figure 5.8. Mapping Experience



Route 1: Sunday, February 21 2010; Approx. 3:00 pm; Overcast, 55 Degrees F
Skyline fading quickly in the rearview mirror. The remnants of an industrial age now leasing; now serving cold beer, hot coffee, and hotter fashions; now on sale for spring. Springing new life, transitional life; in-between uses, revenues, populations, sources and sinks…Atlanta's sink lay just ahead. Rather, its source, briefly collecting before draining downtown; reflecting the skyline in the distance. More distant now, further down the road, deep in the canopy. However a new source, again in sink form, reveals itself - as well as Atlanta's geology. A first skin void of the second skin skyline. Dug, piled, shipped. Once again, the skyline reflected, only in negative. The metaphor deepens. The pile of rubble, gaining energy, anticipates its rebirth; its own transition from first to second skin. Somewhere down the road?…the road winds on. First excavated, now evacuated. Abandoned - houses and businesses alike. No production no mas…but the rearview mirror reminds that no mas is not forever.. .

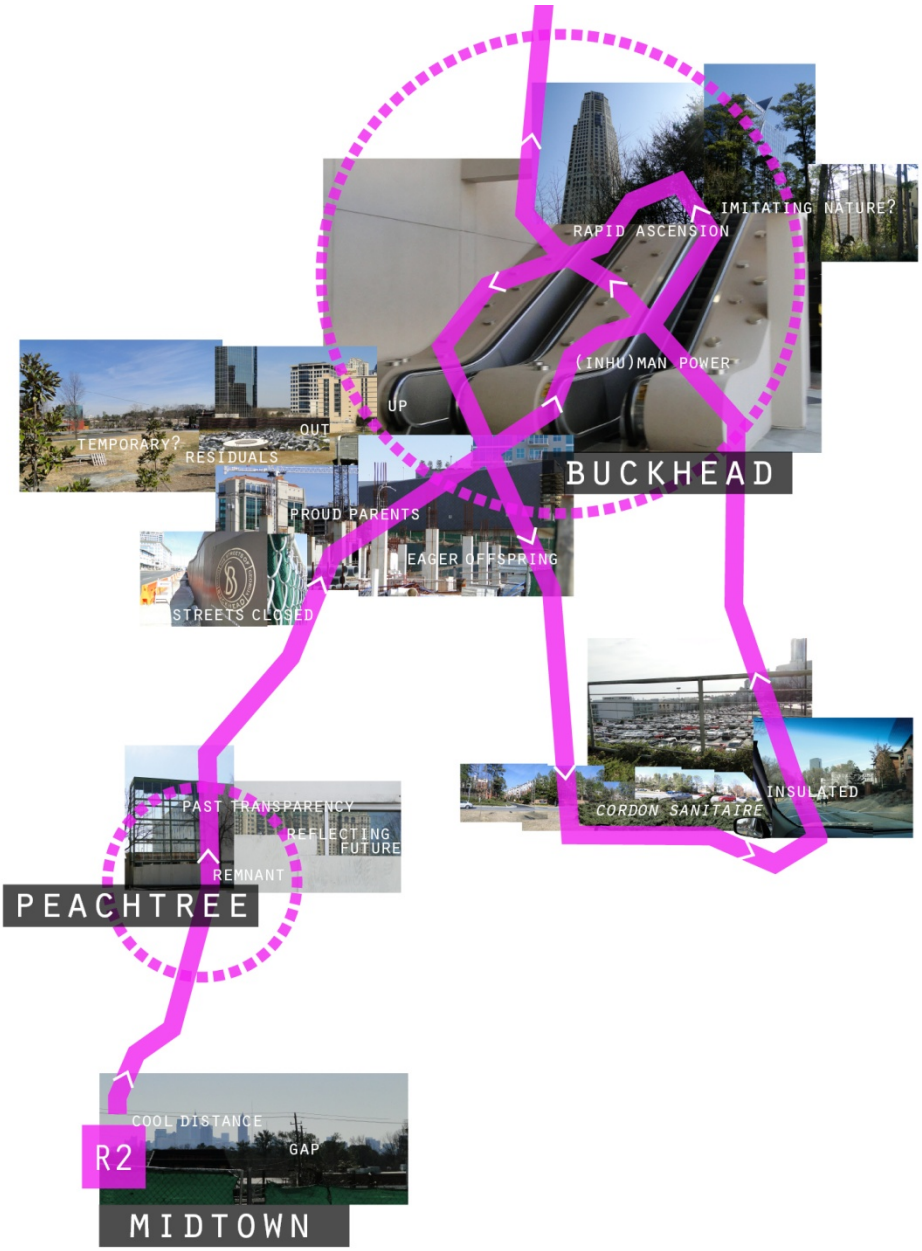
