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(Eds.)

RURALISM

The Future of Villages
and Small Towns in an
Urbanizing World

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The Relevance of Thinking Rural! Vanessa Miriam Carlow	6	Questioning the Urban–Rural Dichotomy	25
Photo Essay by The Pk. Odessa Co	10, 272	Ruralism and Periphery: The Concept of Ruralism and Discourses on Ruralism in Denmark Jens Kvorning	26
		Living in a Small Town: An Urban and a Rural Experience at Once Annett Steinführer	40
		Rurality in a Society of Cities Claudia Oltmanns	56
		The Rural as an Autonomous Narrative within the Hierarchy of Global Urbanization or What Kind of Stories Can the Rural Tell within the City? Christiane Sörensen, Wiltrud Simbürger	64
		(R)urban Landscapes. Navigating between the Urban and the Rural Perspective Sigrun Langner	76
		Rural Land(scapes). Lessons to Be Learned (?) Jonna Majgaard Krarup	90
		Networked Urbanism Interview with Belinda Tato, ecosistema urbano, Madrid	107

Ruralism in the European Context	119	Ruralism—A Global Perspective	227
“Landungsprozesse.” Structural Development Policies and Their Effects towards Resilient Urban and Rural Regions Andy Westner	120	Urbanizing Shanghai’s Suburban Farmland Ruta Randelovic	228
Social Innovations in Rural Life Worlds Ralph Richter	140	The Urbanization of Rural Space in Latin America under Pressure from the Exploitation of Nature: The Case Study of Casanare in Colombia Liliana Giraldo Arias	242
The Interrelation of Architecture and Territorial Character in Northern Germany Ines Lüder	148	No Urban Desert! The Emergence and Transformation of Extended Urban Landscapes in Oman Aurel von Richthofen	256
LandLust—The “Knowability” of Post-Pastoral Ruralism Eckart Voigts	162	Hinterland Interview with Stephan Petermann, OMA/AMO, Rotterdam	268
Key Projects: Combining Potentials from Urban Ecologies—A Swedish Perspective Nils Björling	179	Authors	286
Academy of Future Rural Spaces in Lower Saxony Verena Schmidt, Dirk Neumann, Olaf Mumm, Yeon Wha Hong, Marie Bruun Yde, Vanessa Miriam Carlow	191	Picture Credits	292
The Hike to the Snøhetta: Learning from Landscape Interview with Patrick Lüth, Snøhetta, Innsbruck	212	Imprint	295

The Relevance of Thinking Rural!

Vanessa Miriam Carlow

According to the United Nations, two-thirds of the world population will live in urban areas in the near future—that is in cities and urban regions.¹ How will the other third live? This question alone suggests a simplistic dichotomy between urban and rural spaces that no longer exists. Alongside—not opposite—the transformation and drastic expansion of urban regions worldwide, rural space, too, has changed dramatically: after mechanization and industrialization, rural space has experienced mass out-migration of people. On the other hand, being a recreational landscape it temporarily receives a mass immigration of guests. Rural space has received waste and unwanted or outdated infrastructures from cities. It has served as extraction site for natural resources, creating manmade landscapes of an unseen scale. Rural space has seen a revolution in farming and the genetic modification of plants and animals to feed the world's population. Its water dams, wind farms, cornfields, and solar parks are producing energy at an unprecedented scale. In light of this recent massive change, why are rural spaces often dismissed as declining or stagnating?

Throughout the last decades, the attention of architecture and planning has shifted to be more or less exclusively concerned with the city. Where villages and small towns have not been on the agenda, the city-centered discourse becomes almost a self-fulfilling prophecy with cities becoming larger and better, more interesting and beautiful, whereas villages and small towns are more or less left to their own devices. Few forward-looking strategies for developing villages and small towns exist—even though there are ample methods for how to manage their shrinkage. In contrast with shrinkage, there are

many rural regions, villages, and small towns, which can prosper from establishing a good working economy in a rural network.

And alongside the cities, the grand societal challenges also leave their footprint in rural areas: climate change, resource shortage, the diversification of the population, the need to be more resilient, or the question of how to organize sustainable mobility and civic participation—not least of which is the question of identity. Rural areas and their landscapes oftentimes serve as a medium of collective identity and culture for entire regions—representing an image of *Heimat* and the longing for a wholesome world. Which strategies fit the needs of villages and small towns?

The #3 ISU Talks, held in November 2015 at TU Braunschweig, aimed at a discussion of the “Future of Villages and Small Towns in an Urbanizing World.” Along with the following questions, researchers from different fields including urban and landscape planning, architecture, geography, and social and cultural sciences discussed the future of rural spaces: How and with what human consequences are rural spaces being urbanized today? What are the existing and potential connections between urban and rural spaces? What new concepts for rural living are there? Do we need to formulate a (new) vision for ‘ruralism’? And what role can ‘urban design,’ architecture, and planning play in preparing rural life and space for the future? Which vocabulary do architects and planners, anthropologists, and natural scientists have to describe that massive change? Which strategies are employed to guide the development in space described as rural?

This book combines different disciplinary perspectives on the rural realm.

The articles are centered around three core themes.

The first chapter looks at landscape as a defining element and physical representation of the rural. Some authors argue that the rural is in fact not disappearing, but rather being absorbed to the city to form strongholds there in terms of landscape and also cultural practices related to landscapes, like urban gardening.

The second chapter discusses ruralism and concepts for rural areas in European countries and regions from Austria, Sweden, Bavaria, Lower Saxony, and the North of Germany.

The third chapter looks at urbanization processes in fast-growing countries of the Middle East and Global South, as well as China, where the rural is under heavy pressure to disappear in favor of suburban, low-density development.

Interviews round off each chapter.

A photo essay by The Pk. Odessa Co of Lower Saxony taken in five of ISU’s partner municipalities provides a great introduction to this book.

A Rural State of Emergency

The urgency with which villages and small towns are searching for a liveable future in an urbanizing world was revealed during the “Academy of Future Rural Spaces” that the Institute for Sustainable Urbanism (ISU) launched in 2015 following an open call by our institute. With “Have Space. Want Ideas? Not afraid of students’ ideas?” we introduced ISU as a young collaborative team









Questioning the Urban-Rural Dichotomy

Ruralism and Periphery: The Concept of Ruralism and Discourses on Ruralism in Denmark

Jens Kvorning

The concept of ruralism comprises a number of different dimensions and forms part of various discourses. The original meaning of the term is associated entirely with life in the countryside, often regarded as more indigenous and rustic, and simpler than life in the town or city.¹ But in current discourses, the concept of ruralism is associated with particular lifestyles. It applies to lifestyles characterized by substantial excess, where people wish to rediscover and re-utilize the qualities of country life—most frequently in areas located on the edges of the large urban regions. It also applies to movements in which people wish to develop a new form of life in the countryside, movements which show respect for nature and which seek to construct a new form of sustainable life in the countryside, incorporating social, environmental, and economic sustainability. There are elements of what can be called ruralism that are also associated with an ambition to introduce its way of thinking and practices as a transformational movement in towns and cities.² The American New Ruralism movement has managed to formulate itself in such a way as to become a well-known player on the debate stage.³ Here, the interest lies in country life in close relationship to cities—most often big cities—and the movement is partly associated with the New Urbanism movement, referring back to the manifestos of the British garden city movement from around 1900.⁴ There are precise arguments for having a belt of small production lots surrounding the city to supply vegetables and other agricultural products directly to the city.

