Arcosanti Innovation Video and Report

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Dedication

We would like to thank the people of Arcosanti for opening up their lives to us for the purpose of disseminating greater understanding of the project and their motives for joining it! Hopefully this will inspire more people to get involved.
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INTRODUCTION

The two major components of the Arcosanti innovation project undertaken for JUS 497/591 Social Enterprise: Innovation, Justice and Community Development are a seven minute promotional video of Arcosanti and this accompanying innovation report. The purpose for undertaking these endeavors was to explore the identity of Arcosanti within the broader field of social enterprises and to create greater awareness of Arcosanti (and attract new people to it), as a local, community-based organization; and to explore and apply the concepts and theories that we have learned throughout the semester to this unique entity. The video, “Living and Dreaming at Arcosanti,” highlights our fieldwork at Arcosanti, including interviews, a focus group, and participant observation.

We tried to present Arcosanti by the terms in which it self-identifies: as an “educational program” and a “construction site.”1 Above all else, the purpose of the video is to inform people about the Arcosanti project and the issues related to contemporary urban environments that it seeks to address. We also attempt to underscore the experiential component of the project because it is on this terrain that the two identities of being a construction site and an educational program intersect. People on-site learn a wide range of hands-on skills from metal working to ceramics to construction. More specifically the video emphasizes the residents’ motivations for joining the initiative and the aspects of their involvement in the Arcosanti project that they find most rewarding. Moreover, throughout the video, we tried to demonstrate the types of

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experiences that workshop participants and tourists could enjoy by visiting the site and/or getting involved in it.

Aside from promoting Arcosanti as an innovative organization, given our backgrounds in the social sciences, we also sought to gain a broader understanding of the relevance of the project for themes and issues explored in the course of our study of social enterprises, their development, and connection to justice and community development issues. We have grappled with some of the importance themes of the course in conjunction with what we observed on-site: alternative ways of imagining human societies, aspects of human nature, modes of collective action, and innovative methods of addressing problems associated with the current political, economic, social, and environmental concerns. We have analyzed these themes based on the course materials, relevant literature regarding the project, and our interviews and observations at Arcosanti. The video project and innovation report were in themselves motivated by the themes of the course: navigating one’s way through a collaborative effort. In addition, we attempted to situate Arcosanti as an important cultural center in Northern Arizona, as well as an interesting attraction for visitors regionally, nationally, and internationally.

The report which follows is organized into four sections. The first section describes the background of Arcosanti and the innovative aspects of the project, particularly in the larger context of the social economy of Arizona. Arcosanti is innovative is several respects, including the methods by which it addresses problem related to mainstream urban environments and the alternative paradigm it offers for contemporary human societies. The first section also discusses various obstacles Arcosanti faces as it moves into the future. The second section presents an overview of the video, “Living and Dreaming at Arcosanti,” and the process of constructing it. In the first half of this section we seek to identify the target audiences, and discuss the
innovativeness of the video. This was mainly accomplished by screening other videos about Arcosanti on YouTube, since this a major source of public information about Arcosanti other than its website. In the second half of the second section we highlight the design of the video and discuss issues we faced in collecting the footage and then editing the material to produce the final outcome. In the third section we discuss strategic uses for the video, and in the final section we offer some concluding thoughts on the course and the innovation project—the elements of the course and project that we particularly enjoyed and constructive critiques on how it could be improved.

SECTION ONE: THE VISION, INNOVATION, AND CHALLENGES

Background

Perhaps in reaction to the endless sprawl associated with living in American urban areas like Phoenix and Los Angeles, the founder of Arcosanti, Paolo Soleri, designed his dream of arcology (architecture and ecology) in an “urban laboratory.” Arcology, as defined by the organization’s website,

advocates cities designed to maximize the interaction and accessibility associated with an urban environment; minimize the use of energy, raw materials and land, reducing waste and environmental pollution; and allow interaction with the surrounding natural environment.2

As an “urban laboratory” the project seeks to address issues associated with contemporary urbanization: disintegration of community, environmental holocaust, and the loss of experiential knowledge.

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2 http://www.Arcosanti.org/theory/arcology/intro.html
Arcosanti represents an alternative approach to communities. Its design attempts to rectify some of the issues related to urbanization and overconsumption. In Soleri’s 1987 *Arcosanti: An Urban Laboratory*, he states that cities are central to human societies, but they are doomed if they lose their linkages to sources of sustenance—the countryside and natural environment. He endorses the development of self-reliant communities on marginal lands so fertile areas can be reserved for cultivation. Soleri (ibid) lays bare the idea that the alleviation of hunger necessarily entails the exploitation of the natural environment (Cannan 2000) by emphasizing that environmental exploitation is the result of greed rather than the inability to provide universal sustenance. In this vein, Soleri (1987) argues for frugality, or less consumptive lifestyles. His slogan “small is beautiful” is diametrically opposed to pathological model of mainstream gigantism: that is, “bigger is better.” Frugality is also one of the pinnacles of Soleri’s conceptualization of the “Lean Alternative” to hyper consumption and wastefulness through more frugal, efficient and intelligent city design.”

The “Lean Alternative” also implies that the developed world should be more conscious of its consumption due to the injustices associated with the poor of the developing world subsidizing the wastefulness of richer countries, which will be discussed in more detail promptly.

Soleri (1987) also seeks to redefine the nature of community. He sees the computer age as representative of forces totally alien the integration of life’s major components: living, learning, and working. According to Soleri, part of the isolation associated with urban living is “non-structured nomadism” in which people are not tied to any place and as a result they are more likely to abuse the environment. Isolation also contributes to segregation based on age, race, ethnicity, occupation, religion, and real estate (ibid:35). The scientific packaging of

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information lends to the amorality of the knowledge and the inability of people to perceive psychic knowledge and “environmental sensitization” (ibid:43). He believes that knowledge fostered through lived experience has been severely compromised—and this, he contends, is what Arcosanti intends to recapture.

