

Civilized enclaves of wilderness: substitutes for an alienated urban nature

I S Vuscan^{1*} and S Feng¹

¹ College of Arts, China University of Petroleum, No. 66 Changjiang Road,
Huangdao District, Qingdao City, 266580, East China

*E-mail: sonia.vuscan@upc.edu.cn

Abstract: The article stresses the inspirational capacity of spontaneous vegetation condensed in spaces defined by human oblivion, such as derelict structures and untamed lots. According to the holstering capacity of the medium, isolated cases (weeds sprouting on crumbling walls), or emulating natural habitats (wasteland flora) developed into a wasteland nature propagating as a consequence of dysfunctional urbanization. Because of increased infrastructure development and urbanization, spaces passable of accommodating such unintended design occurrences recede. Such crude source of inspiration for inoculating nature into architecture and design is to be found within the parameters of enduring, unintended, free form compositions of opportunistic vegetation. The article aims at hosting an alternative to current urban order, in what concerns a contextualized human-nature interaction, launching a thinking scheme for rewinding and sustaining the urge toward soil and nature.

1. Introduction

This article wishes to outline manifesting outcomes of nature, with a melancholic call for freedom and wilderness. Within the length of its pages, the article attempts to thrust forward means of restoring nature's wild predisposition within the urban context. Because of decreasing space for oases of green and repose, improvisation and adaptation to the new possibilities offered by a throughout built environment are to be perceived as a solving solution. Urban expansion does not occur in tandem with that of greenspaces, on the contrary, due to increasing demand but limited land availability, greenspaces are stagnating or, more often than not, receding [1]. While scrutinizing spaces at a venture in search for inspiration, a passible eye (designer or architect) might discovered the enduring and obstinate character of nature in unintended occurrences of spontaneous bursts of vegetation, emerging in spaces affording their self-propagation. The observation of those obvious clues of nature's way (spontaneous outbursts of vegetation), is to be followed with receptive designs, materializing in greenspaces and built structures that seem to genuinely evolve into what might become the utopian juxtaposition of the material and natural dimensions of urbanity. In order for this to concretize, the creator (designer or architect) must shift practice from imposing it, to submitting to the way of nature.

The article stresses the aesthetic possibilities offered by spontaneous burst of vegetation found randomly in peculiar spaces (vacant lots, decaying surfaces, repose surfaces, ruinous structures, erroneous structures, etc.). It brings forward the incipient aesthetic qualities of unintended occurrences, in vegetal compositions that have not undergone human intervention but evolve and propagate within the limits of human omission.



The article underlines the existence of such unintended aesthetic occurrences while scrutinizing the unaccounted for presence of heathers, that sprouted opportunistically in spaces that were not intended for their propagation. The intention is to highlight the aesthetic value of spontaneous vegetation. Acknowledge the inspirational possibilities offered by heaths, which could provoke a change in human perception and appreciation, if subjected to a process of observation, selection, restrained intervention and replication in spaces where highlighted and framed by subtle design could acquire status recognition. The dictums under which the ideas were constructed and enquires have been conducted, the key to read the symbolism of photo-registered information are as follow:

- let nature be natural by restraining from over-manipulating greenspaces;
- design should be literally green;
- make chances for nature in design and architecture;
- acclimatize wilderness into a concrete oriented urbanity.

The mechanics of change has at its basis gaining raw aesthetic and ecological knowledge, finding inspiration in the crude and primal, replicate cropped compositions from aleatory incipient habitats in intended spaces of thought and structure.

2. The natural element and urban nature

The natural element is inclusive to the design of the environment, being counted among its building materials. It follows a certain pattern in a repetitive way, given to an established design scheme. One could identify a certain urban area according to its natural décor pattern, the preponderance concerning plant species, comprised vegetation, objectifying aesthetically secure designs. Greenspaces are subjected to design, the natural being distorted through a process of adjustments and fittings with the purpose of creating a sense of controlled space. At the opposed pole there is the alternative of freed vegetation with particular attention given to the enclosure. Design should be the prerogative of a material environment with nature being allowed a lent process of de-civilization.

Vegetal decoration is not to be considered equivalent to decorating with nature. While the former involves vegetal constituent elements of urban flora manipulation for reaching a level of accepted and established aesthetic, the latter implies accepting the unpredictability of nature's behavior in designated spaces (figure 1).

The bizarre beauty of such unintended aesthetic occurrence, as that attached to the nature engulfed built structure, is something that escapes the appreciation and comprehension of neighboring inhabitants and passersby. It is reputed for being disordered, peculiar, reverberating into an oasis of welcomed and intriguing wilderness among arid compositional creativity. The free form composition dares to move away from the accepted and expected form of the material environment. For neophytes it is an upsetting and discordant presence, for a specific viewer a source of aesthetic revelation, calling for a reevaluation of its unexpected, unrepeatable intrinsic compositional possibilities.

Urban nature shares its scarcity among conformist greenspaces (subdued through over-manipulating processes of maintenance and design) and transient greenspaces (circumstantial vegetal compositions in a state of dereliction, underrated heaths that could be valorized with minimum intervention, seeding and trimming). One must acknowledge the ingenuity with which spontaneous vegetation reclaims hostile space, its exuberant development, spreading and resilience to detrimental conditions.

Urban nature lacks a defined status and aesthetic, with processed vegetation and spontaneous vegetation competing for dominium. The presence of spontaneous vegetation was mentioned by Tallmadge (2004) with pejorative connotation.



Figure 1. Example of nature engulfed built structure.



Figure 2. Nomadic vegetable garden.

Tallmadge (2004) denounces the duality of a sterile material component (such as roofs and pavement) of urbanity and too much wildness (such as weeds) with regard to urban vegetation [2]. He translates these visual signals as waist and a call for action. While lacking appurtenance, purpose and quantifiable attributes, they are not short in incipient inspirational value, creating, through their flexible rebellion, spaces of wonder.

