Fast-Forward Urbanism

Rethinking Architecture's Engagement with the City

Dana Cuff and Roger Sherman, editors

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Introduction
Dana Guff and Roger Sherman

At this historical juncture, it is imperative that architecture seek new means to engage urbanism. Since 9-11 and Hurricane Katrina, the two greatest American urban catastrophes in memory, architecture's failings have been broadcast on the front pages of the daily news. Our greatest successes, at Bilbao or Las Vegas (however different these may be), are not apparently relevant to the multiple crises contemporary cities face. The frenzy of urbanization occurring across the globe has made us more aware than ever that the architecture, landscape, and planning disciplines are unable to manage the process. Our models of design practice have come up short; the profession's definition of design is inadequate.

Be it Los Angeles’s Grand Avenue, Biloxi, or Lower Manhattan, the city appears as a stop-action frame: nothing happens for interminable periods, when suddenly we arrive at built results seemingly by fast-forward, with no clear grasp of how we got there. Like a series of discontinuous jump-cuts, the landscape transforms in a sequence of disorienting new frames where the destabilization is never complete, since some things have stayed the same. Today, the indifferent backdrop of the city evolves organically, taking the small steps that everyday urbanism endorses. Urban theory has a harder time absorbing the more radical jump-cuts, where architecture tends to thrive. Only in retrospect, when pieced together into a legible, historical narrative, does urbanism account for the eruptions that punctuate a city’s transformation. By contrast, fast-forward urbanism is projective; it grapples with the big leaps, seeking to explain them, design them, and launch them.

Following the disasters that New York City and New Orleans endured, another tragedy ensued: neither city has triumphed over its ordeal. The long-standing narrative of recovery that has characterized post-crisis cities will be broken.’ In the Gulf Coast, the only group of architects organized enough to respond were the New Urbanists, hundreds of whom assembled to assist the rebuilding effort. In New York, public outcry turned back conventional preliminary proposals in favor of bold, new design solutions. Both
efforts failed. While there are many explanations of these failures, we argue they were unsuccessful because architecture needs to rethink its relation to the city. In other words, we need new theory—not because our formal operations are themselves inadequate, but because they remain independent of our understanding of urban change. While modernist master plans were at once colonizing and eternal, the contemporary city responds most favorably to change that is like a virus to a host. Weak spots and holes are occasions not for projects, per se, but for systemic interventions that can reproduce elsewhere. Fast-forward urbanism mobilizes the rethinking of architecture’s relation to the city, specifically in terms of temporal, opportunistic, and strategic transformations.

If 9-11 and Katrina made architecture more aware that it missed the target, there are myriad indications that planning’s misfires have also caused vast collateral damage. At the beginning of this millennium in America, there is pressure to reconceive the urban plan. With the end of sprawl finally in sight and an ailing national infrastructure, inner cities have deteriorated to the point of being uninhabitable, and disastrous environmental conditions prevail.2 The current federal administration, like Roosevelt’s in the Great Depression, targets revitalization of urban areas and infrastructure as a primary means to stimulate the national economy while investing in our material future. But just how to invent a robust infrastructure, whose design is as ambitious as its economic underpinnings, is a question that planning and architecture have not posed, let alone answered, from the sidelines.

In this urban century, when for the first time in history more than half the world’s population lives in cities, we face an environmental crisis that has the potential to swamp all others. Architecture’s green movement seeks to integrate environmental sciences and landscape into its portfolio, with strategies that emanate from eco-tech, biomimicry, and regionalism. Yet the promise in all these approaches is nearly suffocated by the twin forces of moralism and commercialism: architecture is branded with a heavy coat of greenwash, making it both good and marketable. The problem is not the branding, but the discipline’s rejection of it as a medium for serious work.

To begin, our objective is to extend current discourse about urban transformation and architecture’s role therein. The object of fast-forward
urbanism is the city, or rather, that region where canonical distinctions retreat, because nature is a cultural construction and whole cities are suburban. This metroburbia accepts the possibilities offered by landscape urbanism, while simultaneously reconstituting architectural and urban design as a continuous field of operation.

At the onset of an era in which reconfiguring, revitalizing, and reimagining will increasingly dominate metropolitan practices, an architecture that engages what we used to call the city and the suburbs is required. In light of these new demands, architects, planners, and landscape designers have been concocting peculiar remedies from our old bag of tricks. Instead, we need new kinds of operations undertaken opportunistically that reference the existing urban work—the city as found. Not only are the urban circumstances definitive, but so are the urban operations, which involve a fundamental rethinking. The projects and essays in this volume—which stands on the shoulders of, and yet in contrast to, prior ways of referencing the city—speak to the opportunistic new ways of making cities.