The project broke ground in 1970. Upon the completion of “Arcosanti 5,000,” the design is intended to provide housing for 5,000 people on just 25 acres of land. The structures are built up over and under the land as opposed to the “sprawl” that is characteristic of some mainstream urban planning; Phoenix is an excellent example of this sprawl. Many of the facilities are intended for dual-use to maximize the amount of undeveloped land on the 4,060 acres preserve. The key to the non-exploitative nature of the “urban laboratory” is the harnessing of local resources: in the case of Arcosanti, the sun, the climate, neighboring communities, rock and silt. One example of this use of natural elements is the “vaults,” which are two enormous half cylinders. They are located in the center Arcosanti and are the site of the Morning Meetings, which nearly all of the residents attend. They not only provide shade but they also attract cooling air currents and, thus, function like wind tunnels or natural air conditioning. Arcosanti has also erected greenhouses to enable the community to produce as much of its own food as possible while generating more jobs, which is another example of the harnessing of natural, renewable resources through architectural design. The heat created in the greenhouses during the winter will be channeled to the living spaces, which they call the “green apron” project. The “green apron” project, by moving naturally heated air throughout the living spaces and some of the work areas, allows the site to save energy on heating. The “green apron,” like the “vaults,” also emphasizes the importance of dual-use designs. Finally, silt, a substance that is naturally abundant on-site, is used in various elements of construction, manufacturing, and art.
One final, but important, note must be iterated here: while Arcosanti is commonly labeled as a commune\(^4\) and or as an intentional community,\(^5\) the people associated with the project emphatically reject these markers. As stated in the introduction, the organization, as represented by Soleri and the Cosanti Board of Directors through its website and promotional literature, self-identifies as a “construction site” and an “educational program.” In distinguishing Arcosanti from an intentional community, Mary Hoadley, the Site Coordinator and member of the Cosanti Foundation Board of Directors, claimed that Arcosanti “is organized around Soleri’s ideas and plan for action” rather than a group of people coming together to execute a common plan for a community (email, April 28, 2011).\(^6\)

Aspects of Arcosanti’s Innovation

This section highlights aspects of Arcosanti’s innovativeness, including its models for reducing its ecological footprint, the means by which it finances itself, and its engagement with experiential knowledge. Experiential knowledge is a key aspect of Arcosanti—not simply for the theoretical foundation presented by Soleri (1987) above—because it is through this hands-on training that the site is constructed. Mary Hoadley told us at one of our meetings on April 7 that the primary objective of the promotional video is to entice people to come to Arcosanti to “pay to work.” This phrase underpins the aforementioned intersection of Arcosanti’s identities as an “educational program” and a “construction site”: more specifically, it emphasizes the five week workshop program. During this five-week program, “workshoppers,” as the workshop

\(^4\) Communes are a form of intentional community in which decisions are made collectively and property may be shared in common.

\(^5\) An intentional community is one in which people decide to live together and work cooperatively.

\(^6\) Cosanti Foundation is a “not-for-profit educational organization devoted to the support of Soleri’s noted architectural and urban planning research. Today, the primary areas of the Foundation’s work are: educating students….and the general public…ensuring the continuing construction of Arcosanti…[and] hosting educational and cultural conferences as well as performing arts events” (http://www.arcosanti.org/project/background/cosanti/main.html).
participants are called, learn construction work through helping to build the Arcosanti live/work structure.

Beside the importance of experiential knowledge, a few of the interviewees believe that Arcosanti could substantially impact conventional urban societies. These interviewees, who had backgrounds in architecture or urban planning, stressed the idea that the vision of Arcosanti would not have to be integrated in its entirety to current urban environments in order to contribute to more ecologically friendly ways of life. One such person, “Susan,”7 claimed that elements of Arcosanti’s design, like the “green apron,” could be incorporated into urban structures to reduce the footprint of the mainstream urban living. Presumably, mainstream urban environments could also harness natural elements, like the sun, to heat their buildings in lieu of using energy for heating. Another innovative example of Arcosanti’s design is the apse over the ceramic area. By allowing more heat in the area during the winter and more shade in the summer, the apse uses architectural design that is specific to this site to create naturally “climate-controlled” areas rather than relying on energy-intensive heating and cooling systems. This is why we believe that some of our interlocutors wanted to draw students from planning and architecture departments to Arcosanti; that is, if architects and urban planners were able to integrate elements of Soleri’s designs into their own work, the impact on the global society would be truly world-changing.

On top of its important contributions to the disciplines of planning and architecture, Arcosanti is attempting to educate people about more universal concerns that pertain to average people. In a video entitled “Arcosanti” that we viewed on YouTube, Mary Hoadley voiced her

7 We assured our interviewees that we would maintain confidentiality so we will be using pseudonyms throughout the report.
opinion that Arcosanti was fulfilling one of the educational component of its mission by teaching tourists (and purchasers of Arcosanti’s literature) about the wasteful and destructive tendencies that are considered normal in mainstream society.\(^8\) The hyper-consumptive nature of mainstream society was one of the recurring motivations that Arcosanti residents voiced in their explanations for deciding to move there. One can see this simply by looking at the living spaces at Arcosanti, which do not allow for the accumulation of an overabundance of belongings. This is particularly true for the people living in eight feet by eight feet cubes in “Camp.”\(^9\) Some of the interviewees we spoke to alluded to an over-accumulation of belongings in their pre-Arcosanti lives; these people expressed their relief at having rejected their burden of abundant possessions. This sentiment is exemplified by “Paul,” a resident who articulated his satisfaction and sense of relaxation now that, he “could fit everything [he]…own[s] into a backpack” (personal interview, April 17, 2011). Arcosanti residents have a much more developed awareness of space than that which exists in the sprawl of mainstream societies.

In discussing how the ideals of Arcosanti contribute to the social economy of Arizona and beyond, Soleri’s concept of generating a “Lean Alternative” to contemporary urban environments is particularly relevant. Using less resources and energy in one’s daily living, contributes to greater equity on local and global scales; this idea is advanced by dependency theorists, such as Wallerstein (1974), who argue that that the resource use in the developed world is subsidized by the developing world through declining terms of trade.\(^10\) In highly developed countries, there appears to be a sense of entitlement toward overconsumption—it is considered a

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\(^8\) [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfAJpRWM9tg&NR=1&feature=fvwp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfAJpRWM9tg&NR=1&feature=fvwp)

\(^9\) Camp, which is located about a quarter of a mile from the center of Arcosanti, consists of about a dozen eight by eight cubes and a couple of double and triple cubes. This area housed the original construction team in the 1970s while the people were working on the main site.