Figure 5.9. Route 1; Day 1



Route 1: Monday, February 22 2010; Approx. 8:00 am; Sunny, 60 Degrees F

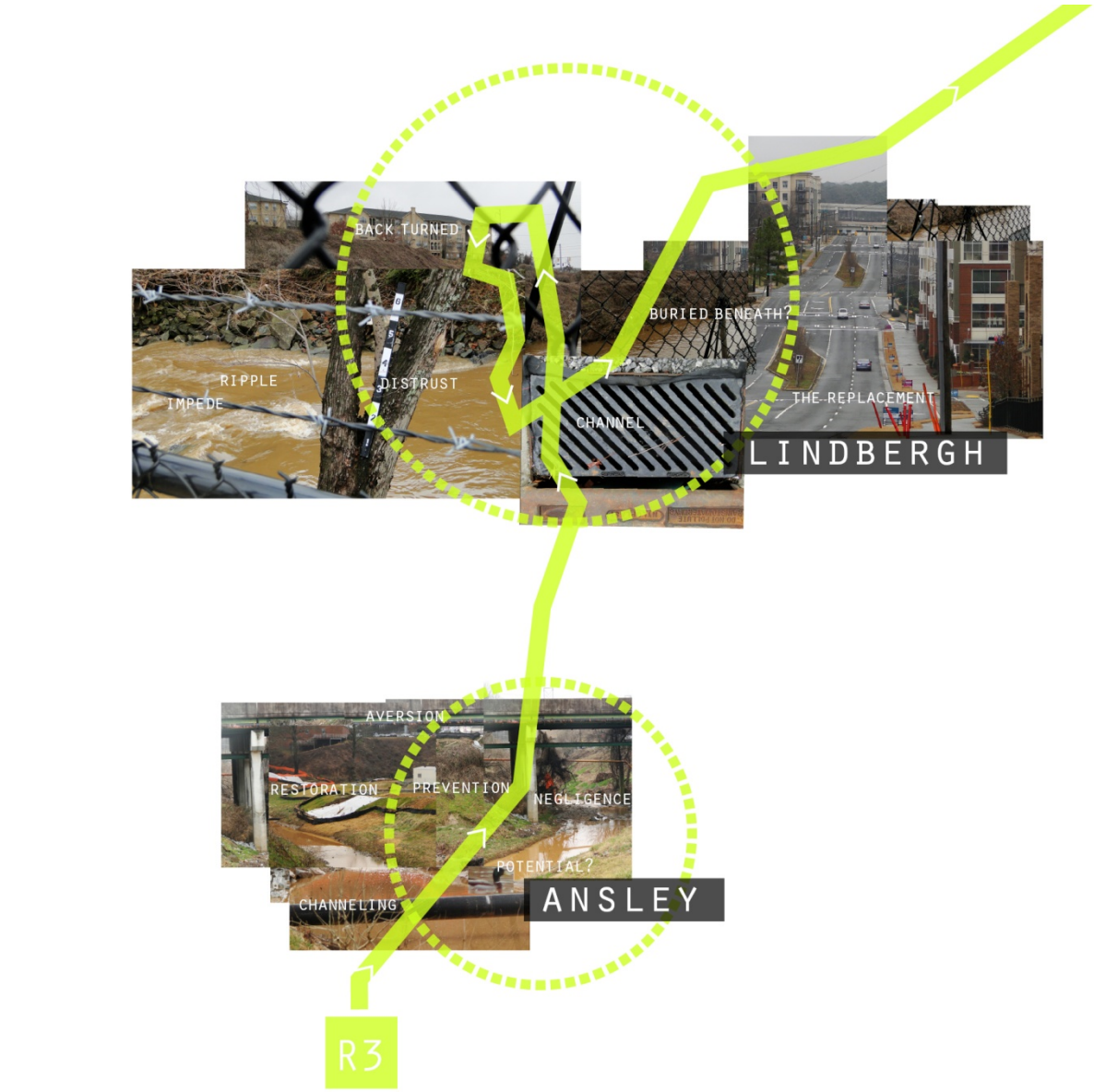
New day of a new week…morning commute. A new skyline emerges…the luster with which it reflects the morning sun expresses proud youth…yesterday a hole, a pile of potential energy; today, parts of a kinetic system that, together, provide infinite access to the whole. The contextual givens of that whole - infrastructure and vegetation - engage here in a tenuous dance. Immediately discernible greys - never complete but completely operative, accessible, connected; fleeting and fragmented greens - equally as substantial but operatively mute, elusive, subdued…sometimes conveniently forgotten while others a constant concern. Natural and improved, constructed and removed, they lack the luster, the speed, the rhythmic pulse of their counterpart. Not so much rhythmic as syncopated. Sporadic omissions lasting just long enough that the soft melodies of the greens remain in earshot, in the mind's eye. Up the road…same song, only the beat muffled…the melody now constant as the speeding cars drive the beat elsewhere…

