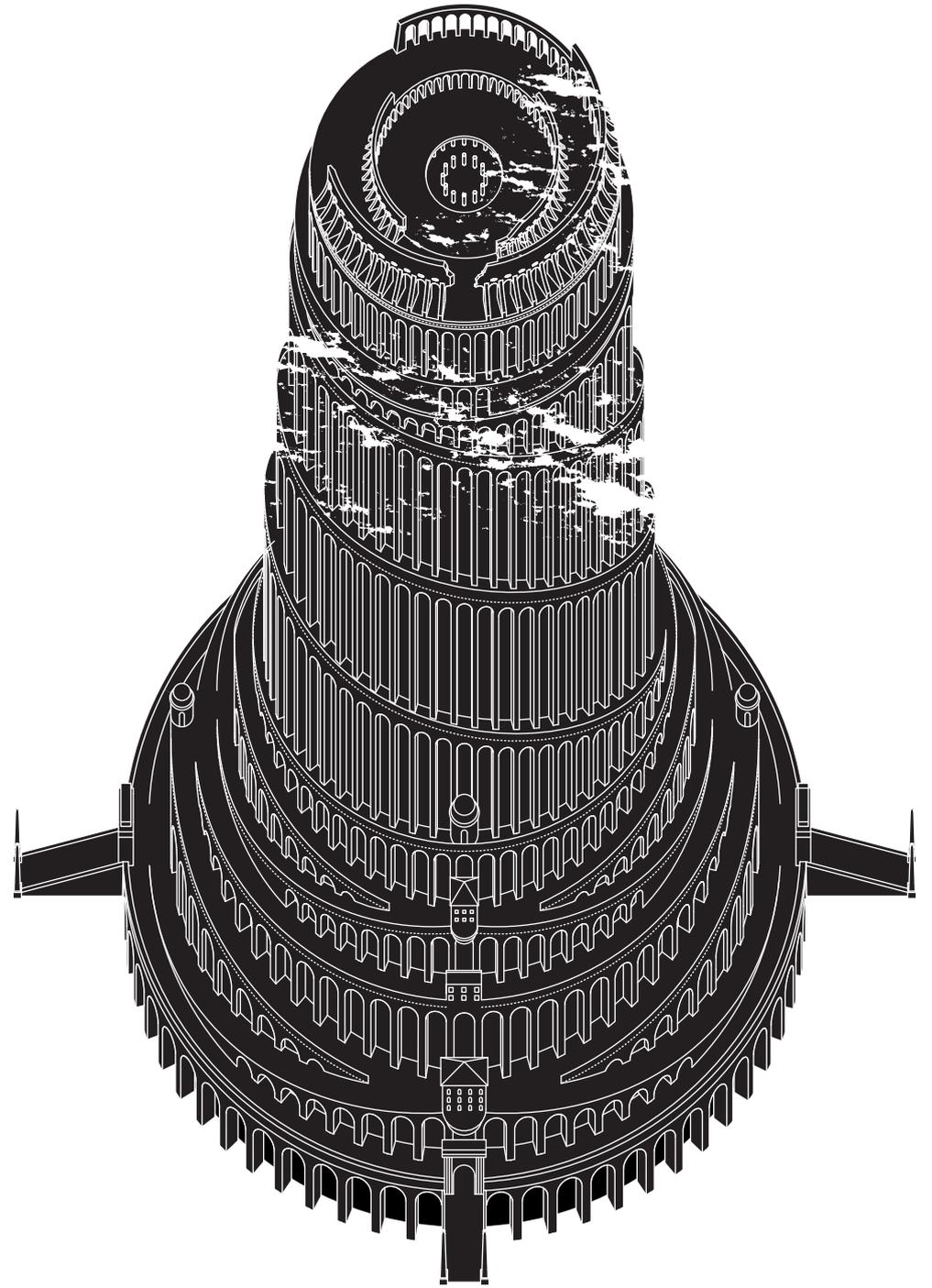


SAN ROCCO - ECOLOGY Rui Aristides and Campomarzio on the Saline Royale at Arc-et-Senans * Ido Avissar on tranquillity in disorder * Francesca Benedetto on the island of the lakes * Caitlin Blanchfield on landscape and the New Deal * Dominic Broadhurst on *Mad Max* * Paolo Carpi digs into compost * Ludovico Centis at Niagara Falls * Rania Ghosn and El Hadi Jazairy on Beijing's air * Fabien Giraud and Max Turnheim on ecology and emancipation * Robert Alexander Gorny introduces *Gestaltungsgesellschaften* * Stefano Graziani in conversation with Rene Gabri * Harry Gugger and Bárbara Mações Costa on urban nature * Wonne Ickx on the stump of a Sequoia * Emma Letizia Jones on Berlin's parkway * Ali Karimi tells a fable about Bahrain * MAP Office envisions multiple Hong Kongs * Maria Chiara Pastore on sewers * Giovanni Piovene offers some notes on territory * Bas Princen finds oil * Davide Rapp explores ventilation ducts * Irénée Scalbert on apples * Sabine Schulz Blank on wilderness * Tuomas Toivonen heats the sauna * With photos by Stefano Graziani and Bas Princen

