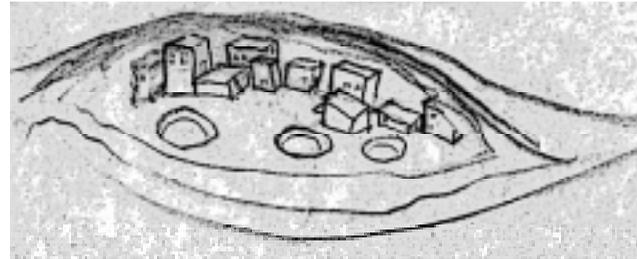


CHAPTER 1

FOUNDATION

Early in civilization, people sought out formations in nature that provided beneficial climate, shelter, defense, and proximity to resources.

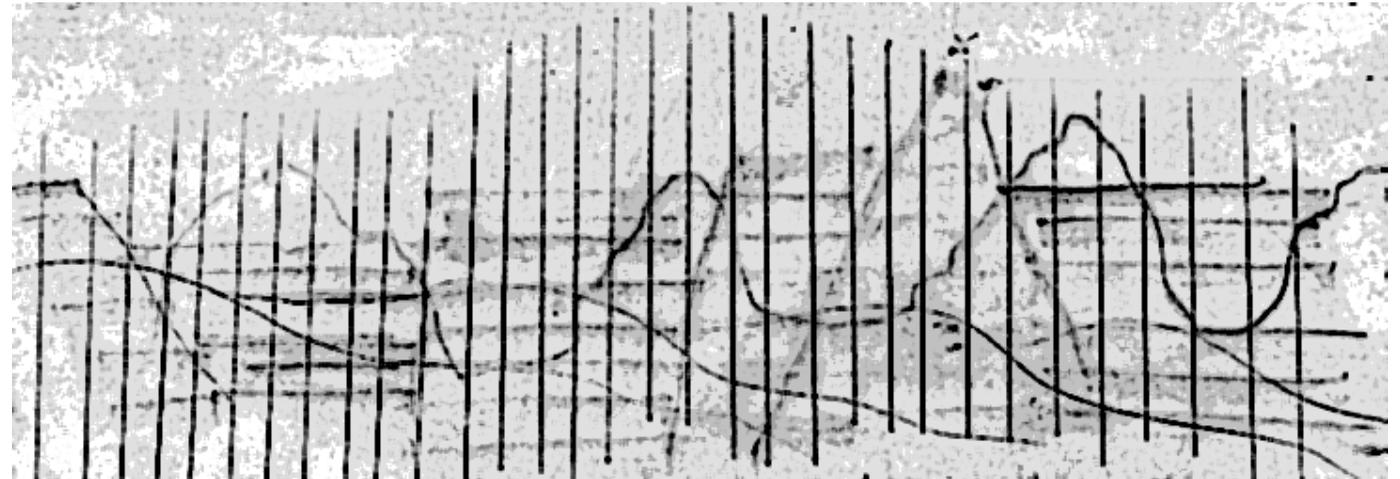
Built structures in those environments sometimes resembled idealized forms (such as lines, circles, and squares) perhaps to create order in a wild setting, or maybe to define human intelligence.



People find order in nature by observing, defining, and marking the natural divisions, such as day and night, land and water, earth and sky. If the distinctions are not obvious, order is found by imposing a regular division, and quantifying the elements contained by each segment.

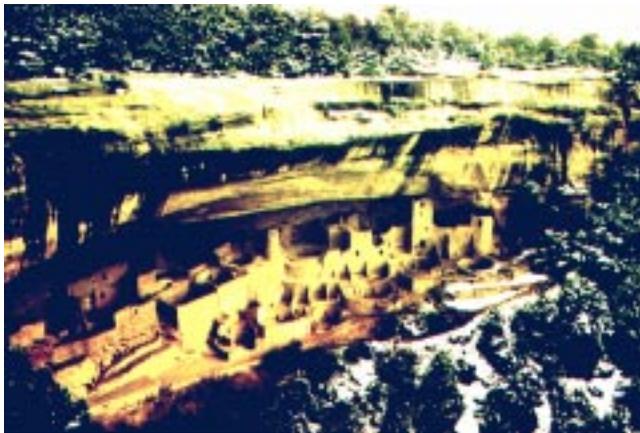
Over time, human civilization discovered techniques to increase the divisions between the elements of nature both intellectually and physically. The separation of the element, iron, from the rock of the ground it comes from is an example of the practical developments of civilization.

Civilization has made efforts to elevate people away from the irregularities and limits of a wild nature and substitute in their place increasingly regular and controlled elements.



What forms of building inspire sublime contemplation of people's balance between an evolution in natural environments and the urban landscapes that have evolved as a consequence of civilization? People have not been urbanized long enough to eradicate the desire to seek natural settings for inspiration, beauty, and solace. There might be some forms in nature that convey the sense of belonging in the proper place, which would create more harmony in the urban environment.

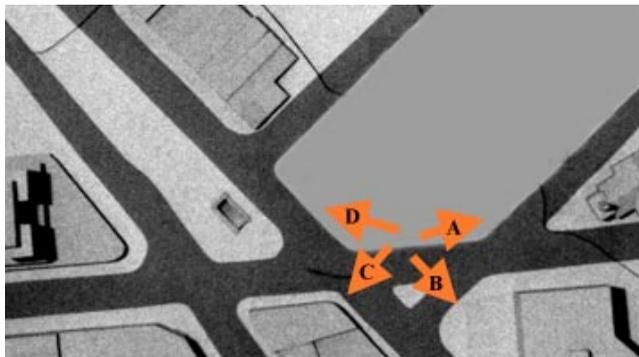
Anasazi ruins at Mesa Verde.