\(^10\) Declining terms of trade is the theory that the prices of primary goods, such as agricultural products and natural resources, decline over time relative to those of secondary good, like manufactured products.
blessing by citizens in affluent countries that they are able to consume without conscientious regard for how this consumption affects the natural environment and the other inhabitants of the planet Earth. In contrast to mainstream ideology, Soleri’s (1987) conceptualization of “lean alternative” promotes greater socioeconomic justice within and between societies because it reinforces the idea that we should only be consuming what we need and we should always be searching out ways of diminishing our negative ecological impacts through consumption. Using less resources and energy is accomplished, according to one new resident named “Mark,” by “walking 500 feet to work…[and not needing to] stop at the Starbucks on the way” (interview, April 15, 2011). In other words, it involves having an increased awareness of one’s habits of consumption; however, it also involves not being at the mercy of how a city is laid out. “Mark” is from the Los Angeles area so he described how, when he lived in Los Angeles, he needed to have a car and pay for gas and insurance. Transportation costs, especially in urban environments that are designed for automobiles as the primary mode of transport, and the grueling hours of commuting in themselves make the “lean alternative” an attractive alternative.

**Challenges and Opportunities**

From our perspectives, there are a few major challenges to the Arcosanti project as it moves into the future, both in terms of the project’s identity and its overarching objectives. First, although Paolo Soleri is in his nineties, there does not seem to be a current plan in place for how the leadership structure will change when he is no longer physically able to maintain his leadership position within the organization. Soleri still plays an important role in governing Arcosanti and it seems that there is not great transparency in regard to his predecessor(s): that is, who will have the final say in how the project moves forward it the future. There are, however, several people on the Board of Trustees that are long-time friends and relatives of Soleri, so the
likelihood of changes occurring in regard to the overarching vision of the project or to the methods by which Arcosanti finances itself when Soleri passes is ambiguous.

Arcosanti is like a living organism and, as such, its vision is constantly evolving through the people who participate in it. For example, there is no consensus among the people we interviewed in regard to the possibility of the “Arcosanti 5,000” prototype coming to fruition. “Emily” and “Susan,” who are residents with educational backgrounds in architecture and urban design, respectively, believe that the finalized plan was not necessarily the most crucial aspect of Soleri’s vision: they believed that it was desirable to take pieces of Soleri’s masterful designs and integrate these elements into contemporary urban design and architecture. Others we spoke to were not sure that they would want to live with 5,000 other people on that site, even with the expanded housing proposed through “Arcosanti 5,000.” Several people discussed how they felt comfortable leaving computers worth a few thousand dollars or other valuables lying about with their current co-inhabitants but these informants were not sure that they would feel the same way if the community grew to its envisioned capacity. “Amber” suggested the possibility of the design morphing into separate interlinked clusters; that is, smaller communities within a larger one, but the smaller ones maintaining the same larger vision.

However, the slow progress toward its impressive vision of housing 5,000 people is one of the reasons sited by critics to discredit this objective of Arcosanti. Some critics say that the project should be relegated to the pages of history because it has not accomplished “Arcosanti 5,000” in the forty plus years of its existence. A few of the resident claimed that the slow progress is more a result of the large fire (some say a Jethro Tull show in the 1970s other sources
say an open house in the 1980s\textsuperscript{11}) that occurred at the site and subsequent lawsuits that were brought up against the Cosanti Foundation; that is, the Cosanti Foundation has had to devote some of its funds to paying off court settlements rather than focusing on building up the Arcosanti site to its envisioned capacity. However, the prospect of completing the project to capacity is still an important issue. While we were there, the housing on the site was nearly full, mostly with residents who have permanent jobs and, as such, people who may not working in construction. Thus, the question becomes the following: even if many people were attracted to the site as workshoppers, where would they be housed? Nonetheless, as stated previously, there is no consensus among the people that have chosen to live there as to whether or not they would want to share the mesa with several thousands of people. Thus, another question comes to us: would a project of 5,000 people draw a different crowd and would Arcosanti be able to maintain its vision if the size increased to capacity?

Another challenge relates to the ability of the project to continue financing itself. It appears that a large percentage of revenues come from bell sales; in a 2002 YouTube video, “Arcosanti,” Mary claimed that bell sales grossed about $2 million. Although tourism has remained relatively constant over the years (serving about 50,000 per year),\textsuperscript{12} Mary Hoadley indicated that recent increases in the price of bronze have resulted in the community being pressed for funds (personal communication, February 26, 2011). Therefore, Arcosanti still relies on attracting “workshoppers” to the project, not only for the revenues this brings in but also because this program provides an important source of labor. Signing up people to participate in the workshop, and thus paying to contribute to the construction of Arcosanti in exchange for learning about construction work and Soleri’s theoretical works, is an important source of

\textsuperscript{11} http://www.johnlocke.org/lockerroom/lockerroom.html?id=22814
\textsuperscript{12} http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfAipRWM9tg&NR=1&feature=fwp
revenue because these funds are neither subject to the fluctuations of the commodity markets nor to declines in tourism due to people having less disposable income to travel. In these hard economic times, many interviewees discussed the prospects of Arcosanti producing more of its own subsistence items by, for example, people reestablishing the agricultural program. Some of those that were interviewed were particularly excited about the baby chicks that they had purchased in the first week of April as a means of producing more of the food for Arcosanti on-site. Although people seem motivated to help the community help itself, these subsistence projects are currently only possible through the labor and initiative of volunteer work because of the strapped budget of the organization.

On a final note, while many newspaper reports on Arcosanti have been positive, others have recycled the same defamatory attitudes toward the project. One reporter claimed that the project does not speak to people in the contemporary era as a place where they would want to live due its lack of modern comforts and conveniences, citing the leaky infrastructure and unsightly mounds of recyclables. Another source highlights how Arcosanti cannot get past its perceived cult-like image among the surrounding communities. Others draw attention to the inconsequentiality of the project due to its inability to engage the mainstream; however, one such article does concede that the ecological foundations of the project have now been hoisted into the mainstream consciousness. This negative news coverage also informs another issue that we hope the video will address: repairing the images of the Arcosanti project and residents of the site upon which the mainstream has cast disparagements. Mary Hoadley also served as our on-

13 http://townhall.com/columnists/byronyork/2009/12/28/a_green_sustainable_future_that_doesnt_work
site mentor and collaborator in executing the video project and fieldwork and was essential to encouraging participation among the Arcosanti residents.

