

# LESS SCULPTURAL MORE INTELLECTUAL: CONCEPTUALIZING LANDSCAPE IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF 1990S AND 2000S

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**Abstract.** The aim of this paper is to discuss the radical shift which emerges in the 1990s and enhances architecture in the 2000s by turning it into a less sculptural more intellectual field of design. Hence, architects rather focus on ground than figure in design projects. This leads them to interrogate the conventional relationships between figure and ground enabling figure to dominate the ground in architecture for decades. They discover the mutual relationships between figure and ground, and design grounded structures instead of ungrounded sculptures. These artificial structures seem like the extensions of the natural landscape, as such the conceptual and categorical distinction between artificial and natural blurs in architecture. Another conceptual blurring emerges between the concepts of landscape, ground, and field. These are generally used as interchangeable concepts, but landscape encompasses ground and field, making it a more comprehensive concept for architects. It is revealed in the paper that landscape is a re-emerging concept which refers to the conceptual shift from form and function to flow and force in architecture. Landscape, therefore, awaits to be explored as a field of flows and forces by even more architects in this century in which cities are characterized by sculptural forms and objects.

**Key words:** architectural design, landscape, landscaping architecture, ground, field.

## 1. Introduction

The title of this paper is inspired from the comprehensive book of Puglisi, *New Directions in Contemporary Architecture: Evolutions and Revolutions in Building Design Since 1988* published in 2008. In the last chapters of the book, Puglisi discusses contemporary architectures in the 1990s and 2000s in terms of their mutual relationships with the surrounding landscapes. Puglisi

discusses them as less sculptural more intellectual architectures since they blend in their surroundings to become an active and creative part of them and do not sublimate their figures as sculptural buildings (Puglisi, 2008). These buildings refer to a radical shift from figure to ground in architecture. The paper aims to discuss this shift which emerges in the 1990s and enhances architecture in the 2000s by turning it into a less sculptural

more intellectual field of design. In this context, it is discussed in the paper that landscape, ground, and field are not exactly the same concepts; but they are conceptually used to point out to the close relationships between site and architecture mutually transforming each other. The concepts of site, form, and function are also transformed in architecture. Architects rather use the concepts of landscape, ground or field than site; flow than form; and force than function (See Fig. 16). The originality of the paper stems from revealing this conceptual shift in recent architecture.

The conceptual shift paves the way for an intellectual shift as well. So much so that, architectural designs begin to blend in their sites by creating artificial landscapes since the last decade of the twentieth century. Spens discusses that architecture takes its impetus from land art and landscape architecture, and transcends the conventional confines of site (Spens, 2007). Architecture is, therefore, defined as land-arch (Jauslin, 2013). These definitions and discussions refer to the fact that architectural designs are artificially integrated with the movements –or moments– of landscape. It becomes important for architecture to be an immanent part of the nature by creating an artificial landscape. The intention here is not to conserve the nature; but it is rather to create a new integration between natural and artificial surrounding (Gausa, Porras, Müller, Morales and Soriano, 2003).

This is a new understanding of architecture associated with the thoughts of avant-gardism and progressivism instead of conservatism. It is discussed as an avant-garde architecture; because it leads an entirely new environment to be created. It is also discussed as a

progressive architecture; because it replaces the existing environmental stabilities with a new network of spatial and structural dynamics (Brown, 1991). Thus, it is defined as environmental architecture, but the concept of environment here is used to imply a much more complex structure than a simple territory or topography. This new understanding differs from topographical architecture which concerns natural topography as the only determinacy. It differs from landscape urbanism as well. Landscape urbanism is an attempt to reemphasize the importance of particular sites and topographies. It goes beyond conventional park and garden design. But, when landscape urbanism is defined through the avant-garde topographical landscape manipulations, then it becomes closer to the idea of landscaping architecture (Carlson, 2005). This idea reveals the fact that architects deal with landscape not only as a landscape architect but further as an urban designer since they manipulate landscape and its urban topography to create a mutual relationship with architectural design. Thus, the role of architects changes and broadens in a way that they begin to work also as a landscape and urban designer. This is an inevitable change in this century in which disciplinary borders blur and intermingle with each other. It is the interdisciplinary field that changes the conventional relationships of landscape and architecture.

According to Mallgrave and Goodman, there is now a new relationship between landscape and architecture, which they call as a hybrid contact emanates from a changing attitude toward nature. Hence, architects begin to approach the local topology without sentimentality, knowing that it can be manipulated, and this manipulation can, in turn, reform the

work of architecture (Mallgrave and Goodman, 2011). However, Puglisi defines it as landform architecture. Landform architecture is about integrating the building form with the surrounding landscape. As Puglisi reveals, it is widely discussed in the last years of the 1990s, and it begins to determine the new agenda of architecture in the 2000s. Landform architecture is usually confused with the recent architectural themes of sustainability and energy efficiency. But it is another way of creating a dialogue between architecture and landscape, not by constructing horizontal buildings covered by grass, and built of natural materials, primarily wood, that blend in the site (Puglisi, 2008).