Figure 5.10. Route 1; Day 2



Route 2: Friday, February 26 2010; Approx. 11:00 am; Sunny, 65 Degrees F
Downtown then midtown, no recognition, then gap…Canopy…cool shade; skyline cooler in the distance. Rising again…through the trees, through the remnants of past occupation; reflected by those remnants…new life on the streets of Buckhead. Sidewalk closed; fenced off…with birth comes death. What am I going to be when I grow up?…variation, diversity, abrupt shifts in form, fabric, and surface breed speechlessness - uncertainty. Loud but with nothing to say. Still rising…up the road and in the air. Even the surface, automated now, moves upwards. Outwards just the same, but with much less care. Remnants again. Rather, residuals; not of past occupation, but of the present…perhaps even future. It remains to be seen what that future will have to say?…

Figure 5.11. Route 2



Route 3: Saturday, March 6 2010; Approx. 9:30 am; Cloudy with Light Rain, 42 Degrees F
Rain…down from the sky…infiltrated by the first skin; deflected by the second. Causing ripples…in the skin, and in the water below…That water, like the rain, is fleeting. Constantly flowing, but impeded… by humans downstream, from humans upstream. The second skin, suspicious of the water's fluidity, its constant movement and change, attempts to stabilize its flow with fences, culverts, and pipes. The water - subdued, choked, channeled - forges ahead. Reemerges ahead. No clearer than before, no more accessible. The first skin, expressing its dominance over the second, surmounts aversion; threatens the second skins stability; joins the flow. The rain…still falling…questions the second skin: still fighting?…

Figure 5.12. Route 3

PICTURING IS TO
MAKE RECORD
OF; WHILE
IMAGING IS TO
THINK
CRITICALLY
ABOUT

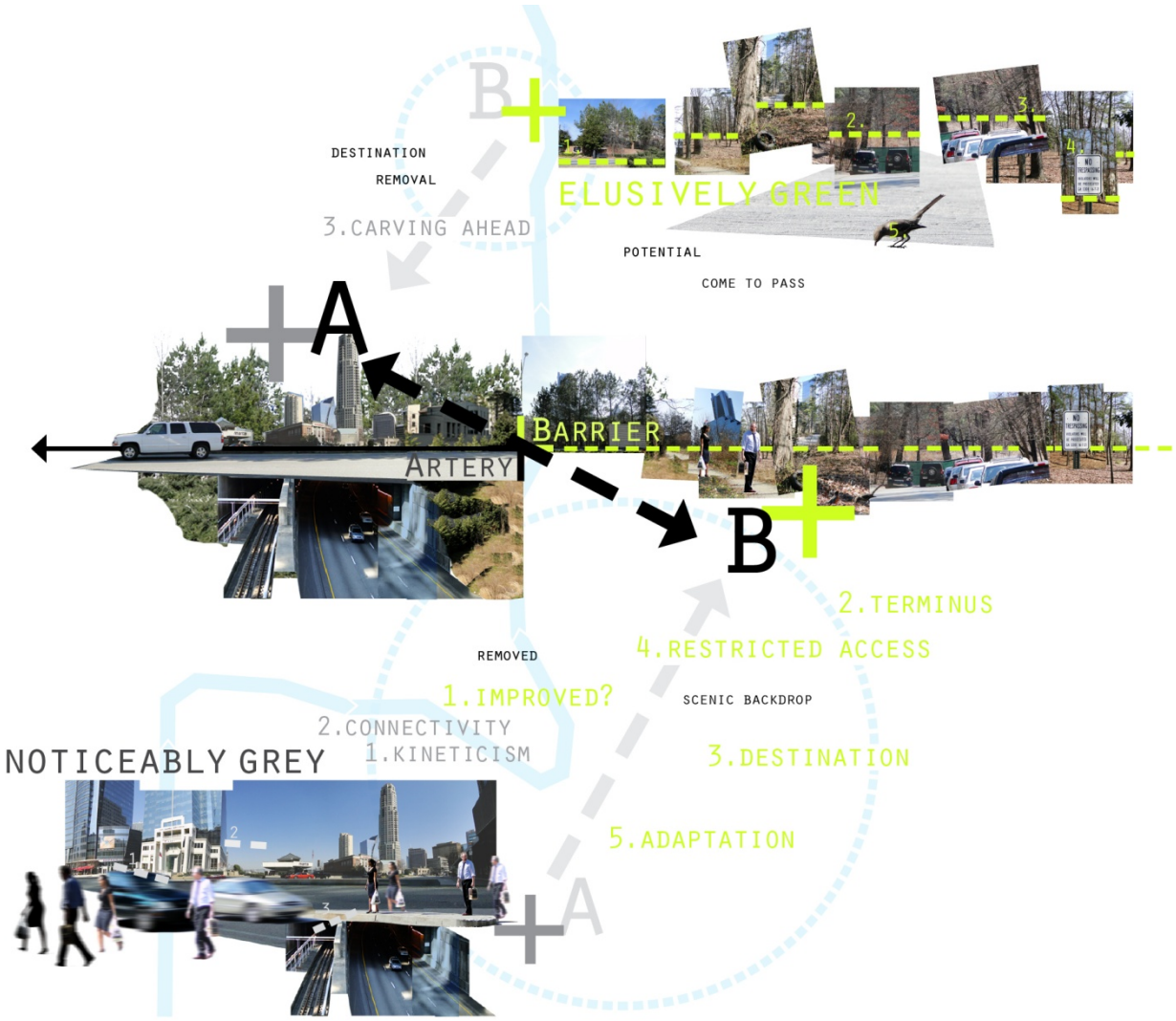
Critical thinking takes place in the realm of imagery…it is an intellectual apprehension of intuitive percepts. Image-making, then, is a re-interpretation of the original traces of vision, the ingrained memories, and the fleeting glimpses of subjective experience as seen through critically engaged eyes. The image-maker draws lines of connection between those glimpses, imprinting a cohesive logic capable of connecting the most disparate of parts. By engaging in process, in the act of creating, the maker reveals new meanings, incites emotional responses, and makes dynamic processes - otherwise subliminal - visible to the mind's eye. With a willingness by the examiner to engage critically with the created, his own connections are forged, his own imaginations stimulated. Critical image-making is the synthesis of new ideas; of logical connections; stanza in the poetics of becoming…