SECTION TWO: YOUTUBE VIDEO: “LIVING AND DREAMING AT ARCOSANTI”

Video Overview

The promotional video we have created attempts to generate greater awareness of the project. It is our belief that if more people knew Arcosanti existed, they would find a way to become involved in one capacity or another. The first section of the video highlights the philosophy behind the project and what residents and workshoppers are seeking to gain and/or experience through participating in it. The second section features the overarching educational components of the project given that there is presumably considerable overlap between people interested in the workshop and those who may want hands-on training through the departments of their various institutions of learning. The last section illustrates what the site offers to tourists by way of tours, dining, artisan wares, festivals, and so forth; it also attempts to locate Arcosanti as a center for cultural interchanges.

Objectives

Ultimately, Arcosanti wishes to draw people physically and philosophically to the Arcosanti project, which can be accomplished in several ways. We aim to create greater awareness of Arcosanti among the target audiences (see below). As mentioned previously, since the physical structure of Arcosanti is built by workshoppers, the project is interested in drawing people in to attend the workshop. We are attempting to attract university student because, not only is this demographic prevalent among Arcosanti residents, they would gain by way of
experiential knowledge to enhance the knowledge of their various disciplines. The video also promotes tourism.

**Target Audiences**

We identified several target audiences through our research of the Arcosanti project, our fieldwork, and our dialogue with Mary Hoadley: university students, faculty mentors, and the general public, especially tourists. We will discuss each audience briefly and then expand on this discussion in the next section: “Strategic Use of the Video by Arcosanti.” University students can gain more textured knowledge of their disciplines through hands-on experience. The attraction of faculty mentors coincides the experience that Arcosanti could offer to their students; Arcosanti can enhance the subject matter of many academic disciplines. The allure to the general public may be simply of wanting to self-educate on issues related to environmental sustainability, which is a popular topic in the mainstream. Arcosanti may interest tourists, in particular, due to it regularly scheduled festivals and performance and because of its unique beauty and history.

**Innovation**

We looked at a dozen or so videos about Arcosanti posted on YouTube and none of them offered the same mixtures of aesthetics and informational qualities as the video we have created. Many offer video clips of the grounds with music playing in the background. A few videos we reviewed offered short video clips of up to three interviewees, which discussed the philosophical underpinnings of the project. Other videos highlighted the touristic aspects of the

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site, such as the tour. Still another, which was produced by OrganicFoods.TV, highlighted the possibility of growing organic fruits and vegetable on the property. Since our video offers more information, it will be of interest to a variety of audiences for a variety of overlapping reasons.

The most innovative aspect of our video is its focus on the workshop program. Some of the other videos we viewed discussed the Soleri’s philosophy, but none of them highlighted the workshop program, which we believe is an essential to our promotional video. Furthermore, our video captured the younger generation of Arcosanti residents. Most of the people that agreed to talk to us were from the younger crowd who were predominantly in their early twenties. The people on the initial list that Mary Hoadley sent us were mostly somewhat recent inductees, very active in the community, and connected to the governing circles either through their jobs or through their memberships on the Community Counsel.

**Video Production**

**Design**

As stated previously, Mary Hoadley thought the primary emphasis for the promotional video should be to encourage people to matriculate in the workshop program. She also mentioned on our initial visit to the site on February 26, 2011 that Arcosanti had had some difficulty since the price of bronze doubled. From this information, we gleaned the idea that the video should strategize ways to draw funds to the project: through workshops participation, ticket revenues from events, patronization of the café and site tours, bell purchases, and so forth. After identifying the purpose of the video we pondered who might be interested in supporting the

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17 [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVhUPLkJXM&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVhUPLkJXM&feature=related)

project financially through one of these multiple avenues: in doing so, we fleshed out target audiences for the video. However, in doing research for this report, we realized how central educating the mainstream populace about hyper-consumption and other ecologically damaging effects of convention urban living is to Arcosanti. Fortunately, this educational component overlaps with a few of the target audiences we identified: namely, people who are interested in sustainability due to the subject’s popularity in mainstream culture and tourists who are interested in eco-friendly venues and those interested in alternative living arrangements.

Having visited the Arcosanti site on February 26 for the course-sponsored “Social Economy Tour and Arcosanti Event,” we experienced firsthand some of the attractions that the site had to offer to tourists. Matteo DiMichele led us on a tour of the site and then we had a magnificent dinner in the café. In addition to the stargazing area, which we considered to be brilliant, and the other beautiful and interesting architecture on-site, there is also a hiking trail with the faint sound of bells ringing in the distance. We had also planned on filming the video during the Bluegrass Festival on April 16, as an event that would appeal to tourists. Therefore, in addition to the Bluegrass Festival, we planned to film a tour of the site, the nature trail, the gallery, and the café. Mary Hoadley confirmed our impression that tourism is an important aspect of promoting the site.

We wanted to highlight the educational program offered through Arcosanti as well as other forms of experiential knowledge that the site offers residents. Our idea was to hear as much about the workshop program as possible in the focus group for workshopper. Travis and Rebecca planned to attend the workshoppers’ evaluations of the initial week of the program, the seminar week, on Friday, April 15. Travis also planned to visit Arcosanti on another occasion to
shadow people in the foundry and the ceramics workshop. During the weekend that we were on the site a resident also offered to demonstrate silt-casting for the video.

**Shooting/Data Collection**

The fact that the site and grounds of Arcosanti are so breathtaking made the job of collecting aesthetically pleasing photographs and video footage relatively easy. The weekend that we were there was also very lively due to the festival and the grounds were cleaned up and looking their best. There were a variety of interesting vendors in the vaults, which made this area look especially colorful. We also got some great shots of the nearly-full moon over the vaults and the sunset from the top of the apse.