SAN ROCCO - ECOLOGY

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CÆLUM

LUNÆ

Venite faciamus nobis Civitatem et Turrim cuius Culmen pertingat ad Cælum

Ἔρχεσθε οἰκοδομήσωμεν ἐκείροῖς τείχος καὶ πύργον ἵνα ἡ κορυφή αὐτοῦ ἴσῃ ἐπὶ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

ולבנות לנו עיר ופיר ופסגתו תגיע אל השמים

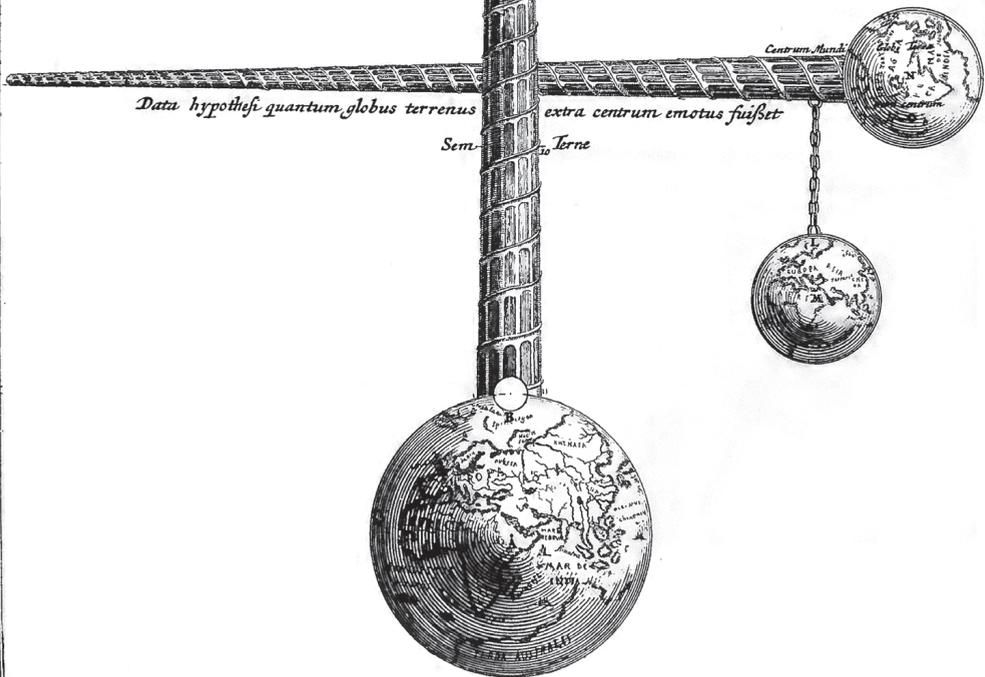
הנה נבנה לנו עיר ופיר ופסגתו תגיע אל השמים

تعالوا لنبي لنا قرية وحصن وراسه يداي السماء

בנו מבני-לנא קרתא ומגדלא דרשיה מטי עד ציה שמיא

Nota ad Lectorem
 Divisus altitudinem Turris ad Lunam usque in 5 partes; quarum unaqueque continet .10. Semidiametros globi terreni, & semid. iuxta distantiam Lunæ proxima a centro terre qz Semidiametru Geocœsmi; Unde luculenter concluditur globum terrestrem pondere Turris extra centrum motum fuisse tanto spatio quantum est interopulo inter O et N. Videlicet pariter pondus Turris globo terre M.I. æquilibratum multum excessisse pondus globi terre.

