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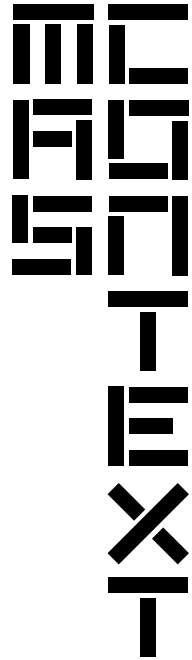
Issue 18 / Summer 13

IMPROBABLE

# THE FUTURE TEXT







Issue 18 / Summer 13

# IMPROBABLE

Unlikely futures envisioned in the past that never became a present. Improbable situations that, beating the odds, became the most tangible reality. Ambitious, grandiose and experimental, all these dreams and schemes radically challenged their present and envisioned a new future. They outlined principles for collective ambitions, defining new physical, political, economic and social organizations. Whether realized or not, these proposals hold valuable lessons for our present and future.

This issue explores the desires, ambitions and consequences of these unrealized futures, as well as the factors that drove the success or realization of unlikely proposals.

## Guest Cover Designer

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MAS Context is a quarterly journal that addresses issues that affect the urban context. Each issue delivers a comprehensive view of a single topic through the active participation of people from different fields and different perspectives who, together, instigate the debate.

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# Unlikely, But Possible

Issue statement by  
Iker Gil and Paul Mougey,  
editor in chief and  
editor of MAS Context  
respectively.

Impossible simply means something can't happen, doesn't exist, and won't ever occur. Yet improbable opens the door a crack. It means something is unlikely to come into being. Unlikely to be seen, built or felt because of the sheer scale of the challenge, or the ruthlessness of opposition or the seeming impossibility. The difficulty and risk often means the improbable evades us.

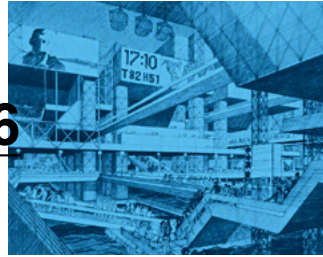
But the door left open a crack means we can peek in. At ambitious projects by architects who were ahead of their time and context. Remarkable plans to host an International Exposition. Complex communication networks that sustain and supersede the value our cities, both past and future. Engineering marvels and domestic objects that envision a brazen future. Future scenarios built atop existing architectural masterpieces. Streets frozen in time in a political and administrative limbo. Imaginary narratives of cities that might be real. Existing cities with issues that are way too real.

This issue pushes open the door onto a series of contributions that look to our past, present and future. And it's improbability. Some discuss a series of efforts, desires, and ambitions that either individuals or groups have proposed in the past that are for the most part unrealized, and sometimes little known, but they still carry valuable lessons for our present and future. Others look at the present, one that is at a crossroad between a (presumably) better past and a challenging future. They provide a snapshot of how we face uncertainty and evaluate the obstacles of possibility. They all present scenarios, even "hallucinatory joyrides," into what we can expect to come into being, or not, in the future.

In the end, this look to the past, present and future aims to be a constructive kick in the what if? To discuss important precedents that might be overlooked, and to speculate on conceivable futures. All of them ideas to help each one of us construct a future that has yet to be defined. And deemed impossible.

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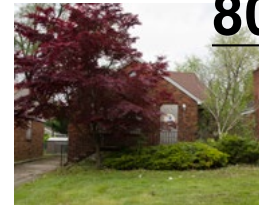
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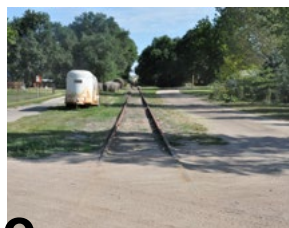
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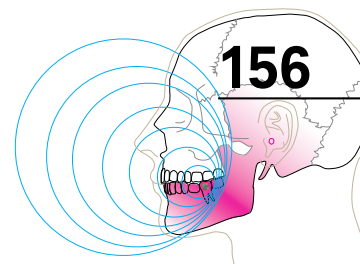
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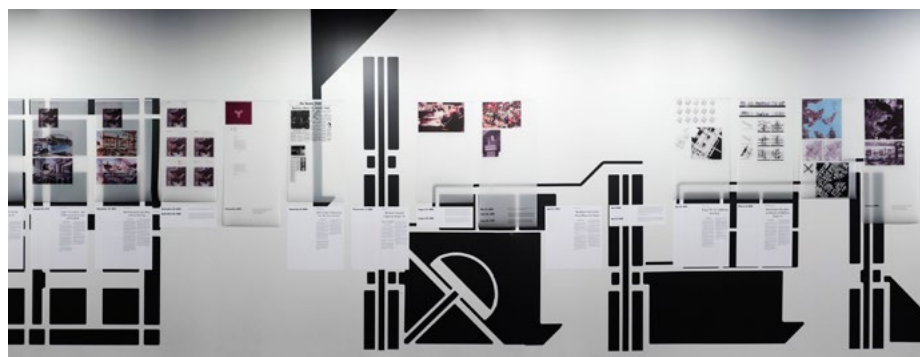


# Futures :

Text and chronology by Michael Kubo, Chris Grimley, and Mark Pasnik

# Expo Boston '76





Urban planning in Boston since the 1970s has often lacked the comprehensive scope needed to frame questions about its development at the total scale of the city. In order to renew this debate, an exhibition by over,under at BSA Space in April 2012 recovered the history of a visionary, seemingly improbable moment from the city's past that projected a radical urban future: a megastructure that would have extended into Boston Harbor as the site for a World's Exposition in 1976.

Supported by the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Expo Boston '76 was an \$800 million project developed to compete with Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. for a federal commission to host the nation's Bicentennial. Architect Jan Wampler and a team of young designers proposed that Boston initiate "an all out attack" on the urgent problems of density and inequality in U.S. cities by building an exposition site that would act as a full-scale laboratory to test solutions for expanding coastal cities. Floating platforms would have accommodated a dense matrix of programs extending from Columbia Point to Thompson's Island, including permanent housing for 45,000 residents, a new transit line, and more than 350 acres of open space and public amenities.

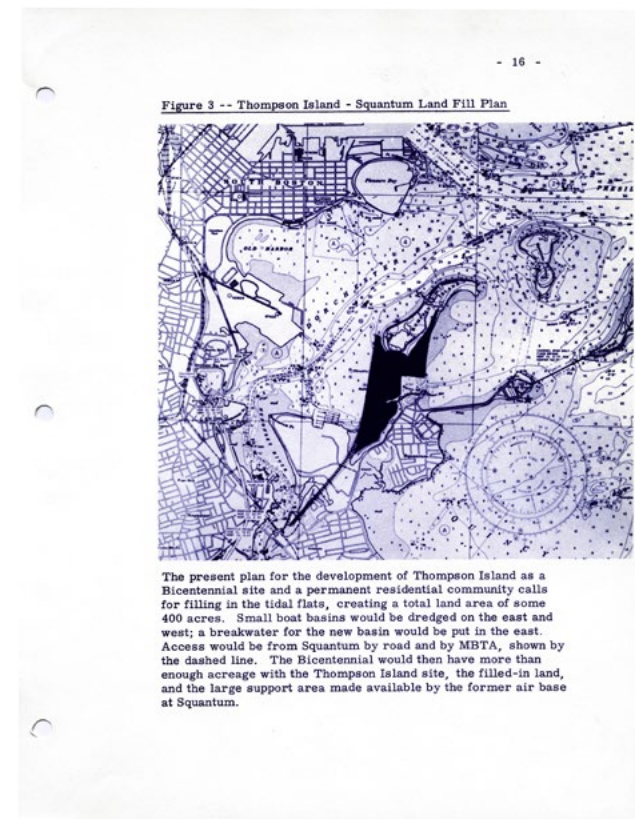
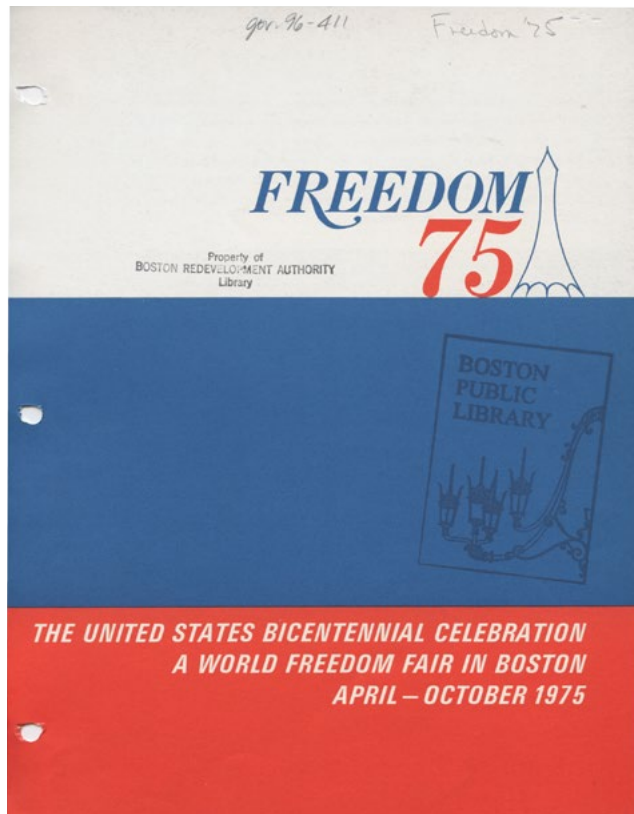
The Expo project was ultimately sabotaged by local provincialism and federal politics. A coalition led by Louise Day Hicks (later notorious as an opponent of the desegregation of Boston's school system) fought against the extension of mixed-income and minority neighborhoods in Dorchester on behalf of the primarily white, Irish enclave of South Boston. At the national level, delays and doubts over the scope of the Expo program ensured that the optimistic climate for such a utopian scheme had dissipated by the time of its presentation, drowned by the economic realities of a country mired in recession and the Vietnam War. Yet features of the Expo plan anticipated later urban developments in Boston, including a new campus for the University of Massachusetts on the Expo site and the cleanup of a then-polluted harbor.

The history of megastructures has typically assumed them to be fundamentally unrealizable in practice, often by pointing to the perceived domestication or obsolescence of their remnants as built (as in Banham's retrospective account of these "dinosaurs of the modern movement"). Rarely have the stakes of such a project played out against the background of media scrutiny, civic and federal bureaucracy, and public debate over the social and economic future of a major city. Expo Boston '76 presented just such a case. The exhibition presented a detailed chronology (reproduced on the following pages) of the documents, actors, and events through which this debate took place, from the inception of the Expo as an idea in 1963 to the final demise of the project seven years later.

A bold vision of what the city might have become, Expo Boston '76 evokes an alternative, more experimental path for the city's development over the past thirty years. Its ambition, scope, and near-realization offer a powerful model for how cities like Boston could once again provide a testing ground for architects and planners to speculate on alternative urban futures.

## Chronology

- Jun 1963** Gilbert H. Hood, Jr., president of H. P. Hood & Sons, founds the group 1975 World Freedom Fair Inc. to advocate for a World's Fair in Boston on the occasion of the United States Bicentennial.
- At the group's recommendation, President John F. Kennedy writes to the Bureau of International Expositions requesting designation of Boston as the site of an international Bicentennial Exposition.
- Jul 1966** President Lyndon B. Johnson establishes the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission to select sites to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the United States in 1975-76.
- 1967** Publication: *Freedom 75: The United States Bicentennial Celebration, A World Freedom Fair in Boston April—October 1975*



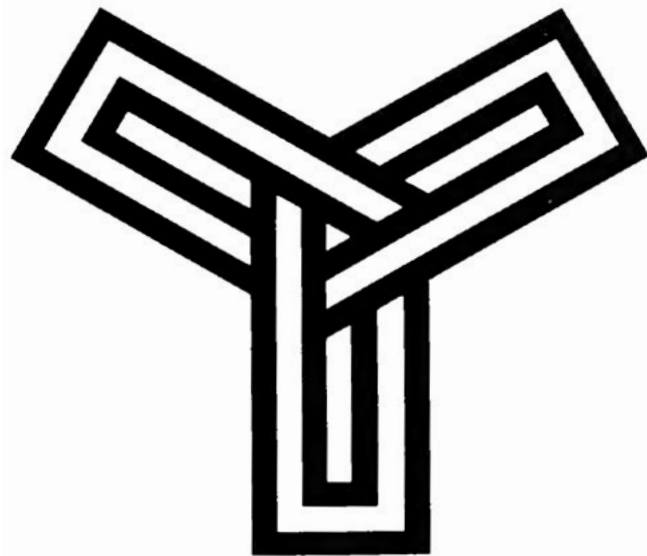
Freedom 75: The United States Bicentennial Celebration, A World Freedom Fair in Boston April—October 1975  
© Internet Archive / Courtesy Boston Public Library Government Documents



- Oct 1967** Expo '67 in Montreal closes. Its success emboldens the 1975 World Freedom Fair group to compete with Philadelphia (where efforts are already underway) to host a Bicentennial Exposition on newly created land in Boston Harbor, adjacent to Thompson Island and Columbia Point.
- Oct 29, 1967** Boston Globe: *What Expo Taught Hub's 1975*
- Nov 1967** Kevin H. White is elected Mayor of Boston. His competitor (defeated by a mere 12,500 votes) is Louise Day Hicks, a staunch opponent of desegregating the city's public schools as a member of the Boston School Committee.

Gilbert H. Hood, Jr. announces the formation of an expanded United States Bicentennial World Exposition committee to compete with Philadelphia. All six New England states and thirteen other U.S. states commit to Boston as the site of the Expo.

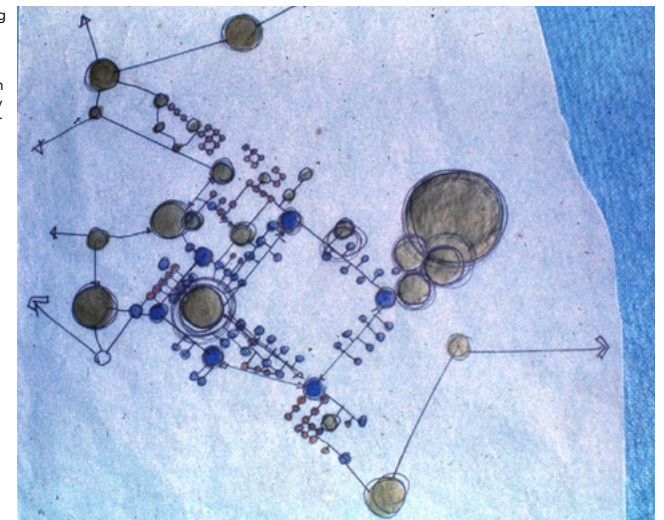
Designers Herman and Lees Associates unveil the graphic symbol for a 1975 World Exposition in Boston, based on the theme of "The Interdependence of Man."



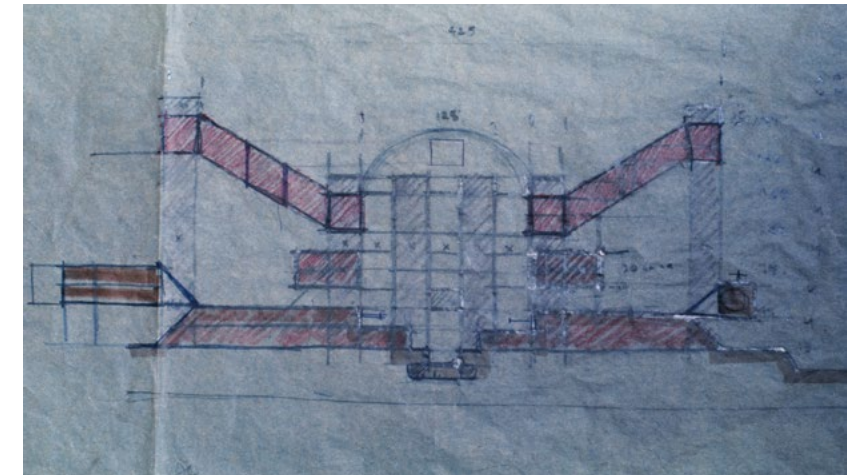
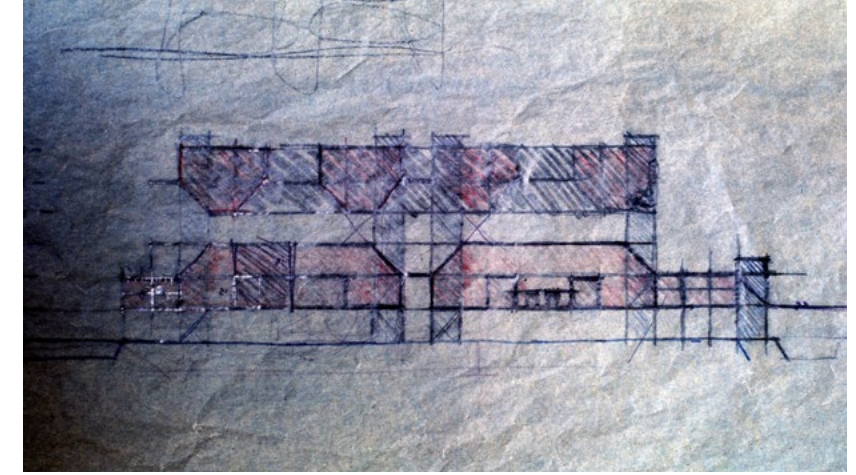
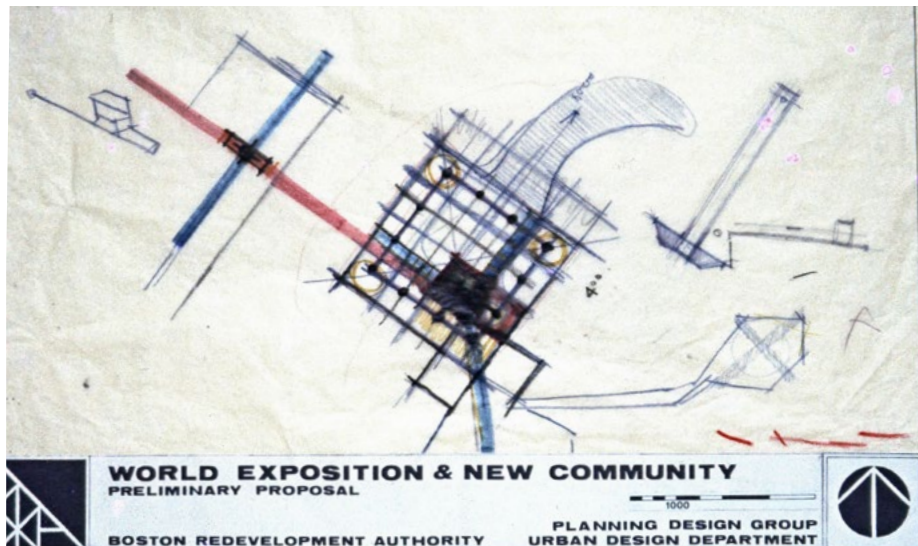
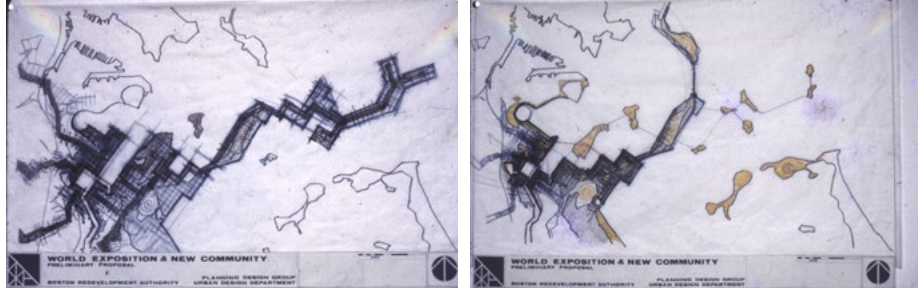
Graphic symbol for a 1975 World Exposition in Boston designed by Herman and Lees Associates  
© Internet Archive / Courtesy Boston Public Library Government Documents

- Jul 1968** The Boston Redevelopment Authority assigns a planning design group to develop the proposed Expo site in Boston Harbor. Led by principal designer Jan Wampler, the planning staff consists of a group of young architects under the supervision of Charles Hilgenhurst, urban design director of the BRA.
- Dec 1968** The Boston Society of Architects and the New England chapters of the American Institute of Architects unanimously endorse Boston as the site of the Bicentennial Exposition.
- Jan 14, 1969** Preliminary plans are unveiled to the public for a six-month Expo Boston 76 from April to October 1976. Calling for an "urban laboratory" to study solutions for expanding coastal cities, the proposal envisions a man-made mini-city of 690 acres extending from Columbia Point to Thompson's Island on a structure of floating platforms. The plan includes housing for 30,000 visitors, to be expanded into a new community for 45,000 low, middle, and high income residents after the Expo; 90 acres for a permanent commuter campus for the University of Massachusetts; a new T line from South Station to Columbia Point and a mini-transit system around the Expo site; a marina and a climate-controlled geodesic dome for public uses on Thompson's Island; 351 acres of open space including museums, amusement centers, parks, exhibition areas, and water plazas.