North America’s particular combination of market forces and public policy has generated alternative urbanisms that seem particularly improbable—most notably those of the “new” (the developments of traditional form) and the “everyday” (the voyeurism of emergent process). The first of these urbanisms ironically mirrors the positivism of the modernist movement whose legacy it seeks to remedy or even negate. In what could be viewed as the urban version of an Oedipus complex, New Urbanism substitutes one manifesto for another. Its vision and principles are equally unable to deal with the messiness of existing conditions and the market forces that control them. It indiscriminately borrows an urban imaginary from an earlier model of city life, and fails to recognize how the forces that produce cities today have radically changed—in the scale of increments of development, instruments of financing, audiences, and implicit lifestyles. For these reasons, it is not coincidental that New Urbanism has achieved its greatest successes, again ironically, not by strategically intervening in existing older urban cores, but on so-called greenfield sites, which are unencumbered by complications that would challenge the degree of control demanded by (their) master-planned designs.
At the other end of the spectrum, the urbanism offered by the everyday possesses a critical complacency that all-too-readily relinquishes the role of the design disciplines to shape cities and stimulate their necessary transformation over time. It endorses a very particular valence of the status quo that gives agency to the bottom-up forces of the less empowered, while failing to grapple with the fact that the capital essential to urban development more often than not flows from the top down, whether from public or private coffers. The contribution that everyday urbanism has made relative to the work contained within this book must not go unacknowledged, in the field's establishment of the premise that working within the city as it is, and as it operates, is a productive research enterprise capable of unearthing practices hidden in plain sight, waiting to be exploited. As such, we see the existing city as a laboratory, incubator, and starting point for all future action. Where the present approach differs from everyday urbanism is in the latter's disregard of the crucial need for the architect-urbanist to assume a more complex role as a double agent whose interests alternate—and negotiate—between those of the client and the interests of those who will invariably be affected by their actions. It is precisely this interface, where the operating system of the existing city can embed design with a more strategic value, that links the various propositions in this volume.

Whether everyday or new, architecture has held a tenuous grasp on city-making, particularly when we examine the recent past. The New Urbanist approach to Katrina is characterized in the many final reports for towns engaged in the Mississippi Renewal Forum. The recommendations involve what we would call "micromastering," or master planning with a fine-toothed comb, yet still its organizers admit three years later, "Every problem, and therefore every alternative solution, is more complex than we imagined." From porch design to town plans, the form-based prescription for rebuilding met the expectable hurdles: nonconformists, developers with different ideas, town councils that had to operate expeditiously, homeowners who just wanted to get back to normal. At Ground Zero, by contrast, rebuilding rested upon the persona of the architectural hero, namely Daniel Libeskind. But there was little agreement among the multiple, powerful players involved, and Libeskind's magical hold crumbled. While it appeared
that the architect’s virtuoso performance, in terms of both the design and rhetoric surrounding the Freedom Tower, might provide enough momentum to carry his World Trade Center proposal to implementation, a fast-forward jump just one year after the competition found Libeskind “virtually neutralized by commercial forces” according to architectural critic Joseph Giovannini. A March 2010 editorial in the New York Times jump-cuts to more recent events, demonstrating that even Libeskind’s winning master plan—a ring of skyscrapers on the site—has little relevance to the changing development conditions in Manhattan.

What resulted in both New Orleans and Lower Manhattan, even though they had almost nothing else in common, was the death of those proposals at the hands of local economic, political, and cultural practices. As such, the discipline of architecture (and with it, planning, urban design, and landscape architecture) has been blindsided. Neither the groundswell of well-articulated planning directives from New Urbanists, nor the bravado of creative genius from Libeskind, had substantial impact. The local political economy prevailed. It is worth stepping back into the recent history of architecture and urbanism to place this predicament in context.

Looking Backward

Within architecture, the city has always been something of a conundrum. As a context for architectural works, the city offers constraints that spawn both innovation and retrograde, historical mimicry. As a project, the city has proven to be too large, or at least too comprehensive, leading architects down the slippery slope of utopian thinking. As a political arena, building regulations may reflect stable public values, but the architect practices in the chaos of dynamic urban politics that oscillate between neighborhood activists and design review boards. And as a collective work, the city is too unruly to curate and yet too seductive (and important) not to try.

The paradox of the city is that it intrinsically demands design, yet inherently resists it. This can be viewed as the source of a number of architectural schools of thought about the city. In the modernist project, for example, architecture is intended to overcome the city’s resistance. Analytic use-categories of residential, commercial, recreation, and
transportation parse not only geography but life itself. Grounded on ideas emerging from structural anthropology, the urban condition is shared by the masses, whose basic needs are knowable and, with architects’ help, solvable. Yet the modernist city is but one model; its postmodern offspring adopt new strategies. Rather than approach design from the top down, the city’s resistance is substantially reduced if urban form derives from existing or past instantiations. Everyday urbanism, for instance, attacks the paradox differently, suggesting that the city does not demand design, at least not by professionals who see themselves as dictating form from the outside. Instead, the vitality of the city is shaped by everyday actors and practices, immune to our theories. Hence, no top-down design, no resistance.