Similar movements, intentions, and practices can be found in most European countries. In the Copenhagen

region and in the other metropolitan regions of Denmark, many agricultural enterprises operate in a way that is encompassed by the current understanding of ruralism: secluded luxury or ecological enthusiasm at work on the edge of the major urban regions, but closely integrated into the network and economy of those regions.

However, in its original meaning, ruralism is also included in discourses about the specific problems of the outskirts, where country life is often regarded as something underprivileged. In this context, ruralism emerges not as associated with specific opportunities and qualities, but as a form of modern impoverishment, characterized by forms of life imposed on people in which they do not have access to any number of the opportunities that otherwise characterize contemporary society. In this ruralism discourse, the periphery is seen as something that must be supported in various ways in order to achieve a different and more equal content in life outside the larger urban regions.

In this political debate in Denmark, people have traditionally referred to a balanced development in the countryside. But the support for what are considered exhausted peripheral regions became a dominant theme, in a new guise, in Danish political discussions leading up to the most recent parliamentary election in 2015. Demands to support the periphery were so strongly worded that it triggered new political briefings and promises of immediate support for the area, which was very precisely defined as the periphery. Promises of support were made in the form of relocating state jobs from the Central Administration, as a gesture to signal attention to-

ward an understanding of the problems of the periphery and to increase the number of highly educated people in the peripheral regions. Promises were made of liberalizing the planning laws to facilitate more opportunities for building in open countryside or close to the coast, with the argument that it would lead to new settlements and strengthening of the local economies. Promises were also made to relax environmental regulations that affect agricultural production, with the argument that Danish regulations in this area were supposedly stricter than in other EU countries, thus weakening the competitiveness of Danish agriculture.

What is interesting and paradoxical about these promises is that they suggest quite different future scenarios for the peripheral regions. On one hand, these scenarios are dominated by highly industrialized, large-scale agriculture, operated using large quantities of chemicals. On the other hand, the scenarios focus on small-scale, local food production, and dense local networks.

Focus

In this article I will focus on ruralism as it is emerging and discussed in association with the peripheral regions of Denmark and investigate whether it makes any sense to couple the ruralism discourse, which relates to the opportunities at the periphery of the major urban regions, with the issues and attitudes that are present in the regions that do not include large towns and are generally characterized by stagnation or abandonment.

the point of view of physical and density-related criteria—is described as a town, you are nonetheless part of a comprehensive, modern urban culture. In tandem with this view, the American New Ruralism movement defines itself as a movement that is concerned with “rural land within urban influence” (www.farmlandinfo.org). The question is whether the shifts that have occurred and continue to evolve in terms of regional differences in income and education mean that this widely accepted assertion must be modified if we are to understand the current development and the political formulations. Do these shifts and increased regional differences call for the development of some more differentiated and complex concept of culture in order to detect and comprehend this new reality?⁸ Should one work on images of a kind of simultaneous presence of very different cultures and economies in the new peripheries—cultures and economies that absolutely do not, or only slightly interact? Should one also work on an image of the national territory that consists of specialized regions that operate industrial agriculture, and which communicate with global markets and develop specific economies and cultures and small pockets of areas that are oriented towards other markets and are part of other economic and cultural networks? And what consequences does this have on ruralism strategies, as they are developed in the larger urban areas, so that they can be transferred to the periphery?

Ruralism and Periphery

The question then is to what extent the peripheries, which appear in the Danish geographical and social landscape, can deploy the concept of ruralism and the strategies associated with it as an entry point and framework for developing strategies for change? We are faced with a situation in which the concept of ruralism, in the American sense of the word, is relevant and current in terms of the larger urban regions. If you reside in rural areas within these regions, then you, as a producer, have access to a differentiated market, which can absorb many special and luxury products. As a resident, you are part of a region where, equipped with an appropriate degree of mobility, you can access a comprehensive range of commercial and social services and to many cultural offerings. You are also resident in areas, nearly all of which offer many countryside features. So, in this context, ruralism denotes the ability to select a particular niche in which you can live a very comfortable everyday life. If you reside in one of the outer peripheries, agrarian production is dominated by industrialized, large-scale operation. The dominant political forces are seeking to open things up so that this industrialization can have an even better framework, one of the implications of which is that it is often difficult to get access to the open countryside. As a producer who wishes to provide specialist, quality products you will discover that, by virtue of the social geography, there are only limited markets for such products. You will also often discover that both the social and commercial services are at a low level and that distances are long. That means that the opportunity

to lead a comfortable rural life as a metropolitan regional provider is rarely present.

Ruralism as Strategy

Is the access to ruralism as described so futile when it comes to the outer peripheries, and are they doomed to continued reduction and impoverishment? Ruralism as “The Art of Country Life” has no prospects as a general strategy in the outer regions. However, in my opinion, a number of the elements involved can be rethought and rephrased to make them relevant and practical in a strategy aimed at complementing and enhancing the opportunities for residence and commerce in the outer peripheries.

The assertion on which the following considerations and proposals are based is that there will always be a group of individuals and families who would like to live in open areas, especially if a reasonable level of services, educational options, and social contacts exist. So it is not about achieving dramatic population shifts, but about creating breeding grounds for new settlements and economies. It must be about creating clusters and networks of settlement, commerce, and services, which are sufficiently large and powerful to survive and generate local environments and which can form the context for a substantial everyday life, lived to the full. It is about regarding the periphery as systems or networks of rural districts, villages, and service-providing towns, which together create opportunities for a comfortable, interesting daily life. Something like this cannot be created everywhere. It requires certain terms and conditions. These towns and

settlements, and the landscapes they are part of, have different preconditions for supporting a substantial daily life and must be developed according to their capacity to accommodate services, local institutions, or simply local hubs, so that the overall system presents an attractive setting for daily life.

The Countryside

One of the preconditions is that the countryside should be accessible and attractive. You do not move to the country to be near a pig farm or close to gigantic fields with no vegetation other than corn or rapeseed. You move to the country to be close to nature, to have access to nature and to be part of a rhythm different from that which prevails in the city. That means that areas possessing special natural features also possess a special potential to attract new settlement and new types of business. But it is essential for these landscapes to be accessible and to contain great diversity and substantial features for activity. Protected zones along waterways, which have been one of the major sources of contention in recent policy in this area, are a good example of initiatives that can both support greater natural diversity and, in the long term, be used to create coherent access systems to the open countryside. This leads to a clear conflict zone between strategies and policies that want to develop rural districts as zones for large-scale, industrialized production, and strategies that attempt to support new settlement and new businesses linked to features of natural beauty.