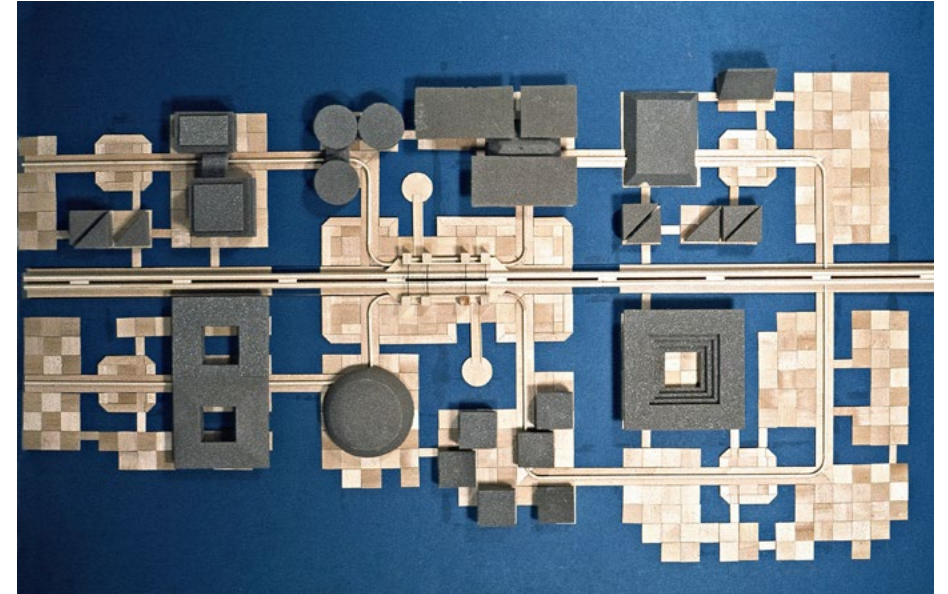
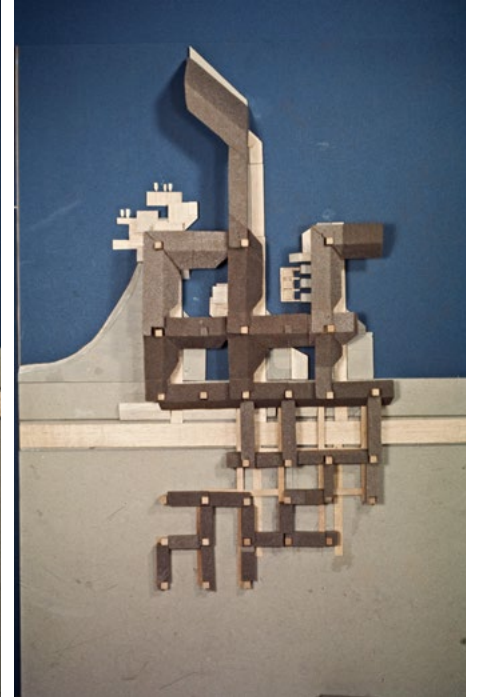
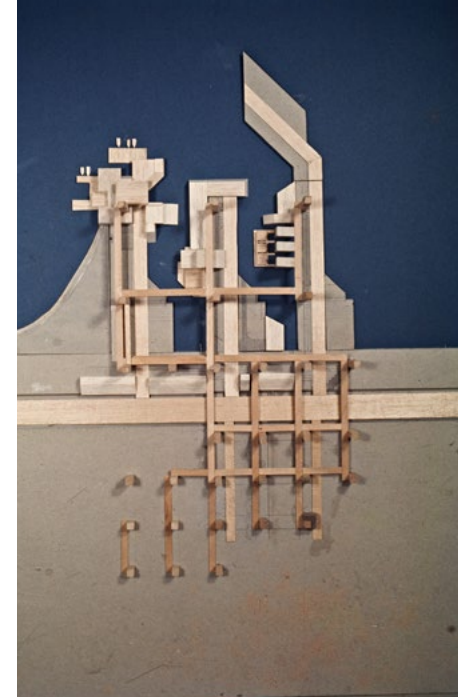
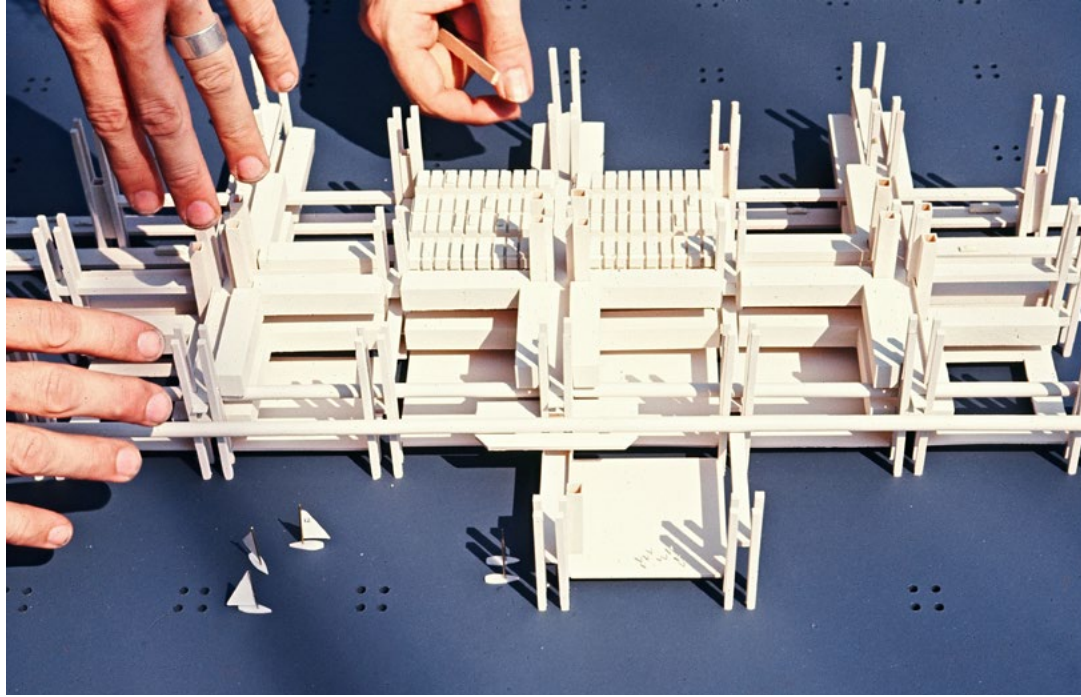
Jan Wampler and a young planning staff develop the proposed Expo site in Boston Harbor with the support of the Boston Redevelopment Authority  
© Courtesy Jan Wampler





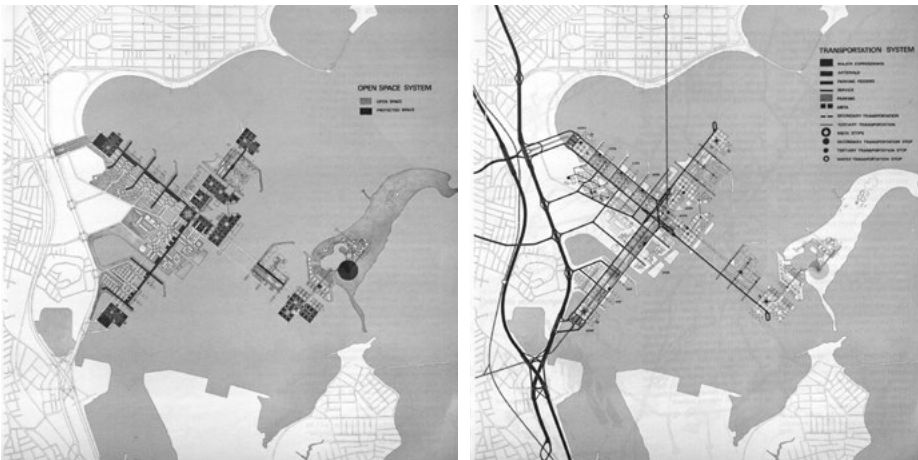
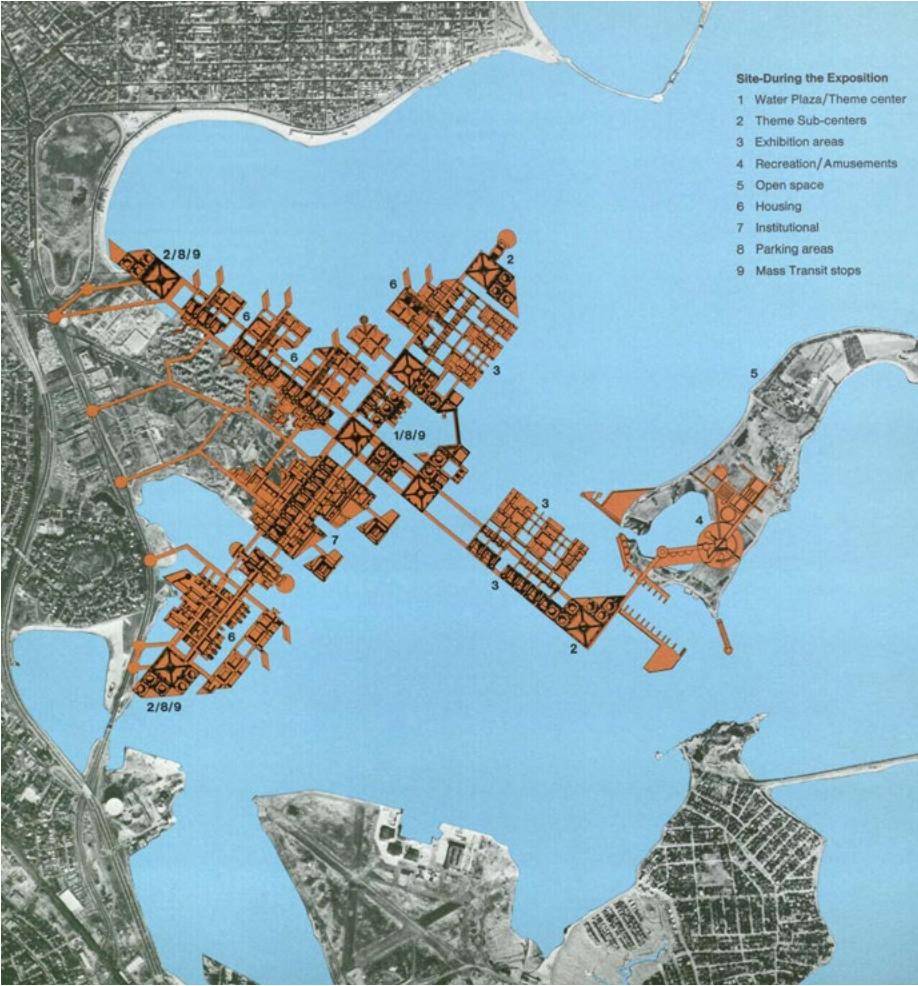




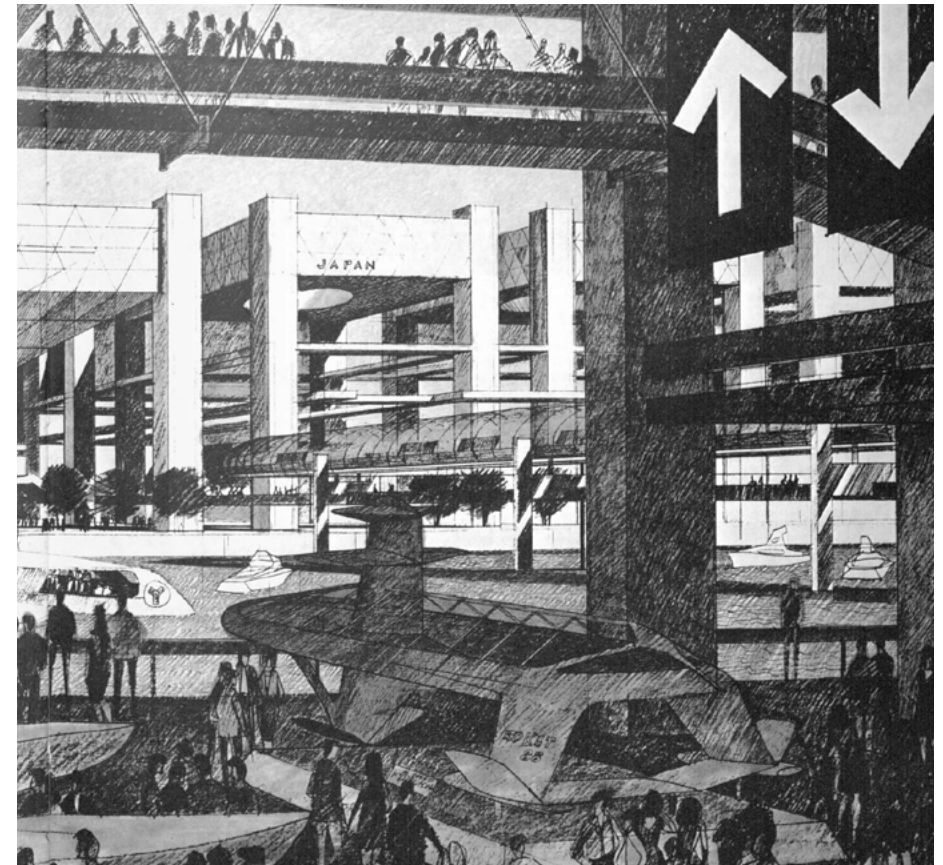
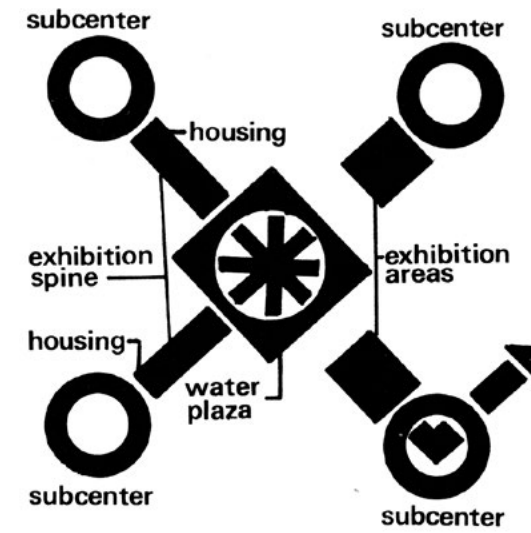


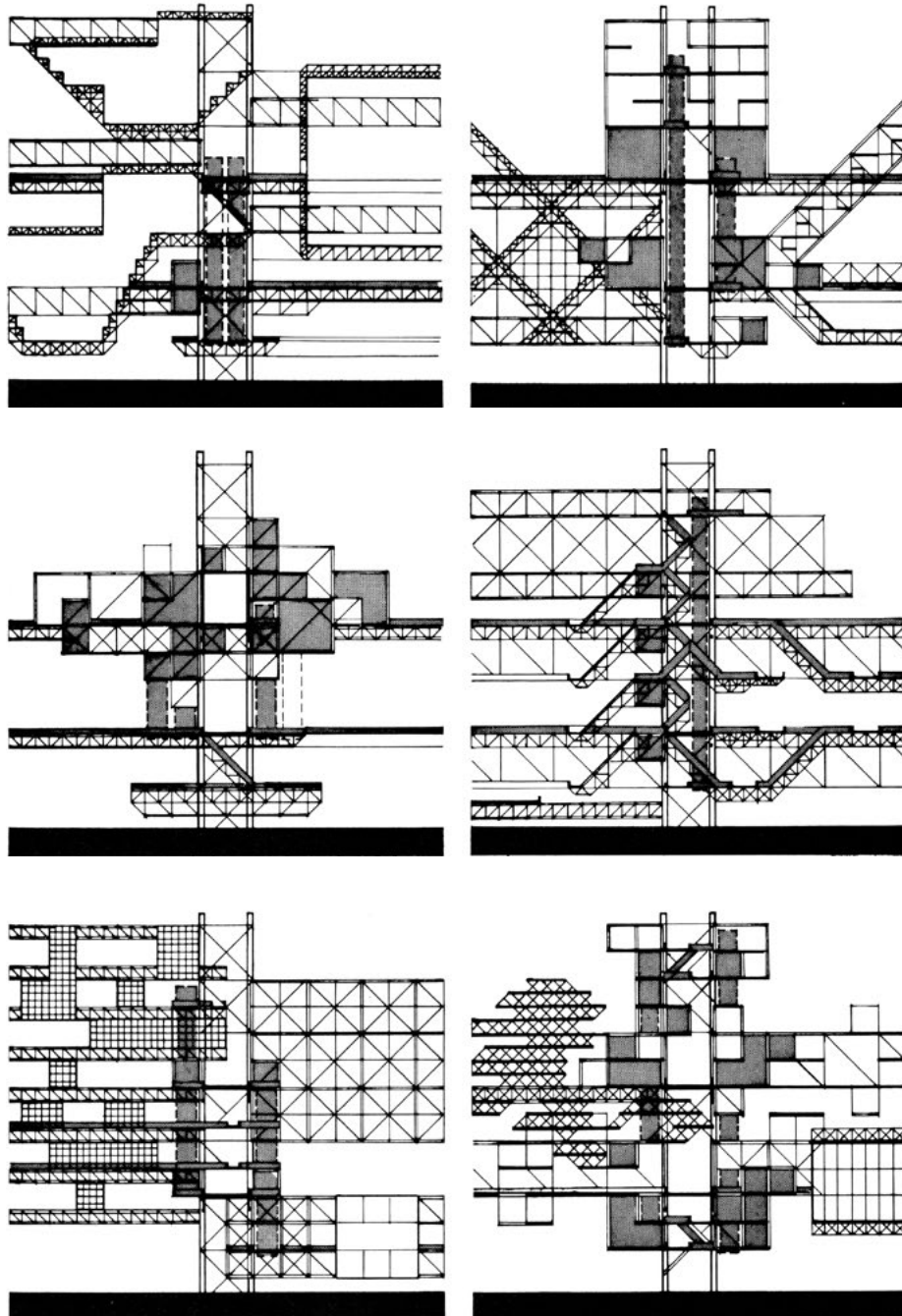


Jan 15, 1969	Boston Globe: \$800 Million Harbor Expo: Boston Opens Drive For '76 World's Fair
Jan 16, 1969	Boston Globe: Expo 76 Could Mean Housing For Thousands
Feb 1969	Publication: United States Bicentennial World Exposition Boston 1976 Preliminary Design Report
Mar 13, 1969	Boston Globe: Hub Fights Deadline on Dream of \$Billion Expo 76