Nevertheless, horizontality seems to be an important quality to integrate buildings into the landscape. The late twentieth century witnesses the emergence of a radically horizontal, field-like urbanism. And there is a need in the twenty first century to proliferate new urban fields that mix leisure, recreation, commerce, and infrastructure in unexpected new relationships (Gausa, Porras, Müller, Morales and Soriano, 2003). Holl discusses the mixture of different functions by the concept of fusion which also indicates to another mixture between the disciplines of landscape, urbanism, and architecture. He thus discusses that working with doubt is unavoidable. For him, instead of stable systems, we work with dynamic systems. Instead of simple and clear programs, we engage with contingent and diverse programs. Instead of precision and perfection, we work with intermittent, crossbred systems, and combined methods. So, he wants to create a twenty-first century architecture that is integral: an architecture of deep connections to site, culture, and climate rather than an applied signature style. Because of the integration

-or fusion- of landscape, urbanism, and architecture, the relationship of the building with the ground is also integration (Holl, 2009). In this sense, Holl prefers seeing and using the potential in the interdisciplinary relations of landscape, urbanism, and architecture instead of designing sculptural objects as buildings (Holl, 1991).

The ways of designing singular and sculptural objects in architecture are mainly due to the object-oriented ontology. According to this ontological theory, object is conceived as a matter of fact in philosophy. Architecture is affected from this theory (Gage, 2015); but it is not only philosophy that affects and orients it to be ontologically bound to create objects. Advances in the computer technology leads new ontological objects to be created in architecture. It is an object-oriented architecture because of the fact that it depends on creating new aesthetic and sculpturalistic objects of non-orthogonal geometries within a virtual environment supported by the advanced computer technologies. It is discussed as the crisis of the object in the paper. This crisis leads architects to discover and develop alternative ways of designing objects by integrating them into the landscape. However, architects usually design sculptural objects -or figures-; but it is emphasized in the paper that they should notice the changes in the conventional relationships of figure and ground, as such figure no more dominates the ground in contemporary architecture. It becomes significantly important for contemporary architects to design a new ground in which figure eventually dissolves and disappears. That means to design a new landscape as well. A new landscape that establishes a ground for discussing the possibility of an objectless architecture...

## 2. The crisis of the (sculptural) object in architecture

Architecture is generally seen as a discipline that creates objects. These are architectural objects either related or non-related with their contexts. In any case, it is important for architects to create recognizable objects within the context of the natural and artificial environment. Architectural objects are often singularly and sculpturally designed to be recognized. At the beginning of the twentieth century, modern architects consciously design singular objects independent of the traditional meanings and contexts (Meyer, 1983). They create not only new meanings, but further, new contexts. Modern buildings are designed and constructed as modern objects detached from the existing sites and contexts. Even the city is seen as a modern object characterized by modern buildings in these decades (Trummer, 2013). That is why, it is suggested that modernism promotes singular, sculptural, and detached objects in architecture. This object-oriented architecture leads architects to focus on creating objects even when modernism, as the most dominant architectural style, is mainly replaced by other styles such as postmodernism and deconstructivism during the twentieth century. It is called as the crisis of the object in architecture since architects dismiss the relationships of the objects with other objects and landscapes. This leads them to create objects that seem as they are not a part of their landscapes. Hence, object-oriented architecture refers to design objects as the ungrounded figures by architects. These objects are dependent neither of the urban ground nor landscape.

But, towards the end of the twentieth century, there is a shift from a concern for the qualities of objects to the relationships

of objects (Eisenman, 1971). Because of this shift, architects begin to interrogate the privileged position of object and so figure (Singley, 2015). They criticize the traditional relationships of figure and ground and realize that figure does not need to be against the ground. Figure does not need to be recognizable by being differentiated from the ground as well (Freeman, 2005). In this regard, Gestalt diagrams provide architects a perspective on creating mutual relationships between figure and ground (Koetter and Rowe, 1980). Nonetheless, ground is mostly ignored, and figure is again sublimated in architecture. Architects continue to create isolated figures which do not have any significant relationships with their site or context.

Allen discusses figure and ground relationships through the field conditions in architecture. He discusses that if we think of the figure not as an object, but as an effect emerging from the field itself as moments of intensity, as peaks or valleys within a continuous field, then it is possible to imagine figure and field as more closely allied (Allen, 1997). Field conditions help architects to understand the mutual relationships between figure and ground transforming each other (Bingöl, 2020). So, they begin to design figure -or object- as an immanent part of its site and context in architecture. But, as in the twentieth century, architecture is generally based on creating not contextualistic but rather aesthetic and fetishistic objects in the twenty first century. The object-oriented ontology still dominates the architecture of this century. On the other hand, Tambassi discusses that ontology requires to develop a new perspective to understand the world as overlapping geographical categories. That means ontological perspectivism cannot be restricted only

with one category as objective reality in architecture. It includes many other realities as well. Tambassi discusses these realities through such geographical categories as physical, cultural, and transportation geographies. Physical geographies are composed of mountains, hills, deserts, oceans, and seas. Cultural geographies cover nations, regions, and districts. And transportation geographies cover roads and streets. He reveals that ontological perspectivism is about to conceive these overlapping categories without reducing them into one category. He promotes a plural perspective of different categories for each discipline (Tambassi, 2022).

