

## CHAPTER 15: The Antarctica Project

Jorge Orta

As an artist, for 35 years now, I have dealt with complex societal problems and in order to do so, I have worked within a mode of "creative complexity" integrating maximum numbers of people. In fact, I am convinced that this world requires complex and interdisciplinary approaches in order to answer complex situations. Artists cannot respond in isolation to the changes taking place in the world. Our response has to be elaborated on a collective basis, and in fact I collaborate with philosophers, sociologists, and scientists in order to shed light on the changing human condition. The Antarctica Project explores the climate change issue, among other things - and the question of the displacement of people that it will cause.

For an artist, asking questions is to ask oneself about the factors influencing collective and individual behaviors. How is it possible, to explain the increasing loneliness, although we are always surrounded by people? How is it possible to explain fear, when "40 Cities" was born to reassure us (C40 Climate Leadership Group)? How is it possible to explain precarious urban conditions when the city concentrates all our means? How is it possible to explain anonymity and indifference when we are all interlinked and everything leads us to think that abundance is impoverishing us; that communication is stunning us; that concentration is isolating us; that the system of security is generating fear and therefore we no longer trust other people, our neighbors or our families? Facing the increasing pressure of people obliged to go in exile, can we the privileged, return to ourselves, behind the frontiers and boundaries? Sometimes boundaries are broken by the lack of hope, by

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*Massimo Alesii*

Maybe we should place this debate within a broader alignment, not just thinking in emotional terms, or in economic terms. We should bring this debate to the ethic bottom line of the common good.

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Climate change, for sure, is a mobilizing intercultural and cross-sectoral phenomenon. It is something that strikes deep within and also on the surface. It interacts with every level of our society and of all societies. In this regard, it leads to a participatory approach, an active participation. For sure, cities and city means communities. Cities could be the catalysts, the places where participation coalescences. This is what cities were created for and if we go back to the political "locus," cities are the places

people who have nothing to lose.

The Antarctica Project is our metaphor for the current world, for the fragility of today's world; and at the same time, for the displacement of people following climate change among other things. We have been working on this for fifteen years, accepting the action/reaction delay over time - that each intervention somehow leads to long-term consequences that prevent us from immediately understanding the cause and effect.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Antarctic Treaty Project**

The Antarctic treaty was signed in 1959 by twelve countries: United States, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Great Britain, Japan, Norway, New Zealand, South Africa, and Russia. They have transformed the sixth continent into a shared continent for scientific exchanges. For the first time in the history of mankind this treaty has opened the door to a new utopia. The Antarctic is the land that respects environment. It is demilitarized and is open to everybody, based on scientific exchange. Antarctica is the sixth continent, covering an area of 14 million square kilometres, with mountains and glaciers. This area comprises two territories: Western Antarctica with archipelagos linked by ice at the south extremity of the Andes; and Eastern Antarctica with a great plateau covered by ice caps, and the sea with impressive floating icebergs. Here we have a deep, silent, wonderful ice culture with 80% of all the water captured in ice caps.

We decided to set up villages in Antarctica as a symbol of hope. For some years now, we have created sculptures that can be integrated to create a kind of village, which is a metaphor for nomadic architecture in response to precarious living conditions that dominate our societies. But we don't only work with metaphors, we actually

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where decisions are being made, where decisions are debated, where negotiations unfold and this is conducive to the common good. This is the ethical dimension of the entire process.

*Cinzia Abbate*

It is frightening to see this image of the sequences of the arch through the tents and thinking that perhaps this could be the new scenario of Venice or, may be New York. This collaboration about emergency dwellings, emergency village is starting to be the new topic of the design also for urban planners.

*Giuseppe Tripaldi*

As biologists, we are looking at nature. We are looking at

**Cities are the places where decisions are being made, where decisions are debated, where negotiations unfold and this is conducive to the common good**