We realized that we did not have many people from the older generations speaking about their experiences at Arcosanti when it was too late to do anything about it. We did not want to be too invasive so we were mostly working with the list of people who expressed interest in participating and very few of the long-term residents wanted to participate. Only three of the ten interviewees had lived on the site more than a year or two. One of the Community Counsel members was kind enough to video record the last counsel meeting on April 12 and upload it onto the flash drive for us. We were mostly relying on Mary Hoadley to encourage participation among the resident but we did not consider asking her to find a range of people with different educational backgrounds and duration of residence. However, our convenient sample was, thought out to be relatively true to the demographics on-site; that is, most of the residents are in their twenties and thirties.

While residents were very willing to assist in the success of the project, the camera and voice recorder were not always equally cooperative; that is, technological issues riddled the
project from its onset (dead batteries, missing cables, and so forth). Furthermore, we came to find out that the memory cards would only accommodate about 20 minutes of filming so it would be too distracting to be required to download the footage several times during an interview. Moreover, 20 minutes of footage took an average of 20-30 minutes to download; therefore, we think it is essential to have at least two memory cards per camera so one can be uploaded while the other is being used in the subsequent interview. Alternately, the interviewers should be informed to permit adequate time in between interviews to upload their footage. We had not had enough experience in filming or with the equipment to have anticipated these issues.

As stated previously we planned to go to Arcosanti for the weekend of April 15-17 because of the Bluegrass Festival and the workshoppers’ verbal evaluations of the seminar week. We were all able to stay on the Arcosanti site from Friday April 15 to Sunday April 17 for at least 24 to 50 hours. We conducted most of our in-depth interviews on Friday. We were initially going to film the entirety of all of the interviews but, after speaking with Ruvi, we decided that leaving the camera on for these hour-long interviews would have result in too much footage to edit; therefore, we decided that we should get each interviewee’s face on film and then audio-recorder the remainder of the interview. Also, as we mentioned above, the capacity of the memory chip would have been as issue since our interviews were about an hour long.

On Friday we filmed “Camp,” by way of an informal guided tour, the café and the bells and artwork therein, the site from the gravel road, and the stargazing area. We primarily filmed the Bluegrass musicians and venders in the vault on Saturday but, since most of the previous day had been filled with interviews, we filmed a lot of other areas on Saturday as well: the gallery, the café, the access to the nature trail, and Soleri’s apartment. On Sunday, Rebecca interviewed
two other residents and filmed the Sky suites—the largest guest accommodation on site with a gorgeous view of the canyon (see Appendix A for further information).

Post-production/Editing

Grace decided to utilize Windows Live Movie Maker to help expedite the video production process. We felt that we had a very limited amount of time to edit, cut, and develop the video. Grace estimates that she and Travis spent about twenty hours working on the video. The aspect of compiling the video that was so time-intensive was going over all of the footage and deciding which the best to use was. Our group had little or no experience in film and editing, so it provided a new challenge in learning a new process: development of a video from beginning to end. Looking back at our misfortunes with technology limiting our amount of footage and audio, we were still able to capture enough relevant and useful footage to create the video. Furthermore, Travis and Grace were unable to attend the editing tutorial offered by Ruvi on April 8.

Reviewing the pictures and video to create a storyboard was the first step in identifying the footage we would use and which we would discard. The completed video captures some of what we set out to in the design but other aspects are less clear. It did discuss the workshop program some of Soleri’s philosophy. It highlighted the festival and other tourist attractions and it outlined some of the people’s motives for joining the project. It briefly captured the daily lives of residents through one interviewee but the shadowing of workers in the foundry and the ceramic apse never came to fruition. If we had been able to utilize some of the other footage that was planned in the design but fell through in execution, it may have helped in highlighting
certain other aspects at Arcosanti, such as ceramics and metal work. On the other hand, having that much more film to go through and edit may not have been feasible.

One of the logistic issues we had was the sizes of our video files as well. Having access to an external hard drive for creating and transporting the video would have also helped with times involved in working on the video; instead of having to continually rummage through several different flash drives for footage, it could have been organized on an external hard drive. Visiting Alt^I was not always feasible because of our other obligations, even though Ruvi was an excellent technical advisor and he helped a lot in guiding us through the videography project.

SECTION THREE: STRATEGIC USES OF THE FILM

In this section we will discuss ways of utilizing the video to attract workshops and other people to Arcosanti. The target audiences for the workshops, university students, overlap with attracting partnerships with universities in important respects. Most of the residents of Arcosanti are in their twenties and thirties, the same age range as students. Moreover, the project involves an array of motives for inclusion, from life sciences to both physical and cultural anthropology to justice studies. For example, scholars studying alternative living arrangements or isolation may choose to study it through a comparative perspective: contrasting mainstream urban living with the society of Arcosanti.

Students of urban design may look at the aspects of Soleri’s design that seek to harness natural elements of the environment and apply it to their plans. They may also be interested in designs that contour the surroundings rather than developing standard designs without consideration for the particularities of the natural environment. This contouring is evident to visitors who take the stairs to the nature trail and see an intact piece of the mesa protruding from
the foundation, which adds contrast to the finished cement walls at the bottom of the staircase. Considering natural features in one’s designs is an important concept for architecture students to as well. Architects could study the multitude of ways that Soleri built the structure of Arcosanti into the mountainside and natural environment rather than over it or through it by demolishing parts terrain. Other examples of the design being built for that particular site include the aforementioned ceramics apse and the vaults. Soleri’s designs are very different from the conventional one-size-fits-all approach to designing and building contemporary urban environments, which seek to “conquer” rather than consider the natural surroundings.

While students of urban planning and architecture are typically the ones that are assumed to be interested in projects like Arcosanti, people studying environmental sciences, sustainability, agricultural, landscaping, and so forth may also be attracted to the project after viewing our promotional video. Students of sustainability (like SOS at ASU) and environmental sciences would undoubtedly be interested in naturally occurring construction materials, such as the silt used on the site in construction, as well as how theoretical models of more sustainable living take on tangible forms. They may also be interested in Soleri’s perspective on frugality in opposition to the hyper-consumption of conventional cities. Arcosanti also offers a land mass that can be used by students of agriculture and landscaping for experimentation or implementation of various projects, such as the seedball project recently conducted by a group of student from the landscaping department at ASU). The ability to practice different agricultural and landscaping techniques would not only benefit the students, but also the Arcosanti project. For example, many of the interviewees mentioned wanting to increase the agricultural production at Arcosanti,

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19 One faculty member of Landscaping and Design is an Arcosanti alumni and he and a group of his students are conducting an experiment with seedballs on the Arcosanti grounds. They began their experiment during the weekend of April 8-9.
but have been unable to do so due to budget constraints. Moreover, landscaping projects could beautify the grounds and counter the problem of soil erosion which is common in desert landscapes.