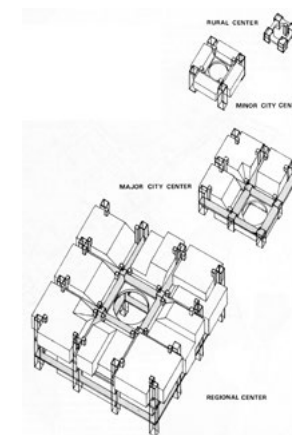
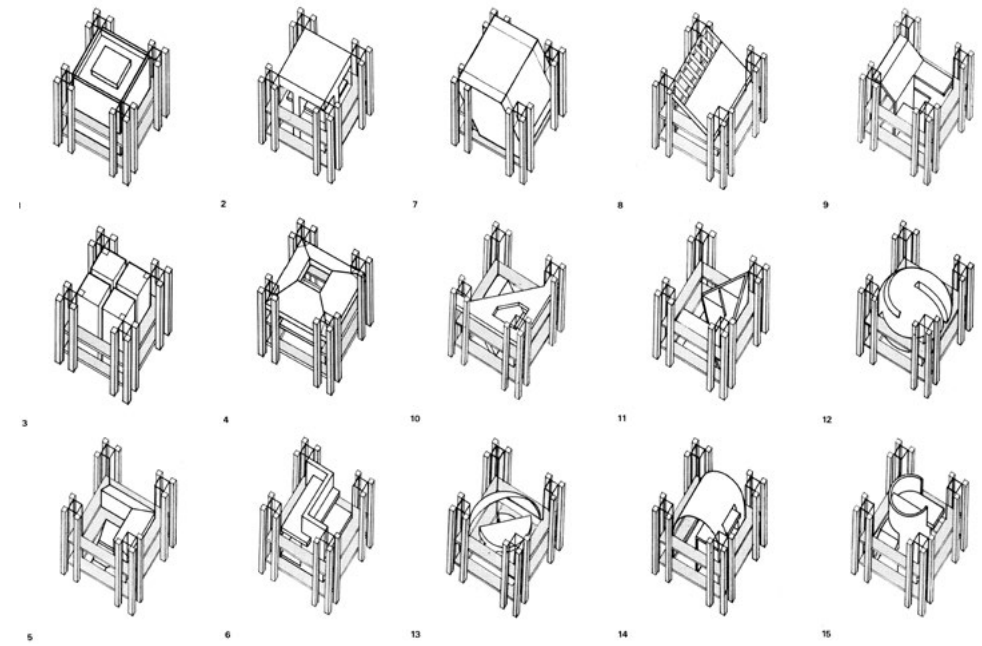




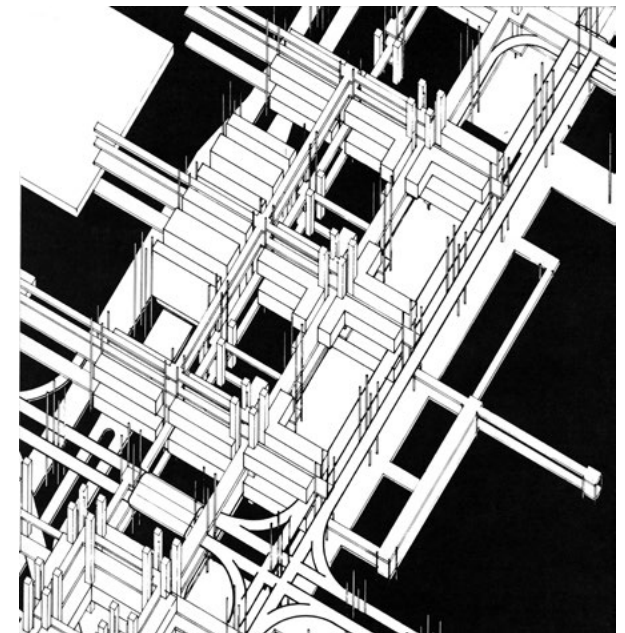




United States Bicentennial World Exposition Boston 1976 Preliminary Design Report. © Courtesy MIT Libraries



United States Bicentennial World Exposition Boston 1976 Preliminary Design Report. © Courtesy MIT Libraries





<b>Apr 1969</b>	South Boston residents claim that plans for the Expo will disrupt tidal currents and increase pollution in the Harbor. Expo planners explain its construction on floating platforms rather than landfill to preserve the ecology of the site. A proposed new T line running through largely white South Boston to largely black Dorchester also prompts neighborhood concern—officially voiced as a fear that some Southie residents will be forced to relocate. A Boston-wide poll claims that 77 percent of the city's residents are in favor of the Exposition.
<b>Apr 2, 1969</b>	Presentation of Expo proposals to the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission is postponed for 60 to 90 days. It is reported that Washington D. C. is entering the competition with Boston and Philadelphia to host the Bicentennial celebration.
<b>Apr 8, 1969</b>	Boston Globe: <i>Expo 76: \$3.6 Billion For New England</i>
<b>Apr 8, 1969</b>	Boston Globe: <i>Southies Are Upset Over Plans for Expo</i>
<b>May 21, 1969</b>	Led by Louise Day Hicks, the South Boston Residents Group holds a mass public meeting to protest the Expo '76 project.
<b>Jun 26, 1969</b>	A day after announcing her candidacy for the City Council, Louise Day Hicks submits a petition against Expo '76 with the signatures of 20,000 South Boston residents at a meeting of the Council's Urban Renewal Committee. She warns that the signatures will be "sent to Washington."
<b>Jun 26, 1969</b>	The Boston Globe reports that the Expo is in "serious trouble" amid uncertainty over securing the proposed investment of \$75 million by the city, \$175 million by the state, and \$250 million by the federal government.
<b>Aug 24, 1969</b>	Expo Boston '76 general manager James I. F. Matthew details the new housing to be created by the Expo. An expanded scheme for 50,000 people would accommodate 15,000 permanent homes, distributed between low income (30%), middle income (40%), and high income (30%) units. Jan Wampler compares the coordinated systems and federal scope of the Expo planning to NASA's recent achievements in space exploration: "Like the Moon effort, only much more realistic."

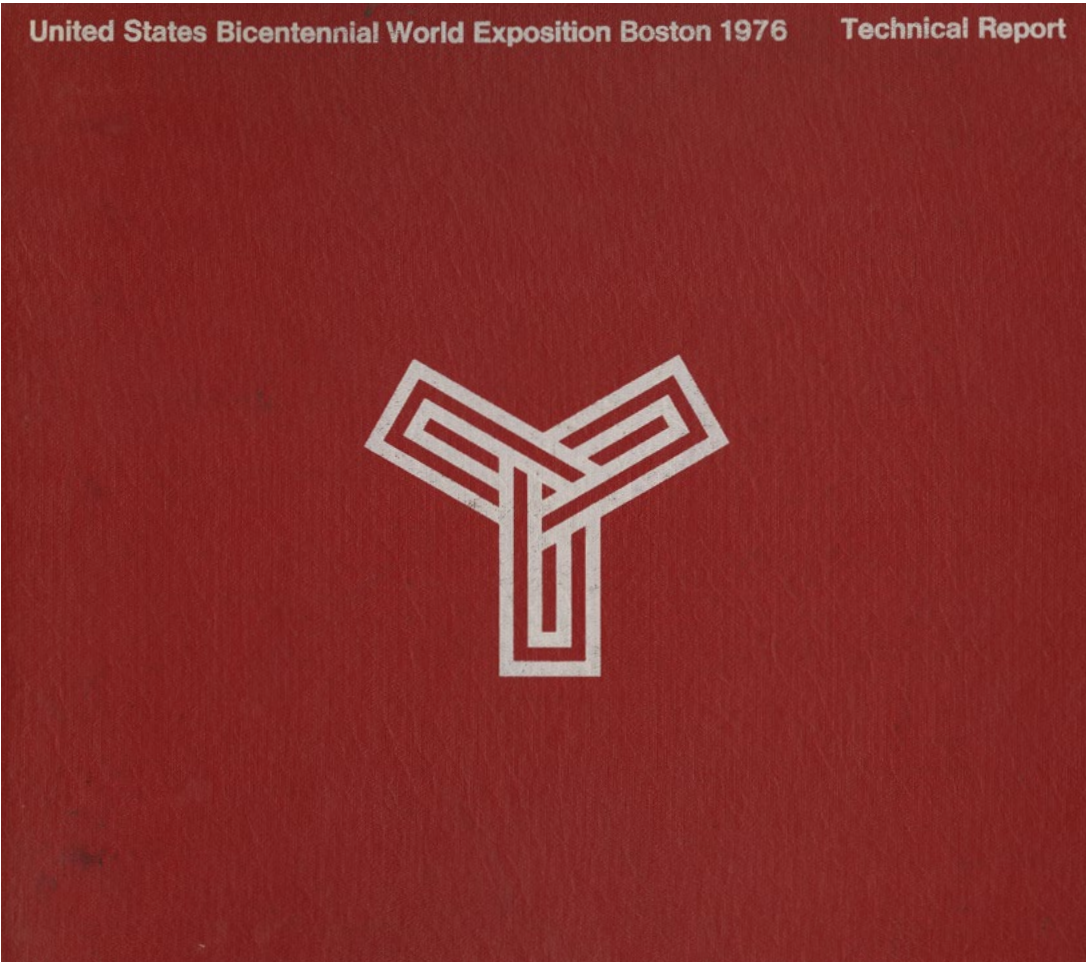


Led by Louise Day Hicks, the South Boston Residents Group holds a mass public meeting to protest the Expo '76 project. © Courtesy of Jan Wampler

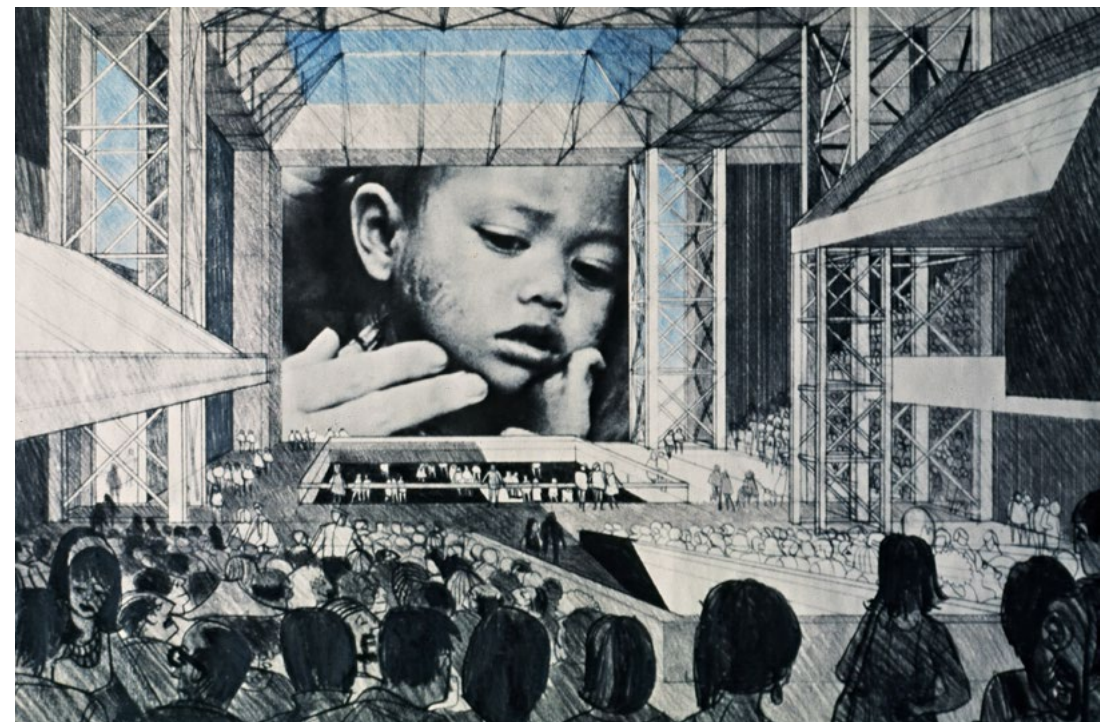
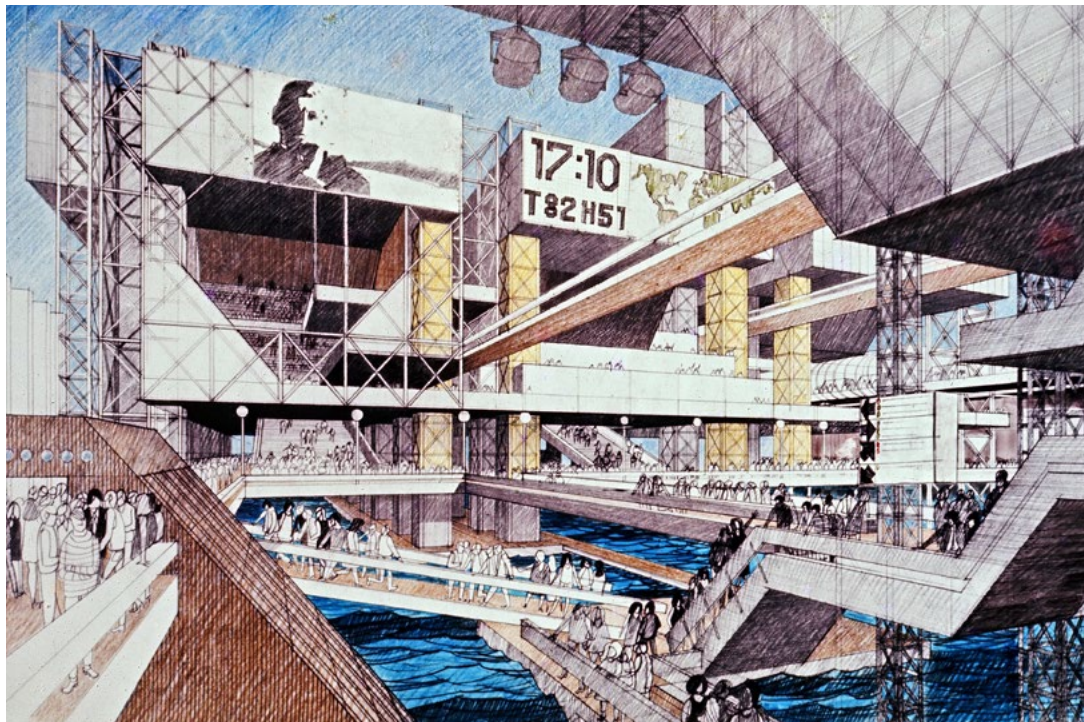
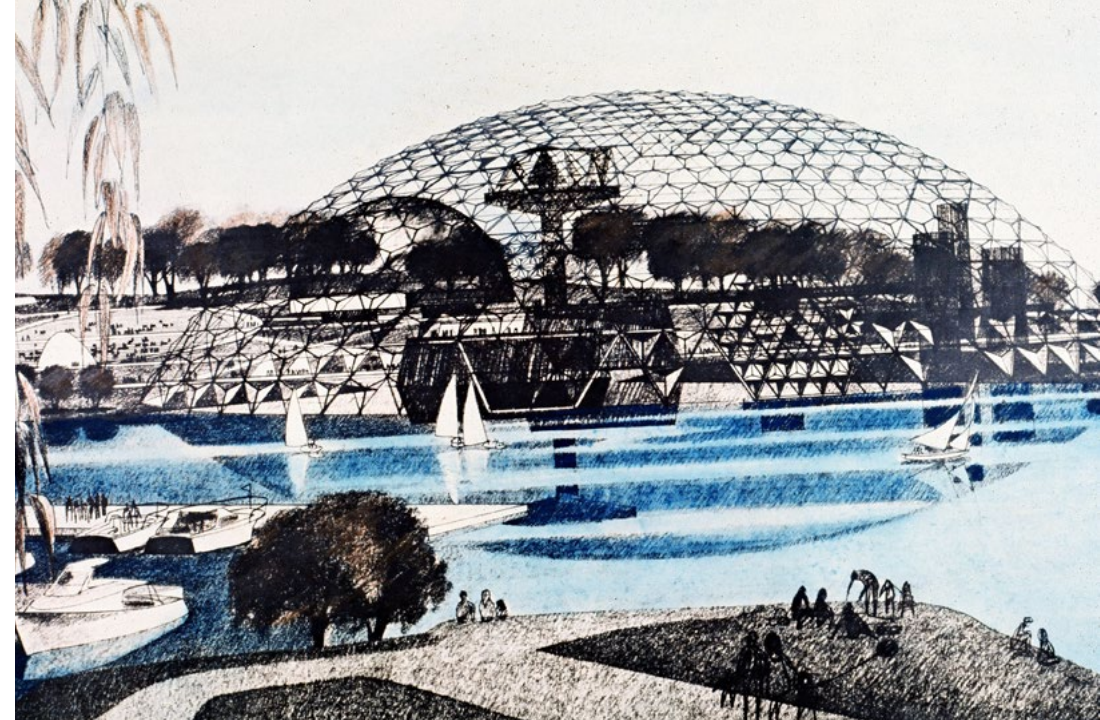
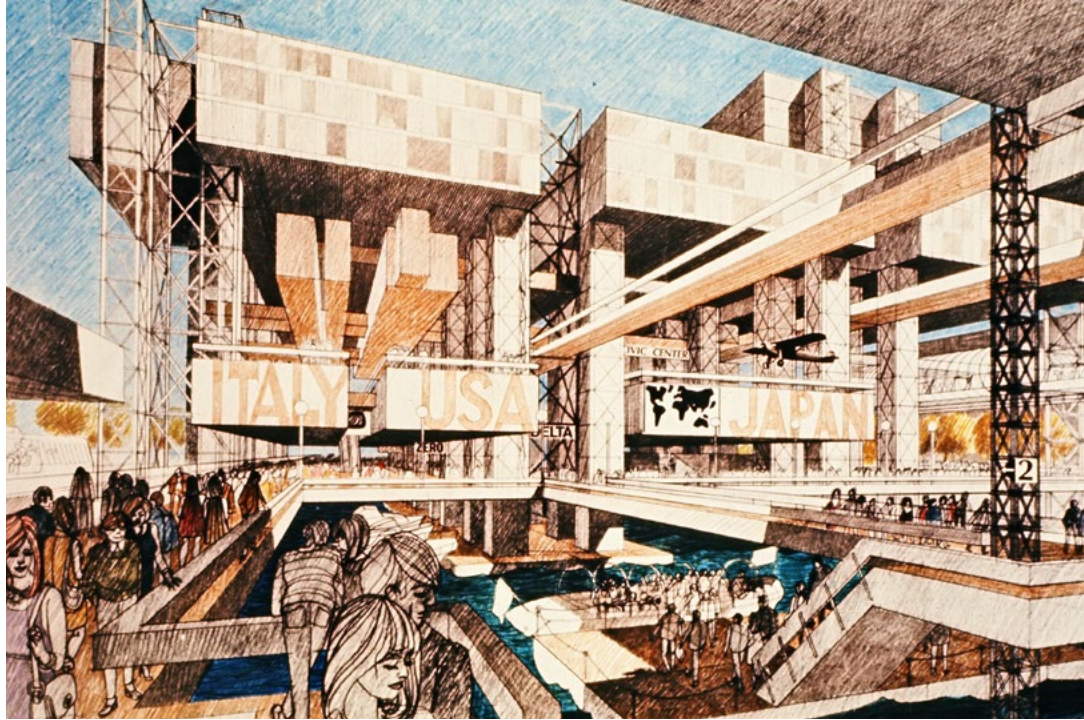
Led by Louise Day Hicks, the South Boston Residents Group holds a mass public meeting to protest the Expo '76 project. © Wikimedia Commons / Photograph by Nick Dewolf, Courtesy of the Nick Dewolf Estate



