THE CITY IN NATURE

NATURE IN THE CITY

“Ideas of Nature”

natura: the essential constitution of the world, a singular Nature

Evolving ideas of nature:

1. God as first absolute, Nature as His minister and deputy
2. Nature the absolute monarch (Medieval era)
3. Nature as constitutional lawyer (17th - 19th c.)
4. Nature as selective breeder (late 19th c.)
5. Nature as a set of objects which man can manipulate
6. Nature as wilderness and refuge

- Raymond Williams. 1980. *Problems in Materialism and Culture.*

first nature: original, prehuman nature

second nature: the artificial nature that people erect atop first nature

“This distinction has its uses, but it too slips into ambiguity when we recognize that the nature we inhabit is never just first or second nature, but rather a complex mingling of the two.”

- William Cronon. 1991. *Nature’s Metropolis*, p. xix

A definition of nature for urban planners?

The city is a granite garden, composed of many smaller gardens, set in a garden world…

…nature in the city is far more than trees and gardens, and weeds in sidewalk cracks and vacant lots. It is the air we breathe, the earth we stand on, the water we drink and excrete, and the organisms with which we share our habitat…

…It is the consequence of a complex interaction between the multiple purposes and activities of human beings and other living creatures and of the natural processes that govern the transfer of energy, the movement of air, the erosion of the earth, and the hydrologic cycle.

The city is part of nature.

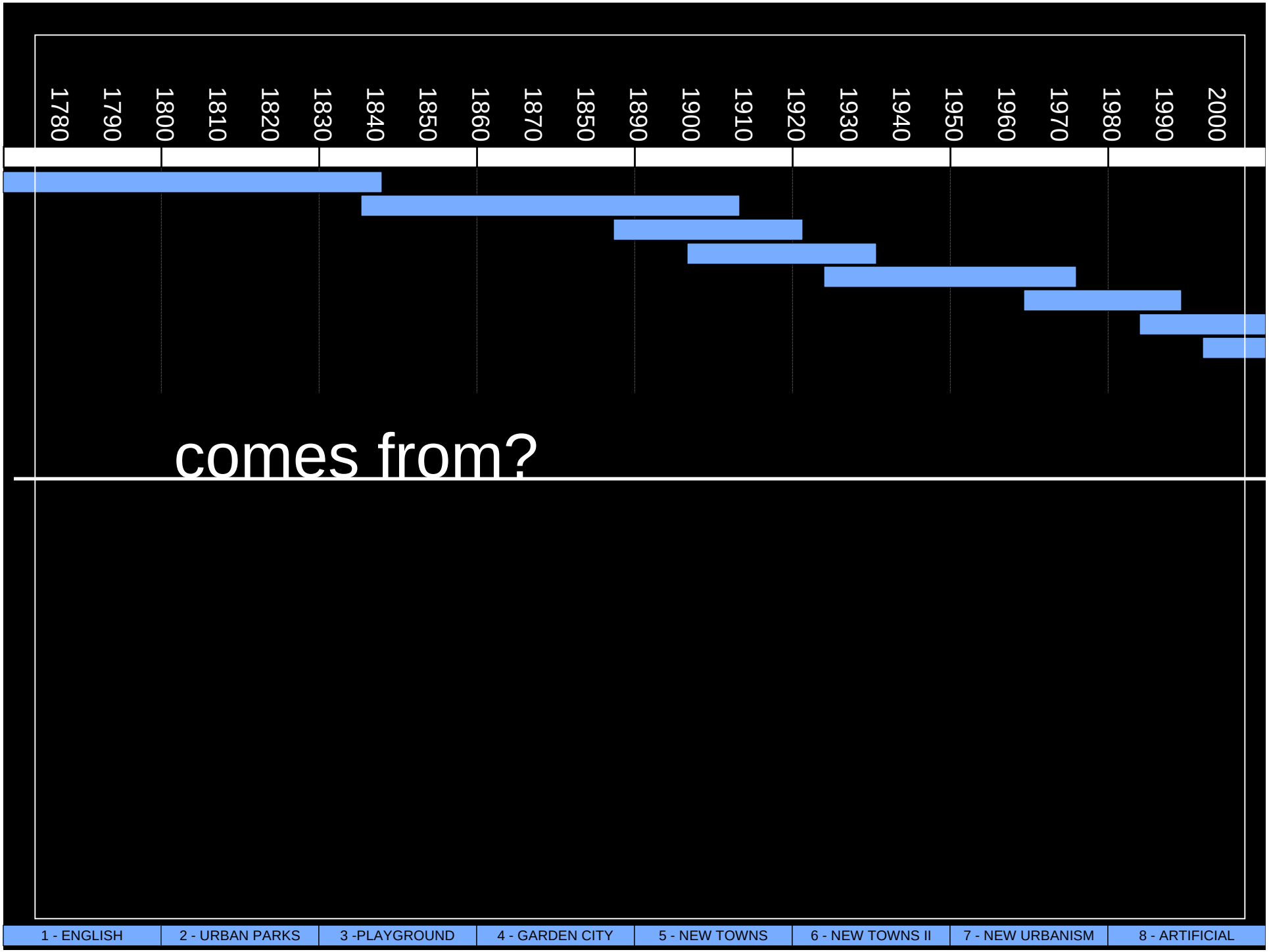
- Anne Whiston Spirn. 1984. *The Granite Garden*, p. 4