Interaction with greenspaces is restricted to visual consuming. With everything already established, the inhabitants are educated to submit to the establishment. In today's over-manipulated greenspaces, nature is being amended from being itself. This highly contradicts Thoreau's reflection on nature's obstinate inclination toward a wild state [3]. Our acceptance of what is commonly considered urban nature: preserves, parks, and gardens, embody what Thoreau (2010) mentions as nature imported at any price. That which is acknowledged as nature in an urban framework is shaped by culturally dominant metaphors of nature. These metaphors validate that nature which is accommodated in parks and gardens or protected as reminiscences of native landscapes effaced by urban development [2]. Moralizing dictums and the augmentation of the fragile character of urban nature, reprimands and penalties, conduct to citizenry's estrangement and sole participation at a visual level. While viewers are being designated to coercive pedestrian areas, urban nature is reformed according to oppressive designs into decorative, non-interactive patterns. Both humans and nature are subjected to permutations from the natural, a restructuring with repercussions in the way humans relate to nature and the natural.

3. The soil at the block's foot

In their study Ryan and Simson (2002) underline the necessity to reconsider urban woodlands as both economic value and improvement stimuli for urban life and environment. The acknowledgeable gains are reason enough for undertaking conservation of existing woodlands and development of further ones. They discuss the propagation of urban woodlands not only at the outskirts but in the urban environment, and furthermore on 'people's doorsteps' [1].

Rebellious spaces, coming in green of many hues and textures from inceptive indulgent intervention, create precedents of urban palliation for nostalgia, in shapes of origin and brutal beauty. The article advocates for a change in human conduct toward permitted nature in a space of concrete and soil-phobia. It also states the need to revise laws and restrictions regarding unpermitted intervention in greenspaces and bordering soil bands. It solicits the right of gaining responsibility over the greenspace in the immediate vicinity of one's own residence - the soil at the block's foot, as exemplified in figure 2, dormant soil revitalized into improvised patches of vegetables which add

value to the overall appearance of the accommodating space. The mutable character of the nomadic vegetable gardens is demonstrated by absence of continuity.

The disposable surface of vertical walls could be considered as a lucrative surface for exhibiting intended vegetal compositions. Figure 3 illustrates an unintended encounter with vegetal elements, an example of nature's stance in creating chances for its accommodation, in a scenario advancing the motto – design and architecture should be literally green. Vegetal elements sprout spontaneous in a passive revolt against the concrete corset.

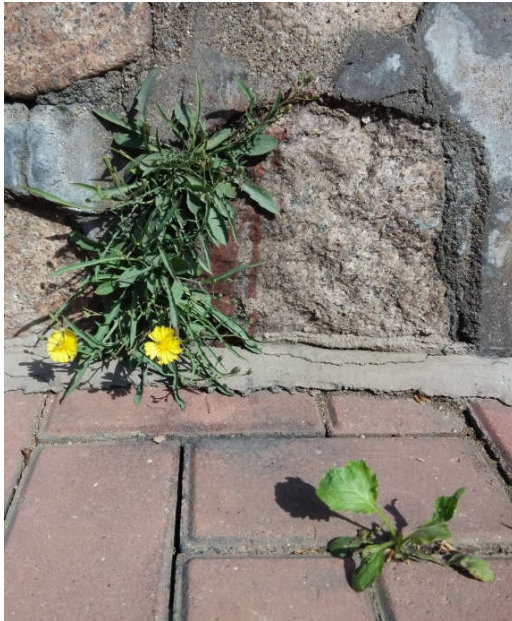


Figure 3. An example of unintended design occurrence – creating chances for nature in design and architecture.



Figure 4. A living roof composed by vegetation which was not caused by human intervention.

Nature spouts in a tenacious effort to proliferate where workmanship and materials are defective. Rooftop surfaces are not to be considered as sterile material components in the framework of green design and architecture. Figure 4 illustrates a living roof – status acquired for its existing vegetation, not caused by human intervention, but self-developed as a consequence of other exterior random agents. Due to a series of fortuitous events, an unintended design occurrence with highly aesthetic value emerged.

Aiming at gaining space for green in architecture, one must consider built-in terraces (figure 5). Within the context of receding the horizontal manageable space, the issue of gaining space rises. Creating opportunities for green patches, be it ornamental or vegetable/herbs patches, is in increased demand. Built-in terraced surfaces could be adapted to host such endeavors while balancing built structures with the idea of suspended gardens.

Expect amalgamation of derailed patterns in composition, confusion in style and tilt toward humanity in its faults and graces. If the enabling environment emerges, one can expect to encounter the unexpected under the form of unintended aesthetic occurrences considered as mediums for astonishment, and resuscitation of curiosity. The unexpected element is the one accounting for dismissing repeatability and predictability, resulting in gradually omitting the visual friction with an urbanized nature.

Spontaneous vegetation should suffer a shift in human perception from a reproachful to an accepting attitude. Spontaneous vegetal elements are to be seen not as derogative but a provided presence in the developing process toward completion of intended design. New schemes in design should embed nature in its structures as implied constructive elements. With variable location and

composition, such aesthetic phenomena prove a contingent happening, freed from space pertaining. They are fortuitous encountering, in relation with abandoned or partially abandoned structures. A proliferation of green roofs could be a consequence of acknowledging and fancying such aesthetic encounters. Letting nature coat the material environment will come as an ecological solution for the aesthetic and environmental problem - vegetation advances, where human intervention recedes.



Figure 5. Spontaneous vegetation captured to exemplify an unintended design occurrence.



Figure 6. Nomadic vegetable gardens, improvised in soil gained in an urban rivulet's valley.

The attribute of citizenship in man became antagonistic with nature cohabitation. It has to be the path of concrete to safely guide you through synthetic jungles of limited and repetitive patterns. The danger is opportunistic and nature wild and spreading, therefore one was trained by words and symbols. The hermeneutics of human and nature behavior was inseeded in our urban minds since infancy. Restriction come in words and geometric plates inoculating decency and clinic relation with nature: *Don't step on the grass*. Awakening and waiting are the drives to experience nature. The action of turning toward the petty land at hand would have as a consequence increased empathy with the environment.

Citizenry should have a stance in shaping urban environment, thus being able to develop particular patches of green and repose, intuitively guiding exuberances of vegetation (figure 6). Allowance accredited to citizenry into shaping environment will result in objectifying spaces to meet their needs and preferences. So is the case exemplified in figure 6, where dwellers' perception of the land at hand, inspired a change in its purpose and therefore its appearance.

The way in which humans perceive their environment is in relation to what it affords, becoming the medium for attaining human purpose. Purpose, which might be influenced and triggered by the order of the environment's constituting elements and the characteristic of these elements [4].