Since students of these various fields related to Arcosanti’s expertise (architecture, urban planning, and the like) have chosen vocations based on their strong interests in these subjects, their penchant for these topics might also feed into their desires to participate in the Arcosanti project. As mentioned previously, we believe that one of the reasons that more students based in Arizona are not engaged in the Arcosanti project is because they are not aware that it exists. One such example of this lack of awareness was offered by a resident named “Emily.” Though she grew up in Cave Creek with Soleri’s Dome House near her residence, she did not hear about Arcosanti until she was studying architecture at a university on the east coast. Thus, initiating contact with universities in Arizona and marketing the video to relevant departments is likely to be the most effective means of increasing workshop matriculation.

We believe the video should be showcased on various sites and linked to the public relations campaign currently underway at Arcosanti. A recent inductee into the project is now working as the public relations liaison. She iterated that part of her work was contacting relevant university departments, both nationally and internationally, to inform them about the project. While the website describes past initiatives, which have resulted through partnerships between Arcosanti and various universities, this aspect of project does not, in our opinion, receive the level of attention that it should on the website.

20 150 Danish students visited Arcosanti during the first weekend of April to design and construct a wood sculpture that contoured the slope of the mesa, which is visible from the south view of the café. Mary Hoadley told us that the second weekend of April a groups from ASU’s landscape and design unit conducted an experiment with seedballs on the south slope of the mesa upon which the Arcosanti structure is located.
More partnerships with universities would not only create greater awareness of the project, and possibly attract more workshoppers, but it could also establish internship and scholarship initiatives within university departments. Furthermore, particularly in regard to urban planning and architecture programs, students could integrate some of Soleri’s design principles into their own projects, which is not actually the intent of the project but could be an ecological beneficial by-product of it. This is only possible through disseminating information about the project; therefore, we suggest that the link to our video, “Living and Dreaming at Arcosanti,” be attached to promotional literature pertaining to Arcosanti, especially literature intended for institutions of higher learning. Furthermore, directors and relevant administrative staff at ASU’s School of Sustainability, School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning, School of Life Sciences, Urban and Environmental Planning, The Design School (Architecture as well as landscaping) should be contacted directly through email with a link to the video. Comparable departments should be contacted at Northern Arizona University: Design for Architecture and Exhibition, Environmental Sciences, Environmental Engineering, and Geography, Planning and Recreation. Similar contacts should be made with University of Arizona departments, such as Urban Planning, College of Architecture, and Institute of the Environment.

Another important component of promoting Arcosanti is through tourism, which enables Arcosanti to educate the public about hyper-consumption and the alternative it offers. We attempted to present Arcosanti as an important cultural site, not only in the Arizona landscape but, also, nationally and internationally. The site offers an eclectic mix of events that occur there during the summer (such as the Bluegrass Festival, the Indian Festival, Juneteeth, and so forth).
Due to its somewhat isolated location, it is the only site of events such as these between Phoenix and Prescott. Furthermore, as the project has evolved, it has accommodated a myriad of cultures: American, Japanese, Italian, and so on. Consequently, Arcosanti draws people from around the world to participate in the workshops: in fact, the top three countries from which the workshop participants originate are Italy, Japan, and Canada.

We suggest, for the optimum exposure of the video project and Arcosanti itself, that the link to the video be posted on various websites, including the Arcosanti website and the Social Economy AZ website. Posting the link to the video on travel websites may also be a good use of this promotional instrument, including travel blogs and local community forums. While Arcosanti cannot be considered an ecotourism project, many of it principles would resonate with people who patron ecotourism or conscientious tourism sites, so we believe that posting the link on these sites would encourage tourism: such as the websites for the International Ecotourism Society and EcoTour. Uploading the link on various event sites, such as AZ Central and Craigslist for the Phoenix Metro area, may also be useful in promoting upcoming events.

SECTION FOUR: EVALUATING THE PROJECT

Ruvi offered a lecture on taking photographs and a four-hour tutorial on how to edit and add effects to video. While Ruvi’s lecture on editing the film was quite extensive and helpful, it may have been helpful to have a brief PowerPoint presentation on how to create short films, similar to the one he gave on taking photographs. There are so many factors involved in creating a film that we did not think about all of them until we were putting the medium together. It would have been nice to see different examples of these so we could have decided in which direction we wanted to move prior to gathering footage. We could have also sent these examples
to Mary Hoadley so she could have had more of a sense of the options available and could have recommended her preferences.

There are other issues related to this particular form of medium that one might not consider until after the fact. We typically throw in words of encouragement when engaging in dialogue ("uh, huh" or "OK") but, in dealing with audio-recordings related to a film, such encouragement disturbs the flow of the recording. We also should have considered how we would integrate faces into various sections. We got a lot of people on film talking about their motivations for joining Arcosanti on film, but relatively few faces speaking about what they do on a daily basis. We also failed to determine if we were going to narrate transitions or put up text—the joys of being novice filmmakers!

This is perhaps very particular to our experience, but we would recommend having extra camera memory chips available for teams in the future. Extra memory chip would have allowed us to download the information from one as we were using another to conduct the next interview. Since the site requires a good deal of hiking to go anywhere and, as such, we did not want to carry our laptops with us everywhere to upload footage. If it is not possible to furnish extra memory cards, the technical staff might suggest spacing out the interviews enough so the research team is able to empty their memory cards between interview sessions. Extra batteries would also be useful, a point to which Travis can attest, seeing as how his second trip was foiled by a dead battery.

