

EDITORIAL

The field is where we live. *Buildings in cultivable soil* – that is the field. Agriculture and city and the expansion of the city and sprawl and infrastructure and trash and buildings and favelas and old villages and gated communities and agriculture and some more other buildings. A collection of “organs without a body” (Angélil and Siress, 2008) laid down horizontally as far as geography permits it. In fact, apart from mountains, deserts, jungles and large areas of mechanized agriculture/mining with little human personnel (as in Kansas, Siberia or Rio Grande do Sul), everything is field: East Java, northern Italy, the valley of Mexico, the Taiheiyo belt, Flanders, greater São Paulo, Guangdong, New Jersey, the Nile valley or Bangladesh.

The field is the place where William Morris’s scary definition of architecture as “anything but desert” becomes true. It is associated with a Malthusian tone, with the concept of no escape: more people, more capital, more cars, more buildings, more energy, more noise, less soil, less water, less food.

Even if it is not *all the same*, the field is *one*. A condition with no alternatives. Still, patterns in the field are different, and figures in the patterns are different once again.

The field lies outside of the binary opposition of city and nature. From the point of view of nature, it is dirty, polluted, compromised, settled and consumed. From the city’s point of view, it is rusty, uninteresting, sleepy, backward and provincial.

The field is not an evolution of the city, but its *natural domain*: it is both its pre-condition and its unavoidable conclusion, the (urban) consequence of the Neolithic Revolution. Today the field is almost filled and it looks like a monstrous version of the city, but it is not. The field logically precedes the city. The city evolves within the field like a

historical process within a geological one. The city is just a possibility within the field, but not the only one, and not the primary one.

According to contemporary statistics, two thirds of the world's population will be living in cities by 2050. But these agglomerations are cities only according to statistics. Nothing about them is metropolitan except their density. To understand these systems as *cities* is a mistake. They are merely denser rural areas crowded with restless masses of (underemployed) farmers. Finally, after the modern infatuation with cities, we are going to have to consider *villages* once again.

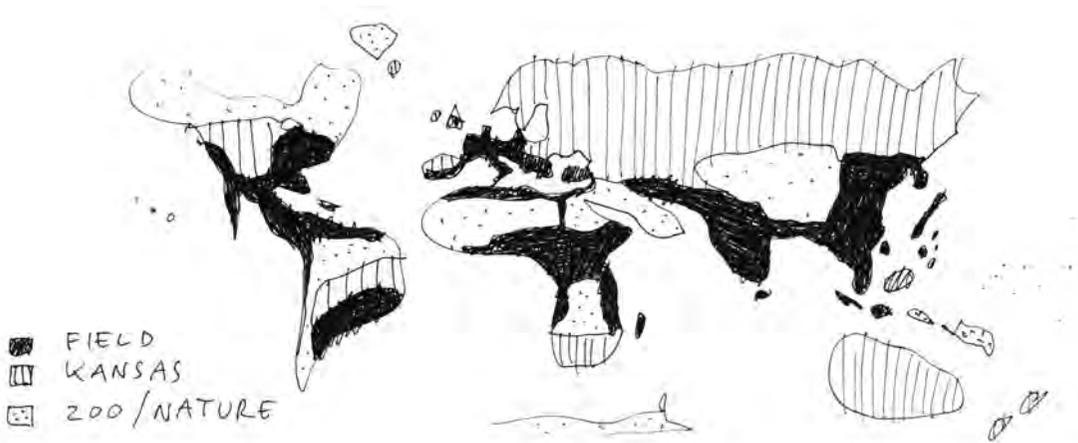
The field is slow, resistant, heavy, opaque: anything but a *tabula rasa*. What is there remains there. It is not possible to add to it, and it is not possible to get rid of things (in the field, you need to bring trash to a filling dump, or – at the very least – throw it into a canal). There are even *identities* embroidered into the field. Habits and traditions resist within the field automatically, because of the inertia of the sheer mass of what has accumulated there.

The field is *landscape* not because it is natural or green, but because it has no centre and is horizontal. In fact, the field stretches over a large surface, a kind of thin, dirty incrustation of the planet.

In the field, there are places, not just positions. Objects are not purely defined by their relationship with the other objects around them; there is a geographic background. Still, the background does not appear anymore. Geography survives as an explanation of bizarre infrastructural solutions, a sort of psychoanalysis of the field.

The field defines a new condition for architecture, reducing its ambitions and mocking its principles (at least the Western ones). In fact, the very existence of the field makes the figure-ground relationship look obsolete. The figure is lost among figures. The possibility of the figure disappears not because of abolition, but because of proliferation, or visual pollution. The landscape becomes a “figure-figure” universe, to the point that figures become irrelevant. Form disappears because of the oversupply of figures, desires and creativity. Architecture disappears because of the oversupply of architects.

Within the field, creative interventions can only modify and transform. Modifications are of the kind of contemporary electronic music: sampling, remixing, dubbing. The themes are already there; they cannot be invented, just found. The garbage already in the field is the



raw material from which to shape whatever contemporary architecture, urbanism or landscape architecture. Recycling is the compulsory exercise.

“The even covering of the field” is an expression coined by K. A. C. Creswell. According to Creswell, a bored British Army Captain posted in Egypt during World War I who became a scholar of early Muslim architecture, “the even covering of the field” is a basic principle of Muslim art (Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, 1958). Although Creswell does not elaborate much on his statement – the “even covering” is proclaimed more than explained – the expression nonetheless suggests the existence of an entirely developed aesthetic, precisely what we are now lacking with respect to the contemporary field.

San Rocco 2 investigates the *aesthetic consequences* of the field, from both urban and architectural perspectives. What does “field” mean, exactly? How do we experience it? What kind of knowledge do we need to understand it? What is the difference between field and city, and between field and territory? What kind of images do these jammed scenarios leave in our memories? What (and how) can one design in a world without a background? And without a background, what happens to the figure? Should the figure disappear as well? Are there exceptions within the field? Should the “covering of the field” be “even”? Does the field have borders? What kind of operations are possible within it? *Field operations?*

Finally, San Rocco 2 raises a political question: should the field ever be *planned?*