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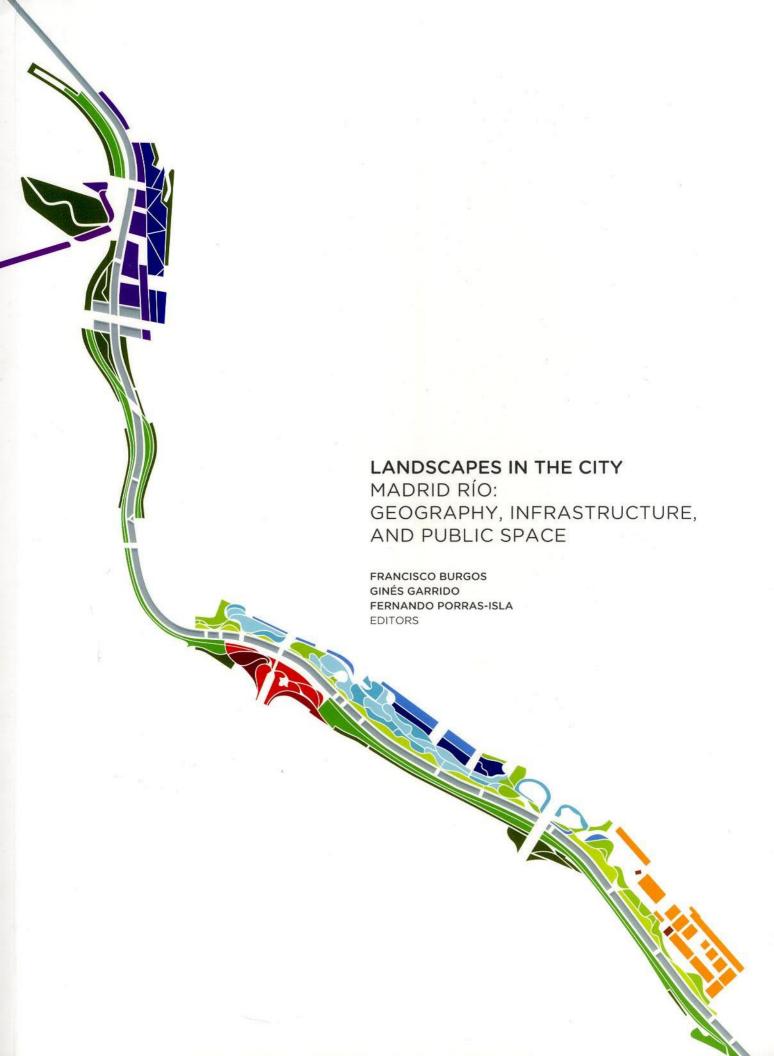
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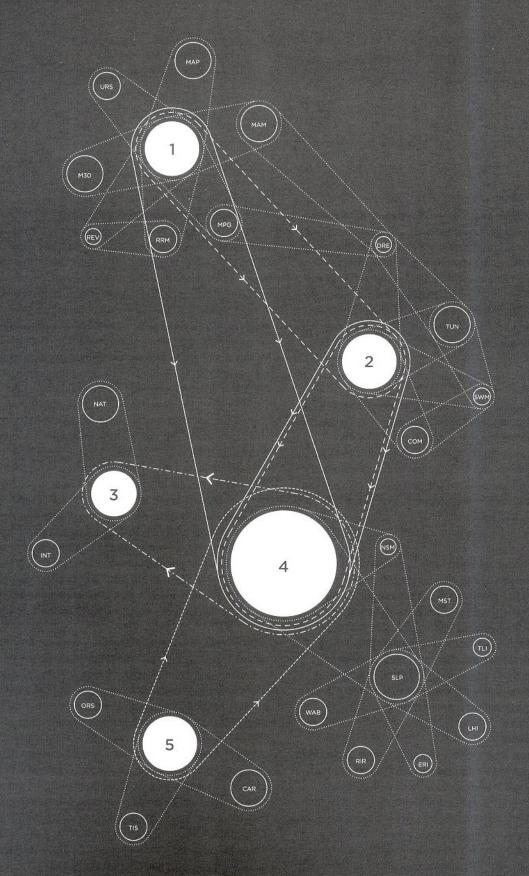
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PREFACE

Scale

If a project conceived for an urban environment affects a surface surpassing the local dimensions of a neighborhood or district, it can be used to generate a new entity capable of modifying relations among the city's component parts. When an action affecting consolidated urban fabric acquires large-scale proportions, its character ceases to be contingent and becomes, instead, a structure that transforms the territory on which it acts. Magnitude is a quality that can single-handedly activate the structural function of an urban element.

Continuity

A strategic operation is instituted as a fundamental structural element for the city when its characteristic principles include the capacity to join innumerable settings through new connections and, in that sense, to establish ties and facilitate itineraries that were previously inexistent. Effective spatial continuity among previously unconnected pieces articulates the morphology of the city as the elements that make this possible become parts of its skeleton.

Erasing the marks

The degree to which any connective structure will take root in the city depends on how close it is to the natural reminiscences that gave rise to its marks, even before the city itself existed. Often, geological features not easily hidden support the silhouette of certain lasting green components, establishing them as parts of an underlying structure. But sometimes, these marks are practically erased because they can easily be replaced by roadways that follow their layout and are thus established over previous natural trajectories, invading them with a constant flow of vehicles.

Closed infrastructures

A powerful communications element, main artery ,or junction generally takes the form of a compact and mono-functional setting. That is the case with major railbeds or highways running through a territory. It is possible to very effectively transit these closed infrastructures, but while their specialized design facilitates linear velocity, it makes them extremely difficult to cross, by minimizing or even annulling lateral transit. Thus, these violent infrastructures act simultaneously as longitudinal connectors and transversal separators.

