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The Westward-Moving House and other stories: J.B. Jackson reading and telling the landscape

John Brinckerhoff Jackson (1909-1996) was an important catalyst for modern cultural landscape studies in the United States. Inspired by European regional geography and by his own experiences working on a ranch in the Southwest, he developed a unique discourse on the American landscape. In 1951 Jackson founded *Landscape* magazine, which became an important mouthpiece for scholarly work and discussions on landscape, urban planning, and architecture. Although Jackson managed to remain an independent and critical voice - he entered the academic world only late in the 1960's - he was a central figure in many contemporary debates.

Jackson concluded the editorial of the very first issue of *Landscape* with the often-quoted words: 'A rich and beautiful book is always open before us. We just have to learn and read it.' To learn the American people how to read the landscape was indeed his primary goal: he explicitly wanted to address 'the intelligent layman', not just a scientific or academic audience. In line with a descriptive tradition in geography and leaning on his own literary skills - he had published a novel in the 1930's - Jackson's description of the landscape was inherently narrative. He wrote many 'stories' on the landscape and the people who inhabit it, stories in which the overarching storylines of history and landscape evolution were told through the lives of individuals and the way they interacted with the world around them. One of his most well known texts is 'The Westward-Moving House', a tale of three generations of American farmers focusing on their houses and their changing relations with the land.

The conference paper explores the literary means J.B. Jackson used to read and tell the landscape. It focuses on the texts he published in *Landscape* between 1951 and 1968, the period in which he was the editor-in-chief. Apart from the writings of Jackson himself, the paper will also consider articles from other contributors to the magazine. I will explore how narrative techniques entered urban planning discourses and methods, especially in the texts on the vernacular and on phenomenology by such authors as Denise Scott Brown, Christopher Alexander and Kevin Lynch.

#### BIOGRAPHY

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Bruno Notteboom is post-doctoral researcher at the Department of Architecture & Urban Planning at Ghent University, guest professor at KULeuven, Faculty of Architecture and visiting scholar at UC Berkeley, Institute for Urban and Regional Development (Spring/Summer 2013 and 2014). He obtained his doctoral degree in urban and regional planning at Ghent University in 2009 with a dissertation on urban planning and landscape

iconography in Belgium (1890-1940). His current research focuses on the iconography of city and landscape in the 19th and 20th centuries. Recently, he was the editor of a book on the Belgian urban photographer Edmond Sacré. He is a member of the Ghent Urban Studies Team (GUST) and of the editorial board of OASE Journal for Architecture.

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