why nature?

- Visual beauty
- Recreation
- Moral uplift?
- Increase land values
- Ecological conservation
- Reserves for future development
- Growth management
- Facilitate natural processes
- Abate pollution
- Agriculture/ food

ways to do it?

- Commons
- Private gardens
- Urban ‘rural’ cemeteries
- City parks
- Playgrounds
- Greenbelts
- Neighborhood parks
- Linear parks
- Community gardens
- Green roofs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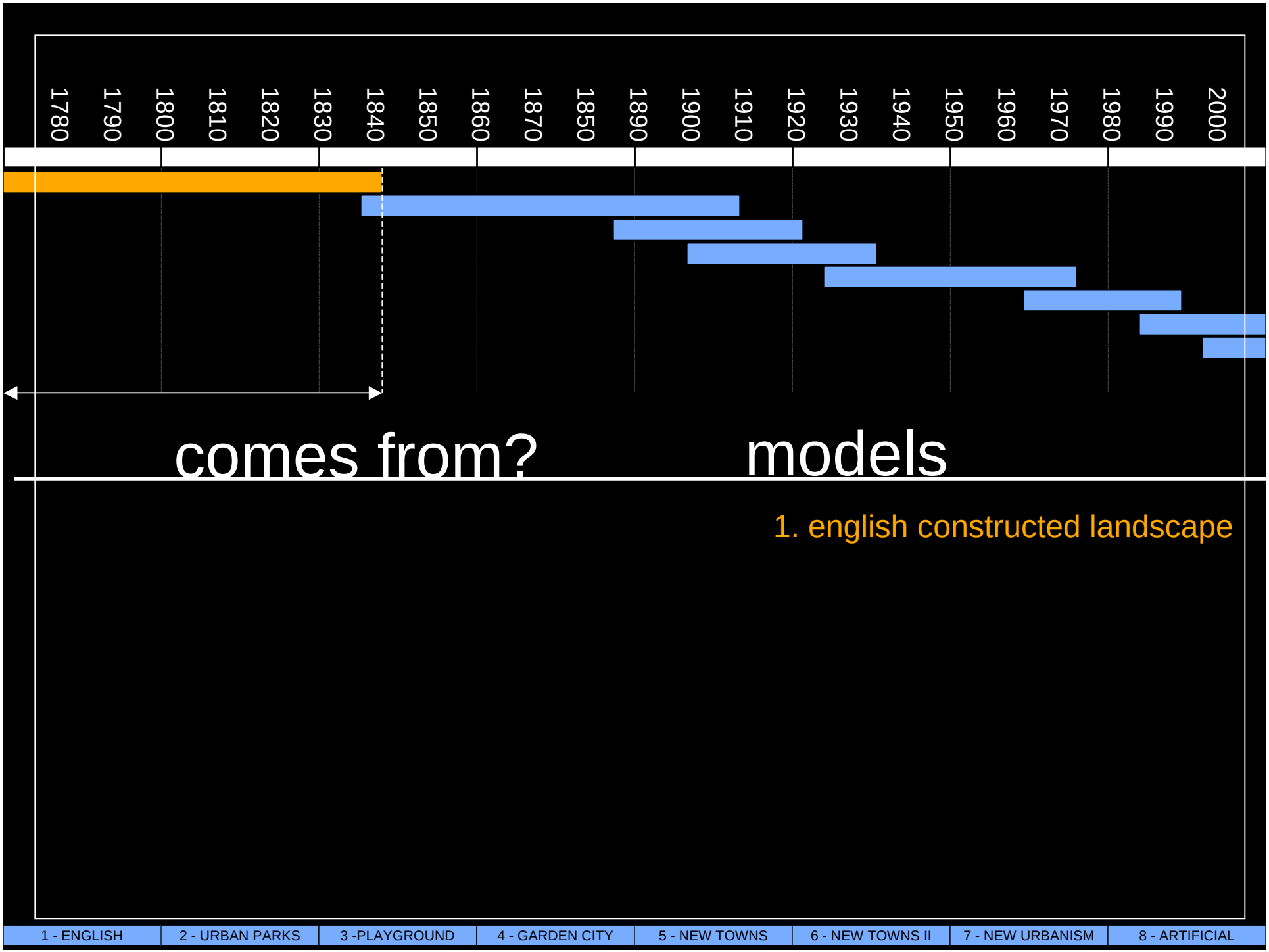