In principle, one could imagine a zoning of the country-

2
Vier- und Marschlande



Figure 3 shows Moorfleet, the spearhead of the Vier- und Marschlande in the direction of the city (►3). The area is almost completely reshaped by urban infrastructure. Its rural character is in dissolution. But fragments of rural-ity remain.

Borderlands—the Potential of Rural Fragments

Until today, rural life connotes the longing for the outside, the symbol for authentic life in nature. The step outside—also as an act of liberation from one’s own social and cultural background describes the topos of a borderland, both at the fringes of the city as well as at the fringes of nature.

In 1974/76, many years after Theodor Fontane brought the Mark Brandenburg to life spatially, another chronicler of space, the German director Wim Wenders, documented the current spatial cultural condition. In his road movie *Alice in the Cities*, Wenders showed the omnipresent city whose images look more and more similar, but he also discovered the borderlands of the city and their specific value. He established their ugliness as an aesthetic category. Twenty years later, this aesthetic reality was finally registered by regional and urban planners and reflected in Thomas Sieverts’s book *Zwischenstadt*, which also attached importance to the cultural landscape between the urban fringes (Sieverts 2000).

When regional landscapes conflate with urban topographies, like in the case of Moorfleet, open spaces emerge or remain as fragments between and along the fringes of

urbanization. In our research on these borderlands and their rural aspects we address the following topics:

1. The presence of the “natural”
Borderlands allow gradual processes and make them visible. They represent the “other” of the city. They offer vastness, openness, and freedom from urban habits. They are spaces of longing and enable a different experience of time, both in the sense of memory and in an immediate presence (for example the changes in the time of the day and seasons).
2. The culture of spatial memory
What kind of stories do these spaces tell us about their reality between the borders? What is written between the lines? What kind of historical sediments are inscribed? Which narrative traces can be uncovered? And which familiar habits, traditions, and rural practices do these spaces bring to life?
3. Stories told by the city—spatial representations
Which attributes do the current urban environment add to these spaces? The diversity of its visitors, rituals of certain social groups living next to each other ... the influence of the city creates another image, a fleeting, temporal one vis-a-vis the inscribed traditions.

Looking at the interstitial spaces at the Moorfleet site, we can identify a patchwork of diverse urban and rural forms of existence. The new landscape is defined less by territoriality, specificity, and individuality, but more by a preference for mobility and temporal usage of public and semi-public spaces.

2

Dessau landscape belt: the open extensive meadowland of the landscape belt is linked with the surrounding cultural landscape of the Dessau-Wörlitz Garden Realm.

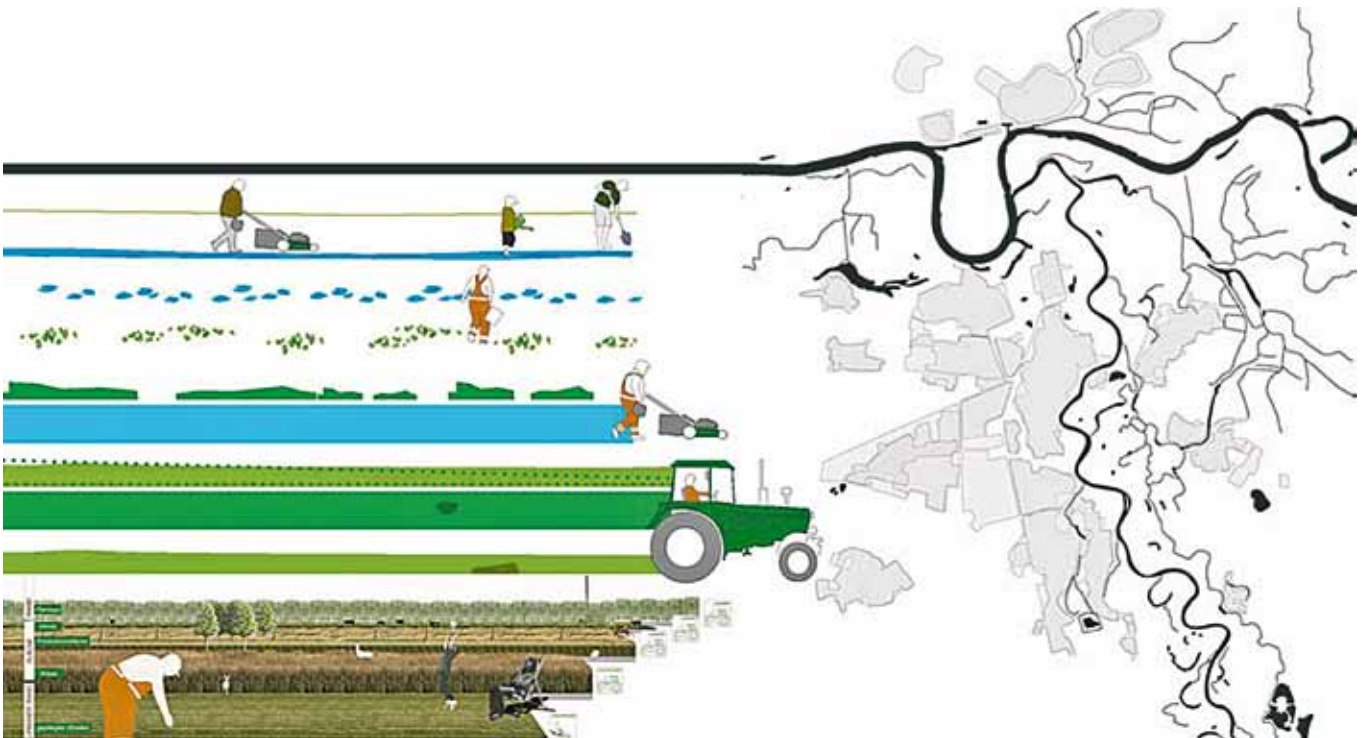
cultivation with aesthetic design and innovation (►2). The approach picks up selected spatial elements of the garden realm, reinterprets them, and reformulates them as a design vocabulary for the stretch of landscape. This operates consciously with rural associations: the resulting open spaces are interpreted as expansive cultivated land, created and farmed with the help of agricultural machinery. Landmarks such as the former smoker tower, now a lookout tower, or a chimney that is now a breed-



3

Cultivation of the landscape over time and by different actors: large-scale sites are maintained by farmers, small-scale sites and the urban edges are used and maintained by volunteers and the municipality. Only by the cooperative interplay of many different actors will the various landscape zones be created over time.

ing ground for various bird species, serve as points of orientation in the new open (r)urban landscape. The remaining solitary buildings have been reinterpreted as country houses with so-called estate managers who tend to the needs and communications in the transitional areas between the landscape and local neighborhoods. This vocabulary serves as a spatial design framework that structures the process-oriented, ecological process of (re)cultivation and social appropriation (Langner 2014) (►3).



in a critical balance. Although the urban expansion has some environmental consequences, there are also some interesting phenomena happening. As today's IT keeps us connected and allows us to work remotely, this neoruralism enables us to have a renewed vision of the territory and its possibilities, offering development opportunities in towns that have been abandoned for decades, for instance in Spain. This new trend is transforming these abandoned towns into new activity hubs, creating a new migration flux from cities. It will be possible to measure the socioeconomic impact of this activity in a few years (► 4, 5).