Figure 5.13. Defining Critical (Visual) Thinking

NETWORK FLOWS

Linking existing processes leads to more operative network flows. What, then, are the existing processes? Most apparent is the potential source/sink cycle existing between the abandonment and degredation of building materials, the active recycling and mining of materials immediately adjacent to that degredation, and the transformation from a post-industrial remnant to a reactivated mixed-use development. Each individual process represents a transitory stage, each a component of the middle landscape. (A) Over time, abandonment leads to crumbling infrastructure. By recycling that crumbling infrastructure into usable building material, the transformation already underway is supplemented with additional resources. As activation expands, pedestrianization is promoted. (B) The interstitial area between these ongoing transformations, currently showing signs of vehicular dominance, inhibits connectivity and access between the sites. If pedestrianization were to spread from the mixed-used developments into this vehicular realm, potential connections could be made to the large expanse of parkland beyond the mining operation…Interconnected network flows lead to better spatial connectivity.

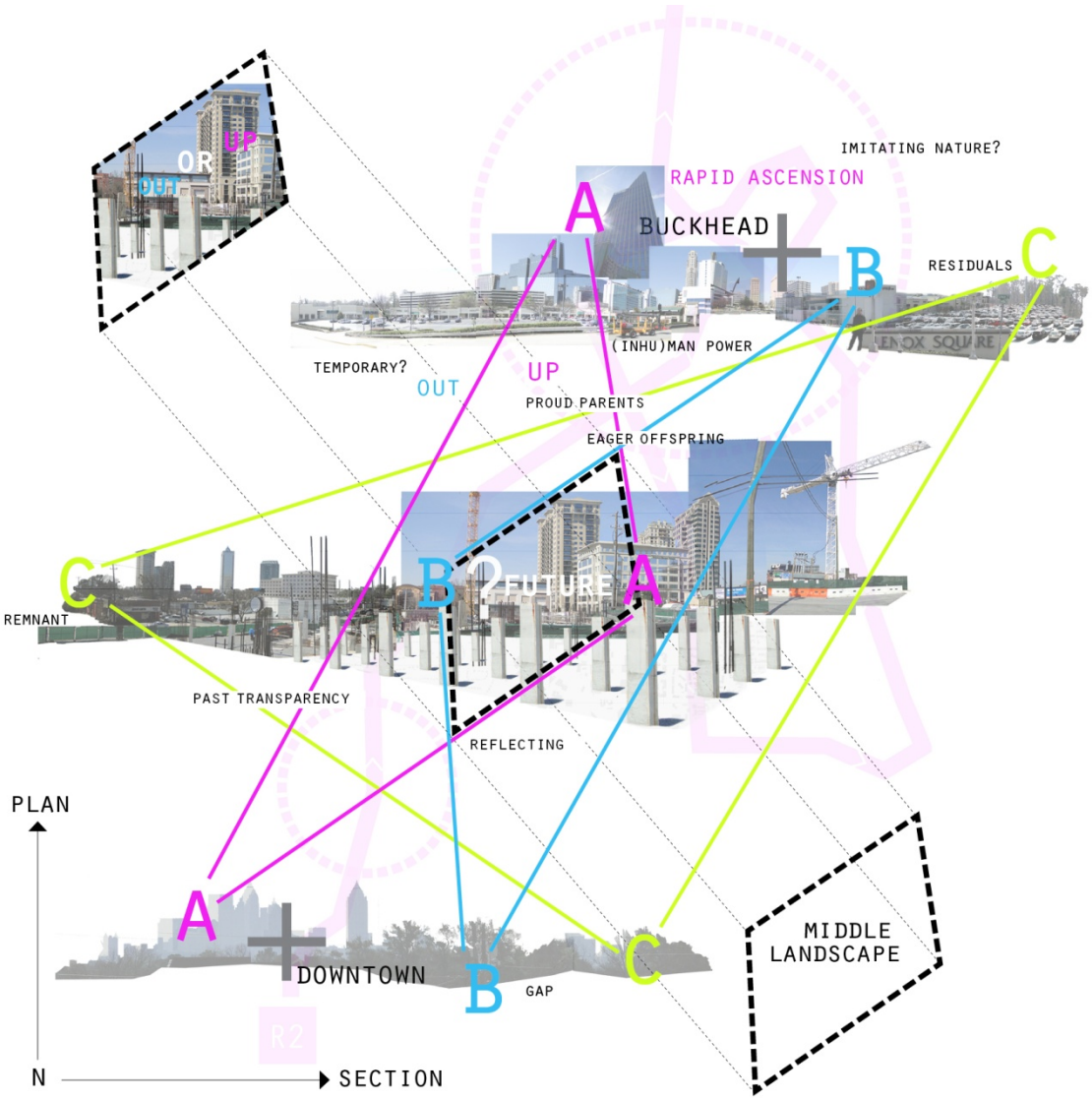
Figure 5.14. Route 1; Day 1: Network Flows