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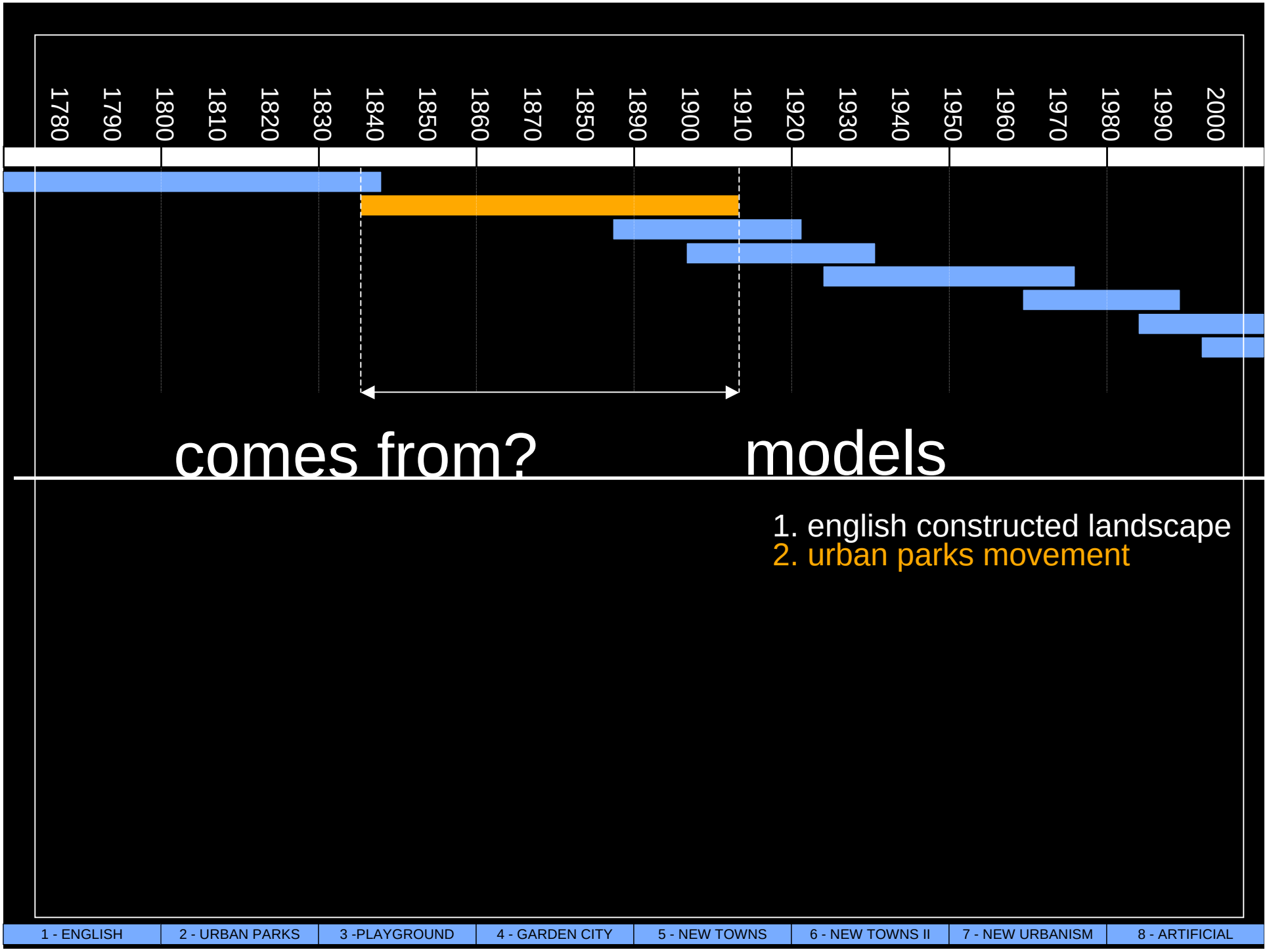
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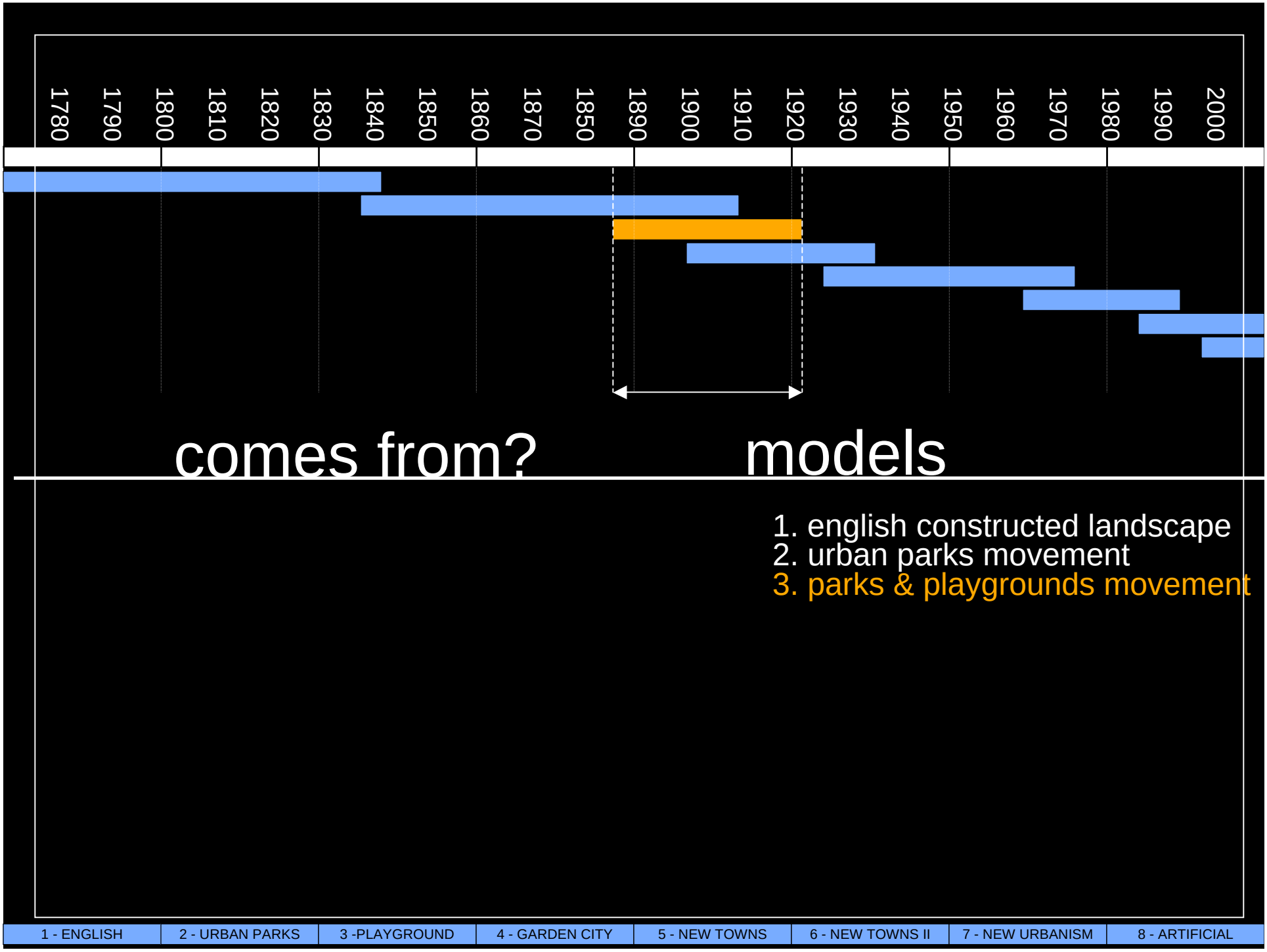