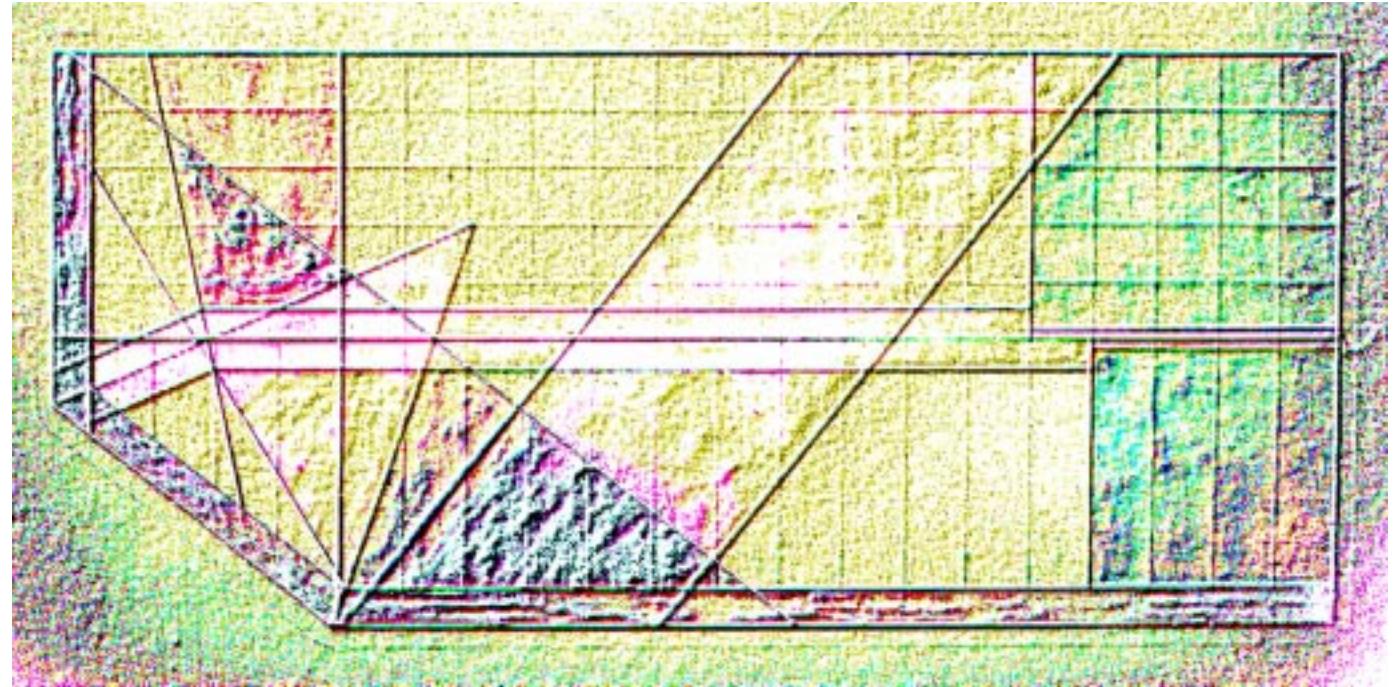
The urban site has many evolved orders imposed upon it by civilization. Climate and seasons remain, but the natural geological, ecological, and microclimatic conditions are often no longer evident.

This site is across the street from the Clarendon Metrorail station in the heart of what used to be the commercial center of Arlington County, Virginia. Originally a high-ground intersection of several rural roads, the area evolved as a passenger rail junction around which bedroom communities for Alexandria, Fairfax, and Washington D.C. developed. Clarendon transformed into the main street commercial district serving automobile traffic in Arlington until the 1950's.

The Clarendon commercial district lost much of its vitality as larger highways bypassed the area, and shopping malls came into favor. Much of the old urban fabric was demolished for the construction of the Metrorail subway system, although pieces of it remain. The Clarendon sector is beginning to be redeveloped as a result of the prosperity along the Metrorail corridor.



The geology of Clarendon is a composite of intermingled veins of material. Magma, from the earth's core, boiled up and cooled into irregular flows of igneous rock. Erosion cracked the upper edges of the rock into rubble called saprolite. Periodic changes of sea level on the coastal plain deposited sediments filling the valleys between igneous rock peaks. The sediments were compressed into metamorphic rock over time. When the ocean receded, the metamorphic rock was also eroded. The Potomac River periodically swept over Clarendon depositing sand and gravel from the nearby Appalachians. The growth of forests over the area left layers of organic dirt. The forests were removed by people for farming and other purposes. Eventually, buildings, underground services, debris, and a thin layer of asphalt were deposited over much of the area. The intermingled veins of material make the site slightly elevated and essentially flat.



Map of urban geological formations at the Clarendon site.

Veins of urban geology are also deposited and eroded during different eras of development. There are residual forms, both apparent and conceptual that shape the urbanscape. Building forms may have been responsive to terrain, property lines, transportation, building materials, program, technology, economics, social conditions, or regulations. As these sorts of influences change, the resultant building types change, yielding a diversity of deposits within the urban geology.