Absurda hinc resultantia sunt
 1. Ad globum terre extra centrum motum totius inferioris nature ruina consequutam
 2. Solem et Lunam terrenum globum non nisi ad illuminationem potuisse. Unde omnium climatum Zonarumque gherbatio
 3. Neminem in terreno globo nisi sub violento statu consistere potuisse nisi sub linea directionis AB. in solo loco A. rectè
 4. Umbra Turris semper alicubi terræ ipsam fuisse in hemisphæris superiori haud secus ac Lunæ



Data hypothese quantum globus terrenus

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Registered Office
Dorsoduro 1685/A
I-30123 Venezia
+39 041 0994628

Operative Office
corso Indipendenza 14
I-20129 Milano
+39 02 36584547

www.sanrocco.info
mail@sanrocco.info

Editor
Matteo Chidoni

Editorial Board
Ludovico Centis, Matteo
Costanzo, Kersten Geers,
Francesca Pellicciari, Giovanni
Piovone, Giovanna Silva,
Pier Paolo Tamburelli, Oliver
Thill, Andrea Zanderigo

Graphic Design
pupilla grafik
with Paolo Carpi, Giovanni
Piovone

Drawings
Michele Marchetti

Photo Editor
Giulio Boem

Copy Editor
Krystina Stermole

Website
Michele Marchetti

Administration
Chiara Carpenter

Collaborators
Valentina Bigaran, Martina
Motta, Magda Vieriu

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Athanasius Kircher,
***Turris Babel*, 1679**

EDITORIAL

By 2050, the world's population will be somewhere between nine and ten billion.

This means that India will have a population of around 1.6 billion; Nigeria, 390 million; Pakistan, 340 million; Indonesia, 290 million; Mexico, 140 million; and Egypt, 120 million. In 1950, India had a population of around 360 million; Nigeria, 30 million; Pakistan, 40 million; Indonesia, 80 million; Mexico, 30 million; and Egypt, 20 million.

And we will not only be *more numerous*: we will also be *richer*, making greater demands, occupying more space and producing more trash.

Parallel to this demographic growth, there has been – and will continue to be – an equally undeniable growth of regional, continental and global regulations. The institutions devoted to the definition of international norms are countless (IMF, ISO, UNESCO, WCO, WEO, WIPO, WNO, WTO – whatever). As an example, the European Union is constantly producing legislation regulating any and all human activities: growing tomatoes, making sausages, hunting pheasants, stuffing rag dolls, boiling mussels, etc. This might have a comical aspect to it, but Europe's regulation-making factory is not the exception. On the contrary, the EU seems to be a *laboratory of regulations* that will soon be imitated by the rest of the world. In fact, as clumsy as the EU might appear to those of us who live within its boundaries, it is considered an enviable model by similar multi-state institutions, such as the East African Community, the Arab League, Mercosur and Asean. Whatever romantic opinions neo-liberals may have,

and whatever rabid protests populists might voice, population and regulations are both increasing in a seemingly inexorable fashion. If what we are witnessing is a *population crisis* coupled with the *emergence of a large and complex bureaucracy*, to use Wittfogel's terms (1957), then the question is: Can we escape a new *oriental despotism*?

Ecology is a word that makes sense only in connection with the sheer quantity of the world's population. Indeed, ecology means just about anything, *considering that in 2050 the world will be inhabited by around 10 billion people*. As such, ecology can be defined as the discipline that aims at the survival of the human species in the long term and pursues this goal by considering the world as a totality. Forget panda bears – ecology is *realism starting from the totality*, or *global planning imposed upon individual decision-making*, and so it is also, unavoidably, a kind of *totalitarianism* – one to be understood without any negative connotations, simply an undeniable condition that could produce several different political results. It is within the frame of this *totalitarianism* that we need to discover a way to regulate the ecological irrationality of the markets while nonetheless preserving a measure of personal freedom. It is within the frame of this totalitarianism that the alternative to pure *despotism* or some sort of polite and reasonable *socialism* emerges. In fact, when it comes to environmental issues on a global scale, only two alternatives remain: 1) non-ecology, or individualistic liberalism, otherwise known as *the apocalypse*; or 2) ecology, or global planning, also known as *totalitarianism*, of which there are two possible types: 2.1) ecology done the brutal way, or so-called *oriental despotism*, i.e., *madness*; or 2.2) ecology done the polite, reasonable way, or so-called *socialism*.