Nomadic vegetable gardens, improvised in soil gained by circling trunks of decorative trees in an urban rivulet's valley. These diminutive gardens are proofs of un-receded agricultural impetus inherent in the urban transplanted rural man, in need of soil and cropping food. The peculiarity of the spontaneous outbursts of green and food reside in their placement in inadequate space and shaping to

adapt to the peculiarity of space. Interdictions are implemented sympathetically due to the fact that the clandestine gardeners are superficially urbanized rural individuals. The space becomes a medium for healing melancholies, and offering comfort by accommodating a continuation of disrupted practices. Space is thus seen as soothing grounds for alienated spirits. Periods of intensive agricultural activity is followed by periods of abstinence (owing to applied interdiction) equivalent with a period of vegetal pauperization and bareness of the space.

Drawing back on an emphatic relationship with nature by launching a tendency toward human – environment interaction on a level of:

- acknowledging – the visual interconnection with the green environment would be of enhanced effect if that which is visualized breaks with convention and follows the pattern of nature as encountered in a wild environment, therefore appealing to memory and emotions. Professional intervention should be discreet and minimal;
- using – within the urban environment, the human and natural element should interconnect on an experiencing level. This would request rethinking green space design in a way that could embrace spontaneous human intervention without creating prejudice to the design project;
- experiencing – human's drive toward a tactile or physical relation with nature must be considered. To limit the interaction to a strictly contemplative experience is coercive;
- Imprinting personality marks – humans leave marks on the environment in an attempt to signalize an existing individuality. While doing this, they attach emotion to the place thus marked. It is a feeling of attachment toward that surface which suffered personal intervention;
- rehabilitating nature - a liberating gesture of letting nature be natural. Equivalent to McHarg's (1900) 'redemptive urban nature,' rehabilitated nature has as rationale conserving remnants of native habitats and species, as well as restoring degraded ecosystems. Throughout McHarg's (1900) narrative of restoring urban nature, urban habitats must recall former landscapes previous to the city's inception. Within McHarg's (1900) discourse the controversial issue of 'invasive species' is introduced, identified as non-native species transplanted and acclimatized through human intervention. McHarg (1900) instigates an ideationally struggle with invasive, non-native vegetation stirred by a vision of urban landscapes as weedlands standing for urban ecosystems. The driving force is the belief in the malignant influence of predatory weeds acting as impediments in restoring the sourcing vegetal ecosystem [5].

4. A neophyte stamp on greenspace development

Old communities maintain customary habits and transpose practices from rural to urban habitats, skipping laws or regulations. Annexes to annexes, interwoven roofs, unintentional associations of colors and materials, mixed styles, cohabitation of old and new, everything unintentional. The explanation could reside in the association of poor financial conditions with the need of expanding space, gaining space, absence of restrictions, or unauthorized, unimpeded intervention on the architecture of built structures, etc.

Nomadic, new settlements, coagulating in the vicinity of the construction sites, dwelling cells of transit and toil, are as many examples of alleviating improvisations of high efficiency but low comfort. The enclosing walls become substitute means for cultivating spontaneous vegetable gardens (figure 7).

The article's intention is not only to ovate the inspirational power of improvisation (in spite of exhibiting confusion in style and maneuvering), but also to amend the opposing overdesigned landscaping. There is limited place for fortuitous accidents given the universality of forms and patterns, repeatability, tamed creativity, dullness and dehumanization, absence or limited unauthorized intervention.

The inducted indolence of the citizenry turned into spectators, in case of greenspace design, should be converted into communion and participation. Citizens should be encouraged to get involved with the surrounding environment. Involvement conducts to a spirit of appropriation. This will concretize the relationship between the inhabitant and its habitat.

At an incipient phase in reshaping urban greenspaces lies researching and experiencing in situ the predetermined site. Ideas should be the embodiment of resulted information and citizenry's response to the forwarded design solutions.

The article insists on the aesthetic, ecological and sociologic fortuitous consequences through the design process of replicating wilderness, the creation of spaces of interaction, self-development and permitted neophytes' involvement.



Figure 7. Improvise for full efficiency. Adapt any medium to satisfy needs, as supplying food and provide a substitute for melancholic imagery.

Failing to provide involving opportunities for citizenry would degenerate overtime into a declining empathy for nature and an increasing alienation from nature:

- receding inclination toward involvement with the natural environment;
- submitting to the mainstream's restrained behavior in relation to the environment;
- accepting design scenarios without questioning;
- restraining from expecting and stimulating change.

In order to reverse the process of alienation from nature and the material environment designers should:

- stimulate curiosity towards the natural and the object oriented environment;
- encourage a critical attitude and induce a continuous rise in demands;
- create chances for human - nature interaction within the urban landscape;
- guide attitudes toward human - nature harmonious cohabitation;
- acclimatize wilderness to the urban context.

4.1. Nomadic vegetable gardens

Enquiries have been made with regard to acknowledged improvised vegetable gardens in opportunistic but not intruding places (customs sustained and propagated by old folks transplanted from rural to urban habitats). The young generation lost inclination toward gardening due to an interruption in the custom flow. Practicing gardening becomes more a matter of fulfilling a spiritual rather than a practical need in a scenario in which all can be conveniently purchased, and, moreover, the costs often surpass the harvest's value [6].

The existence of nomadic vegetable gardens is being sustained by the still persistent habit within the new wave of urbanized citizens. With the old generation gone, the new generation is still to unveil its orientation but it is already there so real and touchable, it's so foreseeable (figure 8). The mutable character of the nomadic vegetable gardens is demonstrated by absence of continuity. Adaptable and improvised vegetable beds – substitute decorative plants in case of melancholic urban expression

caused as a result of a longing for the origins and a feeling of fallow acutely felt. Developing the habit of gardening could be thought over as either triggered and maintained by the perspective of an activity generating income (producing and delivering food, designing greenspaces), or recreation and hobby [6].



Figure 8. Nomadic vegetable gardens – dormant soil revitalized into improvised patches of vegetables which add to the overall appearance of the accommodating space.

In the framework of urban greenspaces or green bands, these nomadic vegetable gardens become productive mediums through their inceptive property of providing food [6]. These green patches of soil will build on the appearance of the pertaining site, substituting for a stroke of human touch, while ensuring seasonal products, wellbeing, and creating opportunities for learning and socializing [7].

