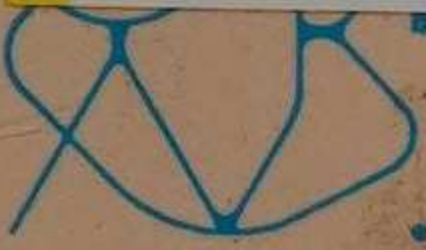


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OTHER BOOKS BY PAOLO SOLERI

Arcology: City in the Image of Man,
MIT Press, 1970

The Sketchbooks of Paolo Soleri
MIT Press, 1971

The Bridge Between Matter and Spirit is Matter Becoming Spirit
Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1973

Fragments: A Selection from the Sketchbooks of Paolo Soleri
Harper and Row, 1980

The Omega Seed: An Eschatological Hypothesis
Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1981

Earth Casting for Sculpture, Models and Construction
Paolo Soleri and Scott M. Davis, Peregrine-Smith, 1984

Space for Peace: A Matter of Mind
Cosanti Foundation, 1984

Technology and Cosmogogenesis
Paragon House, 1985

Cosanti Foundation
6433 Doubletree Road, Scottsdale, AZ 85253

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ARCOSANTI

An Urban Laboratory ?

Paolo Soleri

The Cosanti Press

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Because we are often victims of our misconceptions, we easily victimize others. And because we are often misled by scanty knowledge of what we might be all about, I believe it necessary to list certain topics and discuss them as they bear on Arcosanti. This might help to define objective elements within the project's activities and to explain that the term "urban laboratory" is more than a convenient label.

The topics are not developed, the synoptic presentation having the advantage of brevity. Further, they may serve as openers to lengthier expositions which, upon request, I will be glad to supply.

This list is addressed to both the public at large and those who assume that Arcosanti is purely a "brick and mortar project." On occasion, I'll gladly visit Cloud Nine, the domain of sweet daisies and untainted happiness, if only to reaffirm that Cloud Nine *per se* is fogginess of mind in need of (forgive me) a concrete springboard. There is nothing to be found up there. That is, do not look for spirit where matter is frowned upon. Expressed another way, my bets are on metamorphosis. I have, therefore, no enthusiasm for dualism, for apocalypse, nor do I have gusto for "the more (mis)creating the less." On the contrary, to keep creativity and evolution from becoming a cruel farce, I am for the "less creating the more." Then progeny includes ancestry and not vice versa; time is the vector of creation.

My unwillingness to segregate interrelated elements accounts for a certain repetitiveness in the propositions. So many things belong to so many other things! Thus, here are some concepts with which Arcosanti works and some in which it would like to be engaged.

Arcosanti

“Arcosanti: An Urban Laboratory? helps us to remember that humankind is in the midst of a transition into an urban form of global existence and that the kind of imaginative thinking which has to go into the design of this form has in many instances not even been begun. I find that focusing on the city enables us to bring together more disparate elements in the human enterprise and to see them in a coherent vision, more so than any other paradigm of thinking could provide. Soleri realizes that neither technology alone nor politics alone nor religion alone can provide the framework of imagination for the future we all need.”

**Harvey Cox, Professor of Divinity,
Harvard University**

“Soleri has long been recognized as a brilliant architect and artistic visionary. The time is overdue for his proposals to be taken seriously and adequately funded. Arcosanti represents an experiment of enormous practical importance. Perhaps this book can bring vision and practical implementation closer together.”

**John B. Cobb, Jr., Professor of Theology,
School of Theology at Claremont**

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Drawings: A Selection from the Paolo Soleri Sketchbook #4
(February 1964—November 1985)

Comments on Arcosanti: An Urban Laboratory?

John B. Cobb, Jr.

Most of us now realize that our civilization is heading toward disaster unless radical changes are made. Some of us realize that modern urban society is a very large part of the problem. A few of us realize that much of the problem is caused by the way our cities are built. But hardly anyone proposes serious alternatives.

The one great exception is Paolo Soleri. Soleri has thought deeply about what is wrong with our civilization, what renders it unsustainable. He has envisioned a redirection of the organization of urban life which would not only insure that we would have a future but also make it likely that that future would move toward a consummation of the human adventure rather than obliteration. This is a visionary achievement of the first order.

But Soleri has not been satisfied simply to think, draw and argue. Along with a few disciples he has devoted much of his life and energy to transform his hopeful vision into stone and flesh. He has been doing this in a world that gapes and goggles but does not have the understanding that would enable and require it to give the support and encouragement that could long ago have built a first generation arcology. A vision of a technologically advanced future is being implemented with shovels and picks.

But Soleri does not allow himself to be discouraged. He knows that the principles by which he lives are those to which the world must come—or else . . . He speaks and writes and draws and plans and builds. Most of all, he thinks.

Few will agree with all the details of his thought. But those who understand will acknowledge that he is far out ahead of the rest of us doing what is appropriate to the world for which we must hope rather than to the world that now exists.

This little book makes his thought and his praxis available as never before. Read and meditate and experience the call to take part in the building of the city of hope.

*John Cobb is a senior Professor of Theology
at the School of Theology at Claremont.*

1

Complexity-Miniaturization-Duration Imperative

From bacteria to God, three basic parameters are present:

COMPLEXITY. Many events and processes cluster wherever a living process is going on. The make-up of the process is immensely complex and ever intensifying.

MINIATURIZATION. The nature of complexity demands the rigorous utilization of all resources— mass-energy and space-time, for example. Therefore, whenever complexity is at work, miniaturization is mandated and a part of the process.

DURATION. Process implies extension in time. Temporal extension is warped by living stuff into acts of duration. A possible resolution of “living time” is the metamorphosis of time into pure duration, i.e., the eventual “living outside of time.”

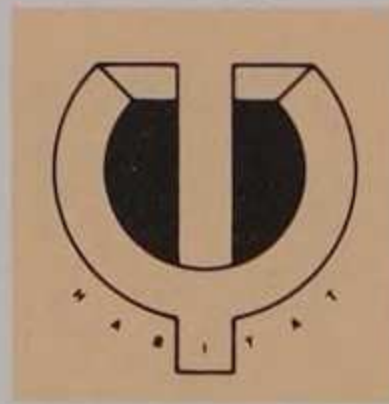


A community meant to become a “living organism” succeeds if it is congruent with the complexity-miniaturization-duration paradigm. If it is not, it will not continue to improve itself. Although the paradigm is very general, it is also a clear, forceful, normative light for any living process to follow. At Arcosanti, we try to be aware of such norms and be coherent with them. Nature and the living are dependent on such coherence. The rewards are many as the following topics point out.

2

Self-Containment of Habitat

In living nature, the notion of unlimited sprawl seems to be adopted by organisms at the lower levels of evolution. The coral reef is a living example. More sophisticated (complex) species (bees, wasps, termites, ants) have opted for “optimal” dimensions. Social milieu seems to demand containment and scale (optimal performance of the habitat). What of the most complex of social events, the city? What of the human dimension of culture and spirit? Containment or diaspora?



The Project is wholly dedicated, by intent and design, to the old notion of containment as opposed to the recent notion of diaspora (with the automobile as the main protagonist). Note the paradigm of complexity-miniaturization-duration as the imperative for organism— that is, for life and consciousness. It is also the imperative for self-containment. Complexity is in the very nature of organism (See #1); complexity is unachievable without miniaturization. Life is where and only where complexity and miniaturization operate via durational beats.

3

Cityscape and Countryside Reciprocity

True conservation is impossible on a planet that denies the city, but the existence of the city/town is dependent on ecological sanity. Indeed, a healthy ecology is dependent on the existence of centers of life so intense as to retain within their boundaries (city-town) the bulk of the planetary population and its paraphenalia. The converse is equally true. Once the city loses sustenance from the countryside, the city is doomed.



The urban effect is the consequence of ecological-evolutionary “well-being” and it is also a process by which such well-being can carry on. Ecological breakdown would mean the starvation of the city; ecological nemesis would mean the death of the city via an ugly and utopian kind of boundless suburbia. It is quite natural, therefore, that Arcosanti is the endorsement of the urban effect within the indispensable guidelines of complexity-miniaturization-duration.

4

Effective Use of Resources

The prime resources, in a tentative order of precedence are: socio-cultural nexus, mind, body, animal-vegetable kingdom, space-time, land, water, minerals, fuels, manufactured things. There are abundant indications that sprawl is ineffective— if not counterproductive— on all terms at the exclusion of the last which is typically consumer-waste oriented. The proliferation of the human race makes the situation even more frightfully difficult.



Implicit in Arcosanti's structure is mindfulness of the waste inherent in diaspora. And, contrary to popular opinion, such waste is inherent in the inhuman scale of the suburban scattering with its logistical paradoxes and its unending and negative power of segregation. Close scrutiny will reveal the direct linkage between effectiveness and economy of mass-energy, space-time.

5

Marginal Lands and Self-Reliance

The planet is richly endowed with what mass-consumption culture calls marginal lands. Far from the main transportation networks, hard to “colonize”, and poor in resources, such lands are for the most part beautiful and at times inspiring. These are reserves where future cultures might flourish, saving the fertile plains for much needed crop cultivation.



The Project is located on such marginal land. Part of the test is to demonstrate not just the viability (self-reliance) of a community on such land, but also the beauty and inspiration such environs engender. The past, as well as the present, is full of such occasions. The so-called cradles of civilization seem ed to opt for such razor-edged conditions.