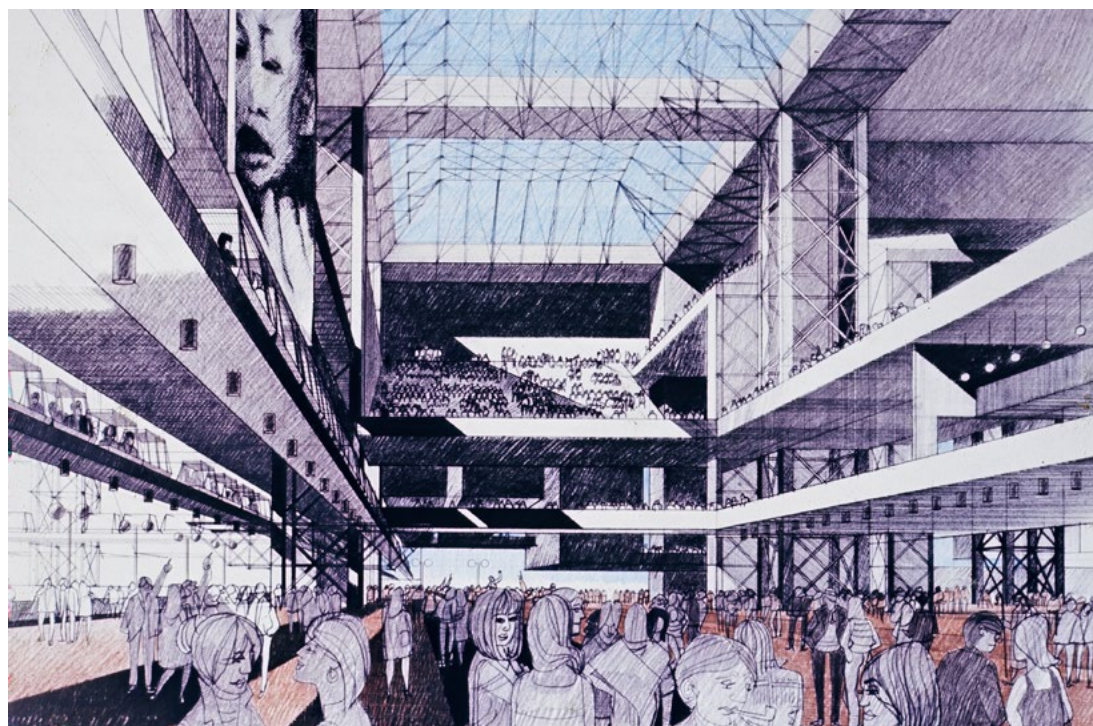
Aug 28, 1969	BRA officials announce that the Expo plan includes a \$20 million pollution control program to begin the cleanup of a “grossly contaminated” Boston Harbor, including a new system of sewer lines and tidal gates to transform Dorchester Bay “from the [city] sewage dump into a sea area truly clean and safe for recreation.”
Sep 1969	Publication: <i>United States Bicentennial World Exposition Boston 1976 Technical Report</i>
Sep 5, 1969	Boston Globe: <i>Boston Council Opposes Expo 76; Objects to Site, Financing; Backers Still Hopeful</i>











**Sep 9, 1969**

*Boston Globe: Hub's Expo 76 Rejected, 8-0, By City Council*

Boston City Council yesterday unanimously rejected a plan for holding the 1976 World's Fair in Dorchester Bay.

*The 8-0 vote (Councilor John L. Saltonstall Jr. voted present), being widely interpreted as a death blow to the \$500 million Expo 76, means the council is opposed to providing Boston's share of \$75 million....*

*Though Mayor White declines comment, city officials "familiar with Washington workings" consider overwhelming local opposition fatal to the project.*

*A spokesman for Gov. Sargent said "that about does it. I don't see how the state can support it in the face of Boston's opposition. It looks very grim at this point."*

**Sep 23, 1969**

Louise Day Hicks is chosen by a small group of local voters for the final election ballot for City Council, to be held in November.

**Sep 24, 1969**

Governor Francis W. Sargent and Mayor Kevin White lead a delegation to Washington D. C. to present the proposal for Expo Boston '76 to the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission. Members of the City Council travel to attend the presentation along with Louise Day Hicks, Senator John Moakley, and Representative Michael Flaherty of South Boston, the most vocal opponents of the Expo plan.

**Sep 25, 1969**

*Boston Globe: Hub Factions Carry Row to Expo Hearing*

*WASHINGTON—With "Southie's My Home Town" echoing in the background, a presidential commission yesterday heard the mayor of Boston and the City Council president contradict each other over whether the city wants a world's fair in 1976.*

*The commission, which has charge of planning the nation's 200th birthday party that year, witnessed elaborate presentations from Philadelphia, Washington and Boston telling why they should be the center of the country's bicentennial celebration.*

*But only Boston offered the distinguished group of planners and public officials a double bill: a political reenactment of the battle of Dorchester Heights with ticket-topper Louise Day Hicks on one side and historian Thomas Boylston Adams on the other.*



While it was impossible to know just what the bicentennial Commission will eventually recommend to the President, the public and private comments of some commissioners made it clear they were not disposed to get involved with a world's fair in a divided city....

The whole idea upset the three opponents, who said they reflected the views of thousands of Bostonians. Flaherty said the plan at one time called for putting a transit system through the center of South Boston, "and for what? To build another city. Boston doesn't need another city. It needs some improvements, but not a new city."

**Jan 24, 1970**

Boston Globe: Expo '76 is alive — but hidden away in a room at City Hall

The model, on a 20-foot square table, represents three years of planning and dreaming and hoping. It represents a conception of an Exposition which would not be a carnival. It was part of Boston's presentation to the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission last Fall. The original plans were to display it in City Hall Plaza for the public to see after that. Instead, it is hidden away in Room 917 of the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

"The mayor and Warner stopped us from putting it there," said Jan Wampler, chief designer of Expo, whose office is across the hall from 917. "They said it would upset the City Council. But that's not where it's really at. These people are afraid they'll lose votes."....

"Everything," said Wampler, slightly resigned, "in this city is weighed for political purposes." Wampler, a 30-year-old architect, was dreaming about an Exposition for the people. He didn't want ferris wheels and slick Disneyish booths to clutter up his fair. He envisioned an "urban laboratory."....

Wampler thinks the problem is communication. He thinks the public will agree with his ideas if they are told about them, about them, about how they'll benefit everyone.

**May 26, 1970**

Boston Globe: Is Expo 76 To Be Scratched? Panel Reported Ready to Recommend No Single Celebration

Neither Boston nor Philadelphia — nor any other city — may be picked as the site of the 1976 Exposition to help celebrate the United States' 200th birthday.

The American Revolution Bicentennial Commission is ready to recommend to President Nixon that no single exposition be held in any one city to mark the country's birthday, according to the Philadelphia Bulletin....

There was speculation yesterday that declining economic conditions and the controversial political climate were factors in the decision to cancel the exposition. Lack of sufficient time for planning and construction was also seen as a factor.

But the biggest factor apparently is President Nixon's views. Last Oct. 9, he indicated to the commission that the 1976 celebration would be nationwide in scope....

His remarks were interpreted as an indication that the idea of an international exposition in a single city, such as Philadelphia or Boston, does not excite either commission members or the White House.

**Jul 14, 1970**

Boston Globe: Boston still has stake in Expo '76

News that Boston had lost out to Philadelphia as the site for the nation's 200th birthday celebration in 1976 caused about as much stir in the cradle of liberty last week as a falling leaf on a windless day.

Boston submitted a good plan and theme for Expo '76, perhaps too good, too visionary, and despite some criticism of Gilbert H. Hood, Jr., president of the Hub effort, neither he nor his staff, nor his directors, can be faulted for their efforts....

But because the site would flank Carson Beach at its southern tip and because of fear that it would add pollution to the harbor, Mrs. Louise Day Hicks from her South Boston redoubt commemoratively attacked Expo 76 with the same vigor as Washington took Dorchester Heights and held her position equally tenaciously....

So Boston lost a chance to relieve her housing problems, develop her islands and harbor, add to her transportation facilities and resolve her harbor sewage problems — all of which would have been possible under the Expo 76 plan with 50 percent of the tab being paid by the Federal government.

# Takis Zenetos. Unbuilt Tropes\*

Essay by Ethel Baraona Pohl,  
Elina Karanastasi  
and Nikos Skoutelis.

Based on a text by Nikos Skoutelis.

\* This text is part of the current research for the forthcoming book:  
Takis Zenetos. Unbuilt Tropes, dpr-barcelona 2013





### Zenetos:

#### A contextual conceptualist rather than a utopian avant-garde visionaire?

Takis Zenetos was born in Athens, Greece, and designed some of the most beautiful modern buildings in Greece during the 60's and early 70's. He studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, graduating in 1954. His life in Paris in the lively atmosphere of pioneering artistic and cultural life of the post-war period had a big impact on his work, which is marked by using prefabrication, addressing flexibility and mobility, designing sustainable buildings to the solar heat, recycling and saving of materials and energy, adapting to the natural environment and rearranging the environment as a setting for architecture and using of advance technology.

Major built works of Zenetos in Greece are the Fix Factory, the Kavouri residence, the Amalia Hotel, the Ag. Dimitrios School and the Lycabetus Theatre, all in Athens and its suburbs. Major unbuilt works, among others, are the research by design on "Electronic Urbanism" and his urban plans for new settlements in coastal Greece.

What is interesting is that Zenetos is considered by younger theorists as a pioneer connected to the international avant-garde. This notion is shared by his contemporary (friends and colleagues) architects, but they connect him more with the context of his projects and his era, appearing to be concerned about locality rather than the international debate. Here are two references on his work, one from 2006 and the other from 1978 to render this distinction:

"Takis Zenetos was a genuine idealist, contemplating the vision of a new future enlightenment, a period of ultimate universal egalitarianism and progress for the people. In his time, he was understood by very few, while for the majority he was associated with the blurred elusiveness of a myth. Nowadays with this work we are able to conceive him for what he really represents: a prophet not only of his time but also of the century after him." Andreas Yakoumatos, *Digital visions and Architecture*, Authors: Eleni Kalafati, Dimitris Papalexopoulos, Edilstampa, Athens 2006.

"The history of postwar Greek architecture abounds with the solitary struggles of young architects who started out in all optimism to introduce the achievements of contemporary architectural thought, which they aspired to adapt to local conditions and enrich with their own original contributions and the teachings of our architectural tradition. Like all solitary causes, these struggles achieved but a few—and minor—victories. In a marginal capitalistic country such as Greece, the result of all human endeavor is decisively influenced by the general adverse conditions generated by a confused but very determinative network... T. Ch. Zenetos was one of the outstanding representatives of the postwar generation of Greek architects. With his knowledge of technology, he was a tireless researcher, deeply concerned with social problems... [His] works are distinguished by their functional

organization, clarity of form, perspicuity of construction and the opportunity they provided the user to shape his own environment, the use of advanced technology, the highlighting of detail and respect for the landscape..."

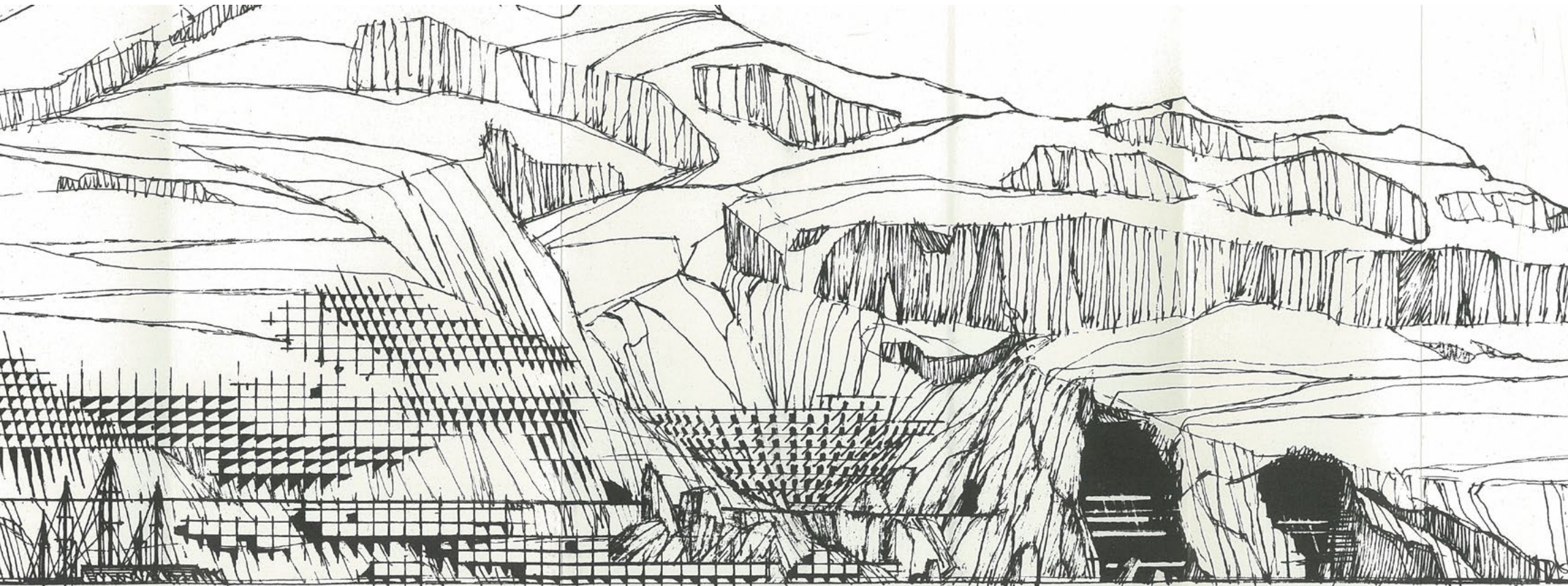
Orestis Doumanis (editor and personal friend), *Takis Ch. Zenetos 1926–1977*, Architecture in Greece Press, Athens 1978.

#### The osmosis of artificiality and naturalness in two works of Takis Zenetos.

During 1966–7, the office of Takis Zenetos prepared two studies for the development of new settlements in Agia Galini and in Plakias, in the south Rethymno region in Crete.<sup>1</sup> These two studies were meant to form an innovative precedent and a trigger for future discussion on the management and development of countryside settlements in Greece. The Agia Galini and Plakias proposals were part of a series of studies for touristic development, commissioned by the Agency for Regional Development of Crete of the [then] Ministry of Coordination.<sup>2</sup> As planned by the "Study for Tourism Development in Crete," Agia Galini would be attributed the role of "urban touristic center," with 2,000 initial residents and expansion to finally 6,000, after the completion of the plan, while Plakias had a destination for "autonomous touristic settlement."

Based on studies of Greek urban planners of the 60s, the need for increased social and tourist infrastructure would lead to a densification of urban centers, hotels and small industries, while the traditional urban fabric should coexist with modern buildings. Takis Zenetos has designed the two projects in this given framework. The Agia Galini design was focused as an urban center of southern Crete, transforming the two eastern hills of the existing village into stepped bearing-plates of buildings, excluding the use of vehicles, sheltered an agricultural cooperative union and an industrial area. The 1,200 meters-long beach of Plakias remained "completely un-designed and deserted, preserving its special character,"<sup>3</sup> while all the sports facilities, restaurants and nightclubs were programmed towards the inland. The small village with low-rise buildings and a total of 300 beds was designed on the hill, while the existing Mirthios settlement was expanded with villas. A hotel [Liakota] hosting 1,500 beds was designed on the rocky part. The highways were designed out of prefabricated concrete slabs, "given the dubious sustainable use of road transport ... with the possibility for reuse as building materials, such as bearing walls, etc."<sup>4</sup>

What is common in these two proposals is Zenetos' approach to regional and town planning which seemed more than improbable on those years. His focus on social environment and technology can be found in the basis of some current projects and his influence can be perceived nowadays, not only in Greece, but also beyond.