INFRASTRUCTURES

The performance of interconnected network flows are largely determined by the infrastructures that accomodate them. In the middle landscape, integrating the more conventional infrastructural components (A) - streets, bridges, railways, drainageways, and so on - with the substantial amount of urban open space (B) - whether natural or improved, residual or intended - is imperative to maximizing flows. However, the opportunity for capatitalizing on the operative potential of these green infrastructures has yet to be fully realized...at least not in Buckhead. Buckhead's conventional infrastructural components portray a certain level of sophistication - high speed roads, below grade and elevated railways, and below grade parking structures. However, its surface, and the abundandance of ambiguous open space that permeates it, remains fragmented; indeterminate. From the middle landscape perspective, that lack of conceptual access results from the continued isolation of grey and green surfaces. The real potential of infrastructure in maximizing network flows and dynamic processes is to harness the operative features of both the grey and green simultaneously. A hybridized system where our bridges and parking decks are no longer built, but grown. Celadon is the color of the middle landscape's infrastructure.

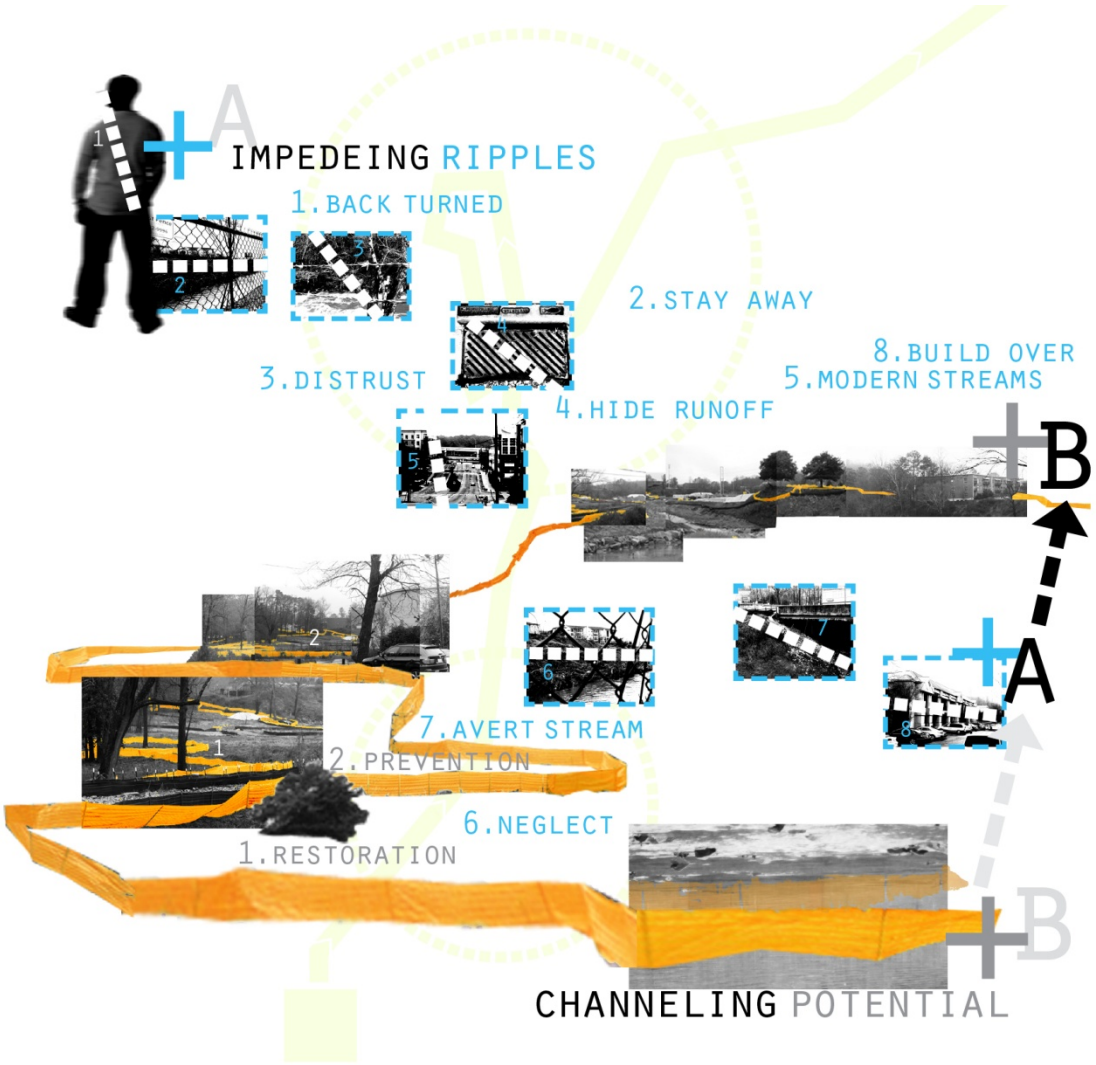
Figure 5.15. Route 1; Day 2: Infrastructures