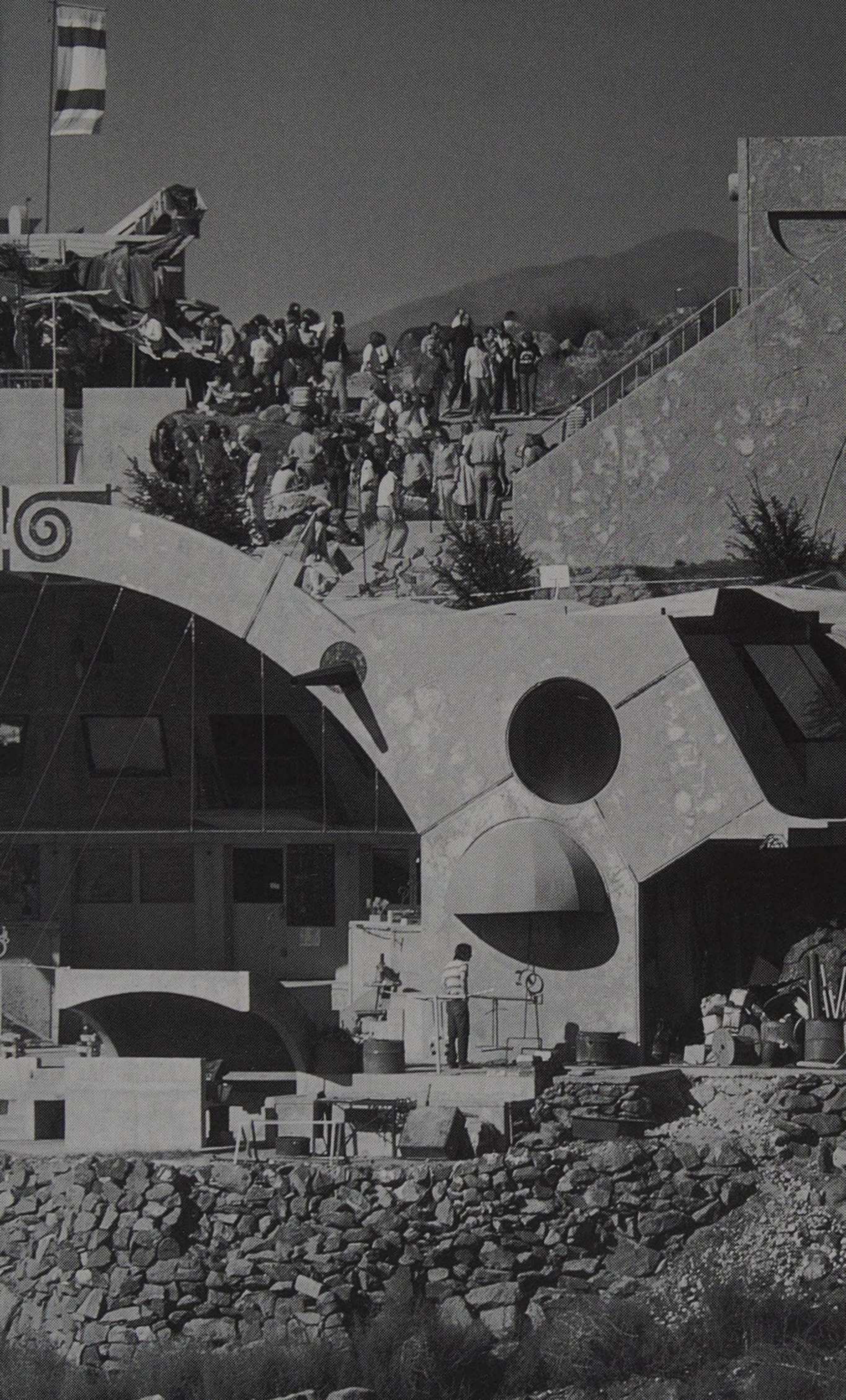
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Arid Lands and Habitat

Life is a wet phenomenon. Each living cell is a little sea of teeming events. Yet nearly one third of humanity is settled on arid land. Compounding the problems of survival and development is the problem of encroaching aridity on many continents. So the question is morphological and planetary. It includes, therefore, economics, politics, ethics, philosophy and religion, not to mention science, medicine and technology. There is now a real chance for an “arid land culture” as there have been powerful instances of it in the past. What could it be?



The Project is built on marginal land in an arid climate zone. The premise set by life— a wet phenomenon— is thus confronted by the arid envelope. Water becomes a critical resource. Since water is used and not consumed, we plan to use the same water in three successive steps: domestically, aesthetically, and agriculturally. More generally, it will be important to see how much we will be able to do on arid land with a minimal amount of megatechnology (air conditioning, for example), as used in such places as Phoenix, Houston, Denver, etc.



7

Hunger and the Urban Effect

To hang hunger on one cause is nonsense, but it is also nonsense to believe that we can solve hunger if we keep promoting the invasion of the planet with suburbanites and their real estate, equipment, machines and energy loads necessary to survival and affluence. In addition, suburbia is one aspect of the greed and social indifference at the roots of hunger. An almost religious respect for the good agricultural lands— and a better use of marginal lands for growing staples— could help in abating hunger and put more immediacy in the whole food-equity equation.



The Project is on target on the 3 propositions:

- 1. It denies a future to suburbia because it endorses the intense urban effect and the self-limiting of habitat.*
- 2. It proposes an economy of frugality as a more effective and equitable path into the future for a limited planet.*
- 3. It is set on marginal lands and intends to make use of its limited agricultural potential to partially satisfy the needs of its residents and keep them in touch with one fact of life: the food chain. Fruits and vegetables growing “at the foot of the town” are a tangible and educational fact, giving the town a greater resilience.*

8

Food for the Body, Food for the Mind

The mind-body split is somehow reflected in the separation we practice between the production of food and its consumption. We go to great lengths to make sure that staples and produce do not reveal their origins. We like to make abstractions of even smelly cheeses or juicy oranges. The ensuing damage is of a physical, physiological, and mental nature. Immediacy, the (reticent) submission to “processing,” is a virtue to keep on hand.



As marginal as the land of Arcosanti is, we want to pursue an agricultural activity that will show the unbroken prodigy of the mineral becoming flesh, becoming mind. Extensive greenhouses will add the dimension of immediacy to the bond of body needs and mind needs and their linkage to— and within— the urban condition.

9

Use of Local Resources in the Marginal Lands

Many great civilizations have had to contend with restrictive ecosystems. They succeeded by making the best, often to excess, of what they could get from the environment. Human ingenuity is proficient in turning necessity into virtue and then breaking the boundaries of restraint, triggering disaster. As pointed out before, the aesthetic resources so often abundant in marginal lands are also of critical importance.

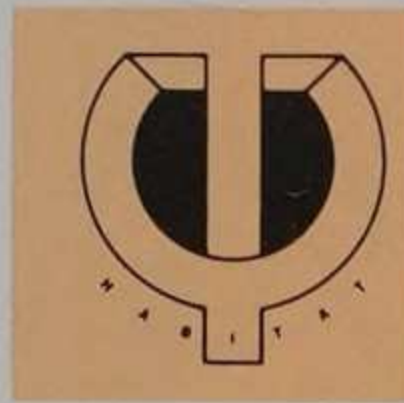


The main physical resources used by the Project, after the land itself, its geological structure and its water, are: the sun, the climate and linkages with neighboring communities. It is also part of the planning to use extensively the native basaltic stone in two extreme forms: one as rock, one as silt (deposited by seasonal floods). Stone cutting, wall construction, paving, silt modeling, and sculpture as a part of the workshop programs.

10

The Recycling Tempo and Its Planetary Optimization

The planet can be seen as a semi-autonomous organism, constantly recycling and digesting parts of itself, constantly redefining its own “constitution.” The cycles are of different sizes and durations. For instance, the fixing of elements like calcium via living organisms takes eons. For an “anti-calcium-deposits mind,” such process is an excruciating, endless pollution of the planet. The generation of free oxygen was an immensely protracted poisoning of the the only established forms of life on the planet in those times. Here and there, we might find that our frenzy of recycling might be a shortening of processes that could be accomplished more easily and more effectively with “nature’s” ways.



Since we are committed to recycling everything from garbage to water, we will be constantly pressured by the questions of size, time, space, cost, mechanics, chemistry, and the aesthetic of our recycling processes. The whole landscape of Arcosanti’s immediate surroundings will be altered by such actions. But a complex, miniaturized, self-limiting habitat is the best site for more efficient, less costly disposal and recycling programs. Naturally, frugality is again the most effective and cost effective way to confront the pollution-recycling-cost dilemma.

11

Exodus of Populations Toward the Megacities

This is one of the most critical problems of population, resource, culture and ecological coherence. There are no real answers in sight. How shall we balance the magic of the big city with the magic of the village or the small town? Economic enticement is not a sufficient nor an adequate solution to the problem of decentralization. A culture is not just a by-product of economic proficiency.



The Project is 65 miles from Phoenix, 36 miles from Prescott and 80 miles from Flagstaff. It will succeed as a "population fixer" only if the mentioned but not described magic can become an integral part of it. It goes without saying that the magic is found in the intense and spirited "urban effect" we might be able to generate at Arcosanti.

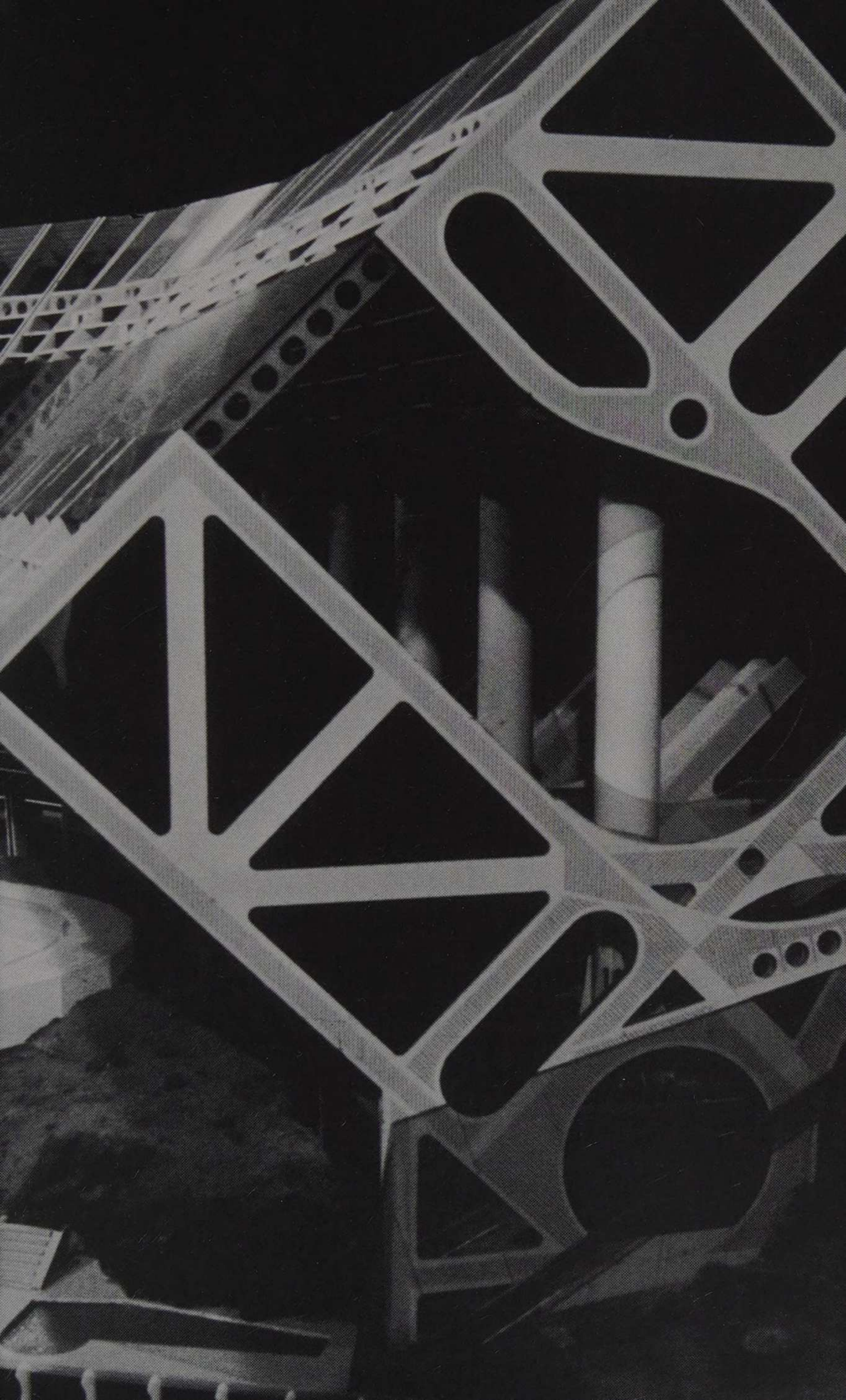
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Shifting Populations as the Norm of the Future

The human species is on the move. When Asia and Africa follow suit, even at the exclusion of forcible shifts (political, economic, cultural and racial), millions of people will expect shelter and services in the most likely and unlikely places. A prelude to the plunge into space, and Hilton Hotels are not where the answers will be.