Revealed traces

The elimination of natural features that mark urban territories to some degree is a phenomenon that has spread to a multitude of cities on all continents. In the 20th century, green areas that had resisted passing time without disappearing were buried under vehicular connecting systems. Now, however, some of the denaturing operations imposed in the recent past are being reversed, so that impenetrable and divisive roadways begin to disappear or are rerouted underground — often at considerable expense — generating new areas of opportunity. Without losing their condition as fundamental and connective infrastructure, these areas take on a new potential that can include a character linked to beneficial environmental values.

The following pages offer an extensive description of just such a process where, between 2004 and 2007, scale, continuity, and respect for natural features made it possible to build a new urban installation over Madrid's underground beltway that is both permeable and open. This new setting, a replica of the recently disappeared infrastructure, recovers its status as a green connection whose construction captures nature. This is an eminently architectural process whose spatial construction takes the form of a constant reaction to the artificial urban context on which it operates. Neither natural nor evocative, the transformation of this landscape is specifically linked to the urban setting, that is, to surroundings profoundly altered — fabricated — by constant human activity.

In this work, the term landscape does not refer to the recreation of sight in the presence of nature, nor to the construction of an atmosphere that seeks to rescue it. Here, the word is not intended to remind us of the earliest attempts by German and Dutch painters to reconstruct their own interpretations of territorial analysis on canvas - the early 16th-century landskip or landschaft — or of those who defend projects dealing with our natural surroundings as a fully relevant discipline. Here, landscape is an operating table, a laboratory capsule, a careful and prolonged observation of the city, an interpretation of its vectors, and therefore, an artificial construct that reunites the fabric of an urban infrastructure. The latter, with one function or another, has always been in the same place but, on the playing field, the primary working element has been vegetation: natural, though imported, materials are employed to generate a huge artifice.

This book is presented as a panorama of visual planes laid out in total continuity with the architectural project and its implementation, like the final link in a single sequence. Its pages successively join back, middle, and foregrounds for the viewer's contemplation. The backgrounds are concentrated toward the beginning to describe the geography and major networks that make it possible to understand the accumulation of physical and temporal events along the Manzanares River's passage through the city of Madrid. The middle grounds occupy the book's central pages, where they appear as infrastructural landscapes belonging to the narrative spun by the river's flow. Finally, the most immediate foregrounds occupy the last pages, where they convey the rules and systems that shape the processes and techniques needed to carry out the work.

This panorama is not selective. Instead, it deliberately includes everything that has actually been done, whether photogenic or not, and without regard for the ultimate success of each as an object. The result is a high-resolution still image, free of arrogance, and that hides nothing. The long view offers an understanding of the project's strategic lines; the close-ups reveal all constituent elements, and their final formal resolution is nowhere near as important as the fact that they belong to a complete syntax. As such, each is only relevant as part of an all-encompassing system, as inseparable components that help to make up the urban installation open to all-inclusive gazes. Thus, this document should become a book-landscape or a landscape-book that represents a constructed proposal, but that also maps data and welcomes an open interpretation of a solid and essentially artificial urban structure built with fragments of nature.

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Burgos & Garrido Arquitectos and Porras La Casta Arquitectos, pp. 306-309
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FG+SG fotografia de arquitectura, p. 255. Miguel de Guzmán, pp. 257 and 261. Vias y construcciones SA, p. 261.
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BASIC PROJECT INFORMATION

Date of the master plan 2006-08 Date of the urban development projects 2006-11 Number of urban development projects drawn up 93

Planned surface area (master plan) 680 hectares

Surface area with urban development projects drawn up 146 hectares

Districts affected 6

Surface area affected by urban development 138 hectares (50 hectares built over the M-30 tunnels) Parks and gardens 118 hectares Sidewalks 13 hectares Roadways 5 hectares Other uses 2 hectares

Length of pedestrian and cycle paths 10 km

Number of newly built bridges and walkways 12 Number of renovated dams 7 Number of recycled bridges 1 Number of restored bridges 5 Number of widened bridges 2

Number of trees planted 33,500 Number of bushes planted 460,000

Number of new sports installations 8

Number of restored sports installations 2

Number of children's playgrounds 15 Number of number of bio-health circuits 2

Number of new ornamental fountains 24 Number of restored ornamental fountains 1

Number of buildings constructed 12

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LANDSCAPES IN THE CITY

MADRID RÍO: GEOGRAPHY, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND PUBLIC SPACE

A PROJECT BY BURGOS & GARRIDO PORRAS LA CASTA RUBIO & ÁLVAREZ-SALA WITH WEST 8

In early 2004, the city of Madrid witnessed the emergence of a violent wound alongside the small river that crosses it from north to south. A bare scar appeared near its center when the M-30 beltway that ran parallel to its riverbanks was rerouted underground. This large linear space freed of any construction emerged as an unprecedented and promising potential landscape. In a similar fashion, a few other cities, such as Boston or Seoul, have replaced their major roadways with green corridors that marked a new understanding of the relation between urban settings, their inhabitants and nature. In Madrid, it is now possible to explore large, uninterrupted areas where the valuable unoccupied territory of the periphery merges with free space in the central city. The Manzanares river has thus become the main nexus, a door that links outside with inside. The abundant drawings, diagrams, detailed entries, and photographs in this book serve to narrate the process of conception and development of the Madrid Río Park, the most far-reaching urban operation carried out in this city in recent decades.



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