Ecology (i.e., *socialism*) is in need of a theory, but no such theory currently exists. Today, ecological thinking is in a much more depressive and amateurish phase than socialist thinking was before Marx (so far, it amounts to a bit of Jared Diamond and some WWF sentimentalism). Although we have no precise ideas about what such a theory should consist of, two things seem evident: 1) the misery of contemporary ecological thinking is, of course, a *theoretical misery*; and 2) new ecological thinking has to be developed from “the point of view of the totality” according to Lukacs's formula. So, broadly speaking, ecology would first of all imply abandoning any spoiled irritation about realism, any nihilistic criticism of the universal, any unnecessary distrust

of the common; it would also imply overcoming the uninterrupted denigration campaign against the totality that has been carried out by pretty much everyone over the last seventy years, from Arendt to Foucault, from Hayek to Altman, from Eco to Eisenman, from Popper to Rushdie.

Ecology means *planning*. Despised as the dumbest thing you could ever think of during the age of neo-liberalism, planning is the one and only solution if we want to survive. We simply have to love it. And, of course, while planning does not mean returning to some sort of easy-going technocracy, it certainly does imply an explicit refusal of the micro-scale obsessions and deliberate weakness of all of the recent pseudo-critical, pseudo-participatory, pseudo-antagonistic rhetoric (all of which ended up being nothing more than indirect neo-liberal propaganda). Planning needs to consider global problems (such as modernism) and extended time frames (such as classicism) while imagining humble, local solutions applied by means of infinite variations, adaptations, compromises, replicas and copies. Most of the time, planning would operate *ex post* – as *remedy* – more than *ex ante* – as *prevention*. It would imply a *controlled* economy, but probably not a *planned* economy (forgive us, comrade Stalin). So, the planning we are proposing would not really be *planning*; it would just be *kind of planning*. In terms of territorial management, too, planning would be anything but modernist, and it would imply neither complete control nor a tabula rasa approach. Planning would be *listening, observing, learning* and only then *correcting*, while always accepting the logical priority of the existent over the new.

If we were to imagine a reasonable, non-apocalyptic scenario for the future – a global soup of super-national entities (something like the Holy Roman Empire) in which super-mighty city-states and guilds (London, Istanbul, Moscow, Singapore, southern California, Switzerland . . .) float about a more or less forgotten periphery – then we could also imagine an *ex-post planning*, one that combines the market economy with the interventions of super-national institutions every now and then, limiting the arrogance of corporations and city-states and thereby imposing moments of large-scale rationality upon the random development of the markets. In this optimistic scenario (something like a vaguely enlightened, generically socialist, modestly corrupt, fairly inefficient and unintentionally benevolent world-scale

Pakistan), how would we go about planning? And for whom? What would the territorial consequences of the decline of the *nation-state* be? To put it in the terms of Dante's *Monarchia*, how would we plan for the *communes* and how would we plan for the *empire*?

Within this scenario, a few reasonable ideas can be proposed. First, territories need to be recognized not according to existing administrative borders, but according to ecosystems and the organization of production. Individuating and naming territories from a global perspective is indeed the first and fundamental act of planning. The narrative of these regions is already encapsulated in their names, and if their definition is correct, then their potential is immediately visible: the Nile Valley could be planned; the Rhine Delta could be planned; the Po Valley could be planned; Lake Victoria could be treated as a city *before* it becomes one; Brazil could make big plans for its highways just as Germany did with the *Reichsautobahn* and the U.S. did with the Eisenhower expressways.

While actively promoting more regulations, international organizations keep on selling a second-rate American dream, promising underdeveloped countries that if they do well and open up their markets, they, too, will soon live the way people in New Jersey do: two cars per family, a large home with a 300-square-metre green lawn around it, maybe a swimming pool. And yet, as much as this does not correspond to the dreams of the Nile Valley farmer – and as unjust as this might sound – that farmer cannot become modern the same way farmers in the Po Valley did. He would not buy a Lambretta, then a black-and-white TV set and then a crappy FIAT. We all survive only if the Nile Valley farmer buys a cell phone, then a bike and then a personal computer. As extreme as it may sound, the alternative is extinction.

