

DESIGNING THE LANDSCAPE

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DEBATE

The Necessary Landscape

Fabrizio Toppetti

In Richard Ford's latest novel *Let Me Be Frank with You*, the main character is an average retired male living in the area of Haddam, New Jersey, devastated by Hurricane Sandy.

His days are filled with a sense of emptiness and anxiety, accompanied by the urgency to come into contact with other people or wander the length and breadth of his territory. It is a ritual of recognition and reappropriation of places that are different from how they once were and from how they are now. His imagination simply doesn't match with reality. It is evident that this «any man», without any special qualities, like anyone in a similar situation, is lacking his own landscape of reference.

The relationship with a catastrophic event marks an extreme point, though it helps clarify just what the landscape is and how and why there is such an urgent need for it, in the face of sudden loss.

I have spoken many times about what the landscape is. To summarise, it is sufficient to refer to the ethical meaning that Aristotle attributes to the what he defines the «portrait of the inhabited earth». In principle the landscape is not design, but forms and evolves over time.

Considering the limit state reached by post-capitalist society in the face of the crisis at the dawn of the new millennium, the time has come to act.

Landscape and Politics, Finally

Franco Zagari

Perhaps politics has finally taken notice of the landscape? Is the opposite also true? The crises accompanying periods of great change are often occasions for new moments of creativity. The time has come to adapt and initiate a dialogue that manages to involve the general public.

The landscape involves the science and technique of relations; it is not only an object of contemplation and reflection, but also a discipline in its own right. In recent times, the relationship between the landscape and politics has grown schematic, ambiguous and evanescent. Successively, it is as if it foresaw the imminent coming of a moment of truth, a moment that would raise a question that is not only cultural, but with notable effects on social and economic, and thus eminently political values. The greatest difficulty was to admit the need for a new approach, that it was no longer possible to wait and that the time had come to act and take risks.

Despite the anti-political nature of a vision of the landscape as a controlled and guaranteed consumer good, a new way of speaking about the landscape and politics gives precise meaning to these two terms. The problemat-

ic dimension of the landscape viewed as a «project» highlights the urgency for transformation, a dimension that demonstrates not only an elevated level of ductility, but also a usefulness, in many cases strategic, to the governance of phenomena in an explosive phase of becoming. The thesis, to date in no way to be taken for granted, is that the question of designing the landscape is a challenge, a political emergency to be confronted as a priority.

The World is a Beautiful Place

Alexandre Chemetoff

This summer, during a trip through France, I went to visit our built projects, works under construction and places that would be affected by future changes. With the *bureau des paysages* we have been working for some time on producing spaces that are welcoming for everyone. Not only in response to the desire for comfort or satisfaction of a need, or to comply with rules and regulations. We are always concerned, first and foremost with the best way to improve the daily lives of citizens.

This line of thought is accompanied by a demanding aesthetic, a form of simplicity, focused on identifying a suitable means of expression for any built situation. Our projects are always inextricably linked to a specific place; on the other hand it is important to push this contextual research up to the point where it reveals something universal, an aesthetic, indispensable to making it intelligible and understandable.

These reflections are related primarily to the polytechnical exercise in the art of the landscape that I chose to adopt as a planner, landscape architect and publisher. With the landscape as a guiding idea, design questions programs, shifts the boundaries, challenges the certainties of deductive analysis, opening up to a living environment in which the elements come into contact with one another. To change the point of view without losing the *fil rouge* it is necessary that design is approached as a cultural act, an open form of commitment.

Landscape Architecture as an Art of Creation of Deep Forms

Kongjian Yu

Landscape architecture by definition is the science and art that bring human beings and nature together, which encompasses the analysis, planning, design, management, and stewardship of the natural and built environments. But in reality, the profession of landscape architecture has been, by misunderstanding, associated with the elite art of leisure making and gardening or flower beds decorating, or planting or pruning trees to create beautiful forms.

In this article, the author extended his argument of landscape architecture as an Art of Survival but not as a descendent of gardening or ornamental design that make shallow or meaningless forms. It is argued that the profes-

sion must re-value the vernacular of the land and the people, and lead the way in urban development by planning and designing an infrastructure of landscape and ecology, through which landscape can be created and preserved as a medium that have meaningful deep forms reflecting the essential bond between human beings and nature.

The timeless interdependence of human culture and nature is most visible in the bond between peasants and their farmlands. This article considers «the peasant's approach» and distills from it four strategies for creating deep forms: cut and fill, irrigate and fertilize, frame and access, and grow and harvest. Such an understanding of landscape architecture enable a new aesthetics and new way of creating urban nature. Six of the recent built projects designed by Turenscape are used to illustrate the theory of deep form creation in urban landscape.

