

## **The Glass House Revisited**

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“I thought of referring to communication networks as something fluid, like water streams, to produce an artificial nature rather than architecture,” Toyo Ito described with reference to the design process of the Sendai Médiathèque. If modernist architecture allowed for a continuous space between building and landscape, nurturing the understanding of the “forest edge as man’s ideal habitat and as a mythical image” (Geddes 1982), today the boundaries between the artificial and natural, the urban and the sylvan, are increasingly folding in. Under the growing sustainability demands, the union of art and nature in a “continuous sensorium” (Latour 2006) calls for further theoretical attention. Recent design practices that have not merely aspired “to mitigate a building’s impact on natural systems, but have sought, at least rhetorically, to become a part of those systems” (Barber, Putalik 2018), suggesting new hybrids between architecture and nature. This paper explores how the phantasy of the large-span, glazed, vegetated environment has shaped visionary projects, marking a shift from the physical to the physiological, from the tangible to the intangible, qualities of space. Following the evolution of the glasshouse from a place of nature preservation to a vehicle of experimentation into new ways of inhabiting the city (Hix 1996; Horn 2016; Sparke 2021), it examines the contemporary relevance of such building type and how it may point to novel definitions of agency in architecture.

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Img. C03 Cedric Price,  
Serre (2): upper level  
plan and longitudinal  
section (c. 1998-90).  
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