The Project includes prototypical elements that can be incorporated within structures needed to shelter and serve any number of such populations. The 3rd Generation Arcology is a study directed at such a complex proposition and at its possible transformation into instruments for learning.



13

Crowding Versus Dispersion

The value, indeed the imperative of crowding, is documented by 3.5 eons of life. Organisms are by definition crowded, self-contained, miniaturized realities (see #1). Organisms, societies, and cultures that turn away from such an imperative would be strange, paradoxical and ineffective exceptions. One such exception is the sprawl resulting from the age of the automobile versus the 3.5 eons old “urban effect” of crowding. Sprawl is a pathological event. It suffers from gigantism with all the derivative handicaps and shortcomings: environmental disruption, waste, pollution, energy and time depletion, expensive logistics, segregation, and urban decay.



The Project proposes a habitat where crowding is present not as an expedient nor necessary evil, but as an indispensable asset. The Project has ample room for sprawl (860 acres) but has chosen “crowding” so as to be coherent with the teachings of evolution and history. There are no “public” roads at Arcosanti. That legislates by design the exclusion of the automobile from the habitat. Naturally, the richness of crowding lies in its being the intrinsic facilitator of connectedness, i.e., coherence and sensitization.

14

Scale and Performance

It is a common notion that so-called “human scale” is a function of visible size, never mind context or effectiveness. A block of granite, a barrel stuffed with flies, a person— each 150 pounds of matter. For the granite, there is indifference to scale. For the flies, there is no performance, i.e., meaningless scale. In the person (although clearly a megaorganism to the fly), there is great fitness of size and performance: the right scale! For a “platter piled with human flies,” scale will always be inhuman (see the Los Angeles syndrome). But for a habitat full of humans and their minds, the right scale will be the critical size needed for effective performance.



Arcosanti will be a small arcology, although all arcologies are “small” in the sense of their being miniaturizations of performance. They take the place of the megastructures of breakdown and paralysis. Los Angeles is a super-megastructure, incorporating all the syndromes of waste, pollution, and segregation. The urban effect of arcology is at the opposite end of the spectrum, the end of complexity via miniaturization. The “human scale” of the Project will be determined by the quality of the thing it shelters and fosters, not by explicit dimensions of the habitat (a mini-habitat anyhow).

15

Small is Beautiful?

Got to be kidding? Or does it mean miniaturization is imperative? For if “small is beautiful,” the whale is ugly and the mouse is beautiful. The degree of miniaturization being equal in whales and mice, both specimens are “beautiful.” Both perform sufficiently well to survive and reproduce. A megamouse afflicted by gigantism would not do. Gigantism is the problem, not size as such. Gigantism is poor “packaging” and consequently a waste.



The slogan “small is beautiful” is a naive look at things large and small and a crude guideline to nowhere. (How small is the universe?) At Arcosanti, we stay away from such imbroglios. The “smallness” of arcology is a functional-performance definition intentionally avoiding pathology (gigantism). The intent of arcology is not smallness as such: it is miniaturization. Los Angeles is a megastructure. In fact, all two-dimensional grids are intrinsically megagrids.

16

The Waste of Commuting

If we add up the time-space-machine-energy cost of forced driving (at the exclusion of pleasure driving), we reach the inescapable conclusion that we must be mad. Something like 1/6 of our “gross national civilization” is given to the single, elementary, secondary task of delivering ourselves where we need or want to be. A topsy-turvy kind of culture. Worse yet is the life negation constructed by suburbia, the ultra-segregation habitat. The social and cultural costs are indeed rebounding everywhere and onto everyone.



The Project reinstates the pedestrian (biped) as the undisputed actor. This is one “novelty” in complexity-miniaturization that speaks clearly of effectiveness, immediacy, frugality, coherence, purpose, variety, and ecological-human responsibility (and in one single stroke, close to a 20% saving in energy consumption)! The much heralded information-communication revolution will only alleviate some of the commuting waste while favoring the onset of an even more pernicious dogma of segregation.

17

Mixed Use and the Burden of Deserted Places

Deserted places are a peril of the urban milieu. They are economic burdens and potential (or actual) sites for lawlessness, vandalism, and social aberrance. Mixed use is no panacea but is “pregnant” with novelty and liveliness. It must be an integral part of the self-contained habitat.



Mixed use is “endemic” in the Project. The question is the proper ratio of it, not its desirability. Empirical testing is, at the end, the only way to find where such a balance might be found. The Project is, by definition, a testing ground for information leading to better planning.

18

Living, Learning, Working Mix and Its Stresses

The computer age offers an unprecedented access to the integration of the three major components in life— living, learning and working. The habitat grid we have constructed for ourselves in the last 100 years is totally alien to such integration. (See #19.) It will be a long and costly battle to redefine a landscape that enables society to really identify with the habitat it constructs for itself.



To integrate living, learning, and working is one of the main goals of the Project. The results and the consequences could be momentous. It could mean the reshaping of a whole (continental) landscape and the culture such landscaping supports. A balance among functions and a dosage of ambiguity, or if one wants to say, “disorder,” are to be pursued by the Project.



19

Segregation and its Impact on Individuals and Society

Segregation is the most pervasive threat to the dignity and well-being of the individual and the group. Segregation is endemic. It goes from the segregation of ages to race, ethnicity, occupation, wealth, religion, and real estate. To reduce its impact and to construct a condition more effective and equitable is an enormous task and an urgent one.



The breaking down of barriers taxing our lives is also part of the Project. Such a breakdown affects society at the core. Isolation, remoteness, time loss, monotony, social and cultural vacuums can become minimal or “voluntary” costs instead of being a “fixed tax” on all. Testing the limits of desegregation vis-à-vis discrimination is in the realm of empiricism, and is an indispensable learning process.

20

The 3-4 Generation Family

The collapse of the third and fourth generation family has been encouraged by technological nomadism and hedonistic leisure pursuits. One consequence is segregation by age. The very young and the very old are the main losers. For the rest of us there is loss of anima. We are really bartering commitment and the care of paid services. Besides the economic and medical price tags, the cultural and ethical costs are staggering. Society is literally dazed by them and the prospect of having “nowhere to go.” Yet the very nature of humanness is at stake.



If the Project can test and reinstate family encounters on the basis of a few minutes walk for either grandparents or grandchildren (instead of a drive “through town”), then better premises for care, warmth and learning can be established. The structure of Arcosanti can do this since it is guided by the urban effect paradigm. If one thinks of the magnitude of the age segregation problem and the consequent suffering, to succeed on this one single “topic” would make Arcosanti worth building.

21

The Dilemma of the Country Folks and the City Dwellers (Confrontation?)

It used to be that while city-dwellers were comfortably identifying with their city, they also had an umbilical (family) connection to the country and could routinely go back to it. The cities were small enough to allow pendulum movement. The country folk would do the reverse by bringing crops and produce to the city markets. Now the situation is either segregation or is nomadism saturated with hedonism. The punch of city-country contrast is lost, to the detriment of everyone, and in favor of unnecessary environmental destruction.



One direct pay-off of complexity-miniaturization (that is, the reduction of the size of the urban habitat and its intentional containment) is direct and instantaneous access to all the institutions of the town (living, learning, working, etc.) as well as to the open countryside at the “foot” of the town. Such is the design of Arcosanti. The democratic nature of such accessibility should be evident as it is critical.

22

Identification, Frustration, Coercion, Freedom (and License)

One of the dismaying aspects of non-structured nomadism (motivated by economics or otherwise) is the inability of an individual to identify with a place. This is a new and “catastrophic,” though endemic, situation. It is a liberation of sorts and has all sorts of effects on the freedom of the individual. It also gives him or her license to abuse the environment he/she happens to be in but does not belong to. The absence of structural discipline has a malignant propensity for coercion. Against it, one throws self-serving license masquerading as self-expression, that is, “freedom.”



We do not pay enough attention to the coercion— physiological and otherwise— engendered by the absence of a familiar scenario, especially when things go awry. This is one of the subjects with which literature so often works. The Project offers such familiarity also by way of its construction and the intense identification which comes from participation in the process of construction. Naturally, identification loves to point at the extraordinary as a source of pride and “innate worth.”

23

Self-Sufficiency or Self-Reliance?

In a reality made of interdependent parts, the pretense of self-sufficiency is a measure of arrogance and ignorance. Only one system is self-sufficient (“God” permitting): the cosmos in its totality. The idea of developing anything that can do without other things is extravagant and devoid of sense. A degree of autonomy and of self-reliance are more sane propositions, as they tend to discount arrogance on the one side and irresponsibility-parasitism on the other.



The Project never pointed at self-sufficiency. Even in terms of energy, Arcosanti does not seek “self-sufficiency.” It intends that, via complexity-miniaturization and the discipline of frugality, a more restrained and judicious use of resources from near and far (Sun, 93 million miles away) will favor a condition of self-sustenance less dependent on the “outside.” But then the outside is still us, is us . . . !

24

Environmental Metamorphosis and Its Impact

The balance between conservation and innovation is a delicate one. The pioneering mode is recognized as the mode in which, on contingency or in emergency, the balance is tilted toward innovation. Cultures profit from such extraordinary events, either from the “success” of the events or from their failure. In research and testing, things are intentionally taken to the breaking point to define thresholds of endurance or failure.