The theorist-practitioners whose work appears in this volume use their research not as a basis for valorizing this conflict through its reproduction, but as a means of realizing the new (life as it could be) via a more promising path than modernism’s imposition of an entirely utopian vision (life as it should be). The propositions included here are extrapolative—learning from (a la Venturi), but also re jigging existing phenomena and protocols in order to produce effects and logistical arrangements that, while familiar, are unprecedented. These approaches—landscape urbanism, scripting, scenario planning, infrastructural urbanism, and the open city, to name a few—share the belief that contemporary metropolitan configurations themselves have become rich reservoirs of unformulated concepts. These loose concepts represent nascent forms of organization and identity capable of being invested with a level of as-yet-unrealized design intelligence.

Fast-Forward Urbanism was born of the frustration that—in response to the resistance encountered by the top-down to bottom-up norms and practices—architecture has, to a large extent, abandoned the city. Not only is its intelligence in a fond of seeing urbanism as extradisciplinary, but the city’s principal players—be they developers or policy-makers—have come to see architecture as irrelevant. In the latter case, it is more accurate to say that the city has abandoned architecture, producing what Rem Koolhaas calls “junkspace.” Even there, what is retained is planning, institutionally as well as intellectually driven by a mixture of modern and postmodern
ideas. In the early 1980s, an important progenitor of this volume, and perhaps for all contemporary theories of American urbanism, emerged: Colin Rowe's Collage City, which examines a role for architecture in the urban project that is not comprehensively utopian. Rowe describes modern architecture's ultimate conflict as being "between a retarded conception of science and a reluctant recognition of poetics." He goes on to state that the science of modern urbanism was a myth obscuring the real problem of urban management, one better handled by the bricoleur than the engineer. In architecture, the myth of a reliable, knowable urban science of empirical fact has largely been abandoned since Rowe wrote his tract, but the question of management has hardly registered in professional discourse. Management, as politics and negotiation, is a critical topic of discussion in the present volume's theory of architecture-as-urbanism.

Rowe's second myth, poetics or "fantasies about freedom," alludes to all the larger progressive goals of modernism. This humanitarian ideal, in its inevitable failure, led to a "tyranny of the 'majority,'" which ultimately marginalized the architect, fostering a kind of social guilt that continues to rear its head today: Fast-Forward Urbanism builds upon Collage City insofar as it too seeks a path out of this paradox without abandoning modernism's virtues in toto. But unlike the other book, Fast-Forward Urbanism revolves around a common idea that has yet to be fully polemized: that the contemporary (and particularly American) political economy both necessitates circumstantial revision of the modernist project and produces opportunities for moving it forward.

**American Exception or Exemplar?**

The conservative roots of American exceptionalism have been roundly criticized for ignoring the continuities and commonalities shared with other ideological and historical trajectories. The discomfort that this exceptionalism provokes is based on its political deployment. While urban processes are at heart political, they remain fundamentally spatial—and hence a legitimate question is raised about the spatiality of urban theory. Nevertheless, the murky water of the particularities of the American urban condition must be stepped into carefully. In this introduction we have sought to position
ourselves within multiple traditions, from modernism to landscape urbanism, but this volume focuses almost exclusively on American urban practices and projects. That focus is justified not by what may be unique to the United States, but by what is highly legible there. For example, America has perfected—to the detriment of both cosmopolitanism and environmentalism—the suburban project, which it subsequently exported globally as a development, finance, and land-use model. The United States has witnessed historically contingent opportunities that are particular to its political economy. For example, American infrastructure is at a historically precarious point, as many of its roads, bridges, and services have significantly deteriorated to the point of requiring federal stimulus funding. There are certain conditions in the United States, then, that have fostered the cultivation of contemporary urbanity. These conditions are found in many different locales, and are at the same time unevenly distributed among regions. Still, they occur together often enough to serve note as a kind of characteristic condition within American urbanism.

First, American urbanism is inherently opportunistic. It is founded on a creative tension between public acts and the private sector. The public sector in the United States has never been as strong as its European counterparts, and this has shaped a particular type of urban politics and finance based more on private gains than public goods. Benefactors, moguls, corporations, and energetic citizens alike can mobilize urban transformations.

Second, the American city, especially as one moves westward across the continent, is trapped by its generic tendencies. This is in contrast to the European city, which struggles against the gravitational pull of an exaggerated historic identity. The postwar American city in particular is a city of space (as Albert Pope describes it on pp. 143–75), with outward expansion dominating the transformation of almost all locales, as Venturi, Izenour, and Scott-Brown were the first to situate as part of a larger discourse on urbanism in *Learning from Las Vegas*.

Third, the American city never cottoned to the master plan as its European counterparts did, in part because of its Tocquevillian participatory democracy and in part because of its Jeffersonian agricultural bias.
Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cities—primarily in the East—were laid out as grids, but even these organizations were ad hoc and relatively rural in nature. City fathers had to realign streets after floods; a grid originating at a train station left no space for public buildings; towns radiated out from the commons, where livestock might be secured. The hierarchy of a central hub—which the Chicago School theorized as the organization of a concentric urban pattern—has been undone by inner-city abandonment, exurban growth, and municipal fragmentation. All these conditions make master planning too Herculean a task, leaving a more open set of game plans in its wake.