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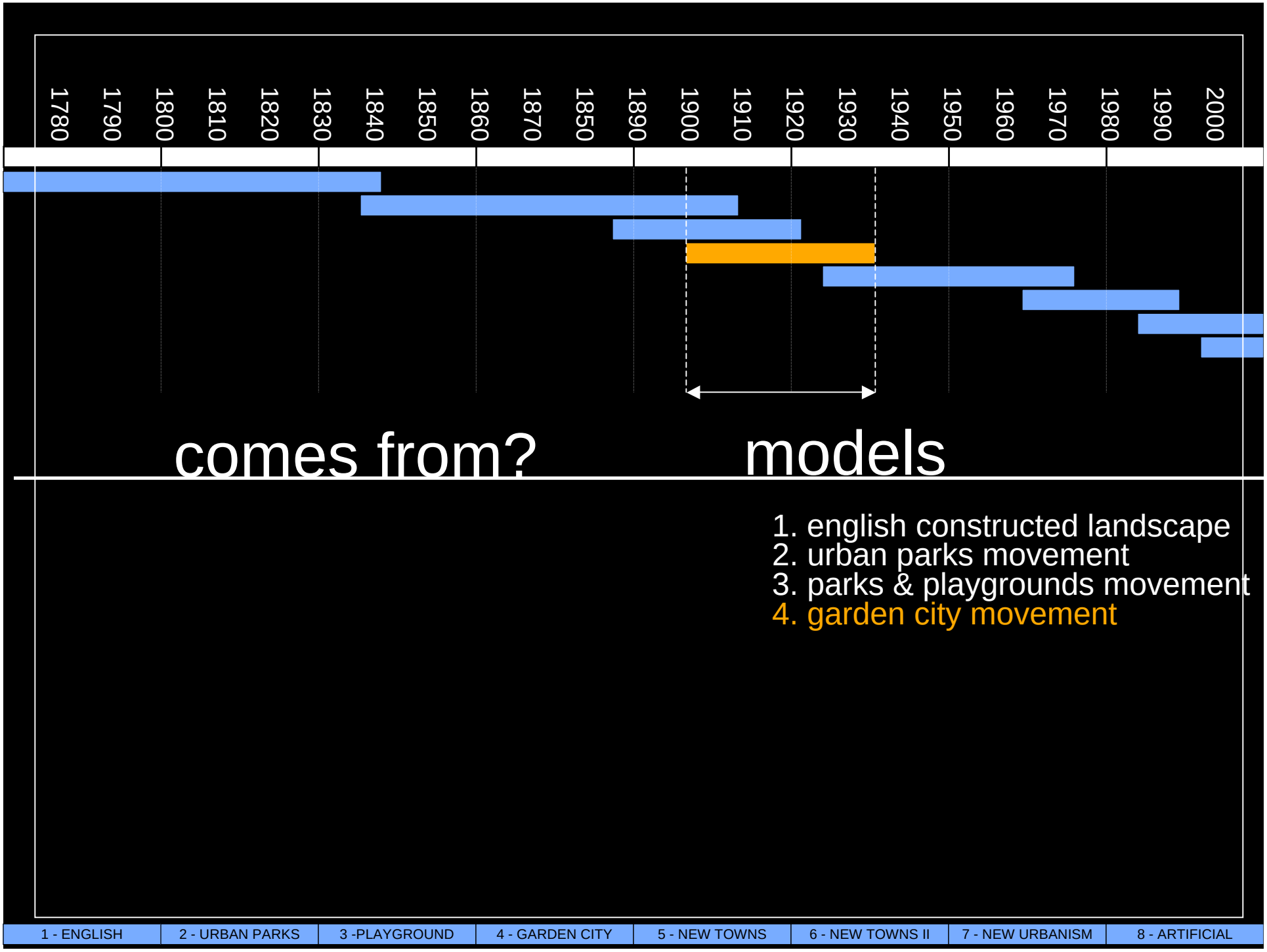
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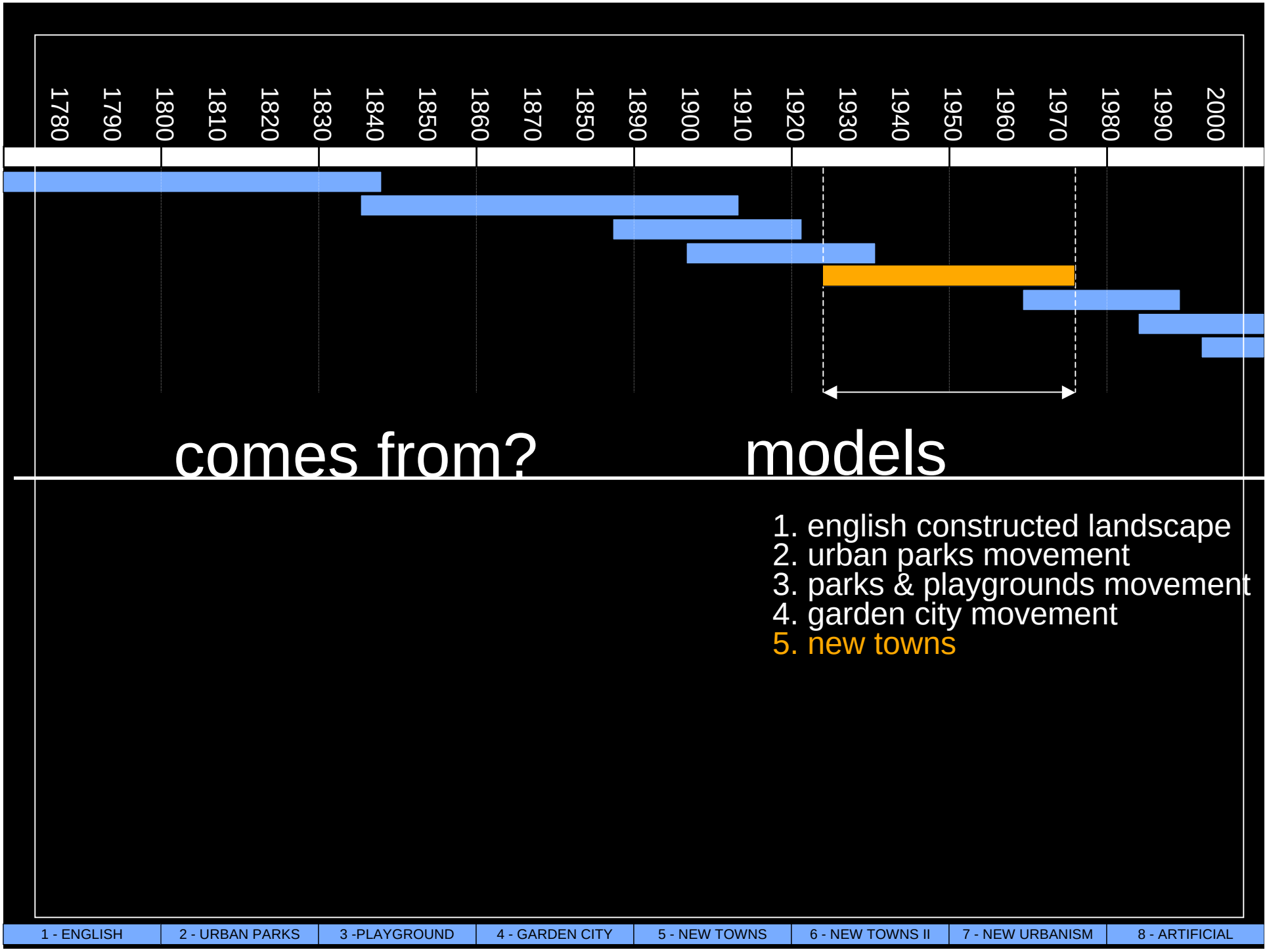