Perspective of the Liakota Hotel in Plakias © Courtesy of the authors



Model of Agia Galini  
© Courtesy of the authors





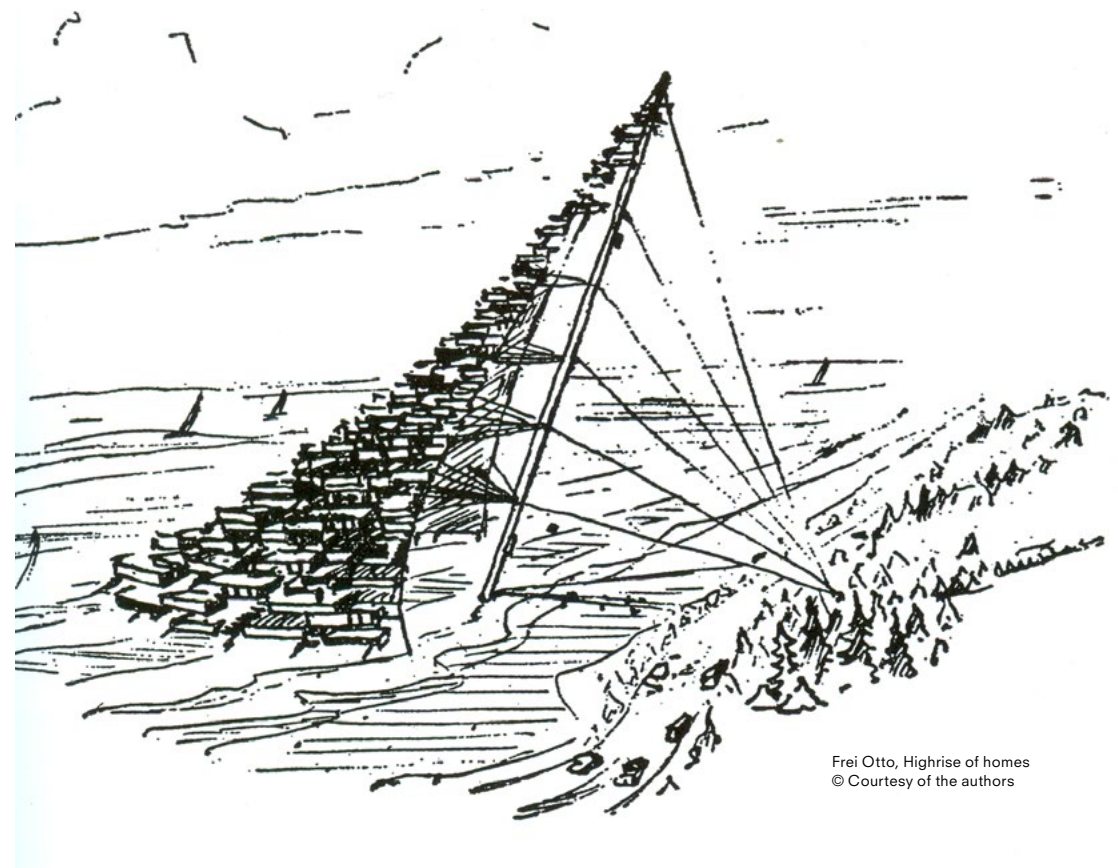
Moshe Safdie, Habitat '67  
© Courtesy of the authors

### The '60s and Zenetos' "Electronic urbanism."

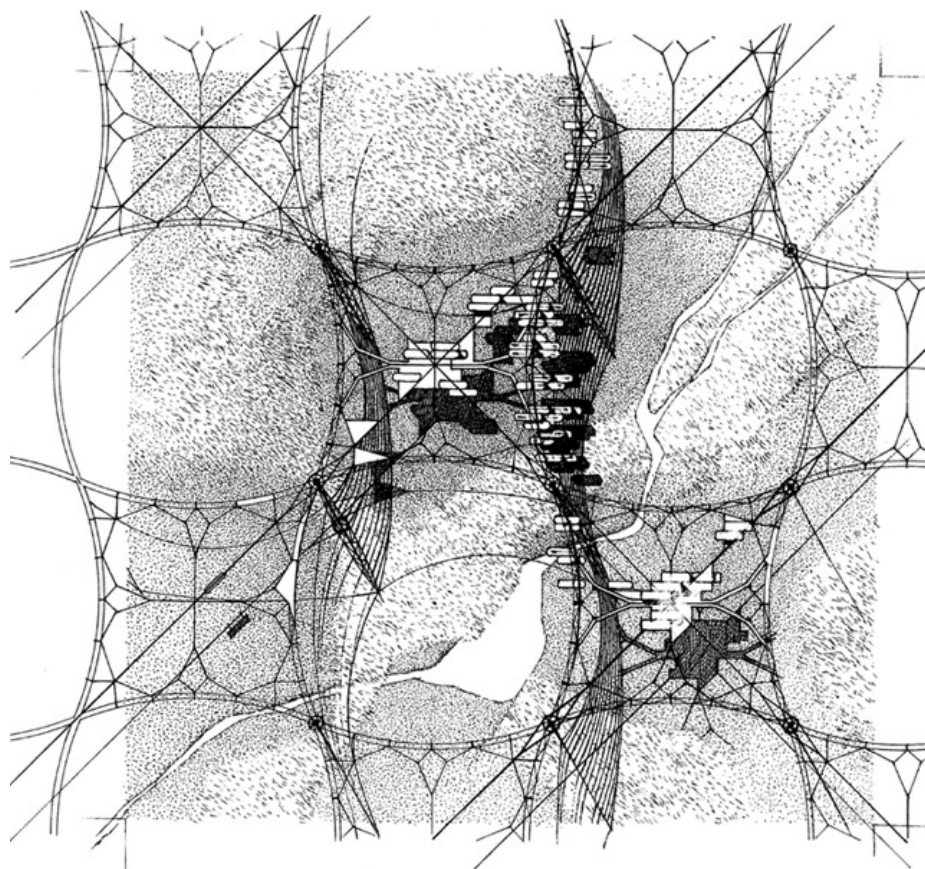
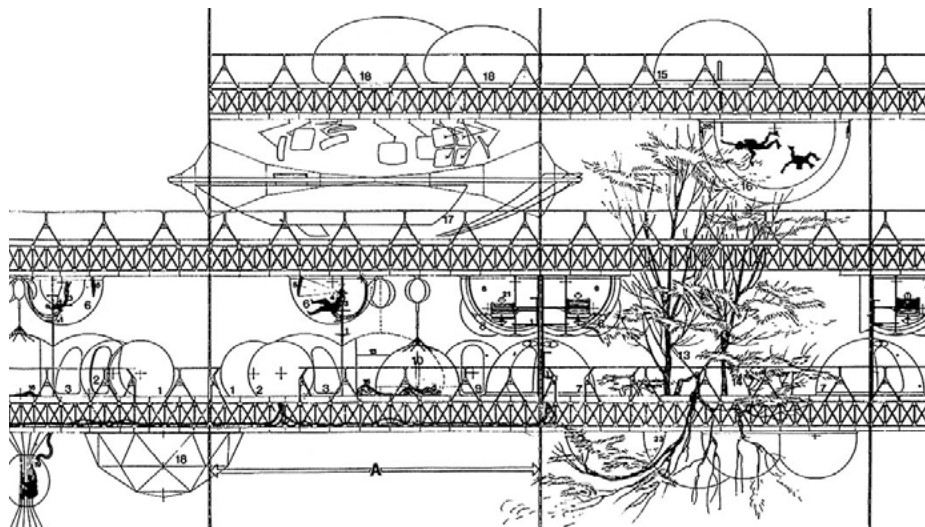
Although Zenetos in Greece is considered to be detached from the local context and the debate of his contemporaries, and even with these two proposals that seem to be utopian tropes, we could identify several crisscrossing relations with what was happening at that time in Greece, in as much as they were based in the specificities of the given landscape. Zenetos' thoughts have been previously analyzed and researched in relation to the 60's international utopian and avant-garde context. His deep influence by the debate in Greece over the balance of society, economy, architecture, tourism and the landscape is neither acknowledged nor researched. His approach to planning for the future of the city must be seen as part of the pioneers of the decade of 1960, without compromising the role of the debate on the society and economy of Greece, architecture, tourism and special landscape.

In mostly all of the avant-garde projects, such as the proposals by Archigram, Independent Group, the Metabolist, and Yona Friedman (among many others), there is a common reference in the confidence and faith of the architects of their capacity to develop an ideal model, ultimately rendered as a world engine with unknown internal laws. In this context, Takis Zenetos' ideas can be easily understood as part of a general movement, where the search for political awareness, social commitment, and technological improvements were part of it. Zenetos worked in a dynamic era in Greece and dreamed of his own version of the habitation of the future, using the term "electronic-urbanism." Always updated on the most recent technological developments, he was rather influenced by creators of a more tangible utopia, like Barry Patten and Frei Otto during the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> The proposal of Frei Otto for the *Highrise of homes* near the beach and the construction of Habitat '67 in Montreal designed by Moshe Safdie, are influential models for his quest on alternative relations of the ground with the city, ownership, services and the social utility networks.

Examining the signs of the times from a distant scope, Tafuri and Dal Co find a common ground in the avant-garde of the 60s: "A prevailing form in all directions



Frei Otto, Highrise of homes  
© Courtesy of the authors



that ends in decorative enrichment of the urban chaos, the one that initially intended to curb.”<sup>6</sup> Zenetos worked in this framework and, while being less ‘utopian’ than his contemporary visionaries, his ‘vision’ included an ‘electronic’ polycentric Athens. His technical approach was triggered and inspired by a constant search in science magazines of his time. He invented his overhanging cities as mega-constructions in tension that gradually would cover the Earth’s surface, though without stirring it up. The only interference with the ground is the nodal connections in combination with the foundations of the pylons.

This establishes a parallel crust to that one of the earth (the natural one, called in Greek “φυσική”=“physical”), forming a world that espouses fluidity and flexibility and at the same time is based on the grid. It is humanity captive in tele-life that seems so alluring. Zenetos proposes a society where working engines free the humans from boring rituals. To explain this, he wrote, “*This free time that will result will give a new dimension to relations between cohabiting individuals, which will be heard by the quiet contemplation of the essence of things...*”<sup>7</sup>

### Towards what kind of tourist development?

Since the 1950s, Greek architects were exploring the expressions of modern architecture, placing the question of rendering a quality tourism project on the relation of hotel types with the given landscape. This debate continued in an issue of the journal *Architecture in Greece* of 1968, where Aris Konstantinidis promoted a management planning of the coasts, Aristomenes Provelengios introduced the term “tourist humanism” and A. Kalinskis introduced touristic units with prefabrication.<sup>8</sup> In the same way of thinking, Zenetos reports on the settlements in Crete, mentioning constantly the need to maintain the given character of the place, when the negative examples of Italian and Spanish coastlines were starting to be present. In Crete, he tries to capture the given image through architecture and to display it into the future.

Zenetos worked on the evolution of Agia Galini from a small fishing village to a settlement of 6,000 inhabitants, researching on a “*structural system, which is responsive to the natural environment and the topography of the area.*”<sup>9</sup> The new architecture singularity enhances the existing specificity of the landscape and both are identified as key “accomplices” for tourism development. The issue of size and proportions is controlled, though “*while under this proposed structure, the plan is always an integrated sum, in all of the distinctive phases of development.*”<sup>10</sup>

While emulating nature as a fixed background and simulating history as a place to extract evolving ideas, Zenetos follows the teachings of Pikionis whereby “*...the forms are in contrast or in similarity to the shapes of landscape and the synthesis of stability and mobility, through the architectural oeuvre, harmonizes with the construction of a new landscape.*”<sup>11</sup> Such an approach is found in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, where “Organic Architecture” provides a method for the perception of the relationship of architecture and place. In the rugged landscape of Plakias, Zenetos considers the synergy of architecture with the strong northern winds necessary. He insists on “taking into account the technical measures of neutralizing”<sup>12</sup> so that the negative element is converted into an advantage.



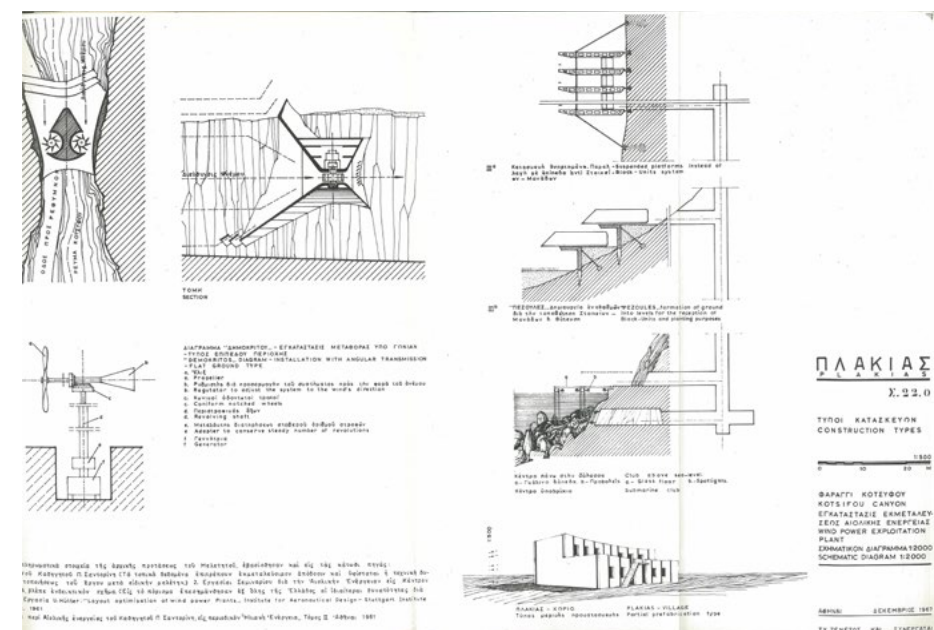
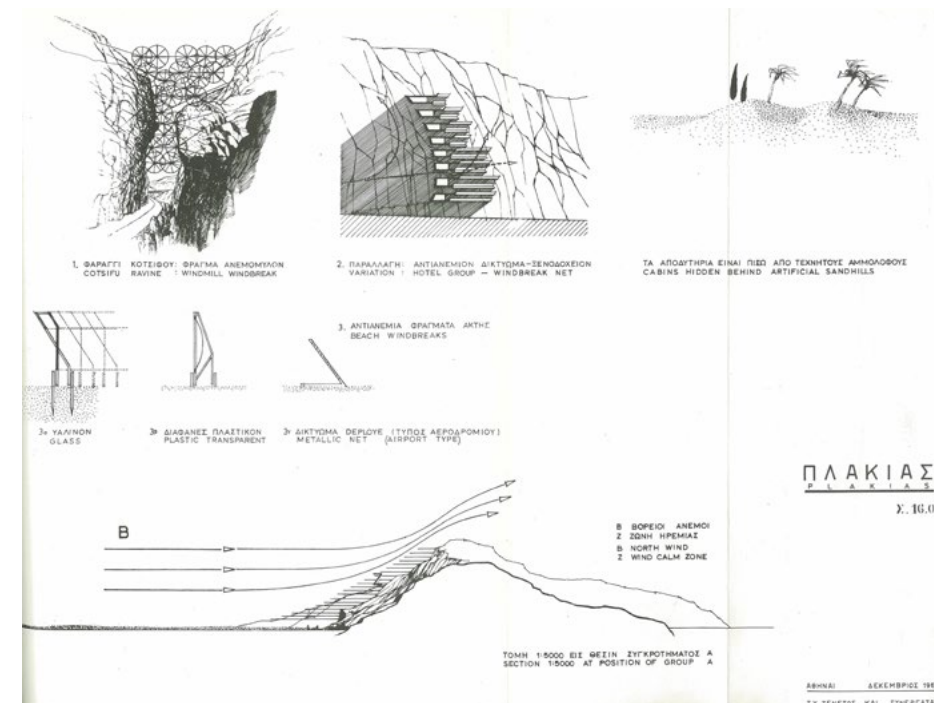


Model of Agia Galini © Courtesy of the authors

In Agia Galini, the specificity of the architectural form is the tool for resolving all scales of intervention and aims in a recognizable settlement and the creation of an additional tourism where none existed. In the context of economic development through fishing, Zenetos proposes the mutation of the typical fishing boat into a modern equipped boat. With the same attitude that he designed folds, expansions and excavations in whole mountains, Zenetos approaches the intangible data, the moving air and sea. As in his Electronic Urbanism, things have to change in obedience to the dictates of the conditions. Human interventionism is present in the physical and the natural imposing its own perspective. Geomorphology is the foundation, the pretext for an active intervention in nature, creating a new landscape with mixed artificial and natural materials.<sup>13</sup>

### Architectural Exaltation [Metarsiosis].

The integrated form of Agia Galini as well as the modular installation of Plakias has to be seen as perspectives of the proposals of “Electronic Urbanism”. In the two Cretan projects, Zenetos simulates the issue of a stone slab detachment (Greek: plaka) from the ground, the most distinctive aspect of the geomorphology of the Greek mountains. The idea of the “ground” is very dominant in his work, either by exaggerating the relief or by ignoring it. The horizontal slabs of “tele-lifetime” overlap with the natural landscapes of peculiarities. The two plans in Crete seem to become more an ‘ethical’ background of his work in an effort to find a kind of “alibi” and



Turbines in Plakia © Courtesy of the authors

“legalization” from nature itself of his current theory and can be seen as experimentation, as an intermediate phase (or a snapshot) of their complete change. The morphology of the premises on rural settlements is seen by Zenetos as nature’s economy, while for larger formations, such as cities, the technological culture results in creating a bidirectional landscape.