By “starting from zero” (never really so), we incur all the positives and negatives inherent in such a situation. Given the lack of human sensitivity to our relationships with ourselves and our environs, natural and man-made, it is imperative that radical alterations be undertaken that might favor the onset of greater sensitivity, which in turn might open new avenues for planning and living. Needless to say, the next step will be to “normalize” such alterations.



Abstractional-Empirical Balance of Learning

This is the age of packaging. In the information field, such packaging has become all-pervasive. The videotape is the icon of “knowledgeability.” This, and all the other powerful devices for learning, bypass the body experience and reach straight into the brain. Minds so cultivated can become immensely amoral. They suffer the deprivation of context, i.e., of emotional, sensorial, environmental sensitization necessary to ethics, religion, and aesthetics. The more we plunge into the computer age, the more we must cultivate our senses and our emotions to carry on as whole organisms.

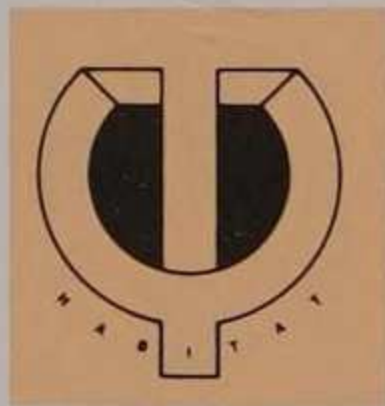


It is the intent of the Project to be aware of and seek the necessary balance between remote and environmental information and the learning that might come from both. The structure of Arcosanti favors such a balanced mix. Both nature and habitat are at hand; also available will be the technology of communication and information now essential to the life of any community. What might result from an integral mix of remote and environmental information can be a norm for the future of culture.

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Doing-Knowing (Laboratory-University)

The information glut has two ugly sisters: abstraction and pseudo-knowledge. The jukebox arcade tunnel is leading to disembodied intelligences adapted to “shutting down,” blip-by-blip (never mind the potential blood spilling at the end of the tunnel). At the delivery end of the jukebox arcade is the university with a job cut out for itself. The university responds by offering another set of packaged information that does not bode well for knowledge and coherence but does have selling power in the job market.



Arcosanti cannot pretend to academic excellence, but would offer the disembodied mind, or the informed if not learned person, a stab at empirical processes. That would help in re-establishing a needed coherence in the world of ideas and things, including our bodies. The urban laboratory is a place where knowledge has opportunities to test itself by way of experience. Such testing and “doing” entail, by necessity, failure.

Robotization and Unemployment

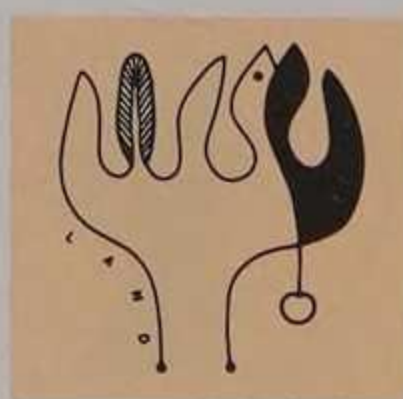
A case can be made for a future extremely busy with constructing better abodes, not just for people but also for society, i.e., the building of habitats of excellence serving the greatest variety of communities. Such occupation is the least suited to robotization. But robotization will be busy as hell equipping and filling in the details. Such occupation entails better knowledge of human limitations and a stronger perception of the imperative of transcendence hidden in the human make-up. The task of implementing human habitats could produce generations of full, meaningful employment. Then, if it is true that robotization augurs a metamorphosis of intelligence, such an event will "revolutionize" mind itself. The dim light at the end of the tunnel could become a black hole of the spirit . . . ! ?



At most, the Project can work as a trigger for metamorphosis. The people involved in the Project are reminded that "my home," no matter how good, still falls short of sheltering the institutions adding up to civilization and culture. Unfortunately, it is only something like a real menace from "outer space" that could unify the human family; it is also unfortunate that atomized suburbia, with all its patent ills, still remains the utopian dream persisting in peoples' minds. The employment of people, including "all those strangers out there," in redefining the urban planetary landscape is a potentially massive and exhilarating task.

Social Science Versus the Art of Living

From time immemorial, humanity has sought the ultimate skill: the capacity to seek the truly good life. The problem with social engineering might be its label, “the engineering of the good life.” The Mona Lisa is not engineered; it is created with the auxiliary of technical know-how. An additional difficulty is the youth of this “science” as revealed in the young age of the engineers themselves. “Live and let live” might be a subtitle to contrast and balance social engineering engaged in a binge of “social” reforms.



One intent of the Project is to “legislate by design.” Two instances are: A) by not having roads, Arcosanti excludes the presence of the car; B) by mixing living, learning, and working, Arcosanti breaks down the ill effects of zoning. What the project wants to avoid is planning the lives of its residents. They are offered a specific grid of environmental resources (the instrument) within which to act and play out their lives (the music).

High Tech and the Urban Imperative

The telling convergence of technology and urbanization is that for both, the imperative of complexity and miniaturization is real. The liberating, indeed the transcendental window opening into the future of life is the complexity-miniaturization window. By way of it, we will eventually be able to transform the nature of time-space itself. The effects of such a metamorphosis will be a “Big Bang” of the spirit. For now, it is more than just elegant to find the fit of high tech and habitat. It is the predisposition for a quantum leap in human culture.



The premises of Arcosanti are in the complexity-miniaturization-duration paradigm. It says that given an equal number of people, given an equal amount of space-time, resources, investment, and labor, Arcosanti will produce more social, cultural, mental, aesthetic, and environmental wealth . . . a move toward the spirit. This is not simply an asset for the benefit of a limited planet. It might well be, and critically so, a teleological necessity for the reality of organism.

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Planning Versus Spontaneity

As anticipatory animals, which inescapably we are, planning is our game. The flexing of a mind given to planning often generates inflexibility of performance. The distinction between the disciplining from structural soundness and the stifling of development and metamorphosis is subtle and constantly shifting. Obsolescence is the measuring stick by default.



A mix of planned and spontaneous processes is a worthy goal. The Project is in a state of flux that is reflected in the transformation of the design within the original guidelines. Naturally, fixation is inherent in context; therefore, as time goes on, there is a fixation, i.e., definition of larger and larger portions of the physical elements of the Project.



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Obsolescence: The Inescapable Entropic Tax

Our throw-away culture has made obsolescence the measure of its dynamism. The larger the bulk of disorder we produce, the more order there must be at the origins of such disorder. At the center of such high order is wo-man and his happiness. We are getting wiser now, but only at the intellectual-abstractional level. Behaviorally, we still exhibit the size of our dumping grounds as the measure of our well-being. The pernicious aspect of planned obsolescence is the erosion of excellence. In most cases, expediency has to have the upper hand.



Since we advocate frugality, we are automatically on the other side of “planned obsolescence” and averse to the (gross) national megagarbage dynamic. In practice, we have a long way to go in the battle against obsolescence, keeping in mind the rightful place obsolescence has in making room for the new. One ugly face of consumerism is the power it has to make the delights of casualness: “I buy it because it is there.” Consumerism is not a high priority at Arcosanti.

Greed and Its Quiet Ways

Few of us will disagree as to our innate greed. Greed is a mighty engine and when its power does not become overwhelming, it keeps things moving. Unfortunately, the engine has no governor. Something has to intervene from the outside to keep it under control. That is to say, greed has no features of organism. It is in the nature of a mechanism that, with “progress” and perhaps evolution, has also made suffering and victimization by-words of the human condition.



Since advocacy of frugality is the backbone of the Project, we are attempting by design and by commitment to abate greed. We also hope for a lesser discrepancy between the rewards we might reap from our work and the rewards the not-so-fortunate might extol from their toil. Planetary equity becomes more than an abstraction when, as at Arcosanti, our salaries (minimum wage) are congruous with a planetary economy yet to come.

Ownership: Public Versus Private

The “God given right to private property” is an egregious lie. Nothing is more alien to grace than holding on to something other than knowledge and emotions. But then, reality is not graceful, and there are contingent reasons for the existence and the justification of ownership. The fact remains that both science and religion tell us that everything is interlaced with everything else, therefore anything I hold onto also belongs to others.



The true value of stewardship is not in reference to nature. After all, reality is process and process is not stewardship. But stewardship can be a cogent aspect of the means by which we parcel among ourselves the use, the control, and the care of what is given to us and of what we construct. Therefore, without falling into the deceptions and inequities of hoarding, we hope to see Arcosanti developing along those guidelines of “use and stewardship” that are also metamorphosis.

Mediocrity and Its Coercive Power

Mediocrity is not measured by intelligence tests but by the degree of honesty and commitment one is willing to exercise. Mediocrity is a moral deficiency, a cowardice of the mind. The freedom to be mediocre might well be a trap for democracy. Planning, architecture, design, music, literature and the level of taste in general within the polis can give a measure of integrity, excellence, and dignity to society. Deprivation of such elements can hardly be a measure of freedom, especially from the perspective of young minds for whom real choice is a subtle question of peer group pressure, belonging and the molding power of the environment.



To develop a project that resists mediocrity cannot be guaranteed, but the intention must be ever-present. Malice, pettiness, vindictiveness, hypocrisy and intolerance are symptoms of mediocrity. We have a long way to go at Arcosanti as elsewhere. Discrimination and generosity are necessary, but the danger is real for discrimination to fall into mediocrity by way of elitism.

Hedonism and Culture

Apparently in tune with the rules of breakdown and decay, our Western culture is on a frantic journey into hedonism. The seventies threw in the additional mirage of “being oneself” (as if anything else were possible). So now democracy is in its “license” phase; anything goes as long as it expresses my ego! Culture could well become a distant echo with few souls battling for its survival. If ever mobility becomes a planetary phenomenon, someone’s task will be to inject learning into the travelogue for billions of tourists. Will the hotels be, world over, the universities of tomorrow?



The Project intends to develop a hybrid with the make-up of discovery-learning-pleasure. The 63 topics should cover enough disciplines to offer meaty morsels about information and performance. A cosmopolitan mix should also propose and expose the silliness of nationalism and its appendages of ill will, intolerance and the tragic propensity toward killing as a solution (better you dead than me red). The “simplifying” character of hedonism is a clear indication of involution and is contrary to the paradigm of complexity-miniaturization-duration endorsed by the Project.