The in-class portion of the course was well structured and clearly defined but the videography project was less so, most likely due to the recent development of the course and the rushed timeline among collaborators. The last few assignments were issued just a week prior to
the deadlines, which made it difficult for us to meet and work through the details of the written work (especially seeing as how they were given to us toward the end of the week and our regularly scheduled meetings were on Mondays and Wednesdays). We had to arrange phone conversations and, being that they were two-way conversations, try to mete out focal points and then articulate them to the other person who was not involved in the two-way dialogue. After the issues we encountered in putting together the project proposal, we agreed to meet face-to-face weekly and discuss the progress of the project over the phone or through Skype and least one other time per week, in addition to the nearly daily exchange of emails. We do not foresee the video projects being as problematic in the future because this is often the case with trial runs of courses.

Our group was mainly self-directed as we believe that Mary was too overburdened to take on a more active role in the project. Although she was very encouraging and was able to convince nearly a dozen people to be interviewed, she did not appear to have the time to offer specific directives as to how she envisioned the video would be developed. She definitely did more than her fair share in promoting the project within the community and, most likely no other person could have done this as well as she did. We identified target audiences, sections of the video, objectives to highlight, and so forth on our own. Perhaps if Mary had delegated the project to another person or co-facilitated it, we may have gotten more on-site feedback on the direction of the film. Her style of engagement seemed to underline the epistemological framework of Arcosanti: experiential knowledge through trial and error. We sincerely hope that the film turns out to be a medium that Arcosanti will want to use in marketing the initiative!
CONCLUSION

Arguably, the most innovative aspect of Arcosanti is that it offers a tangible alternative to mainstream communities. Rather than simply drawing attention to ails of modern living, it promotes the construction of a structure and set of projects that gives shape to this imagined alternative. It can be seen as a monument to this dream: to build with our hands, consuming less, making ourselves available to “environmental sensitization,” and live less isolated lives. As an urban laboratory, it has a life of its own—its innovative spirit attracts people to it and, in so doing, they reinvigorate it with their own spirits. Through the dedication and initiative of the participants, the structure remains both a physical space and overarching vision.

Arcosanti is an enduring form in the Arizona landscape. For decades, it has made bells and trained people in construction through its workshop; it has not strayed from its initial purpose or its means of achieving this purpose. Yet it finds other ways of sustaining itself as well—the festivals not only bring in added revenue but they are also a way to spreading awareness about the project. Agricultural production is another promising approach for disseminating information and forging relations with the community. There are a myriad of routes that Arcosanti could take to increase its revenues, but it seems to be more resolved in remaining true to its initial mission and vision.

Arcosanti is at an important juncture in its existent. Our initial assessment is that Arcosanti will have difficulty achieving its ultimate goal (of housing 5,000 people) unless it strays from the means by which it would accomplish this goal (construction through the labor of workshoppers). If the project wants to reach its goal of the 5,000 people capacity, which, as we have mentioned, is not universally agreed upon among the residents, it will be forced to look
beyond the construction labor of workshoppers alone. We believe that the workshops could still be the pinnacle of its mission, but no one would think less of the project if funds were raised to contract people outside of the community to contribute to the construction. In fact, this move may be less discrediting to the project than its slow progress. However, if the construction through workshoppers is not an aspect of the project from which it is willing to veer, we suggest that this aspect be advanced as its ultimate goal rather than the “Arcosanti 5,000” design.

We will conclude with a few suggestions in regard to how could Arcosanti raise funds toward the goal of “Arcosanti 5,000” (if this remains its ultimate goal). As stated in the report, Arcosanti is an important visitors’ site regionally because it is one of the only locality of interest between Phoenix and Prescott. If investments could be made in the agricultural sector, it could trade its produce with other local producers to become more self-sufficient in its food production and/or host weekly farmer’s market. It could also sell it produce at farmer’s markets in Prescott and Phoenix (such as ASU’s weekly farmer’s market), not only to raise extra funds but, also, to create more awareness of the project. Although its available space for accommodating tourists is relatively small (there are about a dozen guest suites), it could use some of the open space on the grounds for camping if these fields were not designated for agricultural production. This would allow the field to remain minimally developed but still contribute to revenues. Lastly, Soleri could move into the mainstream with his ideas though perhaps not his principles by marketing elements of his designs to be integrated into existing urban communities, as a few of the residents suggested. This would achieve a greater impact on the American and global societies than completing the “Arcosanti 5,000.” Perhaps this will be Soleri’s greatest legacy, even if he does not himself create the designs that would impact the contemporary urban environments.
His vision, maybe not in its entirety, will live on through the people who were touched by his dreams of human collectivity, which was envisioned decades before their time.
APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

We used qualitative methods in conducting our research: in-depth interview, participant observation, and one focus group. While we arrived on-site with an extensive interview schedule, we also gathered our data inductively through employing grounded theory; thus, our subsequent interviews were informed by previous ones. We conducted a total of ten in-depth interviews with a variety of residents, foundry and ceramics workers, and at least one member of the Community Council. We also engaged some of the new workshoppers in a small focus group because we thought their reasons for joining the project would be fresh in their minds: these workshoppers had very interesting things to say and we included them in the film. A lot of our engagement with people was through casual conversation.

Mary Hoadley was our mentor and on-site contact while we executed the video project and fieldwork. She was instrumental in encouraging people to participate. She recruited eleven people for us to interview; however, one prospective interviewee was not feeling well so we were unable to conduct this interview. Interviewees signed consent forms to be interviewed or participate in the focus group. These consent forms ensured confidentiality, which is why we used pseudonyms in the report. Participants who wished to be included in the video through recorded images or voice recordings signed a separate waiver for this component. One participant asked Rebecca to make available to him anything she wrote up in the report about their discussion; upon reviewing Rebecca’s write up of their discussion, he asked her to remove these three sentences and she complied with his wishes. While we were on site, we recruited six other residents to participate in interviews but we only had time to interview one of them. Travis was going to contact the remaining five people during his second visit but it is unclear whether he was able to contact them or not. We were able to recruit these other six people through
announcing our project at the Morning Meeting, approaching people individually to encourage their participation, and engaging them in friendly conversations at meals and other opportune times.

Our lengths of participant observation varied. Rebecca arrived Friday morning and stayed until Sunday afternoon. Travis was on-site from Friday afternoon until Sunday morning. Grace was there from Friday evening until Saturday evening. Travis went to the site a second time on April 21 but Grace was unable to visit Cosanti. Due to familial constraints, Rebecca was unable to make a second trip. Travis and Rebecca went to camp on Friday and Saturday to observe the local night life. We observed the Bluegrass Festival, the morning meeting, and workshoppers’ evaluations of the project. We sat with residences and conversed with them at every meal while we were on site. We visited a few residents in their apartments so we could have a better idea of how the site is designed on the inside.