The “unattainable” in the urban project of Zenetos was present in his thinking “...because the most likely scenario is that this will stay at the proposal stage...” but, “the way of poets is to ignore reality. Dream rather than act. What they do is just results of fantasy. And fantasy creatures are simply constructed. In Greek, the construction is called poetry. (ποίηση)”

His synergy with nature cannot be compared to the one of the level of Architectures, but his poetry certainly reaches that of Jean Tinguely, with common references to the movement and taming of the wind, the reuse of materials, and the experimentation and the personal moments of self-criticism and irony.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 The trigger for this research gave the finding of the model of Agia Galini, by Takis Zenetos, in a warehouse of the prefecture of Heraklion and its rescue in 1996 by the architects Lefteris Kritsotaki and Maria Pistopoulou. The model was given in 2009 to the Department of Architecture of the Technical University of Crete.
- 2 Based on the Study of Tourism Development of Crete by the company Frank E. Basil INC 1964. During the same period, the Ministry of Coordination uses as framework the Regional Planning of Crete, a thesis at NTUAthens of S. Angelopoulos, E. Gritsopoulos, C. Theologidou, B. Katsaros, A. Kostopoulos, M. Lygidakis, A. Mavrodimitou, A. Moraitou, N. Papaioannou, C. Tsanaka, under the supervision of Professor A. Kriezis (June 1964).
- 3 T. Ch. Zenetos and co, Plakias. Plan of Tourism Development, Ministry of Coordination / Agency for Regional Development of Crete, Athens 1967 Summary I.
- 4 T. Ch. Zenetos and co, ibid. p.15
- 5 Barry Patten realized Myer Music Bowl in Melbourne in 1959. Frei Otto realized the German Pavilion at the Expo '67 in Montreal and the facilities for the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972.
- 6 Manfredo Tafuri-Francesco Dal Co, Architettura Contemporanea II, Milan 1979, p 347-353.
- 7 T. Ch. Zenetos, Architecture in Greece, issue 8 (1974), p. 123.
- 8 Related articles A.Konstantinidis, A.Provelengios and A. Kalinskis in Architecture in Greece, vol.1 (1967).
- 9 T. Ch Zenetos and collaborators, Agia Galini. p 17.
- 10 T. Ch Zenetos and collaborators, Agia Galini. p 17, “Summary,” pp. II
- 11 Dimitris Pikionis, ibid p 144.
- 12 T. Ch Zenetos and collaborators, Plakias. p 2 He proposes measures that can harness the wind, giving three options: 1. With the construction of a hanging-hotel that mitigates the force of the wind on the beach, 2. By placing a fence of windmills and 3. By placing a turbine to generate electricity.
- 13 Dimitris Filippidis, “Myths of the current Aegean” The Aegean: a dispersed city, 10th International Architecture Biennale Venice, Athens 2006, p 435
- 14 Martin Heidegger, « ...ποιητικά κατοικεί ο άνθρωπος...», Athens 2008, σ.13.
- 15 Reference to the recycling of materials in the work of Jean Tinguely, which was a theme in both architecture and sculptural work of Zenetos.



# Dissolving the City

Essay by Ali Fard

Preliminary Notes on Spatial  
Ideologies of Information  
and Communication Technologies



Communication networks have been influencing the city and urban imagination since the introduction of electrical telegraph in early 19th century. Beginning in the mid-20th century, however, a new wave of technological advances in electronic communication, generated in part by the military efforts of the two world wars, would inject a new enthusiasm in spatial practices concerned with the city and its future. This enthusiasm would lead to the development of an ideology in the 1960s of an urban transcendence within radical architecture. At its core, this ideology believed that the dematerialization of the networks of information and communication would bring about an end to the city as a concentrated form of agglomeration. Echoing the decentralized utopias of 19th century, this ideology would build on an urban/non-urban dichotomy, which still persists in the contemporary “urban age” discourse.

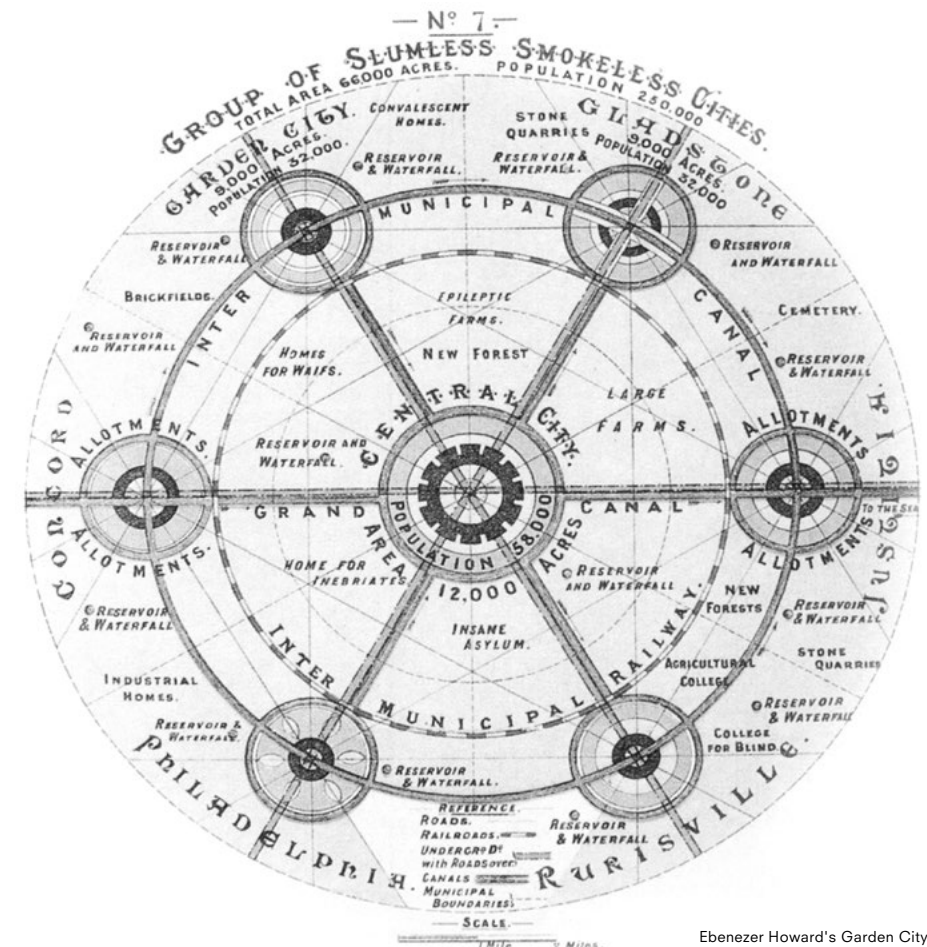
More recently, developments in urban studies and the re-emergence of networks and open systems thinking within design practices have identified a dual explosive/implosive character in global urbanization processes. While city-based agglomeration remains an essential aspect of urbanization, the extended operational urban fabric, emanating from cities and reaching to every corner of the globe, has become an increasingly integral part of global urbanization. And although the urban transcendence of the 1960s utopian schemes has not materialized, information and communication technologies, their organizational logic, and their urban/spatial disposition have remained essential in both concentrated and extended forms of urbanization. The operational relationship between urban hardware and urban software, between form and process, to which most visions in the 60s alluded, remains a productive lens for investigating the hybrid material/immaterial nature of information and communication technologies, and their historical and contemporary spatial ideologies.

### Garden Cities to Cybercities

Connectivity has been an essential and constitutive aspect of global urban development. Yet it was not until the late 19th century and the diffusion of the telegraph that communication networks began to permeate the spatial ideologies of cities and their future orientation.<sup>1</sup> Faced with a problematic urban condition at the turn of the new century, a modernist regime informed by new technological advances in transportation, sanitation and communication took on the task of urban reform. The rise of planning and engineering—with their philosophical belief in science, technology, and standardized infrastructure—coupled with the growth of a consumption society mediated through grids of power, water, transportation, and communication, would eventually lead to the development of what Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin have called “the modern infrastructural ideal.”<sup>2</sup> This ideology was itself rooted in the late 19th century amid the prevalent belief that urban problems created by the rapid growth of industrial cities could only be effectively addressed through the application of scientific methods and technological advances, seen as both the source of, and the answer to, the problems of the ever-growing industrial city. Technological developments in roads, rail, sanitation, water, and communication would form key elements of the larger project of modernization and societal progress.<sup>3</sup> By the beginning of the 20th century, and epitomized by the Garden Cities concept of Ebenezer Howard in 1902, there was a profound shift towards decentralization as

the ultimate solution to the ills of the industrial city. Foreshadowing ideas that were to be further developed after WWII, this decentralization was in a large part enabled by technological advances in sanitation, transportation, and communication, as ways of connecting and servicing new polycentric networks of inhabitation. In Howard’s vision of a “well-structured and biologically sound urban body,” an emphasis was placed on systems of circulation. Howard “stressed the need for a scientific system of flows within and between his garden cities. These were based around systems of railways, canals and reservoirs that he depicted in the networks and routes criss-crossing his diagram of the Social City.”<sup>4</sup>

Urban connectivity was taken up as a major factor of modern movement in architecture and planning, characterized by the International Congress of Modern Architecture’s (CIAM) adoption of circulation and traffic as major issues within their charter. CIAM’s interest in the networks of circulation can be directly linked to the reorientation of planning and architecture towards economy and efficiency at the turn

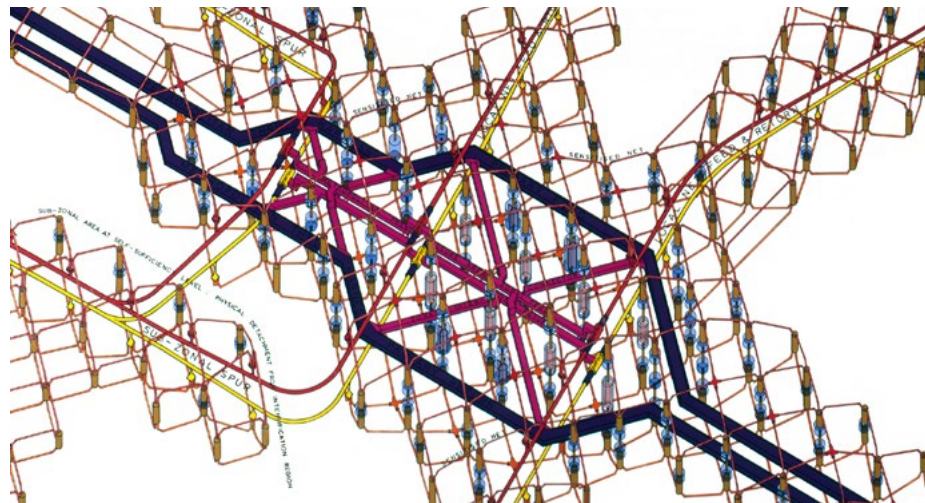


Ebenezer Howard's Garden City concept from *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (1902) © Image courtesy of Ali Fard



of 20th century, which emphasized the scientific and systematic organization of urban flows as one of the main mandates of urban restructuring.<sup>5</sup> With the rise of cybernetics and the study of control systems in the years following WWII, the influence of electronic communication technologies and their networks would begin to permeate the spatial disciplines as major conceptual drivers. Under the heavy influence of the theoretical discourse of Marshal McLuhan and Buckminster Fuller, from the 1950s on, architecture saw a pronounced shift towards electronic communication and computers and their potential effect on cities and urban environments. Converging ideologies of communication systems and urban growth would reach their peak in the 1960s at the *Delos* meetings organized by Constantinos Doxiadis. These meetings and the journal *Ekistics* were to serve as the ultimate propaganda machines for dissemination of a network culture within architecture. Expanding on the work started by CIAM and the modern movement's preoccupation with circulation, the *Delos* meetings and the subsequent journal articles of *Ekistics* were to redirect CIAM's agenda towards electronics and electronically mediated communication.<sup>6</sup> The study of patterns in nature and human organizations initiated by cybernetics was to gain a greater prominence within the architectural discourse of the time, prompting a disciplinary concern for connections, especially the invisible connective networks of communication and air travel, to the extent that, as Mark Wigley elaborates, within these discussions "the central role of the architect was no longer just the form of networks, but the connections between them."<sup>7</sup>

Fascinated with the processing power of computers and the connective fabric of communication networks, radical architectural practices of the 1960s began to imagine the city as a communication system, a giant computer. Not only was the discipline inundated with computer jargon, but the operational aspects of computers were also beginning to pervade how architects saw cities, and even more importantly, how they imagined the future of cities. The Computer City project



Computer City, Axonometric, Dennis Crompton (Detail), ©Archigram 1964  
Photoprint from original ink line drawing on tracing paper, with added colour film, mounted on board, 850 x 600 mm.  
Image supplied by the ARCHIGRAM ARCHIVES 2013

of Archigram from 1964 is a vivid example of this new attitude towards the city. Imagined as "a synthesized metropolis with electronic changeability," the scheme was representative of a reciprocal relationship emerging between information and communication technologies (ICT) and ideas of infrastructural flexibility and changeability. Shedding much of the bulk of the group's other urban schemes, Computer City was purely interested in information, its transmission and potential for generating a flexible urban feedback loop. Information was given material form through cables, transistors, and processing units, provoking "the use of computer technology not as a representational tool, but as an environmental model."<sup>8</sup> Although partly lost in the techno-speak, the project for the first time hints at the build-up of materiality that would accompany the cybercities of the future. Yet this material build-up was encoded with themes of urban flexibility and the potential ability of cities to respond in an interactive way to change and flux. As Dennis Crompton elaborated in the original printing of the project in the fifth issue of Archigram, "the activities of an organized society occur within a balanced network of forces which naturally interact to form a continuous chain of change."<sup>9</sup> His Computer City would be "programmed" to physically respond to changes in the activities of the city over time.

While the shift towards urban software was gaining great traction within the architectural discourse of the time, it was precisely its dialectic relationship to the hardware that underlined almost every project of 1960s radical architecture.<sup>10</sup> This dialectic of form and process—rather than form and function—is an essential outcome of the 1960s discussions around cities and communication networks. As Kenzo Tange reflected in 1966, "in modern civilized society, space is a communication field, and it is becoming more and more organic with the development of the communication system... Creating an architecture and a city may be called a process of making the communication network visible in space."<sup>11</sup> And by the early 1970s, it was generally accepted that even invisible social networks and other non-physical systems require a physical network for their delivery, an "interface" between non-physical processes and physical forms.<sup>12</sup>

### Urban Transcendence

Around the same time, themes of urban dispersal were emerging from planning, where in a highly influential paper in 1963, Melvin Webber argued that "disparate spatial dispersion" was in fact a "built-in feature of the future" and "the counterpart of a chain of technological developments that permit spatial separation of closely related people."<sup>13</sup> Webber saw the density and the concentrated form of cities as a direct outcome of the need for closely related, yet specialized, activities of the city to communicate efficiently. In this regard, emerging information and communication technologies and their connective networks would enable an understanding of the spatial city "as a communications system, as a vastly complex switchboard through which messages and goods of various sorts are routed."<sup>14</sup> Believing that the prevalent understanding of "urban-ness" and cities, as concentrated forms of agglomeration of human activity, was culturally constructed and in need of a reorientation towards a more spatially diversified future, Webber argued for a hybrid urban condition, one both concentric and expansive, a theme that would reemerge at the beginning of the 21st century.



Meanwhile, the two gurus of network culture, McLuhan and Fuller, were working hard and seamlessly to generate nothing short of a revolution in the urban spatial ideology of the time. Their ideas, largely based on and inspired by electronic communication and networks of information, were to champion patterns of fluid connection over static urban form. Here there were considerable differences between what Doxiadis imagined as the future of urban settlements and McLuhan and Fuller's belief in the persistence of the fluid character of emerging patterns of human habitat. While Doxiadis called for a (re)stabilizing of urban environments through visualizing and analyzing patterns of invisible infrastructural networks, Fuller asserted that it was "precisely the stability of unseen infrastructural networks that makes global physical instability possible and desirable. The global village supports a hypermobility of people and architecture. Designers are to aim for 'formless' systems of unsettlement rather than overcome them."<sup>15</sup> To Fuller and McLuhan, the stability of cities and their dependence on fixed infrastructures of connectivity—visible or not—was in contrast to the hypermobility of contemporary society, which was increasingly facilitated by new information and communication technologies. In turn, they suggested a totally new spatial ideology driven by dynamic infrastructural elements able to react and respond to the economic, cultural and social flux of the contemporary urban condition. Cities, as concentrated forms of agglomeration — of capital, people, and form—connected by fixed and inflexible infrastructural networks were now to give way to a largely distributed network of connections between increasingly nomadic forms of "unsettlement."<sup>16</sup>

These ideas were to heavily influence the spatial ideology of a younger generation of designers and architects fed up with modernist architecture and planning. The new dynamism embedded in information and communication technologies, coupled with other electro-mechanical advances, would bring about a general shift towards ideas of urban transcendence. Going beyond the city, towards a dynamic decentralized organization enabled by electronics and computers, was a common theme among this new generation. Cedric Price and Archigram of UK, Superstudio and Archizoom of Italy, and the Japanese Metabolists were among the radical voices that believed the new wave of electronically mediated information and communication technologies would bring about a dramatic shift in the concept of the urban. Freed from the fixity and materiality of traditional urbanism, the city, these designers believed, was now able to move, expand, and disperse. The dichotomy of the urban and non-urban, city and nature, would now be mediated and resolved through electronic communication, the full force of which would "make the distinction between urban concentration and exurban sprawl irrelevant."<sup>17</sup>

The influence of these ideas on architecture and other spatial fields was such that these "fantasies of transcendence", as Stephen Graham calls them, would be sustained for much of the next three decades. Graham elaborates that the mystique which was attached to digital communication technologies between the 1960s and 1990s was such that "ICT-mediated shifts away from place and city-based lives were often uncritically assumed to automatically also involve shifts towards more democratic, egalitarian, decentralized and ecologically sensitive societies."<sup>18</sup> It seemed as if finally the ills of the industrial city had been overcome, new technology had conquered old technology, and the agrarian and idyllic utopias of the past were now the future.