Drugs and Escapism

Once society makes the decision that an individual cannot be culpable but only sick, then drug addiction easily becomes endemic. The fact is that the child who gets drunk or stoned does so with gusto because s/he finds pleasure and exhilaration in this and society is there to encourage it. Illness will come later when physical or psychological addiction sets in. Are the permissive society and its gurus the guilty ones, or are we willing to transfer guilt and responsibility to the child? Hedonism envelopes and ties perniciously together permissiveness and decadence. We dance with abandon and greed into a landscape deserted by ethics and concern. The *me* culture is born.



At Arcosanti, we keep our noses above water (or so I hope). The reason should not be mysterious. If reverence for life means anything, it means that one's own body has the right to be treated with consideration, respect and awe as much as anybody else's. To be drugged and to make this a norm is irreverence. No matter how we label it, the demeaning of body and mind is a crime against life.



The **Me** Generation

Since parents, society and culture are abdicating their responsibilities as originators of the outer discipline essential to the development of self-discipline, we are now presented with the sad, oh so sad, *me* generation. The cruelties such a generation inflicts upon itself and other generations are massive and quite probably inevitable (the sins of the fathers). The ethical vacuum is easily filled by the alliance of the starry-eyed (blurred vision), the intellectual butterflies (jet set), and the “cunning guru” clubs. The slimy concoctions they generate, a sort of soft porn of the mind, make one take a second look and wonder at the virtues of the “hard facts-guided-action” of a pseudo-dynamic technocracy.



I would consider it the worst fate for Arcosanti if it were to fall into the hands of such an alliance. I would rather see the Project go entrepreneurial and greedy or turn into a silent ruin. Arcosanti should endorse the me generation crying from the bowels of the “sewage villages” like Calcutta, Bombay, and other similar places. I find it pathetic and fraudulent when coming from the super-fed, super-cushioned, super-insured, super-“free” cry-baby Westerners. I find it demeaning indeed and hope some of my outrage rubs off on Arcosanti.

Productivity, Frugality, and the Marketplace

One of the tenets of freedom is choice. Choice refers to one's choice as well as the choice of others. The choice of a frugal life with a modest income must be within the acknowledged milieu of affluence and perhaps opulence. The possible clash of an economy of frugality with the economy of the marketplace can be a testing ground for phenomena that might appear when wealthy nations finally face the insularity of their ways *vis-à-vis* the actual endemic poverty of the human majority.



The Project proposes frugality as a better way of life. It is nonsense, then, to envy the profligate or to “go to war against them.” What the Project might find difficult is that some people, enjoying the unique assets of the frugal life of an Arcosanti, might become intentional parasites. That would not help them nor would it help the Project. Frugality is what the planet needs. Why not gear up to it? In addition, what if frugality is a necessary precursor to equity?

The Classroom and the Urban Effect

Experiential learning has powerful fixers in the conscious as well as the unconscious. Roaming the neighborhood used to be a schooling of its own. The demise of the neighborhood has all but abolished the constructive aspects of such schooling. That also goes for the experiencing of nature, now left to the privileged and packaged for all of us. The urban effect is either the breaking down of physical, social and cultural barriers or it is no cause for exhilaration.

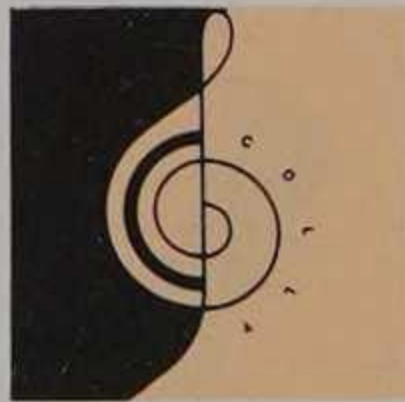


By intent and design, the Project is firmly dedicated to communicating the learning assets of the environment. The urban effect— that is, the lively, self-containing, multi-dimensional environment of the city where children, adults and the old can intermix— is something at which Arcosanti is working. Concurrently, the structure of the habitat is intentionally putting nature at our “fingertips.”

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Health and Medicine in the Urban Effect

A coherent and effective urban landscape does much for the health of its users. Using a logistically sane grid, it can also define conditions where the delivery of health services becomes less emergency prone and far less costly. In a socially intense community, on top of service might come care—the rarest of social commitments.



The Arcosanti structure is designed to put physician and patient at a walking distance from each other. Even more important, the structure favors a greater interaction among residents and greater ease for service and care of the sick and handicapped. In fact, the handicapped will find in the completed Project the most responsive kind of environment, one offering them a great degree of autonomy.

Sports and Fitness

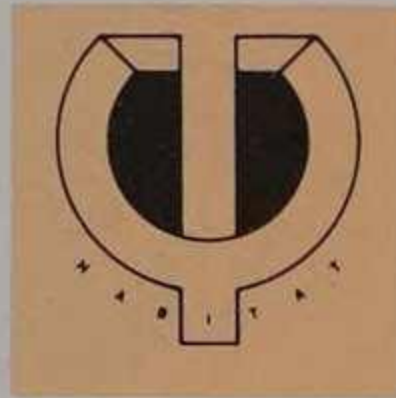
Organisms display pathological sides with great regularity. When it comes to human organisms, the pathologies are exhibited with boundless enthusiasm and at a staggering cost. The mass spectator sports, as gladiatorial spectacle (football) or as extravagant skill (golf), legitimize themselves as moral plays more than as tributes to fitness. The great irony lies in the enthusiasm displayed in exhausting one's body on a deadly boring treadmill and the adamant refusal to walk up a flight of stairs. Consumerism reveals itself again as a master of the absurd.



The pedestrian as a normal organism is a design given in arcology. Since I think theater, within firm boundaries, is an amplifier of reality, I see no desirable dogma in excluding spectator sports. There will be, though, critical financial restrictions. Fitness will be pursued with less extravagant activities and mostly with the routine cycles of being human in body as well as in mind. For instance, there will be less or no sitting behind the wheel within a two or three ton rolling box, hoping that the congestion ahead will abate before long.

The “Radicalization” of the Arts

The above title is intended to be taken literally. The arts originated from contextual needs. They were, in fact, a sort of technological crème de la crème, the best of mental skills and manual dexterity guided by factual needs. A step toward radicalization of the arts is to present the artist with environments clamoring for participation, for emphasis, for counterpoint, for identification.



From the very beginning, the intent has been to make the Project a “center for the arts” (not, however, a craftsman’s community). But the fundamental intent needs qualification; radicalization, as defined above. It is hoped that the habitat itself is not just a device but also an (aesthetic) expression, not only an instrument, but also music itself.



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The City as the Cathedral and the Palace

The past has proposed that the temple, the castle and the palace dominate the cityscape, dividing among themselves the sacred side and the secular side of each citizen-subject. They are now anachronisms that contemporary society tolerates and reveres as aesthetic-historical documents. If the sacred is where life is, then the whole habitat is sacred. Temples and palaces are only points of emphasis and reminders of the power of the sacred and the secular.



For a “democracy of excellence,” the goal is not to reduce things to a common denominator but to raise things to a shared worth. The city is the producer and the marketplace, but the city is also the temple, the city is the palace, and the citizen is the sacred carrier of well-being and of grace to-be. To build Arcosanti should be to build the church and the palace in one. This is where I hope, again, that the physical structure of Arcosanti is not just an instrument, but also music.

Nature and Neonature

When it becomes fashionable to discredit “man” and to proclaim the felicity of a nature freed from his presence, we insult nature and man both. We are part of nature, but we seek that which nature cannot yet deliver: equity, compassion, the work of the mind. Part of the technology of transcendence is the action of *homo faber*. When need be, such action must define a neonature, a “divine” component to an albeit astonishing process, the evolving cosmos.



Habitat is, in bulk and in impact, a major part of such neonature. To minimize or hide it (called “blending”) is sanctimonious modesty. Mind and spirit need proclamation, not camouflage. Let the Parthenons and the Chartres sing the exultation of a nature becoming the stuff of spirit. On balance, even cockroaches and moles will benefit from this (the “entelechy principles”). As for the Project, for better or worse, it is going to be very visible and very identifiable as a homo faber deed within the geology of the high desert.

Anticipation, Planning, and Utopia

ANTICIPATION is a typical and distinguishing feature of the mind. The mind is unsatisfied going from one present into another without advance notice of what might be in store. Like it or not, we live in the future. Like plants and animals, we are biologically and mentally futurists.

PLANNING is the necessary structuring of action to keep open the road into the future. The soup I will eat for dinner is the fruit of “planning soup for dinner.”

UTOPIA is, by now, a naive scenario for a perfect community. Our minds can accept utopia only if it accepts a (simple-minded) model of reality in which goodness, love and beauty are there for the taking. Utopia is the purification of emptiness.



The laboratory is by definition that with which utopia cannot coexist. Utopia is conclusive if not conclusion itself. The laboratory is this or that instance and occasion streaming along the immense tide of those events reality is itself creating. There is no pretense of finality or privilege in the Project, none of the “elected” and the “chosen” syndrome. If you are after utopia, skirt Arcosanti. Nothing will satisfy you there. Planning yes, anticipation yes, optimism yes, failure yes; utopia . . . ? What is that? (It is the habitat of noplance).

The City as Symbol

If utopia is the pursuit of sterility, symbolism beats where consciousness thrives. Symbolism has a way of delivering by the force of awe that which utopia's precious mindlessness grunts about. The road splits into one of aesthetic creation (symbolism) and one of broken dreams (utopia). Whenever symbolism fails, it fails within recognized limits and still has something to offer; whenever utopia is afloat, failure is paradigmatic. Utopia is failure to set limitations in a scenario made of reciprocally limiting events. Such failure denounces a fundamental misconstruction of reality.



I am all for symbolism as long as it is an icon of that which can become more than it already is. Symbolism is, then, some rarefaction and quintessence of "real events." It emphasizes process and the "becoming" it springs from. I count on such springing forth; an eschatological conclusion is a dear notion of mine. Then, if symbolism is a valid expression of mind, the symbol must call out for recognition (see #44) and for unforgettability.

The Fragility and Thin Spread of Excellence

Excellence defines its own extraordinariness. Consequently, no matter how much there might be of it, there is always a shortage of it. It might be important to establish cells of “nomads of excellence,” that is, groups of scholars and/or “doers” who are able to travel from one community to another offering tidbits of excellence as teasers inspiring others to follow suit.