Land-Links / Lands-in-Land

Manuel Gausa

The landscape has become, today, the real «building» of the new Multi-City: the structuring element of a possible integrated order – on multiples scales – more flexible and relational, and not the «possibilistic» remnant of the ancient *edilizia*. A scheduling order able to reset and to redirect the random and wild growths of our new existing urban structures and to create more versatile connective systems – not imposed – resonating with the metropolitan dynamics triggered today. We have used the terms *LAND-LINKS* and *RECYTING* to define potential strategies aiming to ensure coordinated qualitative developments, on a local and a global scale.

Combining actions of articulated development and active conservation, of *urban systoles* and *territorial dias-toles*, in new *multi-urban* and relational devices.

Extending landscape and consolidating the city.

The landscape, understood also, as an «operational topography» able to interact with users and contexts and to react with the new informational and environmental conditions of our time.

The definition of possible «mult-inter» strategies (*multi-layers* and *inter-networks*), to face the main challenges presented today by the new global exchange scenarios, would force us to contemplate some of the major transversal themes of recycling, re-definition, re-naturalisation, and re-information, that today tend to mark the new *urban* and *territorial* agendas.

Merging Public Space and Nature

Enric Batlle

In Joseph Rykwert's article *Il giardino del futuro fra estetica e tecnologia* – published in the 1981 –, we are invited to resolve one of the clearest reivindication of our times: «to bring nature to the city and to turn nature useful for the citizens». Years later, this reivindication is still opened, and the solutions research adopts very diverse shapes and natures. The text I present for this article claims the possibility that Nature – green infrastructures in XXI C languages – becomes a key element in our cities structure.

Our city Streets, Squares and Parks can turn into re-naturalized spaces to connect with the Metropolitan Parks

System and also with the agricultural and natural areas that still remain. Helping to create a new open spaces' network with all possible connectivities, full of ecological potential, leisure possibilities and productive capacities; becoming an environmental and social network, constituting the metropolises' backbone. A new landscape for our metropolis, where we try to merge nature, public space & production.

Regeneration

Elissa Rosenberg

The remaking of landscape – either through the conversion of derelict sites, or through the recovery of landscape structure from the residual leftovers of development – suggests a new approach of landscape, based on the pragmatic project of rebuilding and transformation. The agenda of regeneration, especially as articulated in the discourse of landscape urbanism, has shifted the emphasis from the pictorial aspects of landscape to its performance – how landscape works, not how it looks. However, regeneration has challenged us to approach landscape through multiple lenses that include not only physical and ecological performance, but also history and everyday cultural practices. Without the cultural dimension, the capacity of landscape architecture as a transformational discipline risks being reduced to a narrow form of «green functionalism.» This paper examines two main challenges posed to approaches to landscape regeneration: first, the shifts that have occurred in ecological theory, in which the «balance of nature» has been replaced with a model in which disturbance is seen as inherent to the ecosystem; and second by the metaphor of the «palimpsest» which stresses the cultural and historical dimensions of the landscape. The restoration of the Aire River by the team Superpositions, is discussed as an example of a recent restoration project that embraces the temporality and flux of the landscape and acknowledges the significance of history rather than erasing its traces.

Bad Times for Poetry

Jordi Bellmunt

The nine editions of the International Biennial of Landscape Architecture of Barcelona are the manifesto of the obvious progression of a discipline that has come to a fundamental understanding. This understanding is revealed in the public administration, among designers, both public and private. hiring a transcendent role on landscape design in the evolution of our territories and cities, in the new sites structures, as well as in the urgent awareness towards the worrying environmental problems of our surroundings. New projects focus on being virtuous, and errors in the field of contemporary landscape propositions are paid dear. No one is permitted to make mistakes when working with such sensitive and fragile materials as the human and the places in which it dwells.

Our cultures, our places, our people are different. This includes our values, and the international participation in these events proves it, wants it.

The landscape sensibilities are not so far as personal positions around the subject. For this reason the exchange of professional experiences must continue with

more strength than before, with new ideas, new projects and new blood, because our future requires this.

These certainties and weaknesses, these needs and potentialities must offer an opportunity to create beauty, taking into account the goals of our struggle, because we all know that these are challenging times for poetry.