Fourth and last, the nature-culture binary is peculiarly contaminated and ambiguous in the United States. Culture as nature, nature as theme, park, and landscape as culture are hardly contradictions there. It is not by chance that Los Angeles has provided such provocative urban theory in the past three decades. In displacing the classical center-periphery approach of the Chicago School, the less coherent but more challenging Los Angeles School forwards several key notions about the postmodern city being driven not by the core, but by the hinterlands (see Michael Dear’s essay, pp. 226–41). The traditional duality of center-periphery (congested-to-dispersed, hot-to-cool) assumes a continuous gradient in terms of density, distances, speeds, accessibility, and financial production. This norm gives urbanism the value of radial hierarchy, a value that has been confused and undone through a seemingly never-ending string of natural disasters interwoven with cultural conflict.\(^6\) However artificial or heroic, the paradoxical and peculiar orientation of American urbanity vis-à-vis nature serves for us as a set of operative principles, just as it provided alternatives for refiguring the city that designers from Frank Lloyd Wright to Frank Gehry have capitalized upon.

These conditions set up the American city as an exemplary paradigm rather than as an exception, where the multiple forces of contemporary urbanity are transparently but also instructively visible. As such, there are lessons worth extracting for practices that extend beyond the U.S. border. Far from complying or expressing any master narrative on control, cities like Los Angeles are more constructively understood as nexuses of
various strands of thought that braid together into a condition that at the present moment can perhaps only be described as metrourbans, forming an incomplete history for contemporary urbanism.

The Modern Project

In the spirit of "learning from," there is much to be gathered from the modern project, since its failures have been so noisily proclaimed that its lessons, in particular those for the American metropolis, have been obscured. At least since the 1960s, there has been ongoing critique of modernism, both in terms of architecture and in terms of the city. Simplified and vilified simultaneously, the failed modern project was an easy springboard from which to launch new ideas about design. Team X—made up of the younger members of CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne)—was among the early critics, along with the more populist Jane Jacobs. Rather than lobbying yet another mortar, our particular view is that the master plan, as a quintessential emblem of the modern project, deserves scrutiny. Its inherent implications have crippled urban innovation, because master planning continues to predominate urban practices in spite of its widely recognized limitations. The master plan is dead. Long live the master plan.

To claim that the master plan is dead is hardly news. Substantial critique of the master plan came from its very progenitors in the 1960s, when CIAM members, led by architect José Luis Sert, attempted to revise the principles of the functional city to meet American urban conditions, where sprawl and inner-city slums resisted easy modernist applications. The historian Eric Mumford, in his exploration of the origins of the professional field of urban design, demonstrates that both modern urbanism at its most functional, abstract extreme—and its seeming opposite, postmodern traditional town planning—emerged from CIAM in the middle of the twentieth century.² It was CIAM's evolution in the U.S. context, according to Mumford, that transcended Le Corbusier's reliance on the tabula rasa and became the motivation for it to engage existing urban settings. The metrourbans approach represented in the pages that follow are thus deeply tied to CIAM's American heirs.
If the limits of the modernist master plan have become clichés, it is worth approaching the topic in a new way, to better understand the qualities that have kept the master plan from dying its ultimate death and to recuperate what may have been inadvisably rejected along the way. Contemporary circumstances complicate the modernist contradiction that Rowe named, between science/management and poetics/social ideals: in the United States today (and yesterday as well), there is no master to do the planning. The city and state are inseparable from the consumer economy, leading to a corporate capitalism that turns citizens into shareholders. While the moral attack on comprehensive urban planning (that the master plan is elitist and indefensibly utopian) remains unchanged, the pragmatist critique must be elaborated. Hence, this book.

In his historical analysis of modernist state planning in the United States, Robert Beauregard argues that master planning schemes arose to rationally arrange the chaotic land use of newly industrializing cities in the late nineteenth century. The master plan is and always has been an attempt to control the process that is the city in terms of functional and economic factors that could be spatially organized. The futility of this task has had strangely little impact on the enthusiasm with which such plans are adopted. At worst, the master plan is a fiction, a document that demonstrates ideals that no one imagines will be realized. In that sense, the master plan is a utopian instrument. At best, a master plan is an ideal type, in the Weberian sense that it represents an assembled, positive norm or a synthesis of possible phenomena, but not some perfect condition. Yet the master plan, in practice, exists as a static document to which particular actions are compared. Even if we agree in theory that it is more guideline than map, it is deployed as a portrait of the future. There is a certain confidence imparted by the plan—in the form of a standard—that keeps it in play long after its substantive worth has been discredited.

Our perspective admits the value of that confidence while seeking to convert false omniscience into working knowledge, replacing the master plan with tools and tactics of the trade. Within the world of planning, the important document for contemporary urban thought is not a static portrait of some single future condition, but the regulations that govern
practices—that is, the focus is on the rules or codes by which the fast-forward transition is effected rather than the final frame. These codes underlie and operate to shape form. In legal theorist Lawrence Lessig's terminology, code is a form of law that creates the potential for choice and freedom, if designed correctly. Like rules of the game that are intimately bound to the game board itself, an urban plan is to some extent predictable and to a significant extent at play.