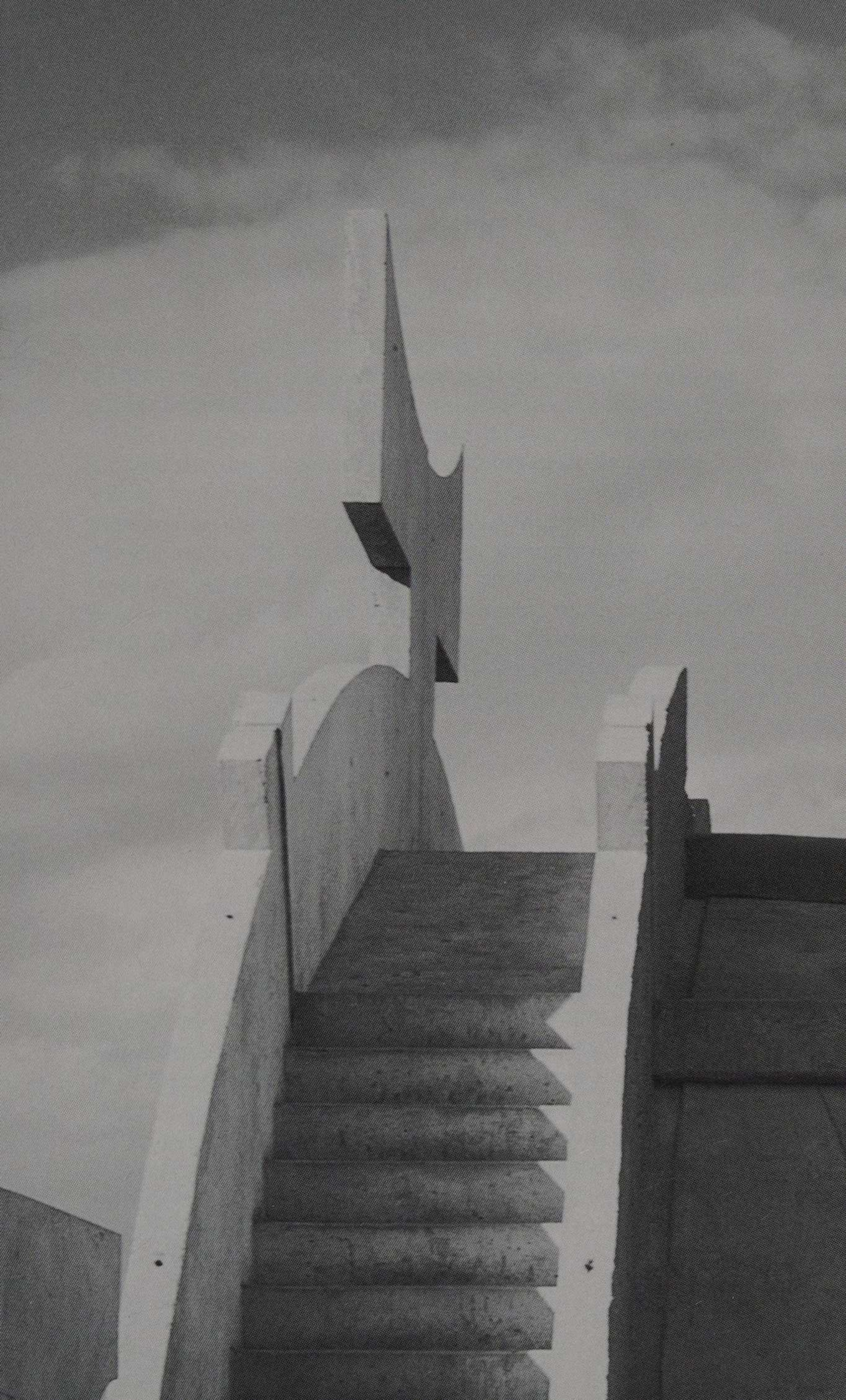
This is a problem that decentralization has made acute. The Project, advocating decentralization and working toward a civilization that is not solely the by-product of mega-urban structures, would like to generate programs that would produce such nomads of excellence to the advantage of Arcosanti itself. Making knowledge and excellence peripatetic is a program as lofty as the Peace Corps program, if not more so.

Form, Function, and Metamorphosis

At the core of the democratic process are needs to be expressed and the power that has to be applied equitably to satisfy them. That is, a form-structure is defined by an existing function (the need). That seems not to be the “practice of nature.” In nature, form-structures appear “out of nowhere” or consequent to genetic errors. Such forms “impose” new performances (functions) upon the organisms. Thus, functions follow the dictate of the form they had or did not have a voice in generating. I suspect that the mix of the two modes will be the fuel of the future. The survival of democracy will also lie in its capacity for metamorphosis induced by such modes.



The form “imposed” on Arcosanti is one of nature’s invention only inasmuch as it tries to follow a program which is outlined throughout this book. The form is only partially explained and justified by it. The “intrusive” elements are from the inventive-creative side of the author. That should make clear that the question is not of form following function to the death, nor vice versa, but of an oscillating dosage of both in an effective, non-sterile mix. The quality of the ensuing metamorphosis (if any) will be the measuring stick of success or failure.



We Can Only Speak to the Future

The distance between two or more individuals makes it unavoidable that crossing messages never reach the original target. Instead, and always, the messages reach the senses of “the successor,” that is, the me and the you of *now* and not the me and the you of ten seconds or hours or years ago (or whenever the message was sent). This is one of the inescapable crosses of organism, since organism exists in a space-time reality; receiving only “old” information and broadcasting it to whom is not yet, while directing it to whom is no more. On a cosmic scale, this means receiving a message from an object that has ceased to exist (for eons perhaps), and vice versa, to broadcast to objects that will come into existence eons hence. So we suffer and rejoice about the ghost of a fossil long disposed of, or vice versa.



Since we and the past cannot surmount the current of time and would little rejoice in the notion of cyclical returns, we can only toil at “building the future.” We do it with a reasonable nostalgia for that which time’s current relentlessly moves away from us, embedded, as we living organisms are, in becoming. To lament such a state of affairs is unbecoming. We must keep in mind that the space-time noise is also the space-time stuff of our making. Arcosanti is “building the future,” one of many such actions going on everywhere.

Individualism and Society

Any eschatology worth its name must offer a structure of unequivocal equity. Whatever the label or slogan, one thing has to remain clear and firm: the individual who has denied society will be low on the scale of worth, as low as the society that has denied the individual. Capitalism and communism should get together and bump heads on the subject. In practice, they are extremes, both foreign to reality. Unfortunately, we, with cruel singlemindedness and catastrophic consequences, mistake the practical for the real.



At this stage of the Project, only embryonic elements pertinent to this topic are perceivable. If we stay in the laboratory mode, the answer to the dilemma of the individual versus society will only be found in a “proto-performing” stage. The instrument must be socially “sympathetic” (it must embrace both individuals and society), while the music should be an encounter of individual voices combining in a chorale of excellence.

Neomonasticism Versus Technocracy

All said and (little) done, what humankind most desperately needs is a re-found (or perhaps a newfound) sense of wonderment toward reality which can then be translated and acted out constructively, beautifully, and equitably. The materialistic experience suggests that such a plunge would have to be some sort of transcendence: the liberation of the material into the “mental,” mindful again of the letdowns consumerism *per se* has engendered in our consciousness. To this end, technocratic excesses could be counterbalanced with neomonastic propositions. The inequities besetting the planet could be attenuated and body and soul could be resensitized in the process.



As an unrepentant unbeliever, I am most interested in having a dialogue with “professional” believers. Since we endorse technology, i.e., a modicum of “materialism,” the Project needs monastic models, Western and Eastern, to “keep things in balance.” Tradition, learning, intellectual rigor, humility, frugality, altruism, self-discipline, and transcendence are not things to dismiss nonchalantly. Both the “secular” and the “sacred” experience advantage themselves through proximity to one another.

Pioneers and Settlers: The Space Quandary

One dreadful prospect is a technocratic and confrontational explosion into space. In addition, given the high probability of genetic differences space encourages, we will need all the compassion and wisdom we can garner. Above all, we will need the knowing and the loving of which we are still deprived. A neomonastic mode could be the the most apt for the space venture, if monasticism is indeed decontaminated of intolerance, bigotry, and idolatry. When, oh when?



Because of the self-containment advocated by the Project, the information and learning it generates will be useful to any manned space program. Here, as with the high tech proposition, is an irresistible matching within the paradigm of complexity-miniaturization-duration (in interdependence, synergy, effectiveness, frugality, coherence, integration, and recycling), in addition to the experience that can be induced in the body social— the fire of equity and generosity.

The Dilemma: Genetic Versus Cultural

Science is predisposing the devices capable of genetic manipulation. It seems to become more than ever necessary to “get to the bottom” of genetic versus environmental-cultural imprints. Without such an understanding, we might play Russian roulette with the lives of our own offspring as we do now with the lives of people belonging to “endangered” cultures. This is because the same, limited understanding of our make-up is applied through economic-political processes well sheltered by nationalism and other reptilian leftovers.



One program of the Project is to offer Native American nations and all kinds of “shifting populations” some of the guidelines applied in Arcosanti. But it may not be possible to do so meaningfully until we better know the thrust of the genetic versus the cultural. A step toward such an understanding would be the adoption of a number of newborn from different racial stock and the offering to them of an identical cultural/ environmental context in which to grow. That would uncover racial-genetic differences, if any exist.

The Astronomical (Cosmic) Connection

The minute and the immense are confronting our existence. A society of “astronomers” would be, at least on paper, better capable of gauging the proportions of our existential dilemmas. Greater tolerance and greater generosity could ensue. It would naturally trickle down to all of creation; it would then come about that many “good things” we now force ourselves to do would happen without the need to legislate.



Parochialism is not something to treat gingerly. It is both a blessing and a curse. A vaccination against negative parochialism is to realize our infinite smallness containing the enormous power of mind. We would therefore like to cultivate an environment wherein structures and grids would make astronomical sensitivity a normal presence.



The Rites of Passage in the Food Chain

Two rites concern us directly. The first one, two or three million years in the making, is the defining of reflection within organism—the knowing of knowing. The second is the possibility of transferring reflection into mineral structures, bypassing organism, the flesh. These two, one operational, the other still hypothetical, are momentous events. They are the potential transformers of cosmos in the direction of mind.



The urban effect as a universal event is the central actor in the drama since any and all organisms are triumphal demonstrations of the urban effect. Without it, there would not be the mind to think such things. Consequently, Arcosanti, as an advocate of the urban effect, is deeply engaged in such “work” and eventually in the portent of “silicon intelligence.”

Is Theology a “Technology of Transcendence?”

Abused by the notion that technology is a lesser manifestation of *homo mentis*, we remain bound to the fact that *techne* is the way of processing media to achieve ends. This is all that it takes for the processing of mineral into mind, be it by way of flesh, be it by way of exo-flesh “techniques.” Technology as we develop it is the young, simplistic, barbaric, but promising offspring of biotechnology. The “beyond” belongs to a holy technology we might be gestating right now in fits and starts.