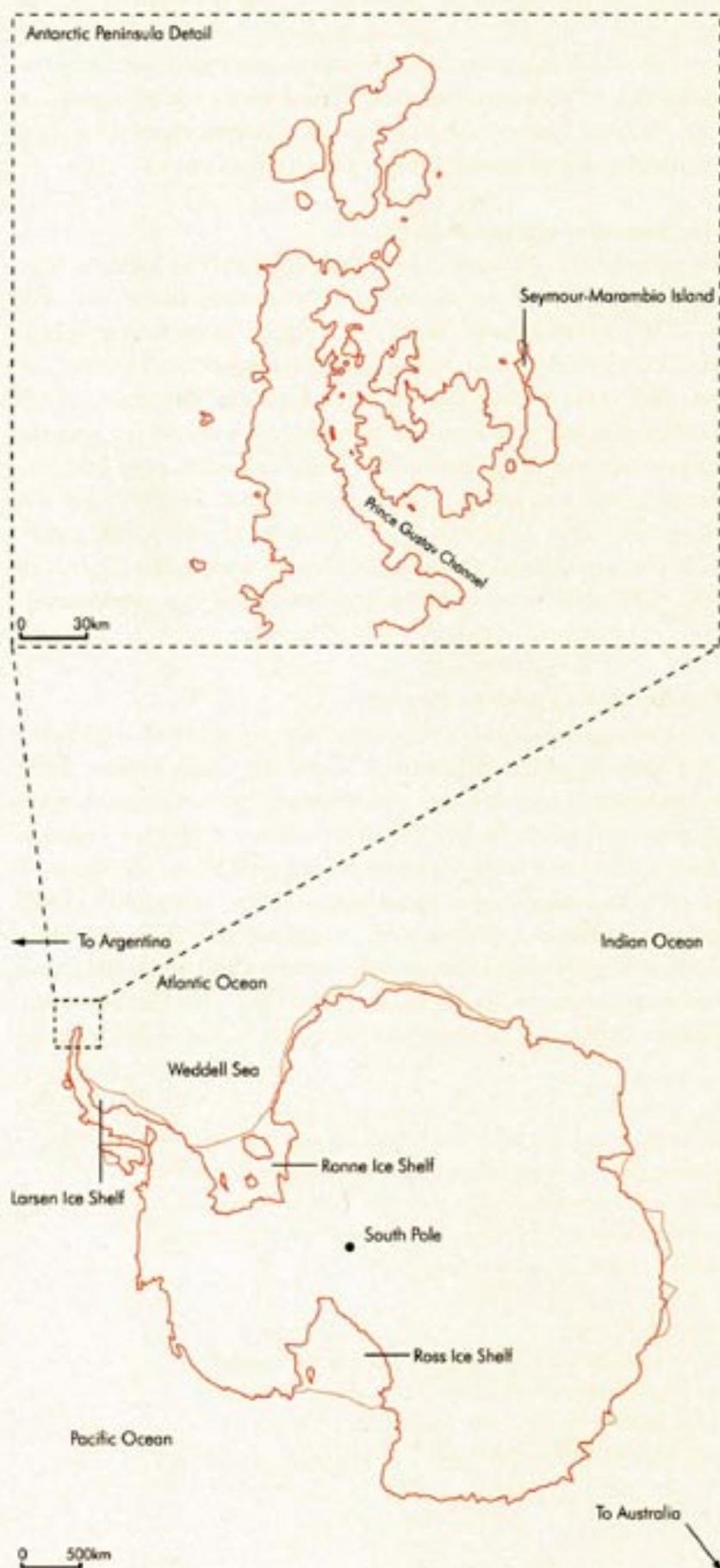


Fig 15.1. Antarctica Project Siting

work in real environments, expanses of land occupied by people and animals - a refuge, an asylum, a place where you can actually go to be safe. Nations are human communities characterized by the conscience of their own historical cultural identity as a language or religious unity. Community is defined as a political entity located on a particular area and institutionally organized as a state.

### **The Antarctic Village Project**

We started with the creation of four villages. The location is at the Marambio Base on the Seymour-Marambio Island (64°14'S; 56°37'W). Installation of the South Village was on Friday, February 23, 2007, the first Antarctic village in this sector. The first day was quite good for this kind of operation. Visibility was between one hundred and nine hundred metres with snow and fog, and the temperature was -9°C, with winds at 12 kilometres per hour. The North Village was installed on Saturday, March 24, 2007 and was the second camp. Twilight was for 3:30 in the afternoon and sunset 9:23. The wind was southwest at 24 Km/hr; temperatures between -4 to -14°C with snow and fog. So you can see - an extreme reality.