Nonetheless, the ontological perspective is reduced to the autonomy of the object in the discipline of architecture (Weir and Harman 2021). Along with this perspective, object-oriented architecture is discussed as a matter of architecture's autopoiesis. Besides, autopoiesis is conceptualized as the autonomy of the object which is completely independent of its context. Autonomy thus refers to the object itself (Schumacher, 2017). But it is interesting to see the fact that Picon discusses autonomy as being object-less through the new landscape of technology. He discusses that this new landscape consists of networks and fields not objects. In the everyday experience of technology, objects are no longer as determining as they use to be. They are superseded by more comprehensive and at the same time abstract entities such as networks and fields. However, most of the artefacts seem to possess only a fraction of the autonomy that machines of the industrial age are imparted with. But today wireless communications and signals of the mobile phones and other technological tools possess a real autonomy that he calls as virtuality. The

virtual reality is object-less; it is composed of networks and fields that surround us recently (Picon, 2012).

Here, it is important to understand the difference between the concepts of field used by Allen and Picon. For Allen, field is a physical reality including physical and non-physical field conditions (Allen, 1997). But Picon discusses field as a virtual reality defining a network like entity (Picon, 2012). Nevertheless, it is possible to find a common ground in their definitions of field. In both cases, the concept of field is used to discuss that object is no more a determinant; it is rather the field that defines and determines architecture. That means, architecture creates fields not objects. This creation refers to a new understanding of architecture integrated with landscape. Advances in the computer technologies lead architecture and landscape to be integrated in a much more effective and creative way. Hence, landscape becomes a re-emerging concept against the crisis of the object in the architecture of the twenty first century.

However, new aesthetic objects are created by the integration of architecture and landscape in the last decades of architecture. But, for many contemporary architects, a reflection on the theme of the landscape does not necessarily lead to a new aesthetic of innovative and complex objects. They rather focus on the integration of architecture and landscape as the antidote to an excessive aestheticization of the practice of architecture, and above all, as the means to avoid the creation of sculptural objects that are extraneous to their context. Contemporary architects suggest that landscape is of greater importance than architecture. It is also suggested that architecture as the cultivation of the landscape is what ought to be about at the



end of the twentieth century and not the creation of the endless aesthetic objects. Architects have a certain responsibility for the cultivation of the landscape and the integration of their designs to the landscape (Puglisi, 2008). It is a way of dealing with the crisis of the object in architecture. Architecture is incorporated as a landscape; it is landscape rather than an object. In this context, the concepts of landscape, ground, and field are generally used as interchangeable concepts. They have similar meanings referring to the site-specific relationships. But the concept of landscape refers to a site that is in a continuous state of flux (Dwyre and Perry, 2015). It has a conceptual and intellectual potential to transform architecture from merely being a form to a flow of forces. Flows and forces lead the concept of landscape to elude its traditional meanings of being natural surroundings, and they lead the new landscapes to be designed and constructed as artificial topographies mostly by using the computer technologies (Gausa, Porras, Müller, Morales and Soriano, 2003). Topographies are considered as the horizons of architecture and landscape (Leatherbarrow, 2004). However, they do not reside in the figurative definition of the object, but rather in the capacity for designing a new landscape in architecture (Gausa, Porras, Müller, Morales and Soriano, 2003). So, it is important to understand the conceptual differences of landscape, ground, and field to recognize the new understanding of architecture as an intellectual landscape, but not a sculptural object.

### 3. Conceptualizing landscape, ground and field

The concept of landscape generally implies nature. As Corner reveals, it is more popularly thought of as the antithesis of the city, its counterpart,

comprised of bucolic countryside and natural areas. Grids, streets, blocks, buildings, and freeways are seen as the constructions that are quite the opposite of the landscape (Corner, 2020). On the other hand, landscape is the cultivation and construction of nature; that means nature becomes landscape when it is cultivated and constructed. But landscape is still a part of the nature which has a much more complex structure than the natural environment. In this context, Kaplan discusses that landscape is a territory (two-dimensional) or physical environment (three-dimensional), definable or distinctive through its social, visual, and ecological aspects – i.e., appearance, natural and man-made features, and processes. The physical manifestations of both natural and cultural processes upon the earth identify, characterize, or distinguish landscape from other physical settings (Kaplan, 2009). So, landscape is a comprehensive concept embodying natural and artificial, physical and social, art and science, or culture and nature.

This conceptual complexity and comprehensivity lead to the abuse of the concept of landscape. During the twentieth century, there is a change from landscape as a negotiated condition between natural and artificial towards landscape as a conception embracing urbanism, infrastructure, strategic planning, architecture, and speculative ideas. Hence, the meaning of the concept of landscape is changed from the pictorial to the instrumental and operational. Landscape is no more a picturesque scene or garden (Townsend, 1997). It rather becomes an operational ground in architecture. The concept of landscape, which derives from the eighteenth-century picturesque gardens, begins to refer to an operation or at least a

manipulation on the ground to design new topological forms in the architecture of the twenty first century.

The enormous interest in topographing and landscaping in architecture is seen as a clear sign that architects no longer rely on the classical relationships between building and ground, or on the conventional definitions of the ground as delimited, stable, horizontal, determined, and homogeneous. Besides, landscape becomes more interesting when architects understand it as a kind of topographic operating system rather than as a category of the built environment (Gausa, Porras, Müller, Morales and Soriano, 2003).