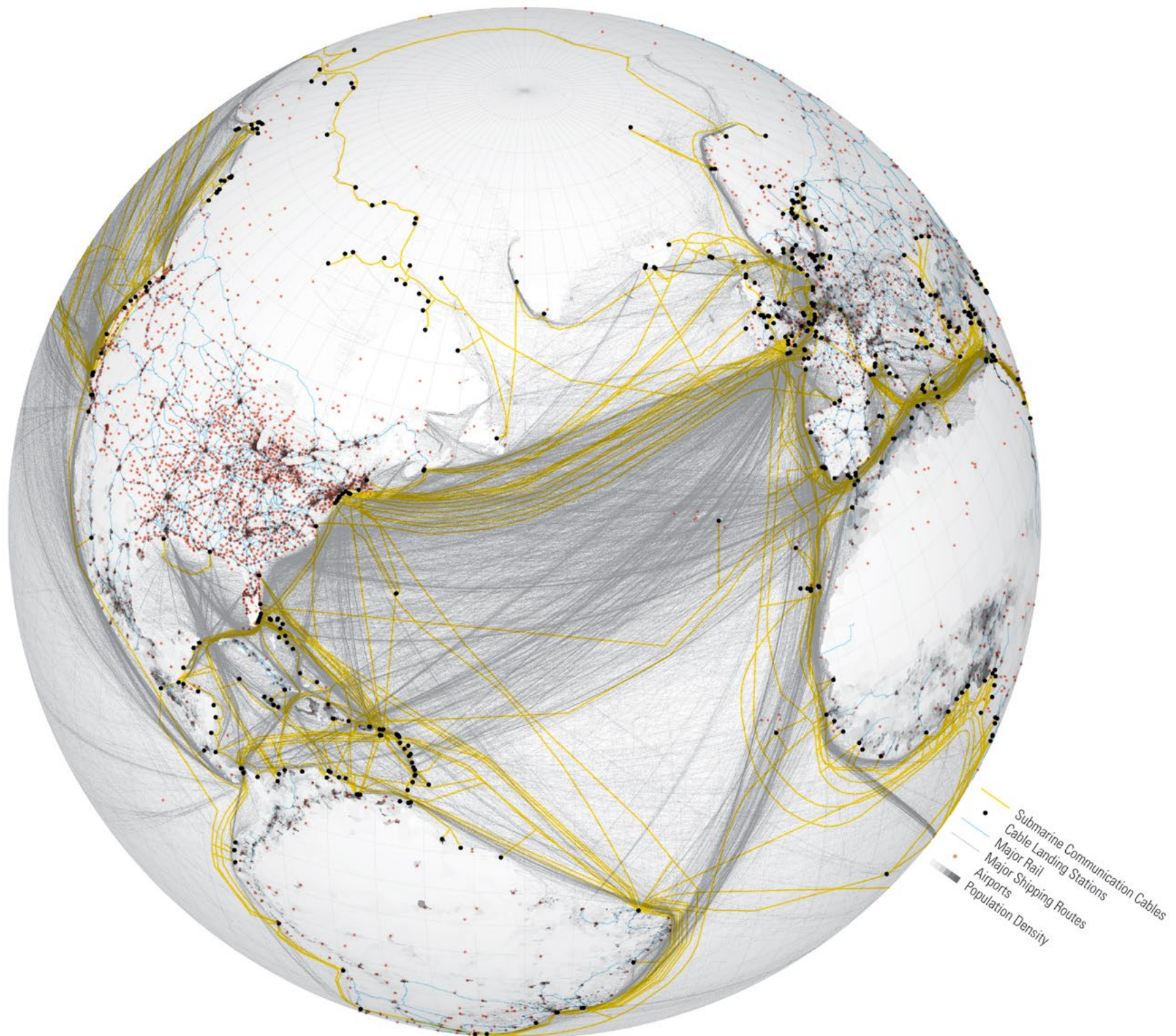
### The City is Dead, Long Live the City

By the end of the 20th century, Antoine Picon suggests, a number of parallel theories had emerged within design disciplines regarding the impacts of digital technologies on the future of the city.<sup>19</sup> Having evolved from the spatial ideologies of cities and technology of 1960s, these theories implied, in some way or another, an end to the city as we know it. William J. Mitchell, for example, hypothesized that advances in digital communication networks and information technologies would eventually replace much of the physical circulation in cities. Advancing the long-standing concept of digital tools as extensions of the human body, Mitchell believed that many of the urban exchanges would eventually become redundant by digital information and communication technologies.<sup>20</sup> It was largely believed that digital culture and dematerialization of information and communication technologies would lead to a radical dispersion of cities, strangely echoing the radical architectural theories of the 1960s and late 19th century.

However, beginning with Manuel Castells and Saskia Sassen, and followed by Simon Marvin and Stephen Graham, a new discourse emerged around cities and ICT. Although some urban exchange was replaced by digital communication, processes of metropolitanization had granted a renewed importance to highly concentrated cities such as New York and London.<sup>21</sup> Not only had cities not disappeared, they had in fact grown, and the resultant urban spaces were highly fragmented spaces of unequal infrastructural development and accessibility. In parallel to these findings, there was a move towards a more regional process of urbanization. Citing "the facilitative effects of the revolution in information and communication technologies" as one of the major forces driving this regional process, Edward Soja has identified a "filling in" of the decentralized urban forms and suburban developments of the metropolitan era, in effect expanding the concentrated form of urbanization to a regional scale.<sup>22</sup>

Recent developments in urban studies suggest a more "planetary" perspective. Questioning the urban/non-urban dichotomy widespread in urban studies, Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid have articulated a need to explore new avenues for understanding the contemporary process of global urbanization. The urban can no longer be understood through a study of various settlement types. If, as Webber declared 50 years ago that "all space is urban space,"<sup>23</sup> then the urban/non-urban dichotomy still prevalent among the "urban age" theorists is extremely problematic. While agglomeration remains essential to the process of "planetary urbanization," Brenner and Schmid believe that "even spaces that lie well beyond the traditional city cores and suburban peripheries—from transoceanic shipping lanes, transcontinental highway and railway networks, and worldwide communications infrastructures to alpine and coastal tourist enclaves, 'nature' parks, offshore financial centers, agro-industrial catchment zones and erstwhile 'natural' spaces such as the world's oceans, deserts, jungles, mountain ranges, tundra, and atmosphere—have become integral parts of the worldwide urban fabric."<sup>24</sup> Echoing the (re)emergence of networks, urban flows and global systems in architecture, landscape architecture and other design disciplines, these ideas reassert the significant role of multi-scalar connections and connective urban fabrics within global processes of urbanization.







## Hardware/Software

Information and communication technologies, and their networks of dissemination, hold an especially critical position within this increasingly global perspective. Not only have these technologies been instrumental in the ideological death and reincarnation of the city and the emergence of a planetary scope, but they have also generated their own complex physical network and a highly articulated organizational logic. Yet, the seemingly immaterial characteristics associated with ICT, and the shadowy effects of a technological determinism embedded in them since their conception, have hampered a deeper study of their spatial disposition. It would perhaps be constructive to reexamine the dynamism of ICT that injected so much enthusiasm into the design theories of the 1960s. Stemming from a dialectical relationship between hardware and software, this dynamism provoked a radical architecture movement that would influence the discipline for years to come. Hence, in retrospect, the cannibalistic tendencies of design to go beyond cities, beyond architecture, beyond hardware, and beyond form, are perhaps not as fruitful as efforts spent on better understanding the operational relationships between form and process, between urban hardware and urban software, and between concentrated and extended forms of urbanization. The operational hardware/software dialectic rooted in the urban disposition of information and communication technologies remains an essential concern of contemporary design.

## SOURCES

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 The emphasis had historically been placed on transportation, power and water, rather than communication. This was particularly due to the fact that before the invention of telegraph, transportation and communication infrastructures were synonymous, as post, newspapers, and other communication technologies of the time depended on roads and rail for their delivery.
- 2 Graham and Marvin (2001:43-81)
- 3 Ibid (41)
- 4 Pinder (2005:48)
- 5 Foglesong (1986:199-232)
- 6 For an engaging account of the Delos meetings and a detailed historical perspective on networks and their adoption in architecture, see: Wigley (2001)
- 7 Wigley (2001:94)
- 8 Steiner (2009:205)
- 9 Crompton (1964)
- 10 By urban software I refer to the visible or invisible processes and forces that influence, and emanate from, cities and other urban formations. Urban hardware can be understood as the operational architecture and material forms that mediate, and are in turn generated by, these urban processes.
- 11 Tange (1970, 240)
- 12 Wigley (2001:91)
- 13 Webber (1963:23)
- 14 Ibid (42)
- 15 Wigley (2001:114)
- 16 See Buckminster Fuller's Report on the United Nation's Conference on Human Settlements: Fuller (1978)
- 17 Wigley (2002:112)
- 18 Graham (2004:8)
- 19 Picon (2010:172)
- 20 Mitchell (1995)
- 21 See: Castells (1989), Sassen (1991), Graham and Marvin (2001)
- 22 Soja (2011)
- 23 Webber (1963:53)
- 24 Brenner and Schmid (2011)

# The Advanced Passenger Train

Short Essay by Tom James  
Photography by Theo Simpson



In a railway siding, in a nowhere town in the middle of England, sits an engineering marvel, a vision of the future. Capable of travelling at 155mph, its current top speed is zero. The track it sits on is a dead-end. This is the Advanced Passenger Train.

In the 1970s, the board of British Rail embarked on an experiment. They decided to fund the development of a new, tilting train: a train that could match the speed of new European services, even on Britain's winding, Victorian railway infrastructure.

A team was assembled. American aircraft engineers were drafted in. Hydraulic tilting mechanisms were created, new methods of harnessing power from the overhead lines were devised. Public money was spent. And by the late 70s, a prototype was ready for testing. The Advanced Passenger Train had arrived.

The APT looks like it could have been designed yesterday, or today, or tomorrow. It's breathtaking. The sharp yellow cab punctures the air. The name, forever futuristic, is written on the side, once, in large, clear letters, so that you could catch it as it screamed past. There are no extraneous elements to the design, livery, or title. No whizzes or bangs are necessary. This machine is Modernism incarnate, functional and simple. Built to go as fast as possible.

And go fast it did. It broke the British speed record, clocking up a steady 150mph between London and Glasgow, leaning through the Lake District's curves. Commemorative postcards were produced, heralding 'The Most Advanced Passenger Train In The World.' Souvenir bookmarks were printed. They proudly announced that the future is here: that the journey time from London to Glasgow has been cut to four hours, ten minutes.

And then nothing happened.

The APT had teething problems. The tilting mechanism was too effective, too smooth. Though the passengers could see the landscape outside tilting, inside there was no effect, leading to motion sickness (particularly among hungover journalists on demonstration runs). A nervous BR board pushed the train into service too soon, in the middle of the winter. A number of high-profile breakdowns, plus the full sick bags, led to the train being trounced by the press. And at the same time, a more conventional alternative, the slower, diesel-powered Intercity 125, was ready to go.

In 1983, the programme was cancelled. The order for a full fleet was never made. The technology was sold to Fiat in Italy, who later used it to develop their Pendolino trains. Eventually, after British Rail had itself been broken up and privatized, the APT's technology was sold back to the British railway passenger, via Richard Branson's Virgin Trains, at a large profit for everyone (but the British railway passenger).

Today, the APT sits in a siding in Crewe Heritage Centre, hidden behind the car park of an enormous Tesco superstore. Taken care of, lovingly restored by a group of volunteers. Next to it, on the West Coast Mainline, newer trains slink past, avoiding eye contact. They belong to companies with sugary, commercial names like Virgin, or Arriva Western, or West Coast Super Quick, or Train-Go. They're painted in garish, eye-catching colours, like Tango cans, or Barbie boxes, or iPhones, with meaningless dots and swirls and stripes to try to attract attention.

Today, thirty years after the Advanced Passenger Train was shunted ignominiously into the sidings, the fastest of these trains, on vastly improved track, still only equals the APT's time. Four hours and ten minutes.



# Modern Masterpieces Revisited

Text and images by  
Luís Santiago Baptista



### (Im)probable Scenarios

Improbability is nowadays a paradoxical definition. The improbable presents the unlikely in situations and the unpredictable in events. It introduces and evaluates difference and otherness in the order of things. So improbability is a statistical scenario that presupposes the possibility of failure and detour. The improbable is what is distant from reality through that which can be conceptualised. Thus it is a space of expectation in its implausibility. But the improbable also involves temporality, the time needed to prove it wrong. Indeed, the improbable shares with the probable the same structure of rationalization and anticipation. In fact, both were the *modus operandi* of modernity, a visionary ability in discerning the evolution of the *state-of-affairs* until its absolute realization. This ideology was called history and its engine named progress. It is a history in the making that demanded rationality in defining the aims and transparency in configuring the end. Thus, a path to a known future.

However, when the future as horizon collapsed in the *here-and-now* of the present, the capacity of rationalization and anticipation was neutralised. The truth is that modern utopia became increasingly relative and indeterminate. In this sense, the process gained autonomy as the final image got obscured. Post-modernity finally announced the *end of the meta-narratives*, and the pluralisation of worldviews, blurring the future in a kaleidoscopic flux of conflicting programs and projects. On the other hand, the virtualisation of almost all spheres of human activity turned reality into a kind of lively dream, disrupting the boundaries between fact and fiction, between phenomenon and representation. If the future is splintered in infinite glimpses without teleological order, reality is now an expanded field crossing the real with imagination. Ultimately, no one knows what tomorrow reserves to humankind or what really is happening in the world. Unpredictability and schizophrenia dissolves the gap between the probable and the improbable. Probability equals improbability. The *butterfly effect* realized.

How could we capture the improbable in such paradoxical situation? What happens if instead we conflate the probable with the improbable? *Modern Masterpieces Revisited* can be a critical attempt to answer these questions.

### Modern Masterpieces Revisited Series

How can we interrogate our current architectural and urban condition in the twilight of theory? The so-called post-ideological and post-critical demand the confluence of fictional and documental strategies of research. The Modern Masterpieces Revisited series explores and exploits the aura of modern architectural objects in this post-ideological and post-critical condition. This comprises singular points of view, critical perspectives and radical scenarios that take iconic modern objects as devices. Something one can capture, for instance, in the out of focus photographs of modern architectural icons by Hiroshi Sugimoto or, more directly, in the Corrupted Classics of modern design by John Angelo Benson, to name two. This research project confronts and conflates the modern masterpieces with both the utopian archive of the discipline and uncontested contemporary realities. Thus the tensions between different times and different spaces altogether dislocate our preconceptions and our value systems. Within this unpredictable process, acts of reinvention, affirmation and transformation, but also resistance, subversion and negation, intentionally cross their boundaries and overlap. At the same time as image and text, a constructed reality emerges neither true nor false, neither good nor bad, neither positive nor negative, neither past nor future, neither visionary nor nostalgic, neither ideal nor real, and only through this conceptually blurred reality can the structural presence of architecture today be truly exposed. Combining compositions of internet-found images and short narrative texts, the project Modern Masterpieces Revisited is an ultimate attempt to confront this critical situation without falling in the modern traps of nostalgia and utopia.

*Modern Masterpieces Revisited* is a project, as Beatriz Colomina would say, "not so much concerned with the relationship between architecture and the media as with the possibility of thinking of architecture as media."



**Modern Masterpieces #4**  
**Ludwig Mies van der Rohe,**  
**Barcelona Pavilion,**  
**Barcelona, Spain, 1929**

Mies van der Rohe made an architectural manifesto for Barcelona. Architecture for architecture's sake. No institutional expression, no clear function, no boundaries between interior and exterior, just a revolutionary conception of fluid space constructed by horizontal and vertical planes. The work was so groundbreaking that after the early demolition it demanded its faithful reconstruction in the eighties, despite the uncomfortable nostalgia accusations. Significantly, the wall found here its essential manifestation as a continuous, uninterrupted and folded plane. Other walls of the same configuration would mark our history after World War II, walls that divide more than guide our movements and even our thoughts. Architects can separate themselves from crude reality exiled in their historic ivory towers. They protect themselves behind a memorial wall that continues and concludes the previous one. And in the rudeness of this wall the new master architect designed a sublime entrance. At last, the *voluntary prisoners of architecture* can start their promised final exodus.





**Modern Masterpieces #5**

**Le Corbusier,  
Ville Savoye,  
Poissy, France, 1928-31**

Le Corbusier was an architectural revolutionary that firmly believed in a new modern society. While working on the reconfiguration of the urban and architectural models for a new collective life, the architect also made some ideal houses for the bourgeois and industrial elite. These radical houses, built mainly in the outskirts of Paris, affirmed the new possibilities of mechanical mobility that sustained the escape from the busy and crowded city right into the countryside. Modern living could be that pleasant and pacified relation with domesticated nature. But this *machine à habiter* was only sporadically inhabited and turned into, firstly, an uncomfortable ruin and secondly, a living museum. Today, new virtual conditions of communication and mobility can recover the productive potential of this singular house. Contrary to the previous modern era, new technologies now promise *stasis* and the grounding in one place for living, working, recreation, etc. Thus, dwelling can recover its ancient holistic perspective. And taking into account the current global crisis, the iconic house can even recover its lost utopian ferment.





**Modern Masterpieces #7**  
**Ludwig Mies van der Rohe,**  
**Farnsworth House,**  
**Illinois, USA, 1945-51**

Mies van der Rohe built the ultimate modern house. A house so perfect that it was almost uninhabitable. A design *maison domino* made of a simple raised structure, composed only of some pilotis and slabs, sheltering a pure glass house. Inside, dwelling became the ancestral experience of the sublime spectacle of nature. Spring, summer, autumn and winter finally could be visually experienced in the comfort of the interior home. The truth is that this ideal modern house remained empty, awaiting a new man to reclaim it. The sixties announced this free individual, the emergent nomad. This eternal wanderer would stroll along the visionary architectural *megastructures* that will connect the global world, constantly building anew an ever-changing environment. Now it is time to fulfil the unrealized promises. The new *rurban* dwellers, the *homo otiosus* that follows *homo ludens* and *homo faber*, appropriate the once dysfunctional structure, making it their own. Who really needs glass when the outside, the magnificent new mixture of dilapidated nature and low technology, is only a few steps away.





**Modern Masterpieces #10**  
**Frank Lloyd Wright,**  
**Guggenheim Museum,**  
**New York, USA, 1943-59**

Wright abhorred the metropolis. He said it not only with words, but essentially by a strange building. The Guggenheim was the very opposite of a metropolitan architecture: small, short, low, round and closed. In the middle of the forest of slim and high skyscrapers, the new museum sealed itself in an organic shell, protecting the new art from the busy city life, a sanctuary centralized in a grand atrium surrounded by a spiraling path. However, this pure architecture had difficulties in exhibiting art, especially the one that resulted from the artistic break of the sixties. The groundbreaking museum soon became obsolete, exposing only but itself despite the valuable efforts of curators. The truth is that the Guggenheim can recover its revolutionary potential, now as a place for contemporary art, a second breakthrough achieved by a double radical inversion. If art could turn low in high, it should abandon the interior walls and creatively appropriate the exterior façades. In a metropolis that is always destroying and rebuilding itself, in some sort of *cannibalism*, the emerging *avant-garde* can fulfill their promise of merging art with life.





# A Bridge Way Too Far

Text and photographs  
by Lisa Hirmer



During the first drive down Indian Road, the houses there appear simply to be derelict, casualties within a greater narrative of industrial decline in the former automotive city of Windsor, the smaller Canadian sibling to Detroit across the river. Yet a closer inspection reveals that the houses aren't exactly derelict. It is instead apparent that they haven't degenerated slowly over an extended period of disrepair and subsequent disuse, but the characteristics of decay, or lack thereof, suggest that something quite different has happened here: though boarded up and showing a few blemishes from the lack of maintenance, many of the houses stand in relatively good repair with the careful details of attentive homeowners still visible amongst the first signs of deterioration. Shingles are starting to peel on a few roofs, but newly painted trim colors, awnings, and custom address plaques are still visible. A couple houses even seem to have been abandoned mid-renovation. It is the vegetation, however, that is the most telling. While the overgrown plants suggest the passage of some time since occupation, the encroaching greens are not the ubiquitous scrub of abandoned lots; they are flowering trees, carefully placed shrubs and ornamental vines. Clearly, these are not houses that suffered from slow degeneration due to neglect. These were well-tended, some of them probably quite loved, homes until one day their occupants just picked up and left, leaving things to succumb to the forces of weather and time.

As I photograph the houses, I piece together the story of Indian Road from the few residents still living on the street, who stop their cars to talk to me, and from a long stream of related international news articles. The story centers around an eccentric businessman named Matty Moroun, the owner of the Ambassador Bridge, a massive bright blue steel structure that connects Windsor to Detroit across the Detroit River. It's the only privately owned border crossing in North America and also the busiest. Moroun had planned to build a second bridge next to the existing one, which would allow repairs to the aging structure without halting traffic and eventually double its capacity. However, the municipal and federal powers on both sides of the border fiercely opposed his scheme for a variety of reasons, and developed plans to build a government-owned bridge further down the river. The result has been an atypically zealous, and often bizarre-sounding, battle between the two sides involving everything from a myriad of lawsuits and fervent public relations campaigns to false eviction notices and an attempt at a constitutional amendment.