SPATIAL NETWORKS

The spatial organization of the Contemporary Metropolis is far too complex for the methods long employed by conventional urban researchers. Structural continuity and order are no longer as easily discerned, dilineated, or objectified. In effect, grasping metropolitan spatial relationships requires a method that is both external and internal; that is both intuitive and instrumental. Here, a hybridized technique is employed that emphasizes vertical space over the horizontal plane. Not only does seeing in elevation preserve the initial percepts of experience, but it explores spatiality in a manner that the aerial perspective precludes. This map, in particular, benefits from the internal perspective since its source material originated from direct sensory experience. In reference to a site undergoing transformation, connections are drawn between Atlanta's skylines (A), horizontal development patterns (B), and ambiguous open spaces (C). By thinking through the spatial relationships visually, a clearer understanding of the contextual system is invoked; a piece of the middle landscape apprehended.

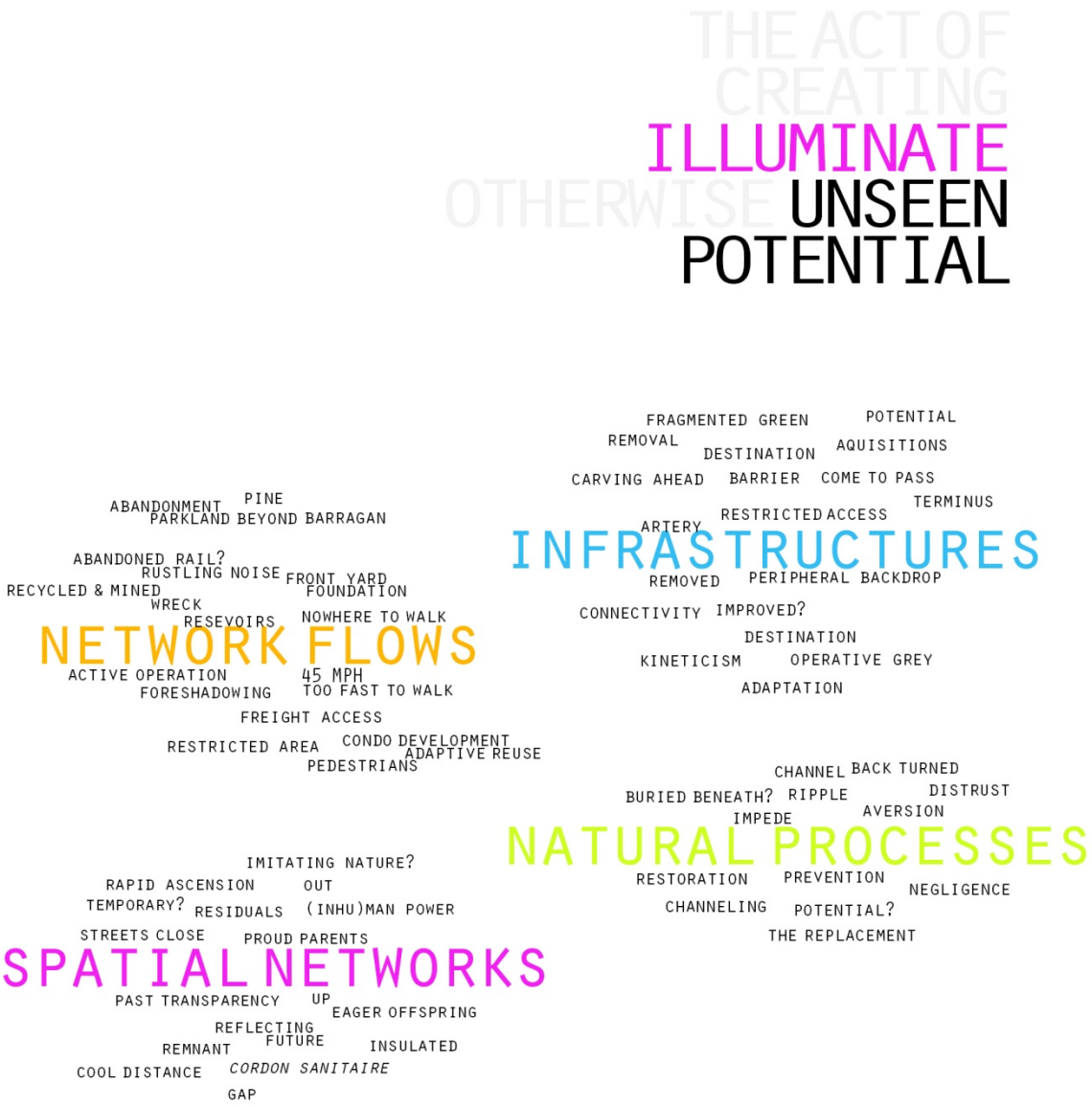
Figure 5.16. Route 2: Spatial Networks



NATURAL PROCESSES

The Metropolis is littered with middle landscapes that continue to suffer the ill-effects of the technocratic rationale that has predominated the construction of the modern American city. Foremost amongst these degredaded sites are rivers and streams, and the entire hydrologic system from which they are fed. They are built on top of, fenced off, and often times accessible only to the harmful byproducts of cultural production - industrial waste, sediment, pesticides, and motoroil to name a few. This, despite the fact that they are invaluable cultural resources, and often times, the first step to reactivating landscape. Here, at two different stream sites in Northeastern Atlanta, patterns of misuse (A) and of potential (B) are collaged to express the broader tensions between culture and nature. The middle landscape, itself an embodiment of that struggle, itself an interstitial idea, turns to the bright orange construction fencing as a means for potential reactivation. A temporary installment for utilitarian purposes brings the entire system - beyond the stream channel itself - into perspective. Beauty, clarity, and potential are manifest in the tenuous interaction between cultural operation and natural process. What other potentials are manifest in everyday sensory experience?