Landscapes resist the globalizing and homogenizing processes in the built environment due to the operations and manipulations on them. These operations and manipulations turn landscapes into a site of transformation. Landscapes are in a continuous state of flux because of this transformation. But they still maintain the continuity of the built and the natural, the building and the territory. Landscape has a particular vocabulary also including choreography, connectivity, interactivity, adaptability, and performativity as well as continuity. Choreography implies the movements of the landscape as an active surface, space, and structure. Connectivity points out to the connected lines, boundaries, and levels of this structure. Interactivity is used to reveal the interactive relationships of landscape and architecture, as such new concepts are used to define this interactivity as landscaping architecture or architecturalizing landscape. Adaptability refers to the blurring boundaries of landscape and architecture; that means architecture is designed as an adaptable structure to the landscape. And performativity implies the sequence of

movements of the landscape and architecture adapting them to the nature.

Landscape is generally designed to perform as a continuous surface in architecture. Furthermore, landscape is described as an art of surface. Landscape's traditional terrain is the extended horizontal surface; but, more recently, it is extended to topographic surfaces that are folded, warped, bended or striated (Gausa, Porras, Müller, Morales and Soriano, 2003). Particularly folded surfaces called as origami landscapes are very common in architecture today (Berger, 2009). This is an obvious attraction for architects since surface becomes a primary tool in architectural design. However, distinct from the proliferation of thin, transparent surfaces in contemporary architectural design, landscape surfaces are always differentiated by their material and performative characteristics or better, in landscape, performance is a direct outcome of material. By focusing on the surface conditions -not only configuration, but also materiality and performance- designers activate space and produce urban effects (Gausa, Porras, Müller, Morales and Soriano, 2003).

Surface conditions do not only lead an active and effective surface to be designed in architecture. They lead the surface of the ground to be manipulated to connect surface and space strongly; as such, surface is no longer the envelope of space, but also its determinant. So, architecture no longer appears as a vertical, active entity constructed over the horizontal, passive ground plane. The ground becomes an active, constructed plane where architecture emerges as an improbable, fluctuating figure (Gausa, Porras, Müller, Morales, Soriano and 2003). Figure is known as the solid -or the

building- when ground is described as the void in architecture. A void of the figural relationships... Landscape is also the field of relationships; the relationships of solids and voids. The concepts of landscape and ground are therefore closely related. Nevertheless, the concept of ground is used in a literal sense to describe the structure and processes of the earth, and also as a metaphor. Metaphorically, ground refers to the various patterns of physical, intellectual, poetic, and political structure that intersect, overlap, and weave together to become the context for human thought and action. Moreover, grounds are open networks, partial fields, radical repetition, and suggestive fragments that constantly transform. When grounds are understood as much more than a simple, thin, two-dimensional plane, the opportunities their multilayered structure offers for architecture become more obvious (Dripps, 2021).

Figures and grounds together constitute an integrated and multilayered plane in architecture. But there is always a contradiction between figure and ground which paves the way for architects to focus either figure or ground in architectural designs. As such, ground is considered as a contradictory plane or platform particularly by modern architects as Le Corbusier and Mies. They design artificial grounds as the new elevated platforms of architecture. This artificial reconstruction of the site leads to a kind of abstraction. The building becomes an abstraction of vertical and horizontal planes, the floor plan is free to take on various configurations and the facade is open for various kinds of transparency. It is called as the architectural revolution by Le Corbusier. In this revolution, buildings are put on pilotis barely touch the ground, roofs are

flattened, and everything is turned into intersecting horizontal and vertical planes. These modern buildings are known as the ungrounded structures in architecture. They are freed from the weight of tradition, artificial rather than natural, abstract rather than figurative, abstract in a canonical sense of reduction to a pure or universal language, reproducible anywhere, irrespective of the natural and urban ground. Thus, a series of oppositions grow up in architecture such as natural and artificial, organic and abstract, contextual and autonomous as well as the opposition of figure and ground (Rajchman, 1998).

However, Dripps suggests that it is possible to come to a better understanding of the value of the ground in human terms by questioning the assumptions about the relationship of ground to human existence such as these embedded within the conventional figure and ground conception that polarizes a relationship between things that are mutually dependent. He suggests that once the ground is revealed and its structure is made visible, it is possible to give the ground a voice equal to that of the products of human artifice in architecture. At this point, architecture can open to and take into its domain a rich world that can augment what it is capable of Dripps (2010).

Architects realize and use this capacity especially since the 1990s by attempting to blur the boundaries between figure and ground. They design reconstituted, folded, and punctured versions of the ground surface in their projects (Mallgrave and Goodman, 2011). So much so that, Eisenman refuses to go back to figure and ground oppositions in his design projects. He conceives the urban context as an accumulation of



superimposed layers in which the partially invisible memory of cities is deposited. There follows a shift in the sense of artifice. Eisenman's artificial cities are artificial in a sense different from that of Le Corbusier's artificial sites. Artifice is no longer opposed to the site, but instead becomes a kind of fiction that intervenes with respect to the joints or connections that supply urban memory (Rajchman, 1998).

So, new grounds are created in architecture that have specific performances in the 1990s and 2000s. New grounds are not neutral in either physical, memorial or cultural terms, but are artificially constructed; new grounds are neither abstract nor neutral and homogeneous, but concrete and differentiated; they are neither figures nor backgrounds, but operating systems; new grounds have an uncertain frame, as the field in which they exist is not a fragment but a differentiated domain affiliated to external processes; they are inseparable from the operation we carry out on them; new grounds are neither a datum nor a reference; new grounds are neither solid nor structured by gravity; and they are hollow and diagonally structured (Gausa, Porras, Müller, Morales and Soriano, 2003).