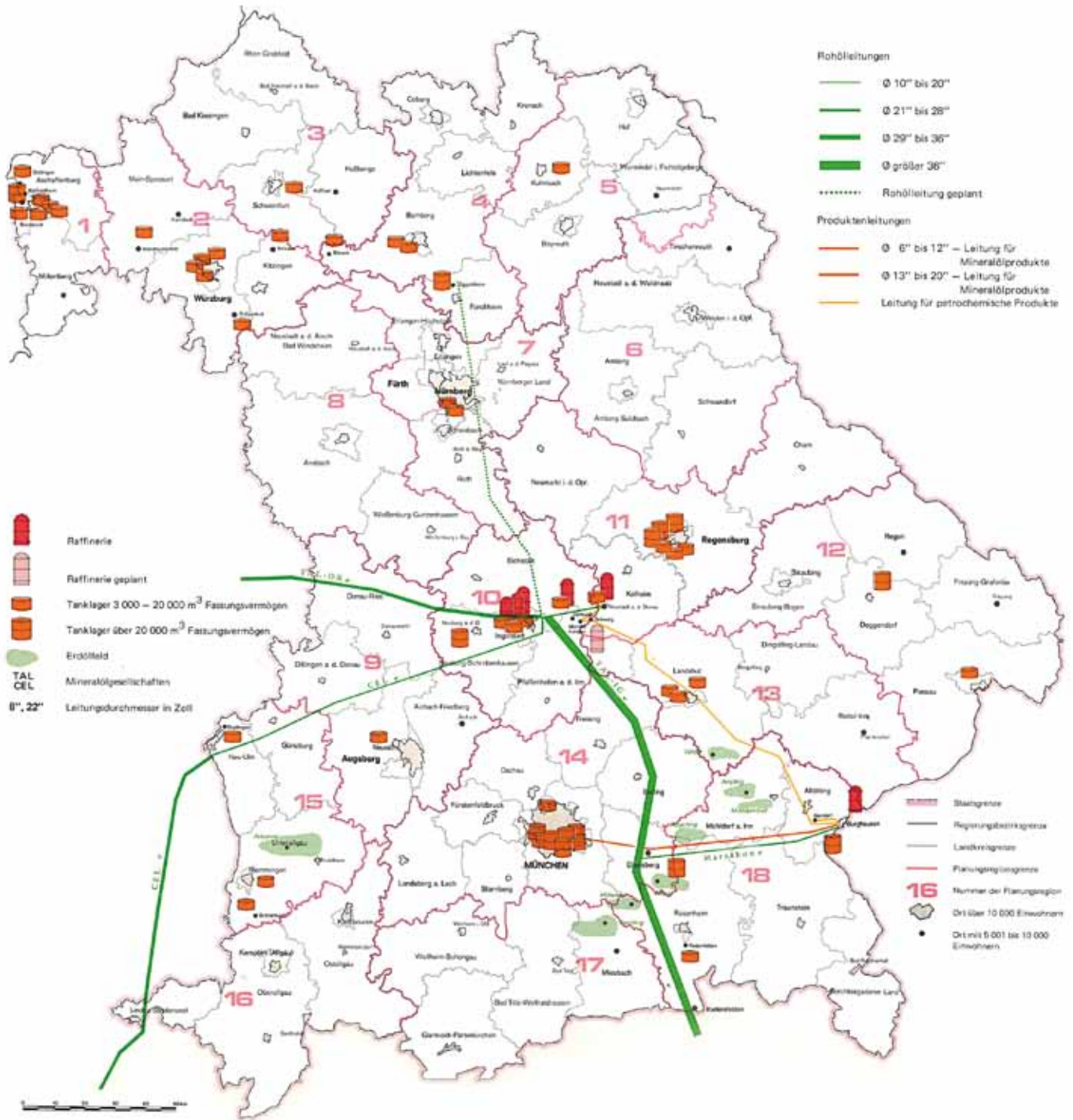
The once remote and quiet countryside is now traversed by global and regional flows of people, goods, waste, energy, and information, interrelating it with the larger urban system. Is a new set of criteria for understanding and appreciating the rural required? How would you measure what is rural and what is urban?

In a globalized world with an unprecedented ongoing process of urbanization, and under the impact of climate change and global warming, it is becoming more and more difficult to precisely define the limits between the rural and the urban as the urban footprint is somehow atomizing and gobbling the rural. Cities are the combination and result of the simultaneous interaction between nature and artificial technology, and their ecological footprint expansion forces the extraction of natural resources from even further sources, with obvious environmental consequences. At the local scale, it is necessary to point out the close relationship between the way a city relates to its environment, the way it manages its natural resources, and the quality of life it can provide to its inhabitants. This could be summarized as: the more sustainable a city/territory is, the better its inhabitants will live.

4

Ecological Boulevard for a social and bioclimatically conditioned public space, Madrid, Spain.