Nomadic vegetable gardens stand for whatever soil surface is able to provide proper medium for seeding and growing, unconditioned by productivity. It is considered proper for hosting adaptable vegetable beds any vacant patch of soil, liable to suffer a distortion in availability and affordance toward cultivation and domestication. The low productivity level makes me conclude that the proliferation of these adaptable vegetable beds are caused by motives other than material, profitable, but rather oscillating in the psychological, affective domain.

While signaling opportunistic vegetable gardens, springing as saluted oases of green spaces improvised and unfitted for the task, one turns toward Olmsted's aim to provide a natural counterpoint to the increasingly dehumanized and abstract urban conditions. His ideas emphasized the possibility of acclimating countryside to the urban environment [8].

5. Ovate nature and the natural

Through design, the receptors could be persuaded to accept an unpredictable aesthetic as dictated by nature in a wild state of development. The designer's task is to instigate the receptors to accept wilderness and natural caption and reception of nature through evocative examples and experiences. Taste and preferences should undertake a shift from overdesigned to continent design, or humbly guiding and trimming naturally developed greenspaces. The appetite for an aesthetic of the natural should be induced indirectly by engaging citizens in admiring, appreciating, experiencing naturally grown nature, designing around nature and creating chances for self-developing nature in urban green spaces and architectural projects.

In the absence of a genuine wilderness as accessible source of inspiration, one might shift attention from long praised and inspirationally exhausted examples, to what Lynch (2001) mentions as 'ruinous attractions', vegetation engulfing derelicts, deteriorating structures, vacant lots found in a transient state of defining and a source of intriguing active and perceptive experiences. While under an uncertain formative state, these marginal, uncontrolled spaces abound in affordances guiding spontaneous behavior in an otherwise restrict environment. Consigned to oblivion by municipality, these spaces are motive for uninhibited imagination and action. While considered accidental, they

form as residue manifestations of urban flora. Design and planning embody our “expectations of nature” within the urban context, through choices made regarding vegetal components [9].

Unintentional proliferation of spontaneous vegetation within the framework of unmanaged vacant lots or ruins is rejected by human planning and design. While vacant land is perceived as triggering negative economic, environmental and social influences, urban planning is intended to embody positive opportunities by filling vacant land with infrastructure or opting for parks and gardens, nonetheless this concretizes in spontaneous vegetation substitution.

Resorting to natural conglomerates for inspiration while designing greenspaces would trigger diversity and highly inspirational creations. This would result in emotional attachment, respect for, and protection of thus created counterpart spaces. Users intuitively apprehend involvement while experiencing imagery and material surroundings. As a reaction to designers’ involvement citizens might readjust attitudes toward greenspace as encountered in urban design compositions, take pride in spaces of natural beauty, appropriate and return involvement. Indifference and mediocrity would trigger adverse stances. This *don’t like, don’t look, don’t care* attitude has to recede.

One tends to opt for perfunctory alternatives: don’t grow, don’t repair and don’t care since everything is replaceable, conveniently purchasable. The tendency moves toward a previously documented opting, or exercising preferences according to pertinent advising at a choosing stage, therefore I appeal to the opinion shapers who could curve tendencies toward nature and the natural. Society propagates an already existing niche adviser to guide opinions, teaching how to behave for fashion. Likes and dislikes should be the result of a responsible thinking process and should not be reduced to an impulsive concluding act effectuated as a result of facile persuasion by media stimuli, or through perpetual encountering of typical visual expressions. The plethora of choices are perceived through ubiquitous visual stimuli. Decisions in relation to taste are often taken according to what is commonly perceived as beautiful and right.

5.1. *The Natural: embedding nature in design*

The incentive the article is making to the environment shapers is striving to achieve the natural as opposed to striving to achieve beauty, since achieving the former means achieving the latter. Human habitat is a composition of man-created objects, assembled with preponderance from man-created materials through the mediation of man-created technology. The exit from that which is logical and oppressive within human habitat is expected to be provided by nature which is to be permitted under censorship as man created the natural environment. In such case nature is denaturalized and forced into predetermined shapes. They are the result of inducted order into nature’s own order, one which doesn’t satisfy our sense of order. In their struggle to reach an unnatural exterior condition of their environment, humans suffer an inner distortion of their conduit and perceptions.

In order to educate the viewer into accepting nature’s exuberances, the designer or architect must:

- make nature the prime décor element;
- emphasize the quality of nature which transcends time and aesthetic values;
- suggest to the viewer the presence of nature;
- introduce the viewer to the complexity and diversity of nature.

The shrinkage to which design and architecture subject nature is a consequence of a competing urbanity. Instead of elevating our condition to a state of enhanced comprehension, the shape givers of the urban environment and educators of our perception of it, are taking great efforts in leveling nature to fit our preconceptions. Conventional design and architectural practice propose a restricted nature instead of educating citizens of the transformative implications of achieving nature ubiquity.

Urban nature should dissipate almost imperceptibly in its surroundings, engulfing, framing infrastructure, thus easing its bearing upon human perception. Nature is no longer natural and the surroundings are other human distortions of it. Humans lost balance by underestimating nature’s natural value, trying to subdue nature by shrinking it into dictated shapes.

When designing and planning, one must persist in remembering the fact that nature is a source of inspiration and a bank of answers for existing and arising problems - we are from nature, and should

follow similar laws. Thoreau (2010) instigated toward regarding man firstly as part of Nature, and secondly as appertaining to society [3]. The need for nature and the natural has been distorted through the medium of design in restrictive outcomes, as for the other “genuine needs” they are being predominantly neglected by the designer [10]. Design should embrace Commoner’s dictum that ‘nature knows best’ [11]. Design should be dictated by feelings of humility, decency, respect and appreciation of nature. Following natural laws in designing green spaces will bring benefit to both humans and the environment, while elevating urban aesthetic.

By embracing a principle of respect while designing the shape and composition of urban nature in greenspaces, aesthetics would have to undergo a change. Aesthetic now has short circuited contact with nature. Aesthetic is a coined term that does not apply to nature but to human expressions in relation to nature. Human developed structures should be minimal, while nature should be maximal, a perpetually perfecting design, while guiding engulfing nature. Nature is value in itself. Adorn design with nature while welcome nature saturation in the environment.