It is worth examining a more specific situation to distinguish plan from code, a distinction that architectural theorist Françoise Choay has called the model and the rule. Rules about urbanity, she argues, are the stuff of treatises, while the reproduction of models is a utopian form of spatial thought. Within the model (the master plan), circulation is the most relevant realm for rethinking the city (versus the other modernist elements of commercial, residential, and recreational space). Although occasionally taking the form of a linear building, as in Le Corbusier's viaduct in the Plan Obus for Algiers, the circulation of goods and people is always considered an important (if not the most important) function of the city. Transportation and mobility with their necessary efficiencies were emphasized rather than what might have been viewed as circulatory infrastructure, because like Le Corbusier's viaduct, circulation was a form-based entity and not just a hidden system of services. Contemporary city-making is focused on formally realized infrastructures, but considers the engineered service systems an opportunity to grab even more real estate. That so much infrastructure has remained purely instrumental and singular in function (power lines, stormwater channels, sewer-line easements, railways, highways) is a new point of entry for design. Infrastructure, as it is used here, implies going beyond function to create more complex and robust systems.

It was Reyner Banham in Los Angeles, unsurprisingly, who considered transportation beyond its modern function of circulation as a form of art and entertainment. Though we might acknowledge the practices of early designers like Frederick Law Olmsted (or Thomas Vint and Stanley Abbott), who turned roadways into pleasure boulevards, it was really Banham who brought the road into the realm of performative infrastructure. Driving, for Banham, was a research method as well as an indulgence, and
he divided the immense, unintelligible space of Los Angeles into ecologies that had as much to do with access as geography. Banham's road as a space of entertainment, culture, recreation, orientation, and identity—as well as mobility—is the way contemporary urbanity refigures infrastructure in a more interactive and relational context.

Kazys Varnelis pulls Banham's view into contemporary focus, looking at Los Angeles as a site of networked ecologies: "A series of codependent systems of environmental mitigation, land-use organization, communication and service delivery." This type of infrastructure follows circumstantial events like laws, environmental constraints, and political pressure, rather than master plans. And while networked infrastructures have spatial registers, those of greatest interest here present design opportunities, with manifest ecologies. As Stan Allen has observed, "Urbanization today is not only a global phenomenon of physical and cultural restructuring, it has itself become a spatial effect of the distributed networks of communication, resources, finance, and migration that characterize contemporary life. The city today is everywhere and nowhere."  

From the machinic ideal of a city with a limited number of working parts, one part—that of circulation—is emblematic of the evolution leading to the metrourban project. Now, instead of modernism's efficient, single-use transportation systems, contemporary urbanities capitalize upon infrastructure to create entertaining, functional hybrid ecologies that in turn set into motion the next set of operations.

**The Dutch Distinction**

An additional, influential connection, both historically and conceptually, comes from current work and discourse in the Netherlands, led by theorists, practitioners, and firms such as Koolhaas/OMA, MVRDV, UNStudio, West 8, Roemer van Toorn, and Wouter Vanstiphout. Through institutions there such as the NAi and the Berlage, as well as by means of cultural policy, commissions, and direct subsidy, the Dutch government has supported architects' involvement and engagement in urban production. It is a long-standing Dutch tradition to invent new urban form within existing conditions, given particularities in the Netherlands.
Despite the fact that the very pragmatism espoused by the Dutch had its philosophical, if not practical, origins in the United States—namely in the writings of John Dewey and William James—its political economy stands in stark contrast to the American one, the subject of which was to a large degree the source of inspiration for Koolhaas's *Delirious New York*. While that work—in which Koolhaas caught the architectural openness of New York (the arbitrary program, the real estate motive, the generic urbanism)—stands in stark contrast to Dutch design, it cannot be a model for U.S. urbanism. Patently distinct, determining forces exist, including the American city's conjugal ties to the market, its expansionist history and parallel disdain for density, and its privileged positioning of the individual over the collective.

**Landscape Urbanism**

The present approach to city-making, as explained above, has developed from a number of sources that include modernism and Dutch urbanism. However, the most direct progenitor and touchstone is landscape urbanism. It offers a third option to the false dichotomy of the top down (New Urbanism) versus bottom up (everyday urbanism) by strategically relating control and disorganization. It seeks to retroactively make sense of how things work in order to redirect them. In this sense, landscape urbanism's approach to design is one that is to be deployed when appropriate, as opposed to comprehensively; it is more strategic than systematic. Consequently, effect and atmosphere matter more than the plan/planning, specifically by employing the following tools:

- surface (graphics, decoration)
- programmatic indeterminacy
- information (data, GfS)
- change over time
- form as a unit of organization, as having catalytic agency

This characterization of landscape urbanism is described by Stan Allen (see his essay on pp. 36–61), who notes that even though the contemporary field condition of cities is particularly well-suited to a landscape urbanist approach, its strategies have been successfully deployed not
in cities, but in parks. As R. E. Somol points out in his essay "Urbanism Without Architecture," such an approach also tends to resist architecture as an autonomous object, resulting instead in something between figure and ground. Landscape urbanism resists the politics of ownership in devious ways, permitting a kind of transgressive urban form and social behavior—rethinking the front lawn, the corporate plaza, and the vacant lot as potentially nonproprietary spaces or "landscapes." The fact that both landscape and infrastructure tend to resist market forces lends them particular urban status.