Ground -as a structure- is actually a part of the field. It is a structure for architects to operate on it. The field is also operative, but it is more comprehensive than ground; that means, field can be cultural and physical or abstract and concrete as landscape. It is accordingly described as networks in architecture. So, field can be understood as a network of abstract and concrete relationships, interactions, and communications. Fields conceptualized as networks refer to less immediately perceptible structures in

architecture. In other words, architectural structures designed as networks and fields merging with their sites are not immediately noticeable or perceptible objects. Picon asserts that networks and fields merge in a more and more fluid way in today's world. This explains the success of the metaphoric use of verbs such as to surf, to browse or to drift when dealing with the networks as internet. They convey something about the attitude to adopt in a continuous technological world. This world generates possibilities and not constrained with the rigid geometries. The geometrical and structural dimension is jeopardized by the world of information. Information is not a thing but an occurrence. The occurrence of endless possibilities and variations... Field is more akin to a landscape than to a system (Picon, 2012).

However, it is suggested that field addresses to a site that is in a relationship with the broader physical, social, and cultural processes and systems that constitute them. Field is not static but a dynamic site including flows and forces as well as processes that blur the disciplinary borders of landscape and architecture (McEwan, 2020). In this regard, Allen indicates to the deterritorialization of the disciplines of landscape, architecture, and urbanism moving from the design of discrete artefacts to the choreography of multitudinous relationships. He discusses that field, as a network of relationships, activates space and turns it into a space of propagation, of effects. Field contains no matter or material points rather flows, and forces. Allen also discusses that field conditions guide architects to move from objects to fields. Architects design and construct the field according to the field conditions. Field conditions -or field constructions- here imply the acceptance of

the real in all its messiness and unpredictability. Field conditions treat constraints as opportunities. Fields work neither through regulating grids nor conventional relationships of axiality, symmetry or hierarchy. Field conditions are relational and not figural. Field conditions have a spatial capacity to make abstract forces visible. Field conditions do not claim to produce a systematic theory of architectural form or composition. Field conditions rather claim to produce working strategies. More than a formal composition or configuration, field conditions imply an architecture that admits change, accident, and improvisation. It is an architecture not invested in durability, stability, and certainty, but an architecture that leaves space for the uncertainty of the real (Allen, 1997).

Landscape is closely related to field because it refers to design the field by using its potentials and possibilities. This means for architects to work on the urban ground with doubt and uncertainties as well as the existing relationships and realities (Holl, 2009). Hence landscape, ground, and field are similar concepts in architecture, but the concept of landscape is at the forefront of the discussion in the paper. As it is mentioned before, landscape is a more comprehensive structure both embodying ground and field. It refers to manipulate the ground to create a grounded figure. It refers to make operations on the ground to create mutual relationships between figure and ground as well. Besides, landscape leads architects to use the conditions of the field. It leads them to use these conditions to design a field-like structure instead of a sculpture. This structure, whether it is abstract or concrete, defines a new landscape consisting of new relationships and potentials. That is why, it is discussed through the paper

that the concept of landscape refers to a less sculptural more intellectual architecture.

#### 4. Intellectualizing landscape in art and architecture

Landscape is intellectualized in art, particularly in painting since the beginning of the twentieth century. Painting becomes a dynamic field of flows and forces instead of being a static scene mostly viewed as natural surroundings. Famous painters from Boccioni to Gris and Picasso promote this intellectualization by their artworks such as *Stati d'animo* (1911), *Still Life with Bottle and Glass* (1911) and *Weeping Woman* (1937). They are influenced by Cubism and illustrate a new landscape by figuring the ground in these paintings. The figures of these paintings are blended in the ground, and they are not dominant or determinant, but grounds are turned into fields created by the movements of the figures. In *Stati d'animo*, there are three paintings of the spatiotemporal locus of a train station, and they are as the topological flows on a two-dimensional plane (Fig. 1). Kwinter defines these paintings as field structures because of their fluidity, intensity, and complexity. According to Kwinter, landscape is created through the relationships between forms and fields. He reveals that, Boccioni focuses on flows, forces and fields instead of forms and figures to create a new landscape in these paintings (Kwinter, 1992).

Dripps suggests that figures are decomposed, displaced, and recomposed in Cubist paintings. This shifts attention from object to a relational field. The recomposition of the figure to engage the ground is the critical point of the intellectual intentions and formal structure of the Cubist painters who want

to make figures more accessible while giving a voice to textual grounds previously operating in silence. That is why, Gris perceives the figure as having a life animated by a level of complexity and ambiguity in the painting of Still Life with Bottle and Glass (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 1.** Umberto Boccioni, from Stati d'animo, 1911 ([https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stati\\_d'animo\\_%28Boccioni%29](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stati_d'animo_%28Boccioni%29)).



**Fig. 2.** Juan Gris, Still Life with Bottle and Glass, 1911 (<https://www.canvastar.com/en/juan-gris-jar-bottle-and-glass>).

This hidden life is revealed when the figure's constituent pieces are unfastened and displaced to engage the ground on their own terms. There is a shift from figure to field also in the paintings of the 1920s and 1930s. Cubist and abstract paintings such as Weeping Woman (1937) of Picasso rather describe a field than a figure (Fig. 3). Their non-figurative

nature leads the dominant formative and figurative approaches to be interrogated in art and architecture (Dripps, 2021).