Aiming to restore nature in an urban environment fits within McHarg’s (1900) strives to initiate a counteraction to the accelerating degradation of the original ecosystem upon which a city was built. Within the frame of his ideas, this indigenous ecosystem is restored as greenspace amidst urban space. In the designs influenced by his ideas, the restoration privileges native flora, as authentic nature, to restore within the urban habitat [5].

5.2. *A living façade*

To take the generous stance toward nature to an extreme would be to assign subtle designed frames for unleashed nature in a highly coercive society. Within this context, the rebellious manifestations of nature would be a relief valve, a welcomed breach toward envisioning an alternative in conducting existence, stirring an appetite for behavioral change.

Pointing toward the objective visual expository of green facades, one has but to question the scarceness of their happening in an undisputed concrete glassed environment. The partially or totally covered façade is an architectural personality index, testifying for human aptness towards nature and aesthetic attitude. The existence of such casual occurrences provides as many clues of the feasibility of such objectively denominated green design.

Decorating with nature could mean, as in figure 9, capitulating to the siege of vines which adds chameleonic attributes while saving repetitive renovation of the host built structure’s facade. The whole built structure gains in aesthetic valor, changing appearance, while moving toward the peculiar style. Not many prefer such alternative of letting and guiding nature. More often the superannuated is talked about and it seems to be in dissonance to that which is progressive and mainstream. A minimal design and a maximal burst of nature, giving free hand to envisioning patterns and a mixture of hues and colors offered by leafs, flowers and fruits are a boundless source of compositional possibilities.

The core idea is to seek inspiration in visually experienced unintentional aesthetic occurrences, imprinted in the perceiver’s aesthetic reader. Through a process of observation, registration and evaluation, perceived images will be stored as data, signaling similar previous encounters.

The rationality is in relation to the concept of living, green walls, partially or totally embedded in an entanglement of vines. They add with minimal demands, permitted being the only repressed action needed for their cyclicity. The expression is that of an unarticulated intention - wall surface monopolization. Under discussion are the extreme cases of abandonment and neglect, having as a consequence the aforementioned unintentional aesthetic occurrences.

Separating cause and effect – the latter being one of aesthetic impact, the discussion could be turned in the direction of unintentional aesthetic occurrences, within the limits of which the intercepted visual experience becomes one with embedded inspirational value. It is a matter of taking inspiration from those unintentional aesthetic occurrences which are to be defined under the given circumstances as:

- aesthetic accidents which imply and are caused by randomly associated natural elements, arranged in visually appealing compositions;

- the interconnection of natural elements and material elements within the range of a given space or context that are solely subjected to the laws of natural development.

One must admit the contradictory impression around a site similar to the one discussed. There is the characterized peculiarity that stirs opposed feelings, possibly based on:

- personal taste – the perceiver's consideration regarding the visual outcome of an engulfed structure by spontaneous vegetation, it is a matter of subjectivity; it is also a matter of social image since perceivers tend to consider such visual expressions as malign proofs of decadence;
- awareness of negative effects – it is an alternative which requires in addition expenses and uncommon interventions in preparing the targeted surface to avoid imminent decay;
- predisposition to nature and the natural – one might opt for a nature engulfing built structures as opposed to a pristine alternative and unabated conflict to rebellious vegetation.

Despite contradictory opinions on the subject, it is an undisputed fact that sites hosting such aesthetic occurrences, are to be considered under a beauty denominator. There is the existing peculiarity given by the spreading of nature in form of isolating layers of green on surfaces that will demarcate them from bare homologues (figure 10.). Weeds and vines are the appanage of ruins and vacancy, of that what is disabled and abandoned. Wherever humans step out there is an exuberance of wilderness ready to step in. Ceased activity and human withdrawal have as consequence nature monopolization.



Figure 9. Decorating with nature.



Figure 10. An example of nature monopolization.

Human perception is trained to see urban wilderness as pejorative. The article advocates for a shift in the citizens' prejudgment. While design should be minimal and perfected, nature should be welcomed in its intended concrete/soil connections. The continuance and resiliency of wild vegetation should be coopted and adapted to complete design into a revitalized urban environment.

There is the habit of subjecting human deeds to interpretation and critic in terms of their aesthetic valor, as for the nature and its myriads extensions one cannot overdo, exaggerate in adding too much of it while beautifying.

One must acknowledge the incubation of that "something" of special valor which circumscribes these hosting buildings from others. There are the so perceived negative effects of the intrinsic quality of nature to accommodate life: parasites, dampness, leaks, a surplus of shadow, sedimentation of dead organic matter, etc. This might conduct the reasoning toward unfavorable conclusions and words would be uttered such as: stagnation, abandonment, or excessive, peculiar (figure 11.).

Life with its cyclicity is to be experienced more acute within the premises of such environment. In relation to experience: the light and shadow, sounds, colors, smells would provide stimuli in a perpetual changeability and at various intensities. The hypothetical inhabitant would substitute for a witness of movement and perpetual transformation.



Figure 11. Inspiration for alternative roofing. Let nature sprout and mature in places it fancies as propitious. Allowing is the only requirement for escaping architectural anonymity.

Man transcends its pettiness entering in a relation of concentricity with nature and the natural, recalibrating values, purposes. Man reconnects with humanity through a process of naturalization. Justify a directed engulfment of the urban habitat with rebellious vegetation, through the increased demand for green, based on an awakened urge for living, feeling, trying.

5.3. *Keep of the tender grass!*

This is a warning that forms generations of men estranged from nature, alerting to keep nature in a register of contemplation rather than experimentation. People feel the need for communion which is more probable to occur with nature as scenery. The signal is breaching the impulse of interpersonal communion. It results in increased frustration, detachment, the interdiction being perceived as a form of assault to personal freedom. As opposed to the over-exercised control within the green space premises, offering nature and natural alternatives are to be considered. Citizens possess an unconscious oversaturated perception of restrictions, concrete and repetitious patterns. While travelling the way of asphalt, one might encounter breaches in the otherwise flat surface (figure 12 and 13).



Figure 12. Beautified by nature – moss coating sidewalk creates an exquisite example of spontaneous vegetation as décor element.