Landscape urbanism's strength is apparent in projects where the literal landscape elements (vegetal growth) and the ground plane dominate. It is weakest when applied to architectural projects in which the object is clear and there is little field that can be identified. Strategies and tactics of agglomeration are needed. Landscape urbanism, thus far, has been more successful at providing solutions to landscape rather than urban problems, making it perhaps not the strongest foundation for new urban theory. Nevertheless, we suggest this volume represents the next evolutionary state of landscape urbanism, one that embeds architecture into its theory and practice. That adaptation fundamentally alters landscape urbanism, while retaining some of its core elements. The principles below lay out this new urban terrain.

Eight Legs

As a starting gambit in the play for new theory and practices, the following eight principles of practice are offered in place of both the anarchy of laissez-faire urbanization and the containment project of prescriptive traditionalists. We hope these principles cultivate new strategies for architects, landscape designers, and planners to work in the risky, accident-prone contemporary city. The eight constructs are reference points—the fast-forward urbanism we wish to introduce. When climate, economy, technology, and culture are all undergoing unpredictable but inevitable transformations, such principles are needed now more than ever.
1. The Radical Increment
Design strategy that utilizes accumulation as a means of catalyzing change, while producing urban character and identity in the process, works through what can be called radical incrementalism. This is to be distinguished from the advocacy of an aesthetics of accumulation (emblemated in the Metabolist project of the 1960s and 1970s and repopularized by several contemporary Dutch architects), in which increments are solely an expressive device, absent of an evolutionary development strategy. In this model, incrementalism is deployed within the project only, rather than as part of a larger typological strategy of urban assimilation and distribution. By contrast, radical incrementalism recognizes and takes advantage of the fact that the real estate speculators who are responsible for financing most of the buildings that constitute the fabric of the American city are creatures of habit. In contrast to the utopian vision of modernism, whose instrument was the aegis of the master plan (more recently in the New Urbanist guise of a false organicism), radical increments can be deployed strategically and with the purpose of developing a singularity of urban character, not its opposite. This is accomplished by the introduction of new typologies that others will adopt because they offer new norms to solve both current and older urban problems. Nothing breeds proliferation like the success of a new business plan, one that offers the architect an opportunity to transform the life and imageability of the city through entrepreneurship.

2. In Vivo rather than In Vitro
Design strategies achieve newness by harnessing and rejiggering existing (political, economic, cultural) behaviors and protocols rather than concocting extrinsic ones. This is not a traditional contextual argument. It moves away from the easy but false choice of the top down versus the bottom up, toward the creation of urban experiences that are familiar yet projective, popular yet critical, and informal yet orchestrated. This involves research that is applied rather than theoretical, and leads beyond a mere inventorying of existing conditions to an extrapolation of design methods that can adjust to changes in circumstance (see principle ?). Contemporary metroburban configurations themselves represent rich reservoirs of unformulated
concepts and invisible practices waiting to be exploited. The in vivo pays close attention to the feedback loop that exists between new models and their performance in the field. Yet even if a model fails at one time or in one context, it can hold the seeds of success in another—a delayed or even inadvertent form of trial-and-error that stands in marked contrast with the now-or-never reliance on the “premier” of the original that the in vitro demands. The in vivo argues that new forms of urbanity begin with learning how things work and why—not with the intent of expressing or fetishizing them, but in order to think about how else things might work.

3. Identity and Experience
The opposition of public versus private provides urbanism the traditional values of identity and difference. Today, however, identity has become over-developed: we have gone from the civic ideal of a pluribus unum to the individual profiling of pluribus maximus. The pyramid and bell curve have been turned on their side. The atmosphere of the contemporary city reflects this, consisting of defined overlay zones, or “O-Zones,” indifferently distributed across a residual field and delimited by policies of exclusion and disinvestment. The undeniable popular success of these enclaves (or, for that matter, less exclusive popular attractions such as Las Vegas or the so-called festival marketplaces that populate so many major American cities) is testimony to the same undeniable draw that the city as a whole once held: namely, the opportunity to become part of something unique, in a way that activates surprising forms of pleasure. Today, urbanism is driven by the realization that urban experience (not the same as the city of which it may be a part) has become commoditized. Rather than summarily decry this fact, it is more productive to accept that O-Zones are becoming our future communities of affiliation by capitalizing upon this fact, and exploit the opportunity they present to establish new platforms for collective life. In order to accomplish this, Somol argues for the need to merge the formerly distinct terrains of urban design (the planner) and experience design (the imagineer), believing that it is possible for architecture to be both critical and commercial, and perhaps become more urban in the process. The instruments of control of such a hybrid approach, which he calls “entertainment planning,”
are directed at emphasizing the orchestration of new operating systems and effects rather than (as is the convention) form and conditions (the bias of form-based zoning; the use of traditional tools such as the figure-ground, for instance, is irrelevant when working with contemporary cities like Los Angeles, where buildings cover less than 25 percent of the terrain). In this way, it is possible to eschew the increasingly reductive narratives of theme in favor of the cunning arrangement of materials and logistics that are directed at cutting across traditional affiliations like age, income, and ethnicity. Rather than being driven by the marketplace and special interests, such an architecture-as-urbanism looks for ways to politicize the economic sphere and thus alter its spatial repercussions, cultivating new collectives that undermine the old politics of exclusion.