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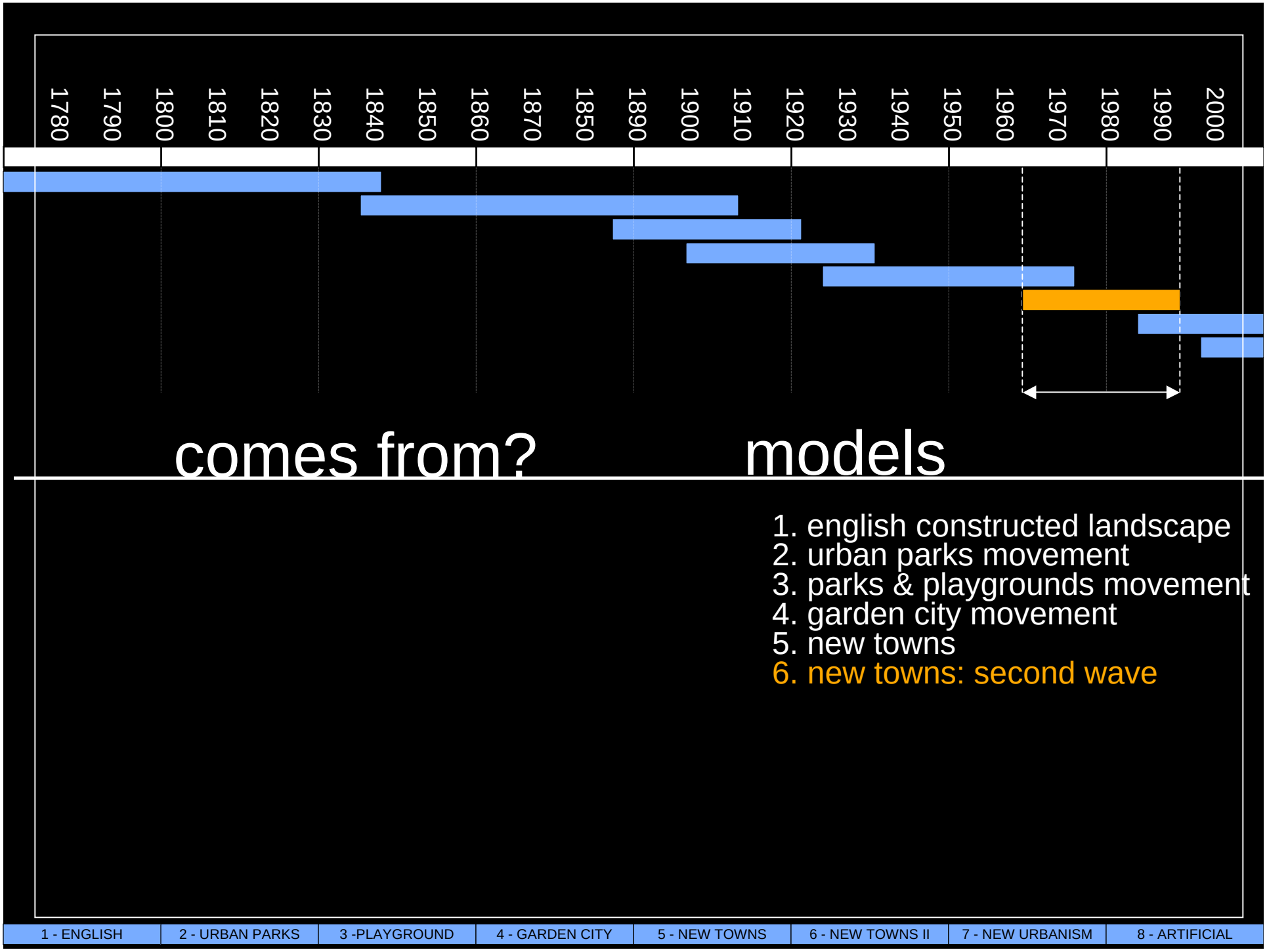
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