International exhibitions have become actual fairs of architectural prowess where the consistency of the whole ends up subjected to individual vanity. As a critique to this usual approach, in this proposal for the Expo Milano 2015 Herzog & de Meuron ask, what if instead of exhibiting pavilions each country presents a piece of their land and agricultural landscape? Maybe we would start to speak of ‘lands’ instead of ‘countries’, since the original meaning of Milan was precisely ‘middle land’.

**Keywords** · exhibition, land, soil, landscape, Milano

Expo Milan 2015 adorns itself with a proud title: “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life”. What can architecture and urbanism contribute to a World Exhibition? And more specifically: how can the masterplan for a World Exhibition contribute to justify such a proud title? These were the questions we raised when we were asked by the then Mayor of Milan, Mrs. Letizia Moratti, to design the masterplan for the Expo Milano 2015. We never liked such big shows, made to attract and impress millions of visitors. We decided to only accept the invitation to design the Milan masterplan if the client would accept a radically new vision for a World Exhibition, abandoning the obsolete idea of expositions solely based on architectural monuments and outmoded vanity shows of national pride that expos have always been since the mid-19th century and that we last experienced in the 2010 Shanghai Expo with its overblown, massive structures. We felt encouraged to go for a radical new approach after learning about Carlo Petrini’s involvement. In the early days of the process Carlo gave a very impressive speech about his ‘Terra Madre’ movement in all parts of this planet. The World Exhibition should bring to the fore all the beauty of this planet’s agricultural landscapes, but also all the challenges that come with overpopulation, drought, fertilization/industrialization and patent issues for seeds by multinational agro companies.
Arquitectos / Architects
Herzog & de Meuron, Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron

Arquitecto a cargo / Partner in charge
Andreas Fries

Equipo de proyecto / Project team
Lisa Euler, Caetano de Bragança, María Ángeles Lerín Ruesca, Monica Leung

Ubicación / Location
Rho-Pero, Milán, Italia

Cliente / Client
Expo 2015 S.p.A.

Superficie proyectada / Projected area
315.000 m²

Superficie terreno / Site surface
1.100.000 m²

Año de proyecto / Project year
2009-2015

Ingeniería en Sostenibilidad, Construcción, Materiales, Infraestructuras y Flujos / Engineering Sustainability, Construction, Materials, Infrastructures and Flows
William McDonough + Partners, Charlottesville, usa

Comité Asesor de Arquitectura / Architecture Advisory Board
Herzog & de Meuron, Ricky Burdett, Stefano Boeri Architetti, William McDonough + Partners
In summer 2009 we presented our concept for the masterplan, which we developed together with Stefano Boeri, Ricky Burdett and William McDonough to the Bureau International des Expositions. As a reference for our conceptual masterplan we took the *cardo/decumanus* orthogonal grid system of the antique Roman city. We went for this ‘timeless’ pattern because of its generic openness and its affinity to the ‘Ideal City’. Its strong and simple orthogonal geometry would free all participants from any formal architectural exercises and therefore put more focus on the actual contents of the theme “Feeding the Planted, Energy for Life”. We proposed to encourage all participating countries to abandon the idea of individually designed architectural pavilions and instead accept to present their national agricultural landscapes and gardens in simple and basic pavilion structures provided by the organizers. Such a concept would let all participants contribute in an equally important way alongside a generous boulevard. None of the pavilions would be overwhelming, none would bore us through its idiosyncratic design ambition or divert us from the essential content which is expressed in the message “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life”. The large boulevard, literally uniting the pavilions of all participating...
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