Since we all left the field with a positive impression of the project and its participants, we decided to research local and national coverage of Arcosanti so we could get a better idea of how it is conceived in the mainstream. This was a content analysis of news coverage on Arcosanti that ranked the highest on Google. Upon further reflection, we thought it may have been a good idea to compare international coverage to that of local and national news outlets. We also examined other videos of Arcosanti so we could identify what our video project could add visually and informatively to the videos already available.

We amply used the assistance that Ruvi lent to the project. Prior to arriving at Arcosanti, Rebecca went to Ruvi’s videography training, which offered many great suggestions for accumulating footage and editing the footage after it was collected. This informed a great deal in
the methods that we gathered the footage. We received further support after our fieldwork by editing and compiling the footage at Alt^I under Ruvi’s capable tutelage. We also used the imovie8 and Windows Live Movie Maker tutorials to help us compose the video and get a better idea of options we could employ.

Filming Locations April 15-17

Café
Camp
Stargazing area
Structure from the road
Bells and artwork
Grounds, nature trail, Danish project
Amphitheater during Bluegrass Festival
Venders in the vault
Soleri’s apartment
Sky suite
APPENDIX B: UTOPIANISM AND THE URBAN LABORATORY

The video is intended to present some of the most intriguing aspects of Arcosanti to the target audiences we identified, which could most effectively help Arcosanti fulfill its missions. Some of the aspects of our interviews were more in line with issues that we have studied in class throughout the semester. While we want the video to help Arcosanti as much as possible, we also wanted to attain a deeper understanding of what it is like to live and work in a community like this; therefore, we have integrated some of our findings here that were either infeasible or inappropriate to include in the video.

While Arcosanti has existed in the Arizona landscape for several decades, the community is a fluid, ever-changing array of artists, architects, nature-lovers, students, volunteers, roamers, and the like. There are a few exceptions to this rule: Paolo Soleri, Mary Hoadley, and several of the project managers. These figures are constants in this kaleidoscopic community. Most of the people we interviewed had been living at Arcosanti for about twelve months; however, we also met several alumni. Many of the younger residents that we met had heard about the project through an alumna or alumnus of decades past. One such alumna named “Sam” called Arcosanti her “home” (personal interview, April 15, 2011) even though she only planned to stay for a few weeks before striking out again. “Bonnie” made a similar remark, which was included in the video, that all the participants at Arcosanti felt like this structure was “their city” (personal interview, April 15, 2011). This sense of “home” or “city” seems to be the overarching spirit of the project rather than a physical locality.

Our team was truly astounded by the level of dedication we observed at Arcosanti. We asked “Sam,” who offered to show us around the first day, if she had time on Sunday to show us
the silt-casting area and Sam replied that she was working. Rebecca stated “Oh, that’s too bad that you have to work,” to which she replied, “I don’t have to work, I want to. Since I’m only here for a short time, I want to do as much as I can while I’m here.” As a past alumna, Sam, had come to volunteer for a few weeks before heading to Colorado to live and volunteer at a Buddhist community. Who was she volunteering with/what type of volunteer work was she doing? When cups were needed for the café, one of the residents who was eating her breakfast volunteered to retrieve them from the wine cellar. “Alex” asked people at the Morning Meeting to help with the recyclables before the Bluegrass Festival and several people (at least one of whom had worked all morning) raised their hands, eager to provide assistance. As a result of this, and other collaborative efforts to clean up the site, by late afternoon, it had undergone a complete makeover in comparison to its pre-meeting appearance.

Mary Hoadley is an enduring model of Arcosanti dedication for the first day and a half that we were there, we never saw Mary sit. Early Friday afternoon, we saw Mary carrying about a dozen brooms on her shoulders. On Saturday night hanging out down at “Camp,” “Amber” told Rebecca she had once seen Mary pick up two 90-pound bags of cement, one on each shoulder, and walk down the trail with a “skip in her step.” One would scarcely guess from her casual disposition and gentle smile that Mary is the pinnacle of power in this small community. While Arcosanti unquestionably remains Soleri’s vision and his input navigates the overall objectives of the project, Mary oversees the day-to-day function of the community. Her leadership in the project can be understood in the context of her tireless dedication.

Valerie Fournier presents the idea of utopianism as movements that are “transgressive and transformative…Utopianism is about movement and processes rather than “better states” (2002:192). She also states that the prevalence of market relations in societies is more a matter
of coercive structures than their innateness. Fournier’s (2002) discussion illuminates aspects of the urban laboratory—it is the process of contributing to the project that drives the spirit of dedication at Arcosanti. The residents work toward a goal of educating more people about alternative forms of communities and more sustainable interactions with the environment. Dedication cannot be commodified and is, therefore, overlooked by the market; for this reason, processes that do not conform to market-regulated incentivization are relegated to hopeless utopianism. If market interaction speaks to the very bases of human nature and relations, how is it possible to understand issues of dedication and altruism? Perhaps we need to look elsewhere to understand people that engage in altruistic ventures.

Residents also alluded to their sense of attachment to Arcosanti through evoking phrases such as “home” and “our city.” The market also cannot conceive psychic ownership or establishing connections based on one’s contributions. The market avers that people will only take care of a place or item if they legally own it. In contrast, Zamagni and Zamagni (2010) claim that people can be compensated through their sense of contribution and altruism; this is completely alien to market-conceived, human relations. To understand projects like Arcosanti, we need to look to alternative perceptions of human nature; perhaps people are not born to be rational, self-interested, utility-maximizing agents. Maybe a person can take care of a place because the site and people living in the space have psychically moved her. Furthermore, she may feel attachment to the space through having contributed to the project in both a tangible sense (construction, for example) and an intangible one: touching the lives of other people in the same way her life was touched. To understand the idea of utopianism we need to look to these psychic forms of connection and alternative ways of conceiving human nature. We should also look to the future: another concept that is totally alien to the market.
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YouTube Videos about Arcosanti

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