



Peer Reviewed

Title:

When Suburbia Awakens [Speaking of Places]

Journal Issue:

[Places, 17\(2\)](#)

Author:

[Lerup, Lars](#)

Publication Date:

2005

Publication Info:

Places

Permalink:

<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9069c7ps>

Acknowledgements:

This article was originally produced in Places Journal. To subscribe, visit www.places-journal.org. For reprint information, contact places@berkeley.edu.

Keywords:

places, placemaking, architecture, environment, landscape, urban design, public realm, planning, design, suburbia, smartacres, Zohemic Canopy, Houston, Lars Lerup

Copyright Information:

All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author or original publisher for any necessary permissions. eScholarship is not the copyright owner for deposited works. Learn more at http://www.escholarship.org/help_copyright.html#reuse



eScholarship
University of California

eScholarship provides open access, scholarly publishing services to the University of California and delivers a dynamic research platform to scholars worldwide.

When Suburbia Awakens

Lars Lerup

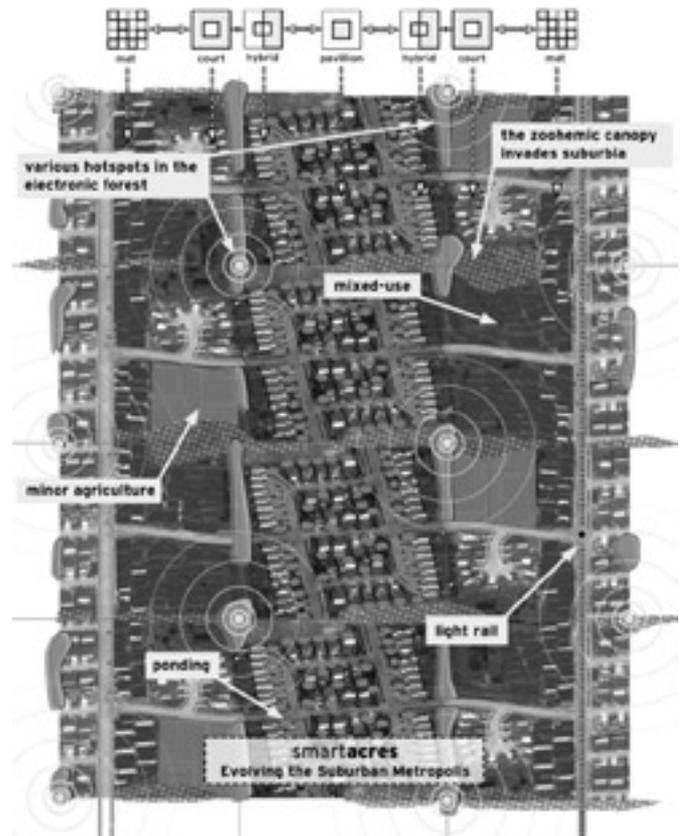
The ancient urbanism best portrayed by etched maps is passé. The new metropolitan urbanism has been liberated from those petrified inscriptions. But we have also left cinematic urbanism behind, where trains once left crowded platforms in billowing smoke. The new metropolitan mode is handheld video urbanism, where a clip can stop, turn left, fade, begin again, grow dim, and be erased.

But all three are inadequate for the future: the first is too static, the second is too predictable—too noir; and the third is too erratic and self-indulgent. The peculiar suburban potential amalgamation of Nature and culture—of lawn and house—with renewed environmental insistence holds the secret to a new metropolitan urbanism. Rolled out, its horizontal coherence is weak but persistent, gentle and laconic; it is, when it can be, just there. Never fully complete, undramatic, always struggling against more powerful forces, it still holds its promise. It is this metabolic intelligence that points the way.

The new metropolitan urbanism is the fuzzy union of the built, the planted, and the natural (in the case of Houston the ancient moist prairie). It is an architecture both visible and invisible. Here Jeffersonian husbandry, now frozen in suburban landscaping replete with leaf-blowers and pesticides, can find new life by seeing the natural as the motor of a new urbanism.

In this return to the natural lies embedded the rejection of our total dependency on fossil fuels and the utopian dream that we will one day grow our houses. Solar air-conditioning! Twin-fuel cars! The image of the new metropolis that emerges from this new field-room is a lateral domain with a quiet but scintillating intelligence—the electronic forest. Here metropolitans will swarm, or swim, in a new liquidity, suspended between the invisible and physical reminders of the public dimension of the metropolis. In Houston these perma-stims will bustle with new communication software, wireless hotspots, environmental controls for monitoring and guiding both public and private traffic—invisible forces that will join an uncanny hardware struggling to break out of its static confines to merge with the endless trunks of the Zohemic Canopy.

Welcome to Smartacres.



Caption: Caption caption caption, caption caption caption. Caption caption caption, caption caption caption caption.