

**To build
or not
to build ?**

That is the question that one should ask himself if he or she is an architect, an urban planner, an engineer, a designer, a builder of any kind in the western world. Demographic transition is completed ; millions of dwellings and other buildings are sitting empty, and slowly deteriorating ; resources are getting scarce ; the Earth is being damaged every day by human actions. As architects, and as members of the building community, we share a big responsibility in how the face of the Earth has changed for the worse. As builders, we owe to the communities to allow ourselves to ask this counter-intuitive, somewhat surprising question : to build or not to build ?

To answer this question, we propose a new path that can be summed up into one word : **Frugality**.

Frugality is creative. To use frugality as an *ethos* comes from the lessons given to us by nature, forgotten by contemporary Modernism that is laden with productivism and consumerism. From masters of nature, we have become her prodigal children. Let us return to the source of our genius, this free expression of nature within us, which is the source of our arts. Let us be inspired by arts and culture, and by the specificity of local resources, the spring of original landscapes and builtscapes. **Form ever follows frugality.**

Frugality is a form of ecology. This economy is a form of ecology. In ancient Greek, *oikos logos* refers to the order of the *house*, that we build together, one and multiple at the same time, that of the human settlement and of its close expression : the commune. It is this *common house* that we are trying to rebuild on the damaged planet we are dwelling. Frugality is also a *commune* at the heart of which we live ; where we are anxious to live together full of pre-existences in any order, inspired by diverse modes of existence and several regimes of space and time.

Frugal comes from frux-frugis, fruges, meaning the fruit in Latin.

According to the Roman philosopher Apuleius, frugality can be defined as "the just harvest of the fruits of the earth". When it is measured, beneficial for the earth and harmless, frugality is good for the human beings who carry it out, justly satiated. Frugality is an ethical ambition for designers of human settlements where the resource is an essential part of the community structure. Frugality is however fruitful and feeds on richness in several ways through :

- the abundance of feasible solutions to respond to each project, including how to act and think with nature, even by acting outside the law to advance the law ;
- the reamplified diffusion of architectures adapted to different environments, societies, cultures and climates, for all community members, and especially for those who are most vulnerable ;
- the ample variety of material and building processes that allow us to put aside sad modernist habits thanks to adapted and proportionate solutions.

Frugality emerges from the ground; it does not descend from a so-called divine or technocratic superiority. It rises from the *genius loci*, meaning "spirit of the place" where nature's work and the spirit of the humanity join. It unfolds in environments, spurs our meeting with what is other and thus generating new space for agreement and the creative synthesis. To date, modernist dispersions and isolations have brought on major segregations amongst people. The seemingly unlimited multiplication of material goods has not successfully filled this loss of the art of living with exchange and common goods. Happy and creative frugality is associated with sharing. Sharing the Earth is our responsibility in the current ecological and climate emergency. Living and creating with frugality, that is in an economy of measure and balance, is necessary for life itself. **We can do better with less.**

Movement for a Happy Frugality

* This movement started in January 2018 with the publication of a Manifesto for Happy Frugality written by Alain Bornarel, Dominique Gauzin-Müller, and Philippe Madec. Since then, 14 000 people from 85 countries have signed it and 40 local groups have formed to share and act according to the manifesto. To read and sign the manifesto (available in several languages), go to : www.frugality.org