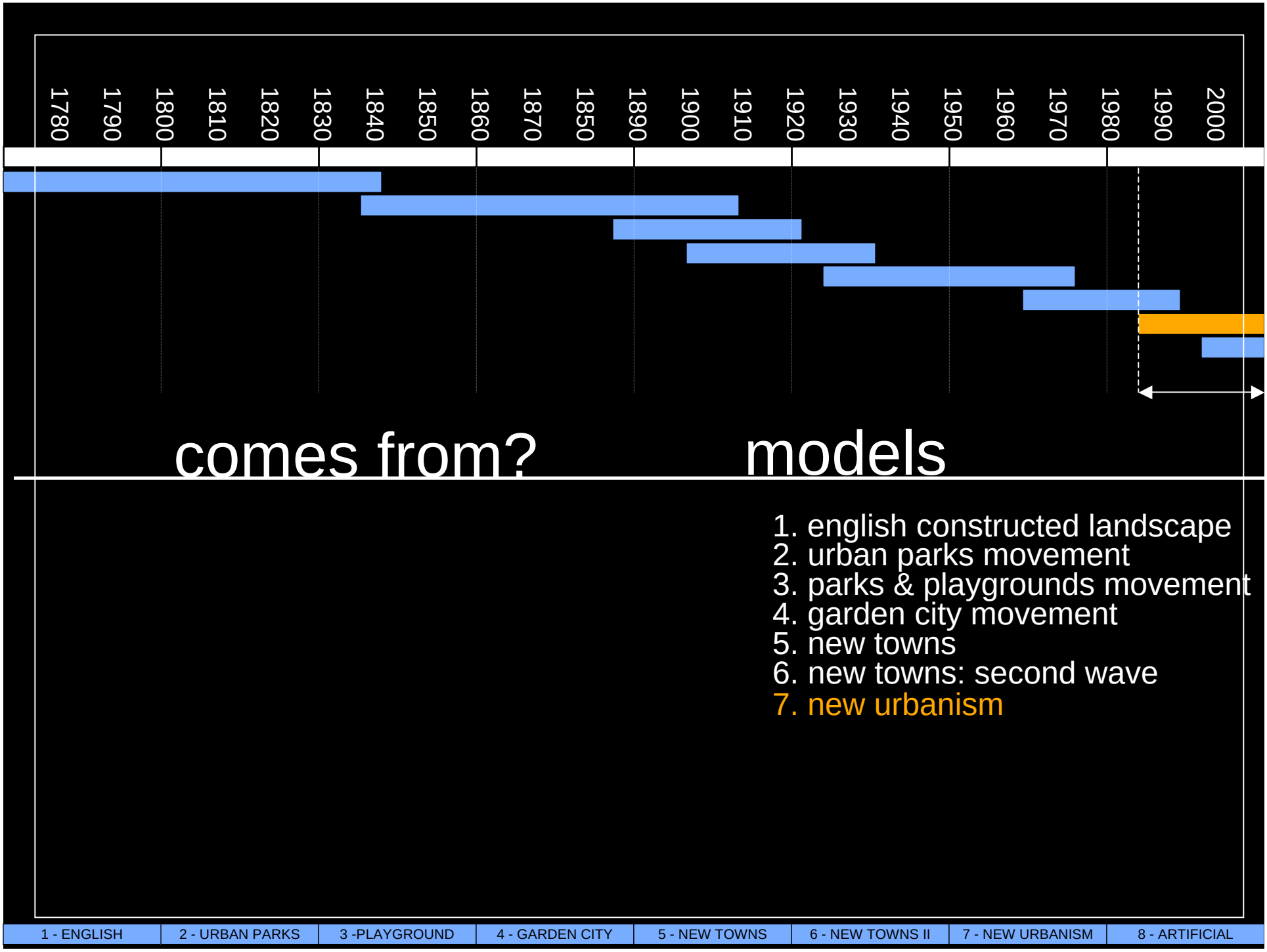
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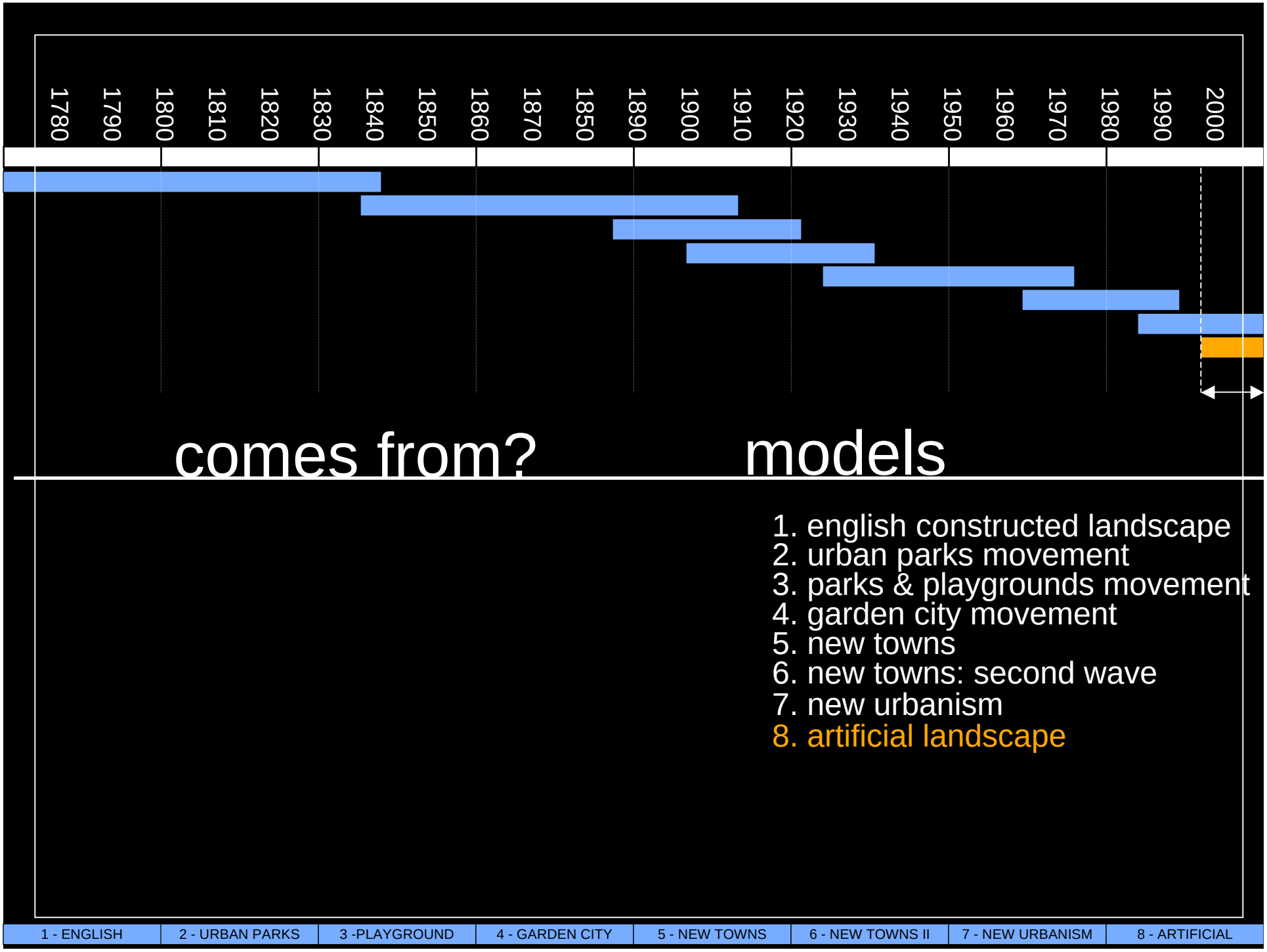
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