RESEARCHES

The Landscape: A Lexicon for Design

Claudia Cassatella

Dealing with landscape means dealing with social perception and aesthetics. As a consequence, dealing with landscape planning and protection should mean trying to regulate perception and aesthetics (often by prescriptive rules). Is there any way out? How this task of regulating landscape scenery has been undertaken? National and international experiences show that landscape scenery is not a well-defined field of application, however it is rich in practices, and advances in techniques.

The paper illustrates a methodology adopted by Piedmont Region and the Regional Directorate of the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities, and its implementation in the UNESCO World Heritage Site «Langhe Roero and Monferrato Hills». The case study of Piedmont Region is exceptional, firstly because of the importance given to landscape scenery in the planning regulation, secondly because the regional guidances have been implemented by local communities, even before the Regional Landscape Plan (RLP) was formally approved.

Piedmont Region's *Guidelines for the analysis, protection and enhancement of the scenic character of landscape* aim to support local authorities revising their local plans according to the RLP. The Region provided technical assistance to local authorities in the UNESCO Site, involving the numerous municipalities in a participative process, which mitigated and enriched the experts' approach. The output was a series of maps of visual sensibility at a supralocal scale, which will be used in the planning processes of town planning revision and in local decision making by municipalities.

The Edges of Urbanization: Landscape as a Manifold of Possibilities

Gianni Celestini

The places of crisis are fertile fields of experimentation. Those places highlight characters, conditions, configurations that constitute the foundation of new and ultimate resolutions. The city at its borders, due to enlargement in space and time, shows a great spatial uncertainty. There, the interstices between buildings provide the basis for actions aimed at fixing the stressed urban metabolism. The work of landscape architects has introduced new and original topics to turn leftover spaces into centres of interest, opportunities for the rebalancing of the contemporary habitat.

It is all about developing a research of new possible relationships between natural and artificial, to be built on the basis of programs integrating figurative features, social issues and ecological structures.

An example which helps identify working paths is the experimental project led within the Workshop Roma 2025, by the research group from Università degli Studi Mediterranea in Reggio Calabria. New lifecycles for the metropolis, in the Valle Galeria area, a territory marked by conflicts between productive activities and residential communities. The aim of such a project-process-action is that of rebalancing landscape in Valle Galeria. The proposal identifies three actions: rebuilding the ecological functionality; promoting social and economical development, based on the idea of multifunctional agriculture; introducing new lifecycles for production plants.

Projects for Future Landscapes

Anna Lambertini, Tessa Matteini

The paper deals with an exploration in the field of landscape architecture, investigating the topic of *proximity*, intended as an useful track-concept to set working methods and to define processes of inventive analysis and projects, in order to redesign places and open spaces frameworks.

Reflecting about *proximity* in landscape project consents to remind both the idea of physical and spatial nearness and that of sentimental and relational contact between persons, and between persons and places. Reading *proximity* in terms of time, means to be concerned for ongoing mutations and so to prefigure forms of changes, project actions and care practices.

Proximity is a main field for human and social relationships, for cultural exchanges and for potential mediations and conflicts; it is also a critical space for matches and clashes between different worlds. So, *proximity* has always a dual role, inviting the designer to use flexible and adaptive working tools, trying to match its complexity.

Here, the report of two experiences of applied research consents to highlight two possible interpretations of *proximity*. The first refers to a Landscape Plan and Project for a Municipality, proposing a working method to orient the territorial transformations, crossing different spatial scales and gradients of proximity.

The second one, proposes to reinvent the role of an historic garden in Florence, intended as a proximity space in the system of urban public places.

Memory, Vision and Waiting in the Historic Urban Landscape

Antonio Tejedor Cabrera, Mercedes Linares Gómez del Pulgar

A contemporary projective approximation of the historically conformed landscape is possible from a conscious and legitimate experience of conservation, restoration and transformation which seeks its incorporation into a new paradigm: sustainable intervention in the patrimonial landscape. Taking as their starting point the words of St Augustine, the author-architects reflect upon the importance of the landscape and the time present in its three dimensions, and demonstrate four strategies of intervention on four hillsides of the historical Andalusian landscape: the northern slope of the Alhambra and Generalife; the Cordoba Gate of Carmona; the Baena South Slope Park and the Roman Theater in Malaga.