4. Recasting the Performative

Architecture-as-urbanism moves away from modernism’s definition of performance as the optimization and expression of function in favor of another valence of the term that relates it to political economy. The proformative, as it might be called, is entrepreneurial rather than indexical; it recognizes the catalytic agency of form, which builds value by purposefully tapping into a cultural psyche. Its implications for architecture are threefold. First, signification is seen as a form of performance: embedded with the intelligence of a branding strategy, the semiotic value of form attracts audiences and investment. Second, toward the same end, the proformative renegotiates architecture’s relation to program by restaging accepted logistical patterns and protocols in a manner that ties it to identity through the medium of experience/doing. This new proformativity is best emblematized in the Trojan horse, whose form neither literally nor directly expresses its function. Indeed, to do so would disclose its plan (bait and switch) and doom it to failure. Instead, the Trojan horse is more cunningly conceived: designed to elicit a certain receptivity (signifying a gift), it accommodates its other intent (infiltration) sufficiently but not optimally. In the same way, it is possible for architecture to be commercial and critical, economically driven and political. The third facet of proformativity, explained in detail below (see principle 5), calls for architecture to eschew its current role in the
city. That is, urban architecture must reject the false choice between acting either as a stand-alone "icon" (as with most institutions) or as infill (real estate)—in effect, having to choose to "perform" as architecture or urbanism, but not both. Allen points out that the thick two-dimensionality of today’s city presents the opportunity for architecture to perform a more complex role, one traditionally assigned to infrastructure—namely, becoming an instrument and space of connectivity for the city-in-the-making.27

5. Infrastructure as Catalytic
In the American city today, infrastructure has become more qualified in its public role; increasingly limited in the degree of service it provides, as well as more localized in its reach (one need only move and try to ascertain utility service providers to discover this). Whereas traditionally the metropolitan grid provided a clear and dominant system of connectivity among private interventions, the continuity of that once-extensive network has been progressively undermined and fractured by the emergence of closed, privatized developments as the dominant figure of urban organization. At the same time, these communities—access to whose utilities are as limited as to its grounds—use the same services in a more localized but also customized way (the cable vs. satellite vs. broadband choice being one among many examples of this). In this brave new world of private governance off the grid, the potential of infrastructure as an instrument by which to lend character and a logic of organization to such places stands in marked contrast to its conventional status as an element of pure necessity, hidden in plain sight. Even in its accepted capacity as a planning instrument, however, infrastructure can be deployed in ways that suggest new logistical arrangements (discussed in principle 3) and strategies of agglomeration, provoked by shifts in the availability of material resources (see principle 6). Finally, it is possible to imagine that the natural extension of the same tendency toward localization will eventually lead (if it hasn’t already) to its eventual application at an architectural scale (see principle 4). This will blur the time-honored distinction between “served” and “serviced” in a way that could offer opportunities to radicalize long-held conventions regarding the relationship between public and private, individual and collective space.
6. Plastic Ecologies

The relationship of the urban to the so-called natural landscape today is ambiguous, as landscape urbanism reminds us. But it is also paradoxical, providing fertile ground for design exploration—as suggested by the evolution in meaning of the term “ecology” itself, which no longer distinguishes between natural and artificial. Rather than try to “naturalize” development (as some in the green movement would have it), it is more enlightening to view nature through the lens of culture: namely, to understand nature as a product of political economy, evidenced in the complex associations that the color and term “green” itself has come to acquire. What has been called the postsuburban, or metroburb, necessarily calls for new combinations of natural and artificial, green and silver, landscape and infrastructure. Those plastic ecologies are to be distinguished from the widespread interest within the design academy in biomimicry, which because it exploits only the semiotic dimension of culture-as-nature, resists deeper questions and misses more profound implications for architecture-as-urbanism. These include the effects of living with limited material resources, which itself suggests the emergence of distinct social arrangements organized around certain resources at the expense of others. In contrast to the literal form of plasticity offered by the biomorphic, ecological plasticity refers to the ability of urban environments to attract unlikely combinations of audiences through the radical combination and arrangement of materials and activities. Just as metroburbia promotes a varied field of social and cultural experiments, it equally promotes a sampling of resources in various combinations. If the world of unequal distribution also affords total access, people might be as likely to go in search of certain resources rather than expect small amounts of all resources to come to them. In place of the ecologies that have traditionally given identity to cities—energy, water, and cars, but also the single-family house and the shopping mall—new cultures, lifestyles, and natures can arise, activating surprising forms of pleasure and solidarity.
7. The Question of Contingency