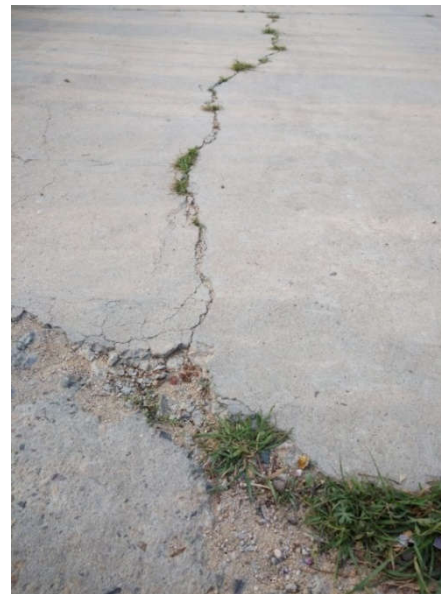


Figure 13. Beautified by nature – grass invading fissures in the asphalt on a road with infrequent traffic.

This obsessing concrete coating is an outcome of disguised phobia of soil and nature's unpredictability. One must embrace errors that result in unintended aesthetic occurrences, such as the cracks in the asphalt which accommodate grass and weeds in becoming opportunistic green nettings.

In the breach between the street and the side-lane, the errored joints leave space for stray plants needing but ignoring and letting be, in what might be considered the "green stitches" of an injured environment. Such insertion is perceived as the hallmark of inadvertence in attendance. In nature, sustainability is to be found as embedded quality.

Humans acquire sustainability through a cognitive process and implementation developed in time. In succeeding, we need to rely on learning and acquiring skills. It is but logical to follow proved capability, as the one employed by nature. Humans strive to humanize nature. If initiated and attended, supported in functioning to full capacity, green spaces could become genuine urban oases of wilderness, offering citizenry a chance to experience a quality substitute for a nature denied on a daily basis.

5.4. Nature and the natural perceived as the apanage of rurality

Nature in free form can be accommodated in urban spaces. Nature is not to be restrained to rural spaces and receding wilderness. If one is to consider that rural spaces lack the benefits of urbanity concerning enhancement in life quality, chances of affirmation, cultural and social experiences, the urbanity lacks environmentally friendly surroundings, peace and a slower rhythm of life. The urban and the rural with the acceleration of urbanization will soon collide and further intermingle. It is a chance in creating an idyllic concentric urban/rural space for the benefit of the inhabitants of both administrative organizations.

One cannot perceive genuine nature in the urban space, nature experience is labelled as a rural component. Nature, in its natural state within an urban environment, is considered unrefined, unsophisticated, un-urban, henceforth the need to civilize it.

Where nature is untrimmed a feeling of abandonment and disregard persists, while littering and improper behavior are more probable to occur. Nature must be subjected to subtle design, and landscape designers must practice restrain while taking genuine natural spaces as inspiration.

The article addresses the need for creating natural green space compositions, recalling the aesthetic and biological composition of the initial landscape (using indigenous plants, implying nonaggressive, ecologically sound techniques), subtly framed by design, framing, adds to the natural composition the status of under signature project. Viewers will attach to the perceived site respect for an authoritative validation of an existing design project.

6. Decorating with nature

There is a cohabitation of past and present design patters inspired by nature. The selection of inspirational vegetal patters, their stylization conducted to reach a symbolic state recall pattern's origin. The selection, synthetization and coding is implicitly subjected to a decanting process developed in time. Some patterns survive and transcend time, spreading an aesthetical orientation.

The article advocates for nature as décor. Inspiration from nature could come uncut, not complying to the human aesthetic filter. In natural state, it comes in opposition to a designer's artistic individuality of which residues due to author's perception, processing visual information and expressing personal interpretations, tend to distort the motive of inspiration.

This article tends to signalize the beauty of nature's rebellious manifestations, spontaneous vegetation, valorized through restrained design. Not only processed urban landscapes functioning under rules and restrictions are subjects of appreciation or evaluated as being worthy of protection, but heaths defined as beauty in crude state, spaces of escape, unfortunately surviving only due to calculated disregard or negligence, perpetual delay in space rehabilitation. Such spaces are to be encountered at the city's outskirts, purlieus.

Tallmadge (2004) found them in vacant lots with unfulfilled capabilities. He uses the term *wilderness*, trying a description of these landscapes, with reserve. His reserve toward pushing defining

terms is justified by the impossibility of justly allotting urban heaths to what one was trained to categorize as wilderness. This urban made wilderness suffer, according to his statement, too much human impact, and the amalgamation of alien species together teaming with the absence of specific fauna, add up to conclude on an unfit use of the term [2].

Where trees raise undressed and grass sprouts untrimmed and following a syncopate rhythm, the human impact is more acute owing to a circulating impression of unsanctioned intervention. One tends to allocate valor to spaces in obvious custody. This article exhibits unintended aesthetic occurrences of uncut beauty found accidentally in unattended spaces of spontaneous nature. Urban landscapes as such, because of their blended composition and lack of compositional norms and structure, do not fit with established notions of beauty and value in nature [2].

Those compositions are to be taken as sources of inspiration, overtaken and subjected to subtle interventions for reaching their full potential. One must search, select and make the unintended aesthetic occurrences something repeatable. Sometimes nature aligns in certain ways appealing to our aesthetic perception, all due to nature and hazard.

Tallmadge refuses implying qualifying notions of *nature* or *ecosystem* with regard to opportunistic vegetation and wastelands due to the poor quality of the vegetation and unfortunate human marks in form of waste amalgamation [2]. Spontaneous vegetation is a product of human oblivion and nature's opportunism, the closest urban nature gets to its wild counterpart. Spontaneous vegetation, heaths, wastelands comprises elements of a rebellious kind of nature, whose ecological and aesthetic valor has still to be identified.

Greenspaces counting as décor elements: bare trees, undressed bushes and uncut grass, all un-cosmeticized, are not enjoying visual appreciation, being estimated as heaths and abstaining from further enquiries into their ecological or aesthetic status. With minimal design, they can be upgraded to spaces resulted as objectified design scheme even if abstinent in revelation. In order to be acknowledged as valuable spaces, they must signalize the embodiment of a design project, otherwise risking citizen's belief of entering a space of forgetfulness and omission.