Figure 5.17. Route 3: Natural Processes



The initial percepts, organized according to the conceptual tenets for which they are responsible in creating, now a reality, but perhaps never complete. As such, the reader is encouraged to reappropriate them; reorganize them any way he sees fit. Encouraged to start the process anew; to create his own set of percepts; to devise his own conceptual tenets; to illuminate his own imaginative potentials. Such is the subjective freedom of perception and experience; such is the type of thinking that the middle landscape requires in order to be seen.

Figure 5.18. Illuminate Potential

CHAPTER 6

REFLECTING THE MIDDLE LANDSCAPE

Network Flows, Infrastructures, Spatial Networks, and Natural Processes are the conceptual tenets distilled from the limited amount of experience allotted for this exploration. They were not predetermined, nor fully grasped until the process was near completion. As such, they are not intended to represent an exhaustive or comprehensive list of the dynamic processes pulsating through the Metropolis. That list is incomplete; never whole. Instead, they represent fragments of a whole; fleeting glimpses of the dynamic occurrences that constitute the Metropolis' infinite complexity on a day to day, hour to hour, and minute to minute basis. While they initiate a better understanding of the Contemporary Metropolis, it is the process from which they were formed – the poetics of becoming – that holds the most potential for future research and design. This chapter, reflecting on that poetics of becoming, projects how theorists and designers might appropriate the ideas and methods bodied forth as a means of contributing their own page – their own poem – to the manifold of the Metropolis.

The middle landscape derives its context from the cultural currents that constituted the original inception of city and suburb. As such, it discards those binary notions, and instead, perceives the metropolitan landscape as an indeterminate amalgamation of the two forces. In doing so, the Contemporary Metropolis is deemed inaccessible through the conventional conceptualizations of urban theory because of their insistence on drafting boundaries, distinctions, and hierarchies that are no longer relevant. Ultimately, it is decided that these conceptualizations perpetuate static design gestures that strive for the order and stability reminiscent of the past city when the spaces and forms of the Metropolis are, in fact, characterized by ambiguity, tension, and an impetuous instability.