Re/activate. Inhabiting Abandoned Landscapes

Nicola Flora

While it is true that in Italy we build eight square metres per second, it is also true that the decrease in the destruction of natural soil runs parallel to the decrease in this value. Educating the community about the «re-activation» of neglected and abandoned areas is a moral duty for those architecture schools that wish to be part of our near future. It is fundamental to destructure the myth of new constructions, which are the manifestation of the designer's ego or the mere expression of the industry's insatiable hunger. The architectural sector, bulimically builds without any real subject in need of what it offers. The correct way to link the safeguarding and maintenance of the Italian territory is to begin from the strategic network of small settlements (in particular those of the Central-Southern Apennines). In general terms, the safeguarding of these areas is now a self-imposed responsibility for these communities, from the perspective of a new sense of social cohesion and a new culture of hospitality. Re-activating them means working together to plan a possible future. It means setting in motion the machine of a balance between the natural and the artificial. For a new kind of shared beauty.

Recovering Abandoned Quarries between Nature and Art. The Appia Antica Park

Paola Veronica Dell'Aira, Paola Guarini, Isabella Santarelli

The contribution is a reflection on the theme of the recovery of former quarries, which exceed the selective intervention in favor of a «systematic» action. The work exploration is on the city of Rome and, in particular, within the area of the Appia Antica Regional Park.

The hypothesis is that of identifying spaces, extensions, elements, able to build networks of connection between the individual sites, underground and «open air» decommissioned quarries, within the park, once recovered and returned to public use, outlining a sort of *masterplan*: creation and/or restoration of ecological and cultural relations and of functional and fruition needs, on a territorial scale.

Such an «extensive» recovery becomes a revaluation instrument towards the identity construction of contexts currently discontinuous and discordant, through the reconstruction of historical and temporal dynamics related to their development. The common thread is the identification and recovery of «environmental infrastructure» or roads – water lines, ecological corridors, ancient tracks – in connection between historical and natural values.

What will guide the interventions is: the deep exploration of the concept of eco-museum: an adequate category of intervention to the task of dealing with the uniqueness and fragility of the sites of intervention; the creation of a museum «en plein air»: a route between artistic materials offered to dot the territory, close to the access to former mining sites.

Among the final objectives: the recognition and/or the proposition of «territorial figures» summarizing and highlighting spatial, morphological and temporal relationships between individual places.

Pescara/Chieti. A Complementary Situation or a Metropolitan Challenge?

Carlo Pozzi

This essay looks at the urban history of Chieti and Pescara, two cities that have been contending roles and programmes since the end of the Second World War.

The tumultuous growth of Pescara is marked by the traumatic passage from a garden city to an undifferentiated fragment of urban expansion in the Central Adriatic region. It is a city whose key future occasions lie in the re-evaluation of architecture from the fascist period and a pervasive and capillary action of rewriting what exists, in which a leading role is played by the decommissioning of industrial sites.

Chieti, with its slower rhythm, is to some degrees an understated reality, characterised by a mixed feeling of jealousy toward coastal development and an incapacity to promote its own archaeological heritage. The city was initially settled by the Marrucini and later the Romans. This condition may condition the future of such monuments as the Palazzo de' Maio, the Via Tecta and the Teatro Marrucino and proposals for the creation of an archaeological forum.

The backdrop to these considerations is defined by the perceptive affirmations of Agostino Renna who analysed the development of the sprawling city in *L'illusione e i cristalli*. He proposed that Pescara function as the «aggregating core» of a vast and sprawling reality. For neighbouring hillside settlements, including Chieti, he imagined the possibility to maintain a diverse velocity, opposed to the rampant acceleration of coastal development.

Under the Blue Vault of the Sky. Territorial Discipline and Agrarian Penal Colonies

Sabrina Puddu

Between the 1860s and the 1960s, 16 penal colonies were founded in the rural territory of Italy. Their establishment was framed within two main goals of the newly born national state: the ultimate codification of a unified national penal law, and the domestication and modernization of remote – and often hostile – rural territories. Most of the penal colonies – in particular those established on the island of Sardinia – were conceived as transitory garrisons of national power. They were planned having in mind their future transformation from penal to civil settlements, a conversion to be accomplished once the agrarian reclaim of previously uncultivated land had been completed. Thus, penal colonies had to contribute to the birth and acceptance of a new rural order at the service of a modern agrarian economy. This assumed the complete abandonment by local farmers and shepherds of their secular habits and rights of use of land – called right of *Ademprivium* and based on the feudal condition of *Dominium Divisum* – in order to embrace the notion and rules of absolute ownership that the institution of the Cadaster had finally codified. Given these high ambitions, penal colonies developed as a specific settlement type, whose spatial principles registered both their contingent scope as carceral institutions, and the greater geopolitical project of reform – of people and space – in rural Italy.