The natural element, if permeated, spreads through itself, beautify pro bono. One must stop seeing negligence in nature's rebellion. In every crack there sprang nature. Offered a chance, nature would coat and permeate our world of concrete and lifelessness, shaping it in something alive and ever changing. The question that arises is if, through a process of intentional omission, green spaces could exhibit unintentional aesthetic occurrences, further developing into natural aesthetic organisms.

Within the urban context, the observer's preconceived opinions regarding the ecological and aesthetic value of nature are based on traditional concepts, as acquired through past encounters with promoted green space designs. Persisting in preconceptions in relation with nature's behavior and exhibits results in lack of awareness, understanding and acceptance of new manifestations of nature within the urban environment. This spontaneous vegetation, self-propagating and flourishing in neglected urban wastelands and margins like vacant lots and other urban waste spaces could, with minimum design interventions, become a valid representation of a substitute nature.

6.1. Create opportunities for nature: Returning a gesture of hospitality

Within the brackets of urban design, green spaces have to be approached from the perspective of interpolating a missing element – nature in genuine form. Nature's intrinsic character of propagation could be exploited with gains in the endeavor of satisfying a rising demand for the natural element while decreasing the efforts of imagining and maintaining. With minimal intervention but proper initiating and maintaining, the expected result would be one approaching genuine cuts out from a remote natural environment, opposing a meticulously designed urbanity.

The visual effect would be one of high contrast, speculating the novel element, and targeting transformations in human perception and involvement, via human's contained capability of bewilderment. Where expectations are toward encountering a unitary pattern concerning urban nature, these oases of untamed nature would instigate to reaction and cogitation.

The driver behind such endeavors of symbolically transplanting (through registration and inspired design schemes) genuine natural composition into clearly delimited urban spaces is the human instinct for nature and the natural. Irrespective of the deviation degree, the natural instinct is under a latent state. It needs a trigger for accessing those distorted altered liaisons. Embracing the tendency in urban landscaping of emulating natural habitats in artificial surroundings would benefit both the urban environment and citizenry.

Schmitt (1990) discusses the subject of ‘nature in need of redemption’, fulfilling a decided need for green as a beneficial factor within the urban industrial environment. Urbanized nature follow the trajectory of traditional green space design compositions concretized into recreational spaces in which human agency holster accredited nature [12].

7. Conflictual aesthetic

Marsh (2003) raised awareness of the ill-effects of human agency, punctuating the ‘unforeseen and unintended consequences’, as well as the wrong application of technological enterprise. Man as a ‘disturbing agent’ and its predisposition to irreversibly mingle inorganic matter and organic life finds itself in antagonistic relation with nature [13].

Through a nostalgic recall, one must admit to a reversing tactic: while at the beginning nature dictated the behavioral patterns in humans, now we are facing the effects of an Anthropocene Age. Gobster *et al.* (2007) signals anthropogenic risks in relation to contradictory ecological and aesthetic values of landscapes, in that the aesthetic qualities could conflict ecological processes while developing landscape appearance. As prevention method against anthropogenic landscape change due to fulfilling aesthetic preferences Gobster *et al.* (2007) bring forward the notion of ecological aesthetic. According to Gobster *et al.* (2007), it is advisable for humans to resonate to the aesthetic stimuli of landscapes that comprise beneficial ecological functions. Therefore, consuming landscape aesthetic will intrinsically contribute to healthier ecosystems, and through extension, human health and welfare. A controversial enquiry is launched whether, in an antagonistic scenario in which ecological goals and aesthetic preferences are contradictory, the aesthetic should take the form of practicality and ethical consideration toward the environment [14].

8. The crave for wilderness

Fulfil citizen’s tamed appetite for wilderness by supplementing that which is provided in urban context by our contemporaneity. Welcome a symbiosis of the two, human and nature cohabitation, conducting to the completion of the contemporary citizen. Design projects should involve a natural nature into the urban decorum by creating chances for its spreading into ubiquity. Goods are protected by laws under the menace of applied penalties. Nature/wilderness should be protected, while placing it at the core of citizens thinking and living. Having something under permanent scrutiny will behave as a commercial. Wide exposure will add familiarity. Reinstall familiarity with a natural nature by adding it in the center of our urban existence.

McHarg (1900) points toward the need of redefining urban nature, which could emerge by embedding nature in urban design. The expected result is that of restoring the ecological function to the damaged urban ecosystem, while adding a new aesthetic to the urban environment [5].

There is a rising request for green as shown by the emphasis placed in advertisement upon forwarding utopic shades of green and blue. It is not ignorance but indifference. Seize the proper moment based on the mechanics of request and demand, while competing with the artificial plants market. Where there is no space, improvise space for the green and natural.

Greenspace design projects lost the unexpected element. Greenspaces are as predictable as the building structures composing their vicinity. To overcome visual apathy, the designer must take as inspiration genuine manifestations of nature as found in a wild state, replicate wild scenarios and learn during the process.

On a brick fence, among broken glass and barbed wire there spring a tree sprout. The nature doesn’t care for trans-passing. It doesn’t know better but to spread and sustain cyclicity following

nature's pattern. The law of decency collapses under extreme circumstances. Nature is at war, making the best of what is left to it.

Weeds sprout out of concrete cavities, being as many examples of working methods for growing plants on walls and fences (figure 14). Spontaneous vegetation could be envisioned as an active agent for developing green design and architecture projects, aiming at reaching an urbanity engulfed in nature.

8.1. Creating a context for nature

While imitating nature's ways, create a designed alternative with an open result of green walls, paths, fences, spaces that seemed easily adaptable to their natural surroundings (intended cracks, drawing with nature, tracing frail contours of seeded plants mingling with weeds).

The moss on the shop arcade, the dripping plant taking its downside course and dead vegetation deposited in eaves go unnoticed (figure 15).



Figure 14. Self-initiated and propagating green wall – visual example of spontaneous vegetation.



Figure 15. Unnoticed presence of nature - example of unintended green design occurrence.

In search for new material for proving the inspirational validity of *unintended design occurrences*, one must be prepared to observe freed from preconceptions and seek beauty in the unconventional, ignored, and underrated. Such is the case illustrated in figure 15, where the vegetal elements self-developed indiscriminately to the ugliness and dullness of their circumstantial habitat. One has but to hope for a continuation of a lax maintenance practice.

Spontaneous vegetation could be accommodated: intended cracks with incipient nature, walls and structures, roofs, sidewalks, etc. A crack in the wall, pavement, a moment of oblivion and you witness a proof of nature's survival (figure 16).



