



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

# Honors thesis

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COURSE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURE  
(REHABILITATION AND REVALUATION)

*Abstract*

**Paolo Soleri (1919-2013): an architecture  
research between art and philosophy**

*Tutor*

Guido Montanari

*by*

Cecilia Cavallo

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The argument stems from a reflection of the author who, learning about the architect Paolo Soleri over the last five years and being impressed by him, she noticed that the work of the Italian architect had been mentioned only twice by her teachers in the academic world.

Hence the interest in Soleri who, in the 1960's, left Piedmont to emigrate to Arizona with the intention of making and giving substance to his original and innovative architectural ideas.

The goal of this thesis was to critically re-elaborate on Soleri's production, examining the historical and historiography's perspective of an architect who, so far, has aroused an interest and influence in the limited academic world.

The main tools to collect and summarize the complex work of Soleri has been the collection of texts written by him, the monographs based on his architectural experience and the other books where Soleri is specifically mentioned in relation to the places and the historical period where he came from.

Starting from the research and analysis of the urban and architectural production, the urban laboratory of Arcosanti was evaluated, where the author stayed for three months and, simultaneously, the willingness to continue Soleri's ideals after two years from his death.

A particular matter of interest is the fact that philosophical disciplines, scientific, technological and anthropological disciplines are merged in Soleri's urban development, with a forward view of critical issues that, in twenty years, would put focus on the phenomenon of consumerism.

Soleri takes distance from the American Dream, which has resulted in an indiscriminate growth of the metropolis. He has learned from the contemporary architectural experiences, from his past as a student growing up in Italy and from the experience gained by the construction of Cosanti. Then, in the early 70's, he was deeply involved in the construction of Arcosanti, an urban laboratory achieved in the Arizona high desert. It attempts to be projected into the future with the characteristics of a settlement founded on considerations related to land use, its use of sustainable energy as well as the foundational concepts of the *arcology* such as the complexity and miniaturization.

Today, there's a growing crisis of the cities and a gradual alienation of man's relationship with the urban context, Soleri's arcologies and Arcosanti's urban experiment may be elements of critical reflection on the urban settlement and at the same time they can stimulate the research for alternative solutions.

All this being said, though the complexity of Soleri's thought is fully expressed at the theory's current level, it remains very limited in experience with little attention being paid to it in the intellectual arena. This is confirmed in historiography's analysis that emphasizes the fragmentary way in which the texts of History of Contemporary Architecture mention Paolo Soleri. The reasons for these absences are probably to be found in Soleri's conscious choice to take an original path, although an isolated one. He doesn't adhere to any current or movement known, which could continue to ensure a greater impact in the future architecture.

Based on what has been reported, the author believes that it is now desirable to have a re-evaluation of the theoretical and practical experience of Soleri. His work is in fact an expression and testimony of the thought and work of an original architect, identified

more with the role of a man than a professional, who has been able to show courage and determination to realize his ideals in a fully coherence.

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For further information please contact:  
Cecilia Cavallo, [cavallo.ceci@gmail.com](mailto:cavallo.ceci@gmail.com)