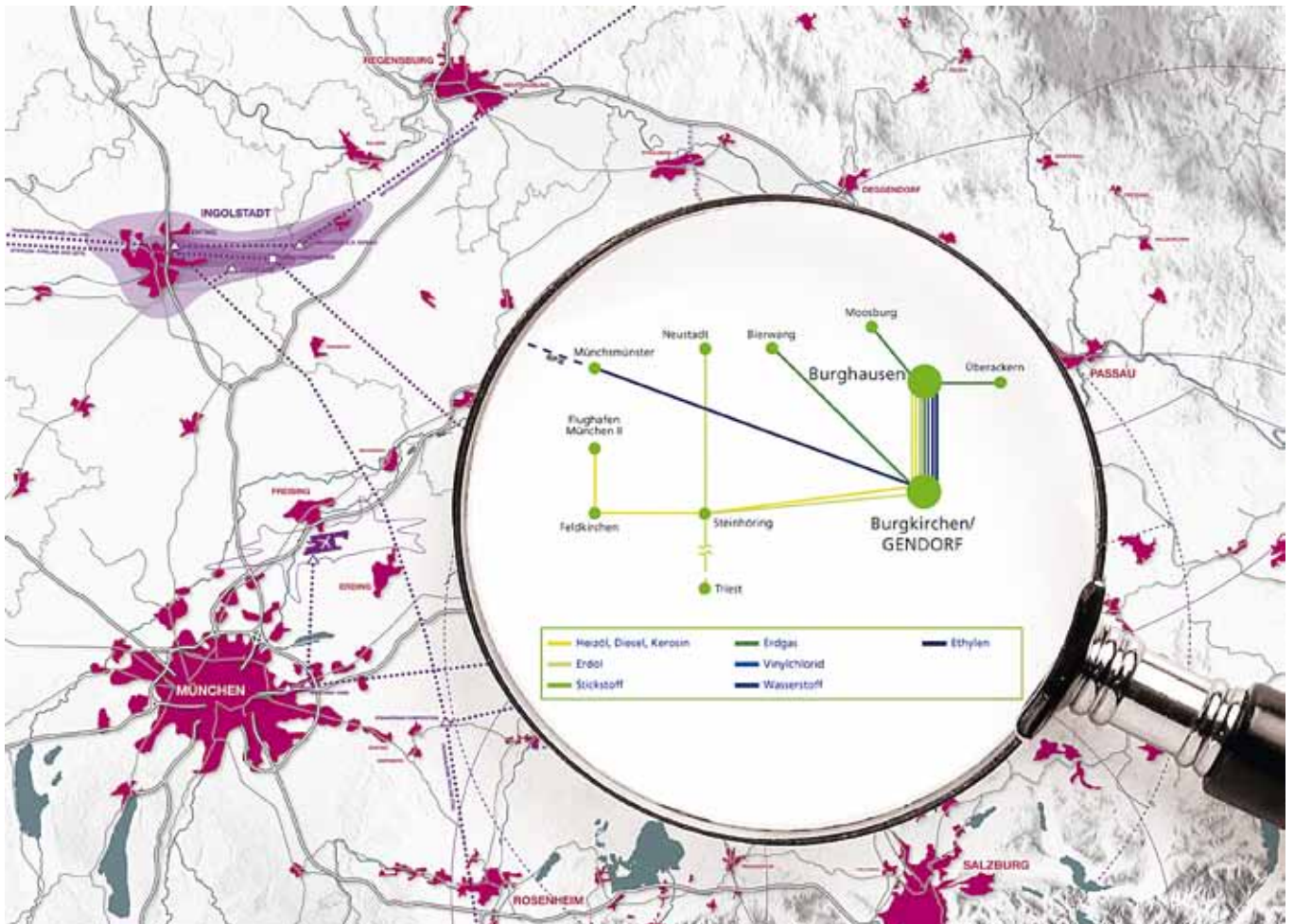


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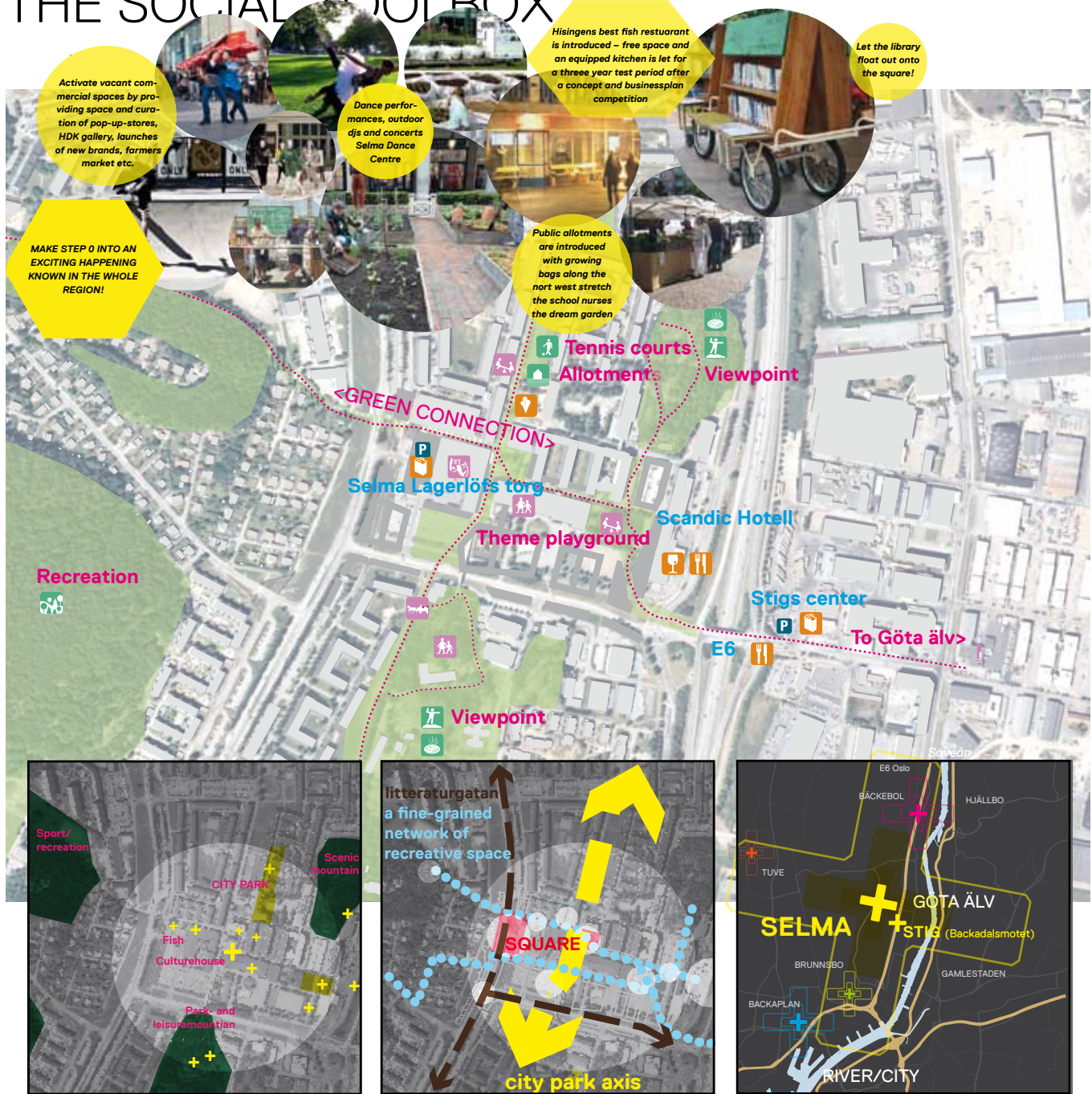
System-modification to petro chemistry (crude oil supply)
 CEL-Pipeline / 2. Crude-Oil-Pipeline / Genoa-Ingolstadt, Karlsruhe (1966) / TAL-Pipeline / 3. Crude-Oil-Pipeline / Trieste-Ingolstadt, Karlsruhe (1967) / Ethylene-Pipeline / Münchsmünster-Gendorf (1971/72) / Suspension and Modification to Gas Pipeline (1997)