Figure 16. Unintended integration of nature in design and architecture.

Accepting, releasing, admiring, placing the emphasis on integrating with subtlety in design, architecture, and planning the effusions of nature. The designed environment must create the context for nature, provide a scene on which it can perform in plenitude. If vegetation finds its way in adverse conditions, one could just imagine its magnitude in specially designed ones. Opting for subtlety, naturalness, and raw materials, minimal intervention in form and almost imperceptible designs, expect a subjective compositional structuring. Choosing and collating, keeping and weeding while exercising restraint from creative effusions and trusting the medium (soil) for its latent qualities and possibilities. Simplify as a form of efficiency, minimize as a form of beauty. Metaphorically speaking, within a green space context, design is the frame for exhibiting nature thus analyzed and accepted as valid.

The imperative question is if we are prepared to accept nature's insubordination, within an urban environment. Change perspective on permissiveness, on that which is commonly accepted in an urban environment (in the crevices created by the defective joining of dales composing the sidewalk pavement, plants strive for existence; weeds sprout in thin mater sedimentation in the defective walls). Delaying prompt intervention in removing unexpected vividness of stray vegetation results in what might be considered an abandoned space, the dominion of negligence and low interest for the place found under described auspices. This article advocates against a hasty and doubtless intervention (removal of the unaccounted for vegetation), and considers such occurrences as fortuitous encounters with inspiration. Could it be that the presence of stray vegetation piercing its way in between asphalted streets and concrete curbs mediate the chance for experiencing an unintended aesthetic phenomenon?

9. Guidelines for urban regularization of human-nature relationship

One witnesses in the development of normalized green space designs the traces of ecological damages caused by:

- the futility of an unnatural drive for manipulating vegetation into forms and patterns;
- abuse in submitting nature to aesthetic rules for the sake of visual gimmicks.

There is a need for changing rules, approaches and ideas based on respect and amiable communion with nature in a form and composition concordant to its natural state. Nature is uncivilized by fact, in this residing its power and beauty. In natural state, there is a receding aesthetic characteristic. A restructuring in green space design is imperative. Initiating a redesigning campaign could be interpreted in terms of embracing a revival and integration of native plants and natural aesthetic into

urban spaces. Nature in a natural state accommodated into an urban context is also a psychological support for the citizenry. One must admit the psychological dimension of spaces turned wild, enclosed in the framing of minimal design.

Conducted enquiries were in relation to signalizing and structuring inspirational venues into a working methodology to benefit landscape, architecture and urban design.

In order to initiate a change in regularizing human-nature relationship and concentric ties within the urban environment, few guidelines are as follows:

- finding inspiration from nature and wilderness;
- keep choices locally. Reintroduce plants from local flora and reconnect space with local ecosystems;
- design subtle frames while using with preponderance natural materials;
- think the whole cycle of a design project (changes of seasons, sprout, blooming, withering, etc.). Take into account the way in which these metamorphoses transform design;
- think human interaction – allow and encourage human touch;
- consider the human element as an implicit part in your designs;
- maintain, while guiding without enforced interfering in nature's self-development;
- think to create and propagate diversity;
- create contrasts and accents (always one center of interest within the composition);
- keep in mind that nature is not decoration – nature *is*, and must be emphasized by subtle framing;
- add to nature's encouraged invasiveness, the need of a strategic maintenance in order to preserve biodiversity (selective weeding, trimming and planting);
- accept, encourage, guide and appreciate nature's exuberance.

10. Conclusions

The article stresses the importance of rethinking laws on human and greenspace interaction in the urban context. With citizens restrained in asphalted areas and nature distorted by invasive projects, the result is the alienation of man from nature. While man is not at ease in a natural environment or when confronted with that which is in a natural state, nature is distorted by excessive rationality.

The proposed design scenario is one related to urban green spaces being dictated by abandonment to chance and a subtle orchestrated wilderness. It is a matter of nurturing a visually effective contrast between a subtle design intervention (subtle and facile assimilation of the material components in a natural context) and the chaotic but plainly perceptible invasion of the natural.

Based on the information received while examining the revelatory examples offered by nomadic vegetation found in certain aesthetic relationship with a hosting material environment, the designer or the architect, could find as practical and inspirational the ways of opportunistic nature, and orient design-related decisions toward accommodating vegetation in projects with ecological and sustainable agendas.

Following the principle of *green literacy*, nature coating as opposed to concrete coating could be perceived as an ecologically sound design solution for both aesthetic and environmental issues within the urban context.

References

- [1] Ryan J, Simson A 2002 'Neighbourwoods': identifying good practice in the design of urban woodlands *Arboricultural Journal* **26:4** 309-31.
- [2] Tallmadge J 2004 *The Cincinnati Arch: Learning form Nature in the City* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press)
- [3] Thoreau H D Walking *The Atlantic Monthly, A Magazine of Literature, Art, and Politics. Boston: Ticknor and Fields. IX (LVI): 657 – 674. June 1862*

- [4] Kaplan, S 1988 Perception and landscape: conceptions and misconceptions In: *Environmental Aesthetics: Theory, Research and Applications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- [5] McHarg I L 1969 *Design with Nature* (New York: Wiley)
- [6] van Leeuwen E, Nijkamp P and de Noronha Vaz T 2010 The multifunctional use of urban greenspace *Int. J. Agr. Sustain.* **8**: 1-2 20-5
- [7] Armstrong, D 2000 A survey of community gardens in upstate New-York: implications for health promotion and community development *Health & Place* **6** 319-27
- [8] Martin J 2012 *Genius of Place: The Life of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Boston: Da Capo Press)
- [9] Lynch K 2001 *Wasting Away - An Exploration of Waste: What It Is, How It Happens, Why We Fear It, How to Do It Well* (New York: Random House)
- [10] Papanek V 2005 *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press)
- [11] Commoner B 1971 *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man, and Technology* (New York: Random House)
- [12] Schmitt P J 1990 *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press)
- [13] Marsh G P 2003 *Man and Nature: Or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (Seattle: University of Washington Press)
- [14] Gobster P H, Nassauer J I, Daniel T C and Fry G 2007 The shared landscape: what does aesthetics have to do with ecology? *Landscape Ecol* **22** 959–72