### **The Antarctic Passport Project**

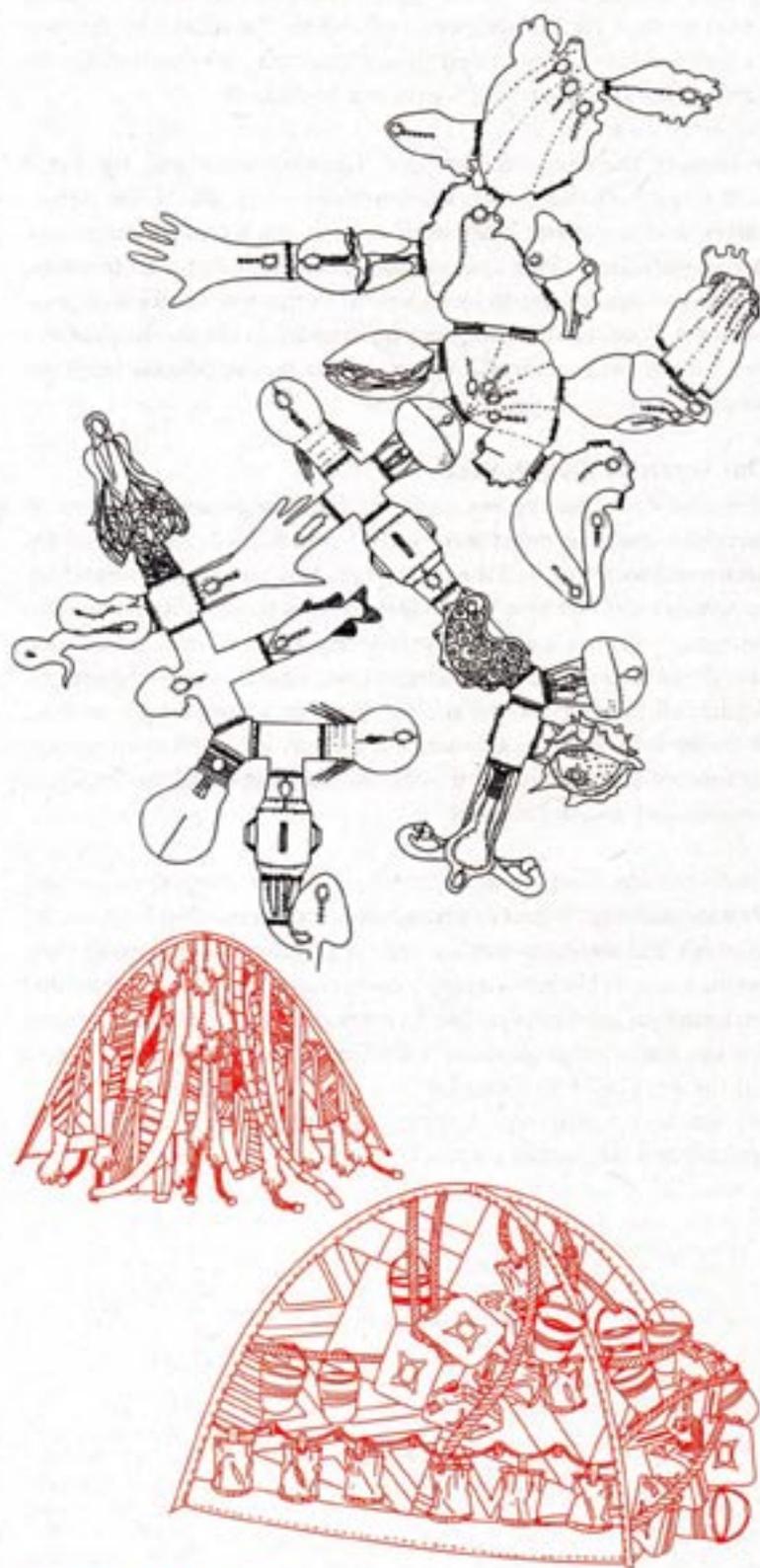
Free circulation, free movement is the key point, and so is the terrible tragedy of people displaced. I believe that this is a major threat to fundamental human rights, and we know that free circulation has been recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. One of the basic problems of our time is that the status of people is sometimes not as important as the status of money, capital and trade, networks, diffusion of production centers, competition and sports, communication, satellites, tourism and organized crime. And therefore we proposed to amend the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with an additional Article 13.3, that would read:

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the environment and biosphere. These are very complex systems, and therefore there are not simple solutions for these complex problems. This is why we can't easily come up with shared decisions for such fundamental questions on the future of our society.

*Lieven de Cauter*

Let us not produce another book. Let's produce a petition which is worldwide, a manifesto, which is free and available and signed by any Nobel prize winner or other authority we can find. It is easier than you think.



Courtesy of Jorge and Lucy Orte

Fig 15.2. Antarctica Project Shelters and Clothing

Every human being has the right to move freely and cross frontiers to their chosen territory. Individuals should not be deemed of an inferior status to that of capital, trade, telecommunication and pollution, all of which have not boundaries.

We created the Antarctic passport. The new citizens of the world need to protect the planet, need to fight every act of barbarism, misery, and terrorism. They need to promote social progress. Human dignity has to be respected and unalienable rights to freedom, justice, and peace have to be defended in this world. We have mobile units to deliver these passports. In order to obtain the passport you have to have your ID taken and to be introduced by seven people.

### **The Antarctic Flag Project**

This idea came on the occasion of the aboriginal celebration of America's Incas between June and October 1992. We were in the Andes and we witnessed the meeting of two hundred thousand Incas who were meeting in Cuzco. We saw that these cultural meetings have many shadows, so I was wondering what we would be doing with Antarctica in twelve hundred years. That is why our Antarctic flag has all the flags of the world. It is like a prism concentrating all the national colors, each national identity is placed one together with the other, hand in hand with the merging of all the edges, as a symbol of a single identity.

This is the way in which we are working. We are using all means and allowing different forms to find a nexus - a relationship between individuals and among individuals, to give strength to the group. And finally, I would like now to say that for decades we have defended catalyzing an art which is able to produce synergies and reactions that can lead to change in society. This is about nurturing Utopia, and the possibility to formulate a dream. We are trying to create a new utopia - a prototype Utopia, so there can be a real ability to implement a new social contract.