**Fig. 3.** Pablo Picasso, Weeping Woman, 1937 ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Weeping\\_Woman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Weeping_Woman)).

However, Modernism paves the way for many architects including the pioneers of modern architecture as Le Corbusier and Mies to design sculptural and monumental modern figures (Treib, 2018) (Fig. 4, 5).



**Fig. 4.** Le Corbusier, Ronchamp Chapel, Paris, 1954 (<https://www.ignant.com/2019/04/12/ignants-guide-to-le-corbusiers-10-most-significant-buildings/>).

Nonetheless, they seem to realize the mutual relationships between figure and ground in the following decades, as such Le Corbusier designs figure and ground



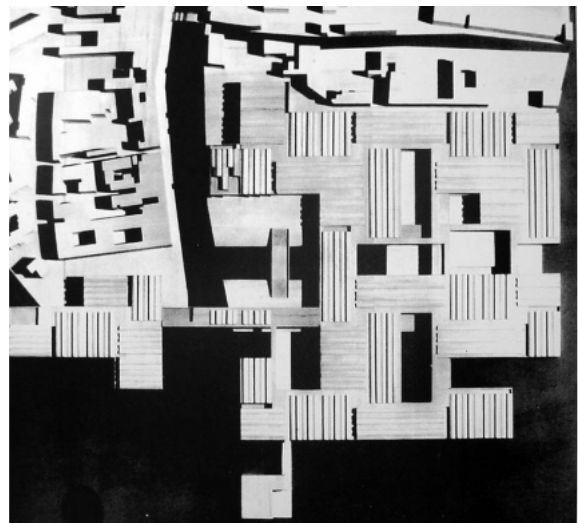
mutually in his unbuilt project of Venice Hospital (1965). He rather designs a ground than a sculptural figure in this project (Fig. 6). During these decades, Minimalism and Postminimalism in art, particularly in sculpture, empty the artwork of its figurative and decorative character in order to foreground its architectural condition. Artists as Le Va and Smithson shift the perception of the artwork from discrete object to a record of the process of its making (Fig. 7, 8).



**Fig. 5.** Mies van der Rohe, Lafayette Park, Detroit, 1959 (<https://www.dezeen.com/2020/04/27/mies-van-der-rohe-lafayette-park-detroit-photographs/>).

Le Va therefore discusses his artworks as the distributions and sequences of events not as formal configurations (Allen, 1997). In this regard, Smithson conceives the Earth as an entropic force instead of a stable ground in his installational organizations also known as land art. These land art organizations define dynamic topological fields and so landscapes (Rajchman, 1998). In other words, they define architectures of

overlapping, bending, folding surfaces: lands over other lands (Gausa, Porras, Müller, Morales and Soriano, 2003).



**Fig. 6.** Venice Hospital, Le Corbusier, 1965 (<https://www.archdaily.com/789025/ad-classics-venice-hospital-proposal-le-corbusier>).



**Fig. 7.** Distributional Sculpture, Barry Le Va, 1960s (<https://www.artforum.com/print/196809/barry-le-va-distributional-sculpture-36583>).

The ways of intellectualizing landscape in art, both in painting and sculpture, leads a new understanding of architecture to be emerged in the 1990s and 2000s. This is generally known as landscaping architecture. Due to this understanding, architects rather design and construct manipulated grounds than monumented figures in their projects. Mallgrave and Goodman assert that one of the most influential manipulated ground projects is Yokohama Port Terminal (1995-2002) designed by Farshid Moussavi and Alejandro Zaera-Polo (FOA). This project

is aimed to extend the surface of the earth surrounding the terminal up and over the building itself, transforming the roof into a park (Fig. 9). Into and upon the undulating park-like surface, FOA introduces a series of interwoven, looping pathways that create a nonlinear circulation system. The pleats and folds of the roof create a landscape of varied but continuous spaces, while simultaneously forming the structure of the building. The architects eventually design a sculptural form for the project, but they deal with the ground more than the form or figure to create continuously ramped surfaces in their formal explorations (Mallgrave and Goodman, 2011). Hence, they create a public space in the form of a differentiated topography in this project (Moussavi, 2007).



**Fig. 8.** Spiral Jetty, Robert Smithson, Utah, 1970 (<https://umfa.utah.edu/spiral-jetty>).

Eisenman also concerns creating an artificial topography instead of designing an architectural form in his projects. He manipulates the ground, particularly in the project of the City of Culture (1999-2011) in Galicia in which the building disappears under the earth by modifying the form of the land (Fig. 10). Axes and cuts are generated by the surrounding context. He modifies the form of the building determined completely by the external factors and forces and no longer by the integral principles of function. Eisenman experiments the technics of

composition borrowed from digital culture, such as layering (working with overlapping layers), scaling (working with shifts in scale), folding, wrapping, and morphing (deformation of surfaces and volumes). He designs the City of Culture at the scale of the landscape, almost mixing with the contour lines based on an articulation of geometries that result from a reading of the site (Puglisi, 2008).



**Fig. 9.** Yokohama Port Terminal, FOA, 1995-2002 (<https://cicararchitecture.org/2019/07/25/the-yokohama-international-port-terminal/>).