6

Spatial footprint and hidden network of the Bavarian "Triangle of Chemistry"

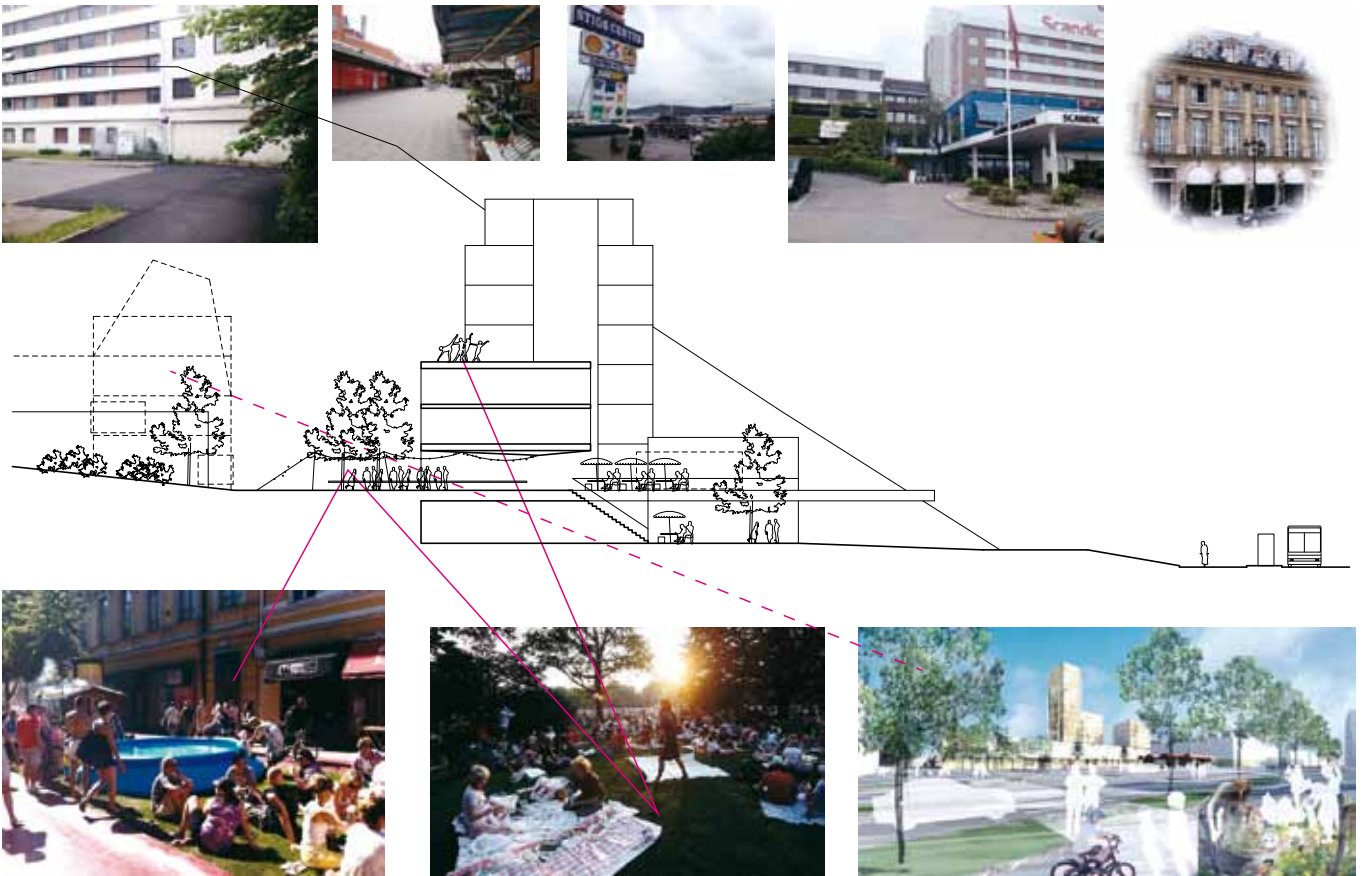


THE SOCIAL TOOL BOX



2
Social Toolbox Selma
Lagerlöfs square and
Stig center

3
The passage from the
local to the regional
scale is reopened







3
The wooden core is shaped like rock or ice that has been eroded by natural forces.

Public Space and Activities

Nicheng area has a high level of independence to the Shanghai city center. Moreover, many of its elderly population have never been to the city center. The Nicheng Old Town Center spontaneously developed after the nineteen-nineties, when commercial content started to develop in the vicinity of the important transit route, Nicheng Road. For example, the area around Xincheng Road, a street parallel to the Nicheng Road, displays a high frequency of users being attracted by its commercial contents. The typology of ground floor commercial activities coexists with the informal selling stands on the pedestrian sidewalk. 50% of the interviewed residents of the detailed case study area rely on the Nicheng Old Town Center, and 15% use these commercial contents every day. The area around today's Xincheng Road is planned to be redeveloped and rebuilt in later stages of the Nicheng Community development.

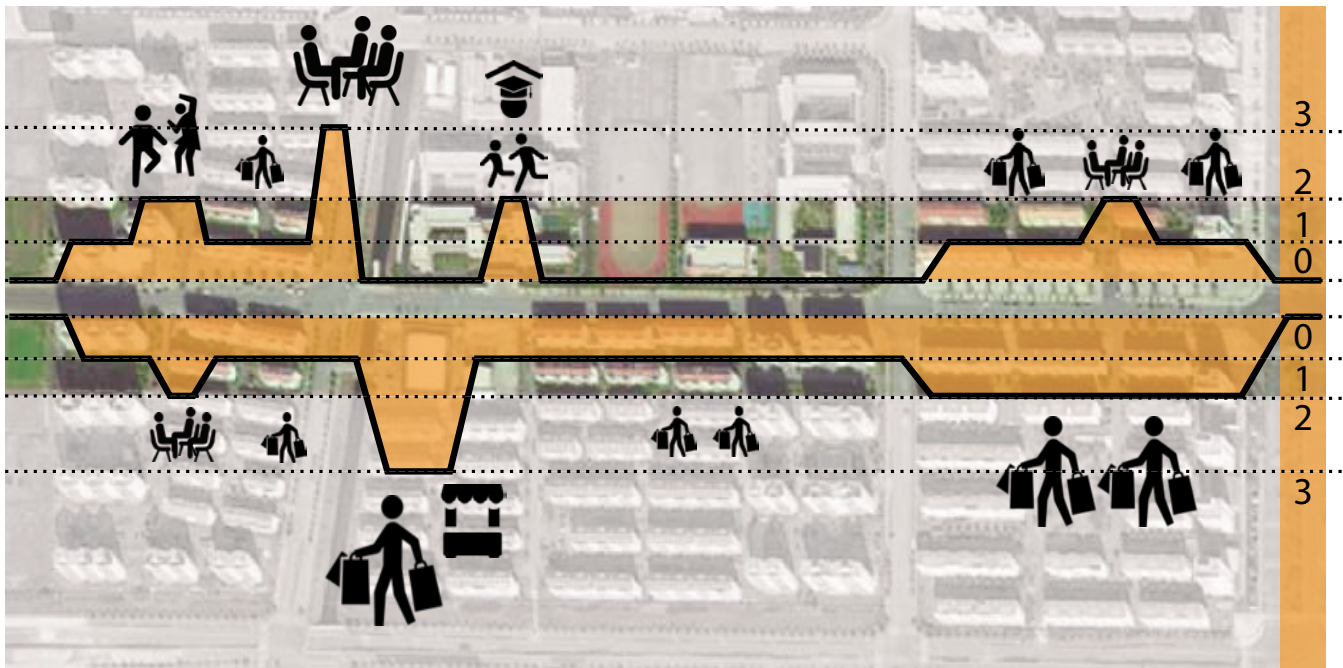
In 2012, the construction of Riverside Park phase I was started, and by the end of 2013 it was mainly finished. Due to the lack of financial funds some planned elements are still not incorporated, like exercise equipment and a planned public pool (Zheng 2014). The Riverside Park size exceeds the needs of the current number of residents, and some accessibility issues are present. This corresponds to the rare visits of the local residents of the detailed case study area, despite its close proximity. Only 17% of the interviewed residents use the park on a weekly basis, and many of the interviewed residents were not familiar with the location of the park.