Whether they are growing or shrinking, change is the only constant in cities today. Time is of the essence: design strategies must invariably address not just what unfolds in the future, but how it might (not will) unfold. Unlike the medium of landscape, where growth and evolution are assumed and where the effects of climate are relatively predictable, urban development is inherently volatile and, accordingly, calls for design strategies that do not merely embrace speculation but catalyze it. From the standpoint of architectural production, a central question in this atmosphere of risk is: Do we desire contingency, or do we have contingent desires? In other words, can contingency prove formally productive as an end in itself, leading to new configurations based on "if-then" diagrams of choice? Or is contingency more potent in reference to the provisional allegiances of metroburbani-tes, who move itinerantly from location to location over the course of a day, to the various "communities" of which they are members? Borrowing from practices like gaming, game theory, risk management, and arbitrage, such unpredictability is best dealt with not through defensively minded approaches geared to adapt to whatever may transpire, but instead through contingent strategies that nudge the future forward, "surfing" or leveraging given current cultural and economic tendencies, with the knowledge that they will invariably yield up the new.

8. Negotiating Discourses

Not since architect and delineator Hugh Ferriss's time has urban representation broken architecture's strictures to render the city's distinctions (see Albert Pope's drawings accompanying his essay in this volume, pp. 143–75). The final lesson of working in and on the contemporary American city concerns the inherent transformation of communications, both in terms of design representation and social negotiation, implied by the above seven points. Given the contingent and projective nature of design proposals today, new forms of visual expression—apparent in a number of the contributions to this volume—are critical. Architectural renderings depict imageability and end states, while diagrams portray ideas and processes, yet it is in between these two where new forms of architecture-as-urbanism are
conjured. More than mere before-and-after depictions are necessary in order to suggest what is next. This pertains not just to questions of phasing, but also to alternative scenarios and readings of context. Not only is a more appropriate visual media set in motion, but communication between actors is fundamentally transformed and the interest of those beyond the traditional stakeholders is catalyzed through the choice of visual media. Markets, audiences, entrepreneurs, and managers displace citizens, designers, financiers, and policy-makers, transforming the conventional dialogue concerning appropriateness to one about possibility—the urban future—without resorting to utopian visioning. Returning to Rowe's argument about science and poetics, the contemporary city calls for an awakening of the problem of management, in both politics and negotiation.

Looking Ahead
The school of thought captured between the covers of Fast-Forward Urbanism includes not only these eight strategies, which are reference points, but the essays and projects that follow. In the book, we have grouped the range of approaches to this future thinking about the next American city under three relevant urban operations, all of which refer—as evident in the "re-" prefix—to processes of both salvage and experimentation. "Recycling Ecologies" concerns ways to convert the interwoven systems of collectivities, their artifacts, and their environments into thriving contemporary cities. "Regenerating Economies" implies that the markets and efficiencies, as well as value, that comprise the city can be prodded into higher levels of performance. And lastly, "Rerouting Infrastructures" acknowledges that the utilitarian systems and functional networks that serve our cities need to be redirected toward more interwoven, complex, and potent ends. We offer this book to all those urban thinkers and practitioners who will lead the American city into its next spatial formation. While Fast-Forward Urbanism is by no means exhaustive, it will serve as a reference, for it contains works that are the seeds of a new urban generation.
2 Southern California Studies Center and the Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, Sprawl Hits the Wall (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2001).
3 We are indebted to earlier versions of this perspective that were constructed in collaboration with R. E. Somol. A particularly astute formulation, in which Somol’s role was primary, was our entry to the History Channel’s City of the Future competition in Los Angeles in 2006, for which we collectively created O-ZLA, an unpublished manuscript accompanying our design entry that is heavily drawn upon here. Roger Sherman, Dana Cuff, and R. E. Somol, O-ZLA (12 Dec, 2006), http://www.citylab.aud.ucla.edu/lad106.html.
4 Less than two months after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, the Mississippi Renewal Forum was convened among more than two hundred professionals and civic leaders to find ways to rebuild in the wake of disaster. For more information, see http://mississippirenewal.com/.
10 Ibid., 4.
11 Ibid., 6.
19 CityLAB’s open design competition in 2009, WPA 2.0, was an exploration of infrastructure’s revitalization in terms of a more public, robust way of thinking. See http://wp2.aud.ucla.edu.
24 Many of these principles arose from discussion during the Fast Forward symposium held at UCLA’s Department of Architecture and Urban Design in May 2007. Participants at that symposium included many of the authors in this volume. Specifically, Albert Pope raised the distinction between in vivo and in vitro ideas about collective identity and ambience over form come from R. E. Somol’s work; and Stan Allen championed the idea of connective infrastructure. Discussions about collective identities emanated from the O-ZLA project (see note 3). While the present work relies on these contributions, we accept full responsibility for their formulation here.
25 Sherman, Cuff, and Somol, O-Z.LA (see note 3).

26 See, for example, R. E. Somol, "Join the Club: Golf Space, the New Town Square has 18 Holes," Wired n, no 6 (June 2003). http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/11.06/golf_spc.html (accessed 8 Apr. 2010).