**Fig. 10.** The City of Culture, Peter Eisenman, Galicia, 1999-2011 (<https://archello.com/project/cidade-da-cultura-de-galicia-city-of-culture-of-galicia>).

Herzog and de Meuron concern about landscape in such a way that they question the concepts of nature and artifice by blurring their conceptual and categorical boundaries. They demonstrate the artificiality of that which appears to be natural. They use stone, which is the natural material of the landscape, as the



artificial material of the building in the project of Dominus Winery (1996-1998). The walls of this building are made of gabion baskets, and the building is consciously and creatively designed as an artificial landscape that looks like the extension of the natural landscape that surrounds it (Fig. 11). Ito interrogates the relationships between natural and artificial as well. He designs a new landscape, which is the result of the synthesis of nature and technology, in the project of Sendai Mediatheque (1995-2001). For Ito, using technology is the way of designing an artificial landscape in design projects. He thus designs this project as a high-tech aquarium (Fig. 12).



**Fig. 11.** Dominus Winery, Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, California, 1996-1998  
(<https://annitoabate.wordpress.com/2012/05/05/progett-in-cantina-dominus-winery-napa-valley-california-usa/>).



**Fig. 12.** Sendai Mediatheque, Toyo Ito, 1995-2001  
(<https://pen-online.com/travel/sendai-library-documenting-and-archiving-natural-disaster/>).

As we know, water is closely related to the idea of flow. It is suitable for him to represent the flows of the electronic society. The floors of this aquarium are connected by circular wells. They allow light to filter in from above, contain the vertical connections and the fiber optic cables that carry flows of information. The wells are transformed into focal points of the composition by steel columns while artificial lighting is used to create the effects of water. According to Ito, nature is to be sublimated through metaphorical re-elaboration in the abstract forms of architecture. But, for Ambasz, it is architecture that should bend to meet the whims of nature, return to a natural state, even at the cost of losing its artificial aspect. That is why, in his project of ACROS International Hall (1995-1998), the construction of architecture becomes an integral part of the organization of the landscape; so much so that, architecture and landscape are almost indistinguishable from one another (Fig. 13). Nature thus becomes the new building material (Puglisi, 2008).



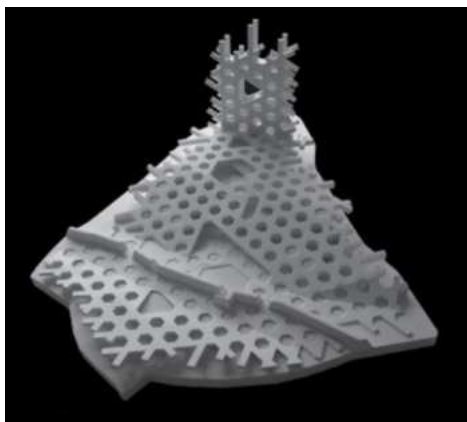
**Fig. 13.** ACROS International Hall, Emilio Ambasz, Fukuoka, 1995-1998  
(<https://www.stirworld.com/think-columns-acros-fukuoka-prefectural-international-hall-by-emilio-ambasz-turns-25>).

In regard of these constructions based on the idea of integrating landscape and architecture, there are many other architects who create new landscapes by the constructing sculptural objects or, as in the case of landform architecture,

with strong lines of plastic energy, the flows and forms of the surrounding context. They wish to create a fascinating artificial landscape. For the Museum of XXI Century Arts (MAXXI, 1998-2009), Hadid proposes a building whose form is the result of different generating lines tied to the existing realities (Fig. 14).



**Fig. 14.** The Museum of XXI Century Arts (MAXXI), Zaha Hadid, Rome, 1998-2009 (<https://www.archdaily.com/43822/maxxi-museum-zaha-hadid-architects>).



**Fig. 15.** The World Design Park Complex (WDPC), Concept Project, Steven Holl, 2007-2009 (Holl, 2009).

The objective is that of creating a living system conceived of as a field of forces, navigated by visitors attracted by the varying distribution of points of density inside the structure. The building is a system with multiple directions, filled by an uninterrupted flow of energy (Puglisi, 2008). The idea of creating an uninterrupted structure is also relevant for the project of the World Design Park

Complex (WDPC, 2007-2009) designed by Holl. In this design project, he emphasizes the fusion of the disciplinary fields of architecture, urbanism and landscape in the twentieth century. According to him, each architectural project becomes an urban and landscape project that necessitates to work with large buildings and scales. So, he designs the project in which urbanism, landscape, and architecture are fused in a woven structural morphology (Fig. 15). It is folded up to become a partial vertical park that contains scientific exhibits. As he discusses, in the WDPC project, morphology and topography are merged with architecture. The netlike, reticulated fusion of project is a convergence of landscape and architecture in an entirely new topology. This is an architecture of porosity where landscape and architecture are in a dynamic integration and a new experiential dissolve (Holl, 2009).

These projects are usually defined as landscapers in architecture. Landscaper is a concept used to denote buildings that unfold the land rather than being constructed on it. They are defined as horizontal skyscrapers as well. Landscapers have the quality of artificial caves in which the building disappears into the land; they are like the result or imitation of such engineering structures such as dams; they mimic the complex structure of the land itself; they take on the quality of a site-specific installation that seeks to establish a new relationship with the land. These horizontal skyscrapers –or landscapers– do not so much represent the ability to escape gravity, as they explore the nature of our connection to the land (Gausa, Porras, Müller, Morales and Soriano, 2003). Unlike the other projects,

the WDPC project seems like a different kind of landscaper; it is closer to vertical skyscrapers since its high-rise structure. However, this structure is designed as a porous extension of the urban landscape that lead us to define it also as a landscaper.