In the detailed case study area of XiaGuang Road, public

space activities are plentiful. Wide sidewalks provide enough space for dance and tai chi practice groups, which is a significant part of a daily routine of the local community. In addition, residents gather at the neighborhood entrance gates, attracted mostly due to the informal shopping possibilities. There is a lot of various commercial content along the street, which adds to the dynamism of the sidewalks in the afternoon. A market place supplies the local residents with fresh vegetables, mostly produced locally, and is another important daily activity pinpoint (► 1, 2, 3).

When it comes to the spatial planning of a new town that is to house the social transformation and support urban lifestyle for an until recently rural community, it is very important to pay attention to the local customs and traditions as well as provide the possibility for growth in intermediate states. Lingang Nicheng Community, which is so far half built out of the planned total, has vibrant and dynamic street life: seniors gather in front of their buildings, informal market places pop up in the afternoon, and dancing groups occupy the small square. On the other hand, a newly built town park seems to be a place of no interest. A question arises if the constant occurrence of obvious disparities between high-rises and crop fields, and between urban and rural lifestyle can be addressed through urban planning (► 4, 5).

1
XiaGuang Road, Public
Space Activities Map



-  Shopping and strolling
-  Sitting
-  Dancing

-  Vegetable market
-  School

- No activity - 0
- Low activity - 1
- Medium activity - 2
- High activity - 3

No Urban Desert! The Emergence and Transformation of Extended Urban Landscapes in Oman

Aurel von Richthofen

If “urban jungle” was an adequate metaphor for expanding cities, then “urban desert” might appeal as the equivalent for a process of extensive urbanization in Oman. At first sight, the larger metropolitan area of the capital, Muscat, seems like an endless monotonous sea of free-standing villas.

Like the metropolitan area, the landscapes of Oman, ranging from the coastal plains of Al Batinah, to the plateaus of the Hajar Mountains, to the old cities in the Interior, the deserts of the Empty Quarter and beyond are subject to recent, dramatic changes. Multiple factors drive these changes first induced by the discovery of oil in 1965, the gradual development of the economy since 1970, and the demographic explosion thereafter. Housing for the population, which is growing at three percent annually, and the provision of infrastructure in

1
Temporal development of the Muscat Capital Area 1984–2014 (von Richthofen/Langer 2015)

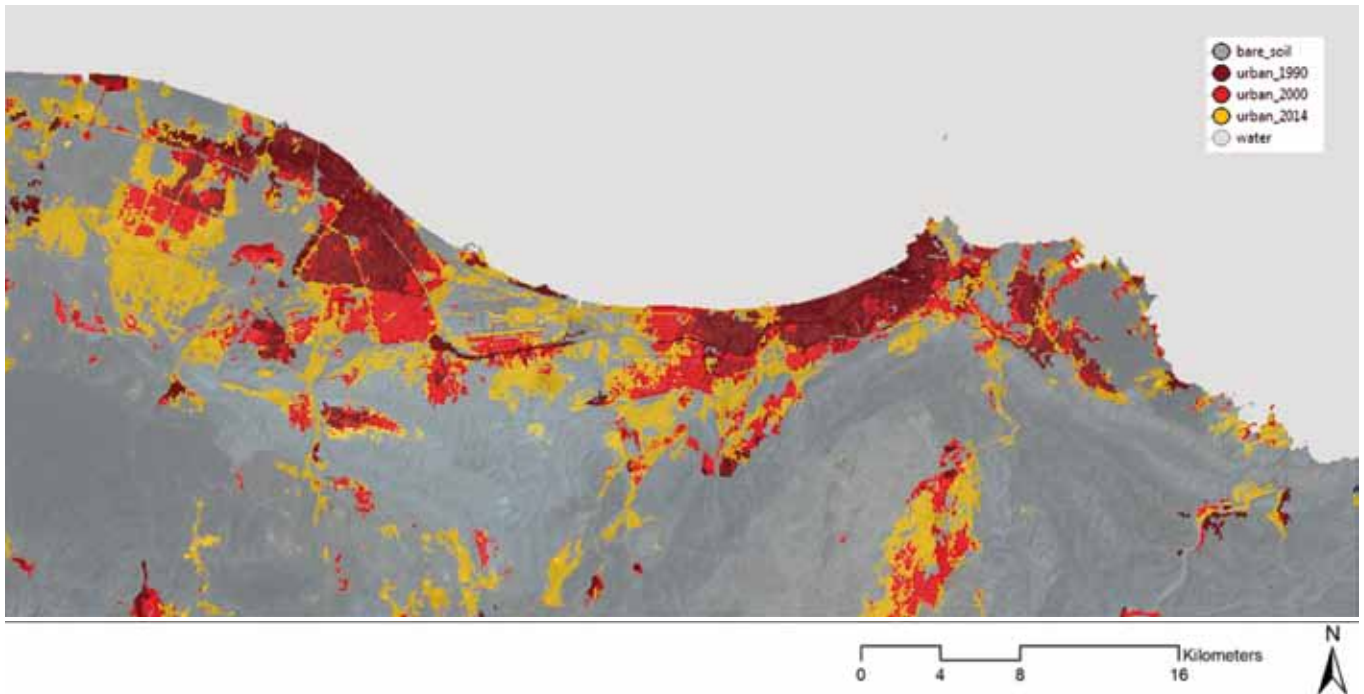


the form of roads, ports, airports, schools, hospitals, and mosques became a national planning priority (Development Council 1976) and the measure of progress as well as public satisfaction with the rule of the Sultan. Today, these processes manifest in an endless proliferation of individual residential houses sprawling across the Omani landscape and can be subsumed under the process of extended urbanization as conceptualized on a global scale by Schmidt and Brenner (2014). The urban geography of the Muscat Capital Area has been studied by Scholz (1990), while the process of urbanization and its effects on urbanized areas, urbanizing areas, and areas beyond have been researched by Nebel and von Richthofen (2016). As the research scope expands, the definition of urban and rural in the Omani context needs closer attention (► 1, 2).