In the debate of technology-versus-humaneness, the Project stands as a strong rejection of the notion that we have to choose between the two. The neomonastic notion reappears here, and it is connected if not identified with technology. The techne of creating grace and beauty is the tallest of all orders. Arcosanti could make a contribution by keeping alive the “paradoxical” idea that spirit generates from matter via “technologies” of immense subtlety.

Religiosity Versus Religion: Faith Versus Intolerance

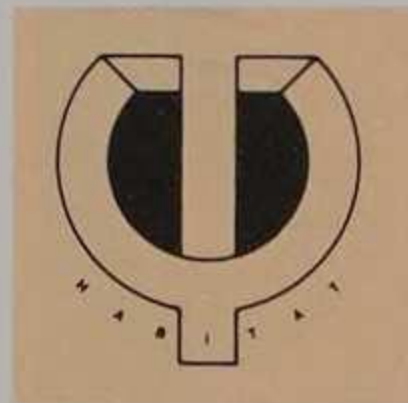
The idolatry of technology is betrayal like any idolatry. Religious idolatry has done to life what only the most malicious power could conceive as punishment. One could make a case in proposing that no religion at all is preferable to the religious fanaticism religions seem to instigate in wo-man. The first tenet of religiosity would be that all the gods we invent have to take second seat *vis-à-vis* life's sufferance.



This ties together the food chain, evolution, urban effect and time-space. The dialogue of neomonasticism-Arcosanti could again make a contribution by opening up the question of how reality can combine so much grace and beauty with so much suffering and terror. To do so, much of the cushioning instituted by affluence might give way to the perception of the tragic-beautiful sense of life.

Hidden and Open Violence

In a reality constructing itself via the food chain, violence is endemic: eat or be eaten. The mind is facing this with ever-increasing anguish but limited resourcefulness. Fear, greed, and the pursuit of power, the mighty engines of history, are steeped in hidden and open war and violence toward that which is not the I (ego). It will take eons to see knowledge, compassion and grace become mightier than those three, but therein lies the only hope for a mindful cosmos.



How puny Arcosanti is in this conflict between matter (the ancestry) and mind (the progeny) is in no need of emphasis. Yet, if the premise for positive developments is the avoidance of self-deception, then Arcosanti must maintain the “non-quick-fix mode” as a dedication to intellectual integrity and as a part of the imperative for a distant but indispensable equity (see #60).

Naivete, Optimism, Cynicism and Doomsday

The spectacle of grown-ups debating and planning limited thermonuclear exchanges is excessively obscene. It points to the fact that even the prodigious mind is capable of the most savage self-deceptions. *Dementia mentis* is ever ready to add malice and surrealism to a beautiful reality already infused with indescribable suffering.

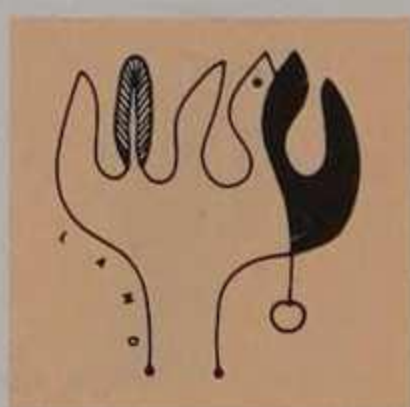


The Project is “optimism in concrete.” It works by believing that there is a tomorrow that can be prodigiously affirmative. We would be unholy fools if we did not acknowledge the savagery of what our politicians and our strategists are planning. We must also remember that we vote— that is, we transform reality first and foremost with our lives, minute by minute.

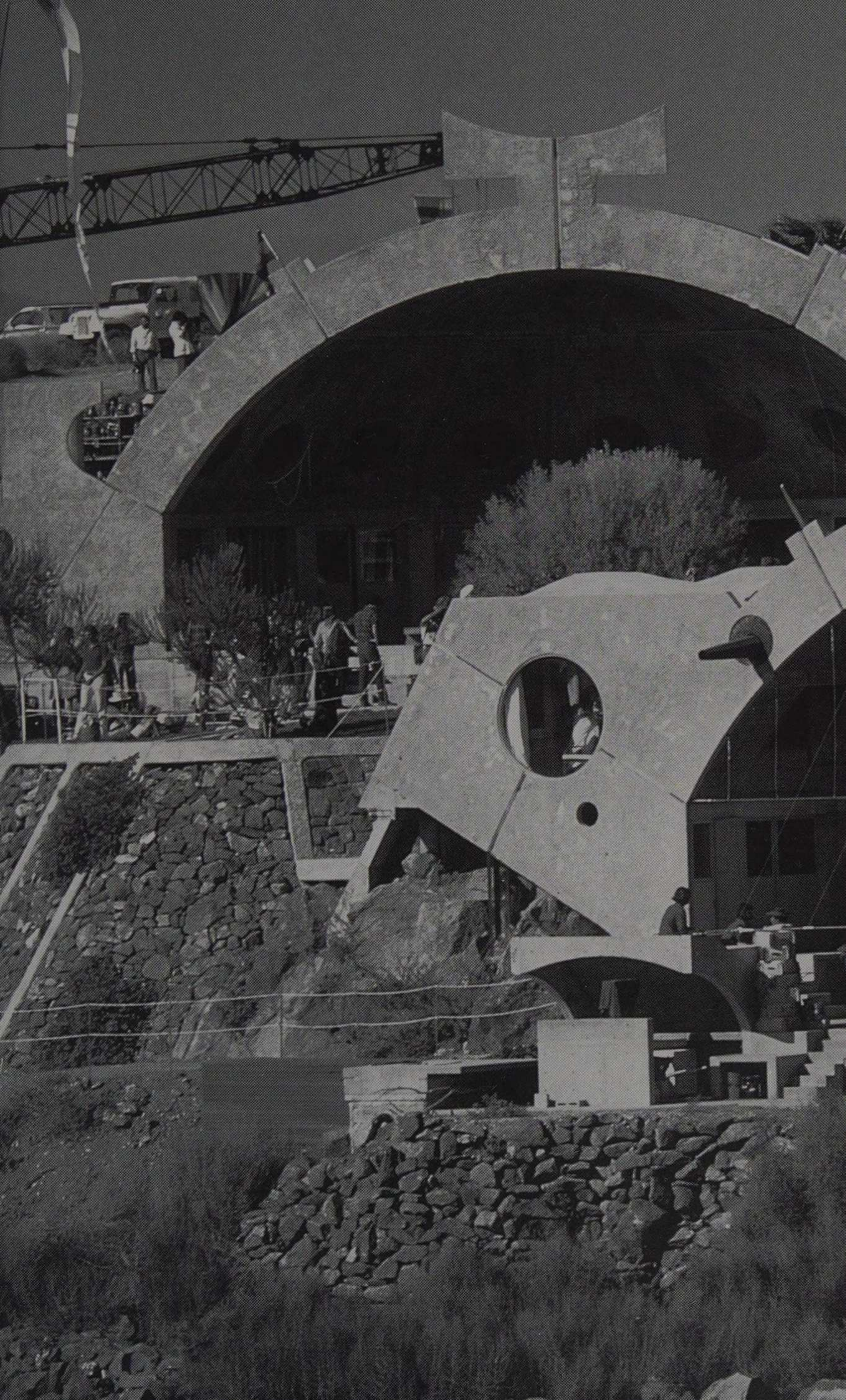
60

Equity in a Space-Time Frame of Reference

This proposition is a frank rejection of the notion that attaining equity can be disconnected from the necessity of equity's rebounding throughout reality, the bulk of which is the past. It is the quasi-absurd imperative of retroactivity, but an imperative nonetheless. There is no way to satisfy our moral sense and to abate outrage by staying in the infinitely segregated band of the present and seeking, in it and (only) for it, compassion and justice (an immensely undemocratic notion).



For the nature and the “success” of Arcosanti— its music, let’s say— this is really the key. If we do not succeed in developing a better perception of our responsibilities, which is a reflection of the awe reality is consumed by, then we will succeed only in a limited way. If this endeavor requires the redefinition of justice and divinity (and, by the way, democracy) so be it.



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Is the Aesthetic Reality the Ultimate Reality?

If reality is a self-creating process, a genesis, then it is within reason to think that such a process might eventually create its own aim. That such an aim might be just and benevolent is also within the reasonable boundaries of thought. Given the immensity of the context (a cosmogenesis), one could propose an additional dimension— exhilaration and grace, the excruciating process of aesthetogenesis embracing and transfiguring the cosmos at large.



Genesis is a vectorial process. Given the enormity of time-space, such a process is a quasi-endless aggregating and interlocking of infinitesimal “units,” adding up to that which is more than the sum of its parts. Ten to the 80th power is one way to make tangible the “number of parts” in question. That the Project might in some minimal way contribute to the process of aesthetogenesis is a most rewarding notion. Time and only time will tell.

The Urban Effect

All these topics are under the aegis of what I call the urban effect. The urban effect as universal effect is the transformation of mineral matter into mind via the potentially unlimited power of complexification and miniaturization. Such is the chase of organisms: single, composite, associative. In eschatological terms, the upper limit of the process could be the concluded aesthetogenesis in a cosmic seed, the omega seed.



For Arcosanti, it is again a question of infinitesimal contributions to a process that is potentially limitless in power and scope— the vivification of reality, the immense time-space, mass-energy phenomenon that we are part of. Organisms have such power charged and stored away in their limitless lust for the absolute. (Theoretically, it would only take a few hours or days for an unleashed reproductive force of organism to transform the whole cosmos into flesh!!)

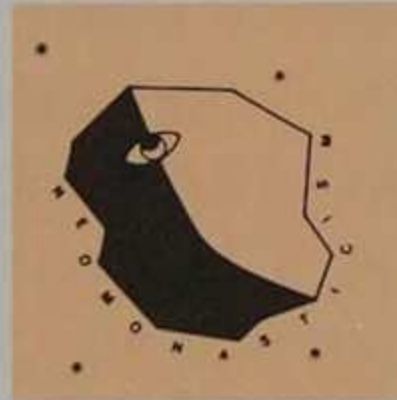
Violence and the Urban Effect

Facts are giving the lie to the notion that crowding generates violence:

1) Crowding does not induce violence. Antisocial, irresponsible behavior induces violence. The Londons, the Tokyos, the Moscows, the Calcuttas— and thousands of other cities big and small— testify to this. Only a gun-loving society can deceive itself into mistaking causes for effects.