Ecology is first an *anthropological* issue, and only secondly a *technological* one. Changes in social behaviour have the greatest impact (for example, if the world's population became vegetarian, it would solve approximately 30% of our current environmental issues). Contemporary eco-friendly rhetoric is totally flawed: technology will not yield a solution. Solar panels will not save us, and neither will electric cars: the real solution is to be found in a series of changes in our social behaviour, or – even better – in our desires (for technology would then follow suit). Also, these changes are already known to us for the

most part; from a scientific and technological point of view, they are *nothing new*. Indeed, *ecology is no novelty*. In architecture and urban planning, the right ecological policies have been discussed since the 1970s, if not before, but they are still largely ignored because of the suicidal logic of the free market: suburban settlements waste endless energy (as well as destroy the social fabric) and should be abandoned; combinations of working and living spaces are desirable and the dumb aftermath of modernist zoning and construction standards should be eliminated from legislation; the use of local materials, local technology and local labour should be encouraged. The private ownership of cars is simply nonsensical, for shared cars would immediately solve all of the issues that are currently not being solved by the clumsy and hypocritical *electric car*. A taxation of individual airplane travel that increases with the number of flights taken (a kind of anti-frequent-flyer programme) might make sense. In northern Europe, interior temperatures could be kept significantly lower than the current average temperature of 22° C, and we could easily return to sleeping in cold bedrooms the way our grandparents did. Most of all, culturally imposed Western standards pursued merely as status symbols should be forced to re-adapt to their contexts. There is really no good reason for freezing interior office temperatures in Singapore; there is no good reason to wear a suit and tie in Thailand; there is no good reason for artificially produced lawns in the UAE; there is no good reason for having Christmas trees in Mexico . . .

All of these policies are obviously valid from a technical point of view, and yet nothing happens anyway because they would require a radical redefinition of some of the standards of living to which we have grown accustomed.

As much as ecology means exercising a certain degree of restraint, this does not mean advocating “prosperity without growth”. This perspective is simply anthropologically wrong (at least as much as classic liberal anthropology is). Aggression will not disappear, and neither will conflicts. But if the anthropological presuppositions of 19th-century socialism are not only wrong – for it seems clear that man is not “good by nature” – but also boring, the math of global population growth is undeniable, and socialism offers the only reasonable escape, provided that an appropriate anthropology is developed. In the end we just need an ecology *based on a deep distrust of*

nature and a socialism freed from any naïve anthropological optimism. In the simple and amazing words of Paolo Virno, “the critique of the ‘monopoly of political decision-making’, and more in general of institutions whose rules function like a repetition compulsion, must be based on the assertion that man is ‘bad by nature’” (*E così via all’infinito* [Turin, 2010], p. 154).

For the average building constructed today, we presume an economic life span of twenty-five years, which implies that from now on we will have to renovate buildings heavily every quarter century in order to maintain them. But renovation costs are generally between 50 and 100% of the total investment necessary to build a new structure! In the light of this, it is difficult to believe in the salvific promise of cavity walls or HVAC systems like the “passive house”. All of these things are more likely to harm the environment than help it because of their maintenance costs and the trash they produce in the long run.

This economic cycle creates a situation in which architects have very limited budgets and no longer perceive buildings as an investment for future generations. Who cares about the ageing of materials? Who cares about future users and the transformations they might require? Who cares if a building looks nice? In the end, it is all just about making a quick buck. Capitalism has made mincemeat of architecture by reducing its long-term perspective to the twenty-five-year time frame of returns on private financial investments. In the context of these twenty-five years, *firmitas*, *utilitas* and *venustas* all sound like a bad joke.

No matter the political scenario, ecology forces us to think in the long term again. For all of the discussion about recycling, the truly important task is to produce things that could work for the long haul, and as far as architecture is concerned, this is entirely possible (there is enough evidence of this in the architecture of the past). What is more, compared to the evidently nonsensical time frame of contemporary capitalism, architecture is something inherently ecological, not because of some silly solar panels, but because of its slower time frame. If we were forced to build things to last 200 years, we would reflect upon what the future might bring and we would have to design buildings to be adaptable, solid and aesthetically convincing – just like the ancient Romans did.

If we look back, sustainability was always at the core of architecture. The aesthetic result was never in opposition to functionality or durability. In fact, Vitruvius, Alberti and Palladio can all be read as a guide to sustainable architecture.

So what kind of architecture would satisfy a contemporary, realistic and ecological agenda? What should the aesthetic of this *realistic socialism* be? Might the answer be a dry, elegantly reductive and committedly universal (and – because of that – thoroughly contextual) *socialist realism*?