The middle landscape provides an occasion in which those boundaries and distinctions are erased. Therefore, it is not so much a landscape typology as it is a landscape occurrence; a moment in space and time. Its relevance is supported, first, in the fact that the Contemporary Metropolis, unlike its predecessor, is constituted by space rather than form; and, second, that time, an infinitely accelerating variable, results in the constant shifting, changing, and collapsing of space. The middle landscape, then, requires a mode of representation that accounts for the dynamic interactions between space and time, and how those interactions might manifest themselves into design. It requires a mode of representation that can be actively engaged, and subjectively interpreted. A mode formulated through the enactment of perception, experience, and critical imaging.

Through enactment, the middle landscape becomes less, itself, a conceptual framework as it does a perspective from which an appropriate framework may be devised. It is a method of *seeing*; a lens that transcends the mere recording of sensory experience, and, instead, facilitates the formation of new ideas. New ideas require new eyes; eyes that resist instant access to meaning; that perceive tension and ambiguity as opportunity; that engage the visual world with critical images of their own.

In a metropolitan landscape ripe with tension and ambiguity, overdue for re-conceptualization, the middle landscape frees the mind's eye from the hard-edged delineations and statistically-derived constructs maintained by conventional urban theory and design. It provides the occasion for difference, for not knowing, and for finding out. Here, perception and experience initiate that pursuit. But only after those initial percepts are documented, remembered, and reassembled does a glimpse of understanding emerge. Enacting the middle landscape, then, is an inductive process, and much like the environment on which it is impressed, it is not susceptible to objective or preconceived valuations. Instead, it is a way to *think* the Metropolis, and to *see* its unforeseen potential.

Essential to this process is the act of creating dialectical images. Critical engagement with imagery transcends the pure recording of sensory data, and reveals ideas and relationships unforeseen

by conventional written research. In the complex Contemporary Metropolis, where change is constant and most often subliminal, image-making provides a means for the designer/researcher to interact with, and to connect to, the dynamic processes that constitute its formation. By entering into and experiencing the flux, the designer/researcher contributes to processes in space and time, not only as an observer, but as, himself, an agent of change. In reflecting on those experiences, in connecting the fragments of perception, the image-maker creates a metaphorical bridge between the day to day processes that contribute to landscape formation, and his own process of creating landscape forms.

While the middle landscape remains, admittedly, in the realm of landscape and urban theory, its image-based method and capacity for enactment harnesses a potential for practical application that many conventional written-research theories preclude. The practitioner has long employed image-making as a tool to develop and represent landscape. However, as Catherine Dee contends, the tendency of the landscape researcher is "to drift away from, or omit to engage with, visual spatial and other sensory dimensions of landscape experience and place through the process and outputs of writing" (Dee 2004, 14). The image-based approach enacted here offers a method of critical inquiry suitable to both research and practice, thus, bridging the divide between theoretical outputs and practical applications.

This is not to suggest that the types of imaging engaged with here should replace the conventional methods employed in the actual making of landscape architecture (referring to implementation documents in particular). Rather, it is posited that these sorts of dialectical images, if used throughout the design phase, will alleviate the designer's preoccupation with form, and his tendency to allow those static gestures to drive the final products of design. Because the act of creating dialectical images focuses the designers attention on enhancing existing processes and instigating futures ones, it ensures that the created, whatever form it takes, will be flexible enough to stage dynamic human activity, and allow those activities to change and evolve over time.

By engaging in this process, form will inevitably come. Imaging is a visual occupation and thus, requires all of the same compositional techniques employed by conventional design processes. However, the middle landscape approach ensures that dynamic process – space changing over time – remains in the foreground; and that form – just as it exists in the Contemporary Metropolis – remains subordinate to those changes. As such, the logical direction for future research is to test its efficacy in drafting the design of a physically occurring middle landscape. Here, it will remain a conceptual framework; a means for *thinking* the Contemporary Metropolis, and for *seeing* its dynamic processes.

The middle landscape has been enacted and partially revealed. The Contemporary Metropolis, that new and unique organism, continues to shift, grow, and evolve, and so too must those who effect its surface. The middle landscape is just one fleeting attempt. Because the surface conditions for which it was devised remain in a constant state of flux, this thesis, too, remains in an in-between state: between the shifting worlds of visual and verbal representation; between the evolving notions of city and suburb; and between the constant evolution of the metropolitan surface. While it focuses explicitly on the theoretical apprehension of the Contemporary Metropolis, the methods of understanding and the modes of representation set forth are intended to be readily appropriated across a range of disciplines, scales, and contexts. While it gives reference to the middle landscape in particular, it operates on the pretense that the very *idea* of landscape is inextricably tied to image, and thus, a critical component to the designer's ability to *see*.

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