As it is seen in these projects, the ways of dealing with landscape blur the categories in between what we use to call as infrastructure and superstructure. Landscape is intellectualized in the projects in such a way that it is no more an infrastructure; it is rather a superstructure in architecture (Picon, 2012). It is designed superstructurally, but not sculpturally to explore new grounds in architecture. The architects today understand the concept of new grounds as being artificial, hollow, diagonally structured, constituting neither foreground nor background, and inseparable from the operation they carry out on them. They define their operations in a systematic way proposing a general strategy of architectural design rather than merely outlining a design tactic (Mallgrave and Goodman, 2011).

The projects above are operationally, systematically, and strategically designed to be an immanent part of the landscape. They are some of the most featured projects in the context of landscaping architecture or architecturalizing landscape since the 1990s. They reveal the fact that landscape is seen as an operational ground to create a new artificial landscape in architecture. These operations are enhanced in the 2000s, as such landscape becomes a common operational ground. It paves the way for architects to interrogate the conventional relationships of figure and ground by which figure dominates the ground for decades. In this respect, ground is now

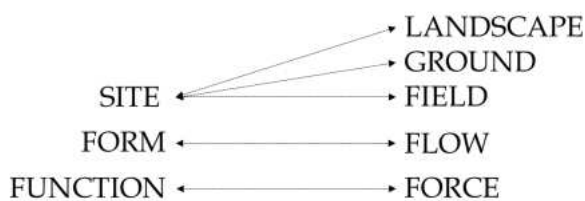
the new dominant and determinant for architects to design new landscapes.

### 5. Concluding remarks

It is discussed through the paper that there is a conceptual shift from figure to ground in architecture. This shift leads the re-emergence of the concept of landscape referring to a new way of integration between architecture and its surrounding since the last century (Eckbo, 1983). It also refers to the destruction of the hegemony of figure recently. Nevertheless, figure generally dominates ground even when it is separated from the ground in modern architecture at the beginning of the twentieth century. It defines its own platform elevated from the existing urban ground which is considered as a traditional pattern by modern architects. They try to create a non-traditional urban pattern with the elevated (and separated) figures and grounds. It is a new relationship established between figure and ground in architecture. But this relationship is redefined in the last decades of the twentieth century in a way that figure becomes an immanent part of the ground since it is integrated and intermingled with it. So, in the twenty first century, ground becomes much more important than figure, as such a new understanding of architecture enabling architects to see the ground as the field of exploration, emerges. They explore it as an operating ground that leads them to understand landscape not as a formal, but an operational field in architecture. As it is widely discussed in the paper, landscape, ground, and field are used as interchangeable concepts to point out to the mutual relationships of site and architecture. However, landscape encompasses both ground and field, making it a more comprehensive concept for architects.



With the re-emergence of the concept of landscape, there is another conceptual shift in architecture. Architects rather use the concepts of landscape, ground, or field than site; flow than form; and force than function (Fig. 16). That means, site is re-conceptualized as landscape, ground, and field, or better as the flow of field, by which architectural form is dynamically and fluidly created. Thus, it is not a form, but a flow created by following the dynamic structure of the field. And form -as a flow- is characterized according to forces, not functions. These are environmental forces defining landscape and architecture such as geographical movements, layers, and structures. These forces are both abstract and concrete, since they consist of social, cultural, and structural dynamics which shape the environment. Yet, it does not mean that architectural form no more has a function because of the shift from function to force in architecture. It can still have a function, or functions, but these functions are dynamically and environmentally designed by a sequence of forces rather than fixed or pre-determined spatial relations.



**Fig. 16.** The conceptual shifts in architecture from site to landscape, ground, and field; form to flow; and function to force (produced by the author).

In this regard, it is discussed as a new understanding called as landscaping architecture or architecturalizing landscape (Gausa, Porras, Müller, Morales and Soriano, 2003). This new understanding of architecture is mainly based on the idea of integrating the building with its landscape. That is why, it is discussed as less sculptural more intellectual architecture in the paper. The

sculptural figure of the building dissolves and disappears in landscape in such a way that architecture becomes an intellectual field with new concepts such as flows and forces. Hence, it can be suggested that architecture has new discourses as form follows landscape instead of the old but well-known discourses as form follows function. It does not need to be determined by form or function anymore. The new dominant and determinant is not form or figure; it is now ground in architectural design. This leads landscape, as a non-figural ground, to be rediscovered and redesigned by architects. It is discussed not as an option but an obligation for architects to concern themselves with exterior spaces and the immediate environments of buildings. This is a new awakening of interest in landscape and its relation to architecture (Aldington, 2000). It is a significantly important interest especially in these days in which cities are still characterized by sculptural and spectacular objects. However, landscape continues to interest and inspire architects. It materially, spatially, and structurally inspires them to design and construct new grounds. Landscape awaits to be explored by even more architects with its endless capacity and potentiality. It paves the way for discussing the possibility of an objectless architecture in the twenty first century.

## 6. Conflict of interest

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