2 Muscat Capital Area

Oman's Urban Turn

The description of rural-urban dynamics in Oman starts with methodological questions of how to define the terms urban and rural in Oman? Following from there we can ask how much space is urban in Oman? Yet, the definition of what an urban area actually is poses challenges in Oman and elsewhere (Brenner 2014, 181ff). According to the UN Habitat (2012), eighty-five percent of the population of Oman lives in urban areas yet occupy only three percent of the Omani territory. The high urbanization rate arises from a very low threshold index of 2,000 inhabitants that qualify an area as “urban” within the UN statistics for Oman (as compared to 100,000 for other places). It would be wrong to conclude that the remaining territory is therefore non-urban or



Hinterland

Interview with Stephan Petermann,
OMA/AMO, Rotterdam

What role do villages and smaller towns have in a world in which the majority lives in cities?

It has become an enormous cliché that half of mankind now lives in the city, and that this proportion is only increasing. This has been a pretext for architects to focus only on the city. Ironically, the Harvard Project on the City itself, launched in the mid-nineties, was perhaps partly responsible for the initial shift, but not for the maelstrom that followed. We are bombarded in architecture books with statistics confirming the ubiquity of the urban condition, while the symmetrical question is ignored: What did those moving to the city leave behind? The countryside is ninety-eight percent of the world's surface and fifty percent of mankind lives there. But our preoccupation with cities creates a situation comparable to the beginning of the eighteenth century when vast areas of the world were described on maps as terra incognita. Today, the terra incognita is the countryside. The emptying of the countryside is having a more drastic impact than the intensification of the city. While the city becomes more itself, the countryside is transforming into something new: an arena for industrialized nostalgia side by side with total control of the landscape, new patterns of seasonal migration, massive subsidies and incentives, data storage, digital farming, species homogenization, genetic experimentation... It would be difficult to write such a radical inventory of the city. It shows that the supposed dialectical opposition of urban growth and rural decline might be true when you look at population proportions, but not at the actual size of infrastructure or built substance.

Could you comment on and describe a bit the situation in the Netherlands or the other countries you have been working in?

We have mostly been traveling through Russia, the Netherlands, and Germany. In Russia, we stayed in small villages built under early communism in almost derelict conditions where you still find a lot of energy and enthusiasm. In Germany and the Netherlands, I can say the same, the “depression” of the built environment now and again does not always coincide with the mental alertness you find in the villages. This might also explain the hipster focus on rural aesthetics. In the next stages of the project we will be focusing on Africa and China. I think there will be, partly due to sustainability and economy forces, a pressure to start designing new villages to relieve the pressures on cities, specifically in China and Africa.

In your presentation at our conference, you mentioned a study about a piece of Dutch landscape. Can you describe your approach and findings? Was this the starting point for AMO’s exploration of the rural?

We had and have some presumptions and initial hunches of what was happening in the countryside—about work, the role of agriculture, migration, leisure—which if you only draw upon statistics still remain flat or generic. So we took a section of Dutch countryside of 12 x 3 kilometers, largely random apart from the fact that it is under the reign of heritage and relatively old land for Dutch standards (seventeenth century), and visually resembled the prototypical Dutch landscape. We went for two days on bikes and asked at every house we saw what the

inhabitants were doing. The responses confirmed most of the hunches—you hardly would encounter actual farmers, more band members, writers, artists, logistics workers, massage parlors, yoga studios, release doves, etc. We also tried to buy an operational farm to become real farmers, which really puzzled the local real estate agents as his clientele had never asked for that.

In the current city-centered discourse, rural spaces are often dismissed as declining or stagnating. However, rural spaces also play a critical role in sustainable development, as an inextricably linked counterpart, but also as a complement to the growing city, as extraction sites, natural reservoirs for food, freshwater, and air, or as leisure spaces. Do we need to formulate a (new) vision for ‘ruralism’?

Yes and it will. So far, a move back to the countryside is haphazard and mostly very locally organized, but with the prevailing pressures on the cities increasing, there is no other way. And it’s great! There is so much space, larger scales are easy, so little costs, so much more freedom and space for experimentation. You actually don’t need urban farming or other forms of penance, you can just do them. If you look at the visions of the modern utopias from the nineteen-sixties, none of them would be possible to be built in the current cities due to financial and preservation-related constraints. So if we want to keep pursuing this agenda, there is no other way then turning to the countryside. Our cities might be done, little left to dream about.



Fukushima 11800km

Niedermyr 433km

150km Göttingen

100km Göttingen

30km Thun

20km Schwabach



Authors

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Ines Lüder works as a researcher and lecturer as the Chair of Regional Building and Urban Planning at Leibniz University Hannover. She is involved in the research project Regiobranding, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Lüder studied architecture in Braunschweig and at the University of the Arts in Berlin. She worked as an architect in Berlin for Weinmiller Architekten and ASP Schweger Assoziierte and has realized her own projects as well. She participated in the Bauhaus Dessau Kolleg—EU-Urbanism and has taught at the Technical University in Berlin.

Patrick Lüth is the managing director and a partner at Snøhetta, he has been with Snøhetta since 2005. He started off as an intern and worked on many international competitions due to his exceptional 3-D skills. He has been involved in many of the most spectacular design submissions for Snøhetta in the recent years, including the Swarovski Kristallwelten Evolution project. Since 2011, he leads Snøhetta’s studio in Innsbruck, Austria.

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Ruta Randelovic holds an international dual MSc degree in Urban Design from TU Berlin and MArch from Tongji University in Shanghai. During her studies, she investigated the topic of new town development in Shanghai’s periphery. Her professional experience includes projects from architecture, building practices, and interior design in Croatia and Serbia, as well as landscape architecture in Germany.

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Belinda Tato and Jose Luis Valleja are cofounders and co-directors of the firm *ecosistema urbano*, established in 2000 in Madrid. *Ecosistema urbano* is a group of architects and urban designers operating within the

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The Pk. Odessa Co is a cooperation of photographers founded in 2010 by Simon Jüttner, Markus Lanz, and Sebastian Schels, who are based in Munich and Brasilia. Being both photographers and architects/urbanists, their common work is devoted to the precise study and photographic description of architectonic spaces. They focus on land- and cityscapes as ‘lived space.’ Works include freelance artistic work, as well as monographic documentations of architectural work.

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