2) More important, since in life are elements of conflict and since life is crowding by definition (see #13), the presence of life-crowding entails a modicum of violence.

Therefore, any eventful environ (a village for instance) is accompanied by some violence. An environ 10 times more eventful (a city for instance) should reasonably carry 10 times more violence. *The astonishing thing is that this is not so.* The fact is that, on average, the urban effect is *benevolent*. Quite a feat.



That until now Arcosanti has not seen violence does not grant it a non-violent future. In fact, I am of the opinion that smallness is also in this cast (see #15) a handicap. One wants to keep in mind that the most violent environment is the smallest of them all, the home.

Since the demise of “violence” is the necessary premise for any kind of honest constructive effort, it seems to me fitting that a statement about non-violence should be part of this book. Violence is in quotation marks to qualify what one would wish not to qualify. But given the nature of becoming (the food chain, that is), violence is not only endemic but functional, that is, purposeful. Remember the chicken or the salmon (or the salad) enjoyed at lunch.

Complexity, Miniaturization, Duration (the paradigm)

1. In any given system the liveliest quantum is also the most complex.
2. In any given system the most complex quantum is also the most miniaturized.
3. The most complex-miniaturized quantum is also the most durational.

Complexity is the qualification; miniaturization is the media (mass-energy-space-time) obliging. Duration is the fruit of media conceding.

Urban Effect (the methodology)

The complexity-miniaturization-duration paradigm epitomizes interdependence, cooperation, and synergy. At a higher level it epitomizes reflection, anticipation, passion, compassion, love, grace transfiguration, mind. It is the urban effect as postulated by the “city of God,” that ultimate (and therefore the only legitimate) utopia.

Aesthetogenesis (the aim)

The art object— poem, painting, sonata, etc.— is intrinsically virtuous; a speck of godliness. As such it stands as an end in itself. A virtual and virtuous end of reality is the one that resolves the dilemma, means and ends, inasmuch as it resolves the totality for reality’s history into a combine where finally all means find themselves to be also ends. Such process is then an aesthetogenesis.

The Equity Imperative

The radiance of aesthetogenesis happens to be also the fruit of the imperative of equity. As the aesthetic demands for each particle of reality (the rightful position of end), so it is that such transfiguration (from means) is by necessity all pervasive. It penetrates the “solid of reality” (the past, all of it) down to its first hiatus. This reproactivity of the equity imperative is the condition *sine qua non* of omega seed. The pain and suffering of organism, any organism, will have resolution, a radiant one, if and when the full legitimacy as ends unto themselves will appear side to side with the contribution as means to an end: Omega Seed. That is to be at the end of time (space).

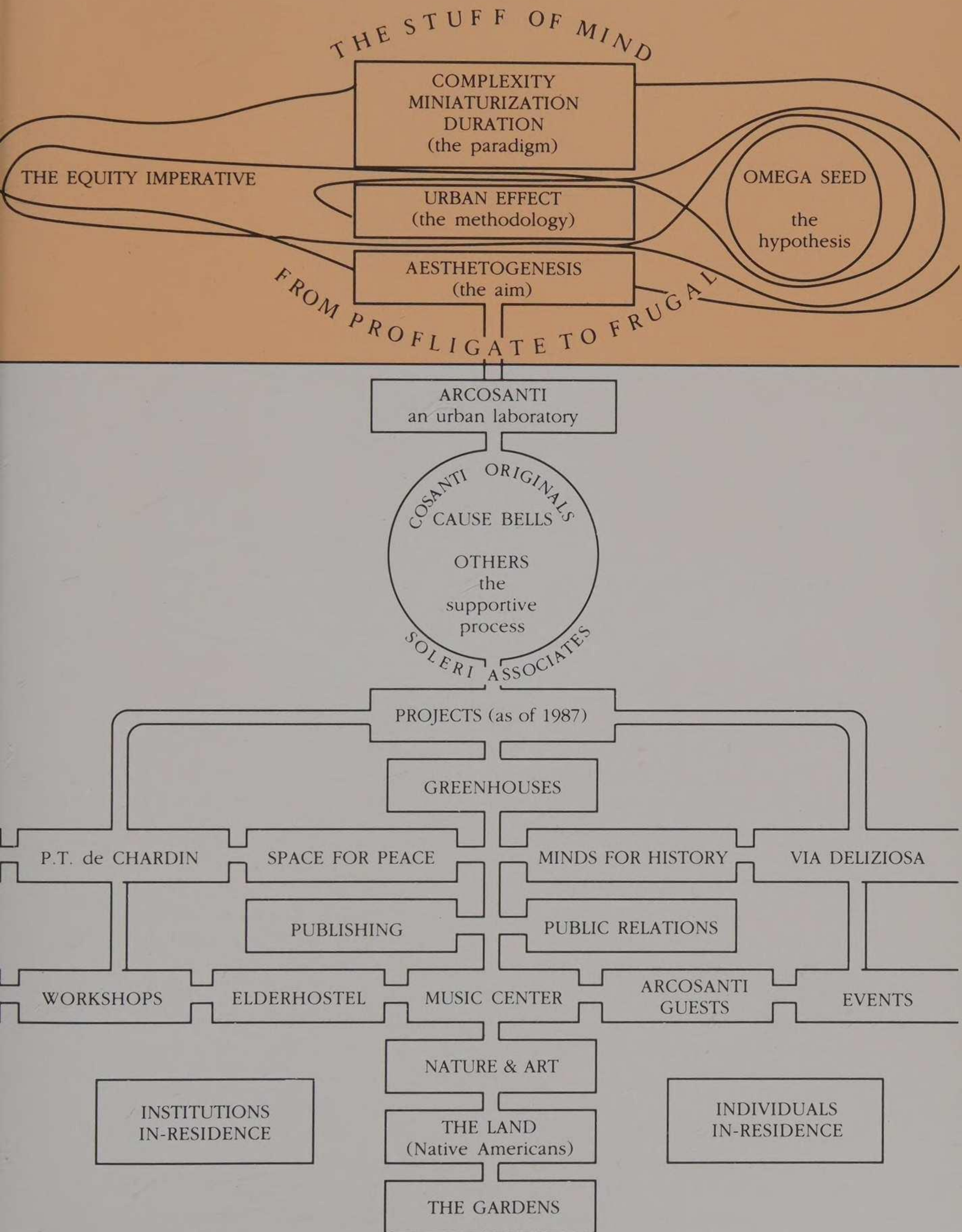
Omega Seed (the hypothesis)

The urban effect carried to its extreme is implementing the full blossoming of the aesthetic which is not to be unless the equity imperative is activated. The complexity-miniaturization-duration paradigm has to seek its fulfillment in a transfiguration of reality which Omega Seed proposes. In Omega Seed, reality has sought and has created the gene of itself (the ultimate gene, that is). The divine so passionately wished by consciousness is a pale anticipatory image of Omega Seed.

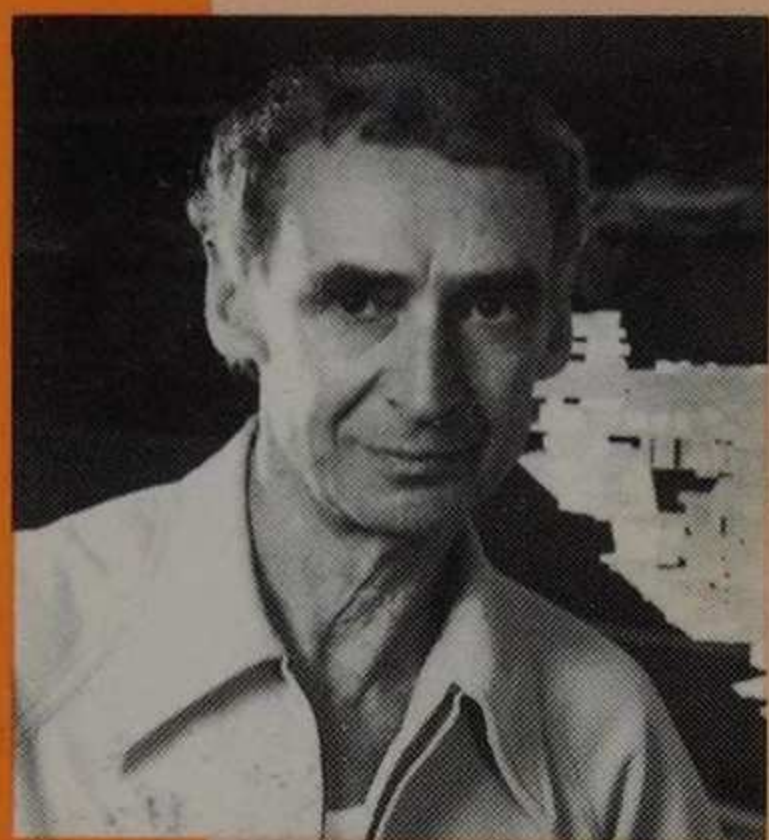
From Profligate to Frugality

The aesthetic as that which does the most with the least is inherently frugal. Omega Seed as the mind of history in which nothing goes to waste is eminently frugal. Entropy is the main obstacle to Omega Seed. Entropy is a message of less frugality and it is also the nemesis of true equity.

The Project



The top of the diagram is routinely ignored or dismissed. Fact is, it positions the Arcosanti project within reality



Paolo Soleri, Italian Laureate in architecture, is the director of the Cosanti Foundation in Scottsdale, Arizona, and the visionary responsible for the design of Arcosanti. He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim and the Graham Foundation and has been awarded three honorary doctorates.

"Like an immortal among the living, he is perhaps the leading architect of our time. Colleges would kill to have him on their staffs. Others would pay fortunes to have him design their skyscrapers, homes and hotels... To tour through Arizona, and not visit Arcosanti, the vision of 67-year-old Paolo Soleri, is to miss a view of the future as seen by a possible Leonardo da Vinci..."

Arthur Frommer, Chicago Sun-Times

Arcosanti offers an alternative to current urban dilemmas and at the same time seeks to re-establish contact between people and with an undisturbed landscape. Arcology is a methodology that recognizes the necessity for radical reorganization of the sprawling urban landscape into dense, integrated, three-dimensional towns and cities.

"To describe a Soleri city is to describe life itself, for at its most basic level a Soleri city is a living organism with a thousand minds... a being functioning as an entity while the city's inhabitants also function individually."

Naomi M. Bloom, Science Digest

In this book, Soleri discusses why the city structure must contract and miniaturize in order to support our complex economic, social and cultural activities, and to give individuals a new perspective and renewed trust in society and the future. Soleri skillfully engages the reader in a lively discourse, showing that the city can be a humane, healthy, dynamic, stimulating place to be.