In the case of Indian Road, the bridge scheme led to the purchase of nearly every property on the street by Moroun's bridge company, presumably to both secure the land needed for his bridge and remove potential friction from nearby inhabitants, and also on the city's part, to classify the neighborhood in question as a heritage zone, which introduced a moratorium on demolition for the empty houses. This means that, as this conflict plays out at an international scale, the houses on Indian Road remain in a suspended state; they can neither be occupied nor torn down.

Surely, this has not been a good thing for the neighborhood, which is eerily silent most of the time. Private security guards hired by the bridge company patrol the streets regularly, presumably on the lookout for trespassers. Only a few houses remain occupied and the occasional pedestrians hurry along, usually students seeking the quickest route to the nearby university. It is becoming increasingly clear that Moroun's bridge will probably never get the approval it needs to be built. However, the irreversibility of his takeover of the Indian Road houses (after such a long stretch of not being occupied, it is unlikely the homes are livable) has left a definite mark on the fabric of the neighborhood. It is a brazen edit to the city's plans, like marginalia from an individual who has encroached upon the printed text, obscuring the narrative, misbehavior which, though motivated by a vision of another bridge, brings with it the means of entry for other possibilities that might otherwise have been unlikely.

The improbable situation of a street left to succumb to the lush vegetation that once decorated its modest homes has created an uncannily beautiful landscape, half suburban garden, and half feral wilderness. It is a sort of contemporary landscape garden, both picturesque and banal, the houses follies hinting at the inevitability of urban decline. There is a strong sense of temporality here, of urban construction as a moment in material processes that will eventually be subsumed by the exploitative forces of ecology. It is picturesque in the Smithsonian sense of a deformity softened by the effects of time and the entropic forces of nature, a temporary but amazing landscape offering a double-sided view, both of the thing it once was and a preview of the fate that awaits this place and at some point all construction.











































# You are One Lucky Son of a Bitch

Short Essay by Sparkle Hayter

According to Stephen Hawking, if one second after the Big Bang the universe had been denser by one part of a thousand billion, the universe would have expired after ten years, and you would not be here.

If the elements had not combined against all odds to spark life and nurture its mutations over millions of years, if the Neanderthals had overtaken humans, if your first ancestors had not survived disease, natural disasters, attacks by wild animals and wild humans, if your great-great-grand-father had not left everything and everyone he knew and loved at age 14 and boarded a ship in steerage to a new world he knew nothing about, escaping war and famine, and if on board he had not met an amusing girl from another village who didn't mind the mole on his chin and his overgrown eyebrows, bushy like shoeshine brushes, you would not be here.

If their daughter, a buxom, curly-haired widow named Dolly with three hungry children, had not prostituted herself to a lonely Toledo Seed Company salesman with a few extra bucks in his pocket, she would not have had her fourth child, your grandfather, and you would not be here.

If that grandfather had not heard a young woman laughing at a Jack Benny radio program from a high terrace in a residence for young ladies and asked the house matron for an introduction, you would not be here. If he had had brown eyes instead of blue, your grandmother would not have agreed to meet him and you would not be here.

So if Jack Benny had never been born, you would not be here.

And if your father hadn't taken your mother out in his father's Packard one night to look for Sputnik in the night sky, and if your mother had not said "Yes" after a solid year of saying no, and if one lucky spermatozoa had not chuffed up her vaginal canal that night, beating out 300 million others to find a waiting egg, you would not be here.

Multiply that by trillions.

The chance of you being born was less than one in a centillion. Almost zero. You exist at the nanometric-fine razor's edge between improbability and impossibility. You are the ancient seed of thousands of generations of lucky bastards.

Inspired by this:

[http://members.shaw.ca/tfrisen/chances\\_of\\_you\\_existing.htm](http://members.shaw.ca/tfrisen/chances_of_you_existing.htm)



# Notausgang 73

Essay by Evangelina Guerra Luján

Once, a city was divided in two parts. One part became the Good Half, the other became the Bad Half. The inhabitants of the Bad Half began to flock to the Good Half of the divided city, rapidly swelling into an urban exodus. After all attempts to interrupt this undesirable migration had failed, the authorities of the Bad Half made desperate and savage use of architecture: they built a wall around the Good Half of the city, making it completely accessible to their subject. This is how the London we know today was structured. (For more information, see Rem Koolhaas project for London 1972: The Strip Project.)





Another city experienced the same story: Zürich. After all attempts to stop immigration from the bad parts of the city failed, the authorities of Zürich desperately ran towards architecture solutions to improve the situation. Savage use of architecture was made and then it was born: a wall was built around the city, as well as a sphere that covered the heart of Zürich. Underground passages were built so the inhabitants could reach the mountains if they wanted to, and secondary large buildings were attached to the main wall. These facilities accommodate all kinds of tourist services. The media noticed it: once more, the import of an urban model was a success, unifying cultures, making bonds, and making everyone stronger. Once again "The Urban Copy Paste" was the megalopolitan answer.



Political propaganda posters from Swiss People's Party, circa 2007. Left: "Free pass for all?." Right: "Stop. Yes." illustrates hands of many skin colors reaching into a pile of Swiss passports © Courtesy of the author



"Wall Project Zürich," 2011 © Courtesy of the author

This wall was responsible for many changes in the city. For example: Paradeplatz (previously a pig market) was now one of the most paradisiacal, pleasant and safe spots in all Europe. All the pleasures came to The Good Zürich. There were all the desirable alternatives a citizen ever wanted. The authorities structured a plan called "Sensorial Project" so the inhabitants were stimulated by the senses at all times. Thousands of chocolate stores popped out of nowhere, turning the public realm into a delicious one. Graphic design was embedded everywhere. The most astonishing typefaces, flyers, ads, here and there... everywhere. The bills that the government decided to transform into the city's strongest cultural object were beautiful. The inhabitants, those strong enough to love the new metropolis, were joyful: they had the most beautiful bills in the world. Even the garbage bags were an example of beauty. It was perfect. You could frame a bag and put it in a museum of any other country next to a label: "This is a Masterpiece". But the true masterpiece was the city. Not the wall, not the sphere over the heart of Zürich; it was all the ideal urban idea of Zürich.

Transportation was another asset of the city. Name the spot, there was a mobile tube with an individual place for each one, to travel in comfort even the shortest distance. The most efficient transportation system was created, and every day of the year, it was updating itself. In that world where the city of Zürich was re-structured, another important element was acquired. Clocks were placed in every corner of the city, the beauty of punctuality in all its splendour. Not one minute more or less in every aspect of Zürich life was ever again experienced. No flaws were allowed. Some of them would sing the time and this melody would be heard in every corner of the city. Each one of the citizens was living in an uninterrupted harmonic urban space.





Zürich: Das Gute Leben...? Collage, 2011 © Courtesy of the author



The Art of Acquiring Goods Department. Photo collage, 2011 © Courtesy of the author

Disposal became an art: trash was elegantly thrown away. Each type of product package had its container. Each container, its architectural space. Every architectural space, a series of instructions on how to approach it. The *do's* and the *dont's*. All this achieved by means of the beauty of graphic design. The sight in perpetual nourishment as part of the "Sensorial Program." The trash had never been so clean, and in the middle of this oxymoron, there was the exquisiteness.

The city suddenly muted into a runway of serene monuments in a continuous ornamental frenzy and decorative delirium, an overdose of symbols. Consumption of goods was the indirect answer of the inhabitants to the authorities as a response to their wealth in every possible aspect of their lives. The most prestigious brands from all over the world contacted the authorities in order to open a store in Zürich, and it was carefully curated by the Department of Art of Acquiring Goods. Not every brand had the qualities of infinite and lifetime pleasure to a Swiss buyer. The most lusted-after places were the ones in the perimeter of the sphere.

The atmosphere was so different than in London, the urban model of the strip, followed as expected and in much more pleasant ways. Zürich had not only imported London's Urban Model, it had defeated London in terms of urban design. It became a plausible moment: the rise of the *Urbanalization*.

In such a little time frame the inhabitants, miraculously, started to follow all the rules imposed by the authorities, and soon, the wall stopped its construction and the sphere was removed. This spatial decision did not change the behaviour of the inhabitants. To the contrary, they continued all the norms of urbanity. In some parts of the city, you still could see the remains of the wall, left as a footprint of this urban phase.



Ruins of the Zürich Wall Project at Irchel Park. Collage, 2011 © Courtesy of the author





Time passed, and a dew of stress and concern engulfed the behaviour of the citizens. Something changed. The inhabitants did not know what, and even though the authorities knew it, the information had to be kept and secured for everyone's own safety. Otherwise the "Swiss way of life" could have been interrupted. One of the guesses amongst the inhabitants of a slight but notorious dissolution of their happiness was the incredible amount of people begging the city for admission. These human flocks were merely caused by the intense mass media exporting and communicating all the pleasures experience in the hedonistic Swiss land. Some of the applicants were admitted, after careful medical, intellectual and financial analysis, and some others managed to permeate the city limits. All the inhabitants, the welcome and the unwelcomed, became then, in a way or another, voluntary prisoners of the urban dictatorship in the territory.

Time passed and, suddenly one day, it happened. Something occurred in the mind of just one of the inhabitants. All types of pleasures had been supplied and yet this fullness suppressed her insides.

**Where in this city could she get "nothingness"?  
She trembled with desire and sighed. Is there a way out?**



She spread curiosity amongst other prisoners and in one month, there were 670 prisoners trying to escape. Visual demands of liberation of leader prisoners started to appear in the urban landscape. In an emergency state of mind, they started expeditions in the territory and trespassed every single architecture element of every spot in the city, mapping one by one the emergency exits for Zürich and passing this cartography notebook from generation to generation. Only one copy was made. It was available for consult, but no copies were made in order to protect the information. The data should have been evangelically passed on, but some of them called it rumours and others urban myths. This caused a decrease in the number on prisoners wanting to keep, and therefore pass, the information. These prisoners lost the ability to locate the exits and in their blindness, they continued in the urban dungeon forever.

**Most of the information was lost.  
Other data was suppressed.**

There is only the certainty of one emergency exit.  
We call it : Notausgang 73.





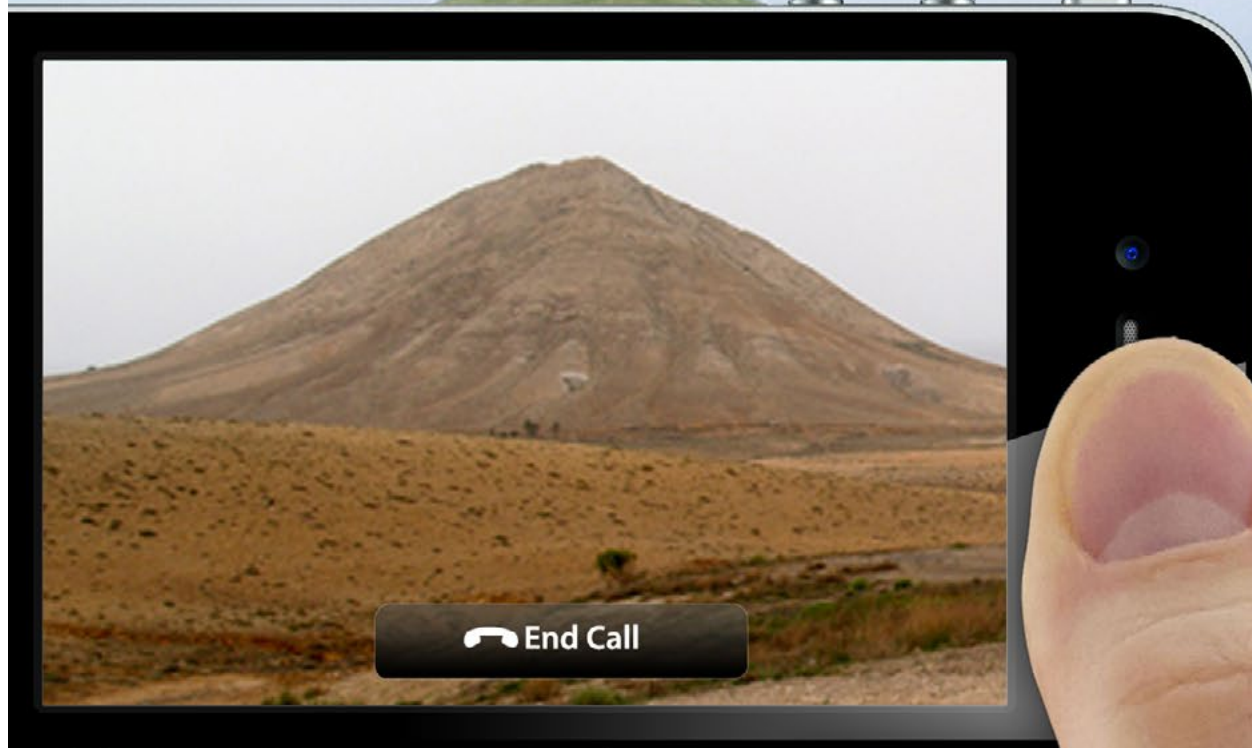






# Netopias : Premonitions of Past Futures

Essay by Eva Papamargariti and Vassiliki-Maria Plavou



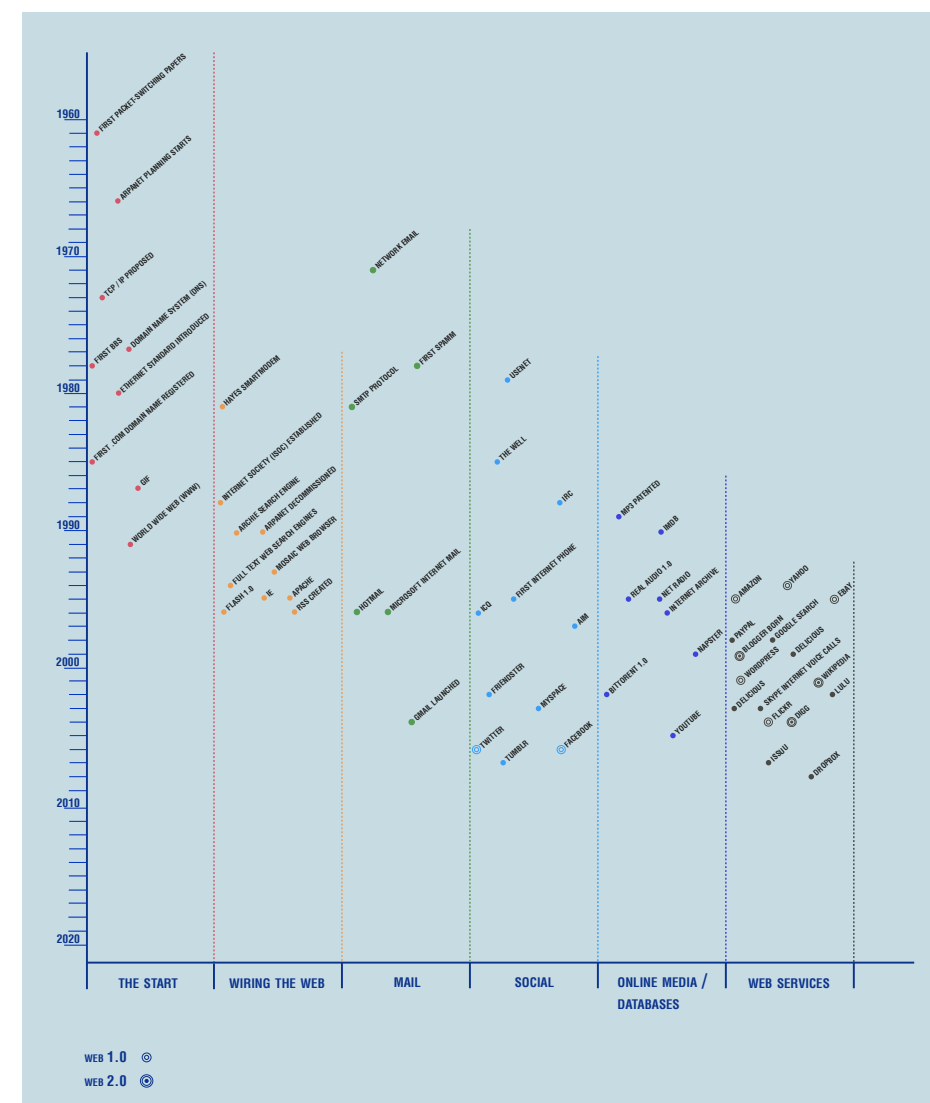


"Making" architecture within crisis confines has highlighted the need for re-examining and re-evaluating past utopias, minutes before the declaration of future utopian scenarios. The last bold formulations of improbable architecture were triggered by a technological impulse and the way this conquest influenced the individual's imagination. Technological developments functioned favorably to produce new utopian thoughts, and new practitioners in the architectural field were incorporated in this dream-weaving machine. Recalling distinguished examples of the 70's, we can recognize such attempts. Archigram's legions of mechanical contraptions with delicate, conjunctive tubes passing through bodies, machines, and cities augured a new, vibrant, assembled body through connectivity. Moreover, in a metaphysical manner, Superstudio provided a series of technophilic illustrations accompanying narrations of future life for a revolutionary society escaping the current capitalist system and refinding itself on the criticism of this former society.<sup>1</sup> Such a venture implies the inviolable participation in the community's dialogue. With Archizoom's No-Stop City, we are facing the inauguration of an architectural practice, where built forms are intensively ruptured in exchange for the nurture of networking. Here architects could defy the limitations of physical boundaries and operate in a new trans-urban condition. In the early 70's, a new horizon was established in the architectural discourse: "Networks were, indeed, increasingly crucial."<sup>2</sup> Architects, along with scientists, designers, and researchers became the detectors of the ascending, whose occupation resupplied the social ground. Today, almost 40 years later, we are orchestrating our everyday and social life through and within networks, confirming the importance of the core of these former visions.

Recalling the explorer of the past who sought the ideal, unknown land to live and cultivate, we now meet the contemporary explorer who shifts the limits of research from finite physical space to the n-dimensional digital world: he moves from mountains, valleys and islands (world of surface) to the field of screen (world of interface). A different kind of landscape is being created, one that can be only seen through the frame and surface of the screen that imposes its own rules of representation, and underlines a crucial differentiation in terms of depth of field and spatial traits. While moving from the physical to digital, we are experiencing a gradually increasing absence of obstacles or temporal distances; everything is inscribed on the monitor, which the new era explorer observes. This sudden reversion of boundaries and oppositions that Virilio is referring to, constitutes a very definitive feature of contemporaneity, we are not facing a "here" and "there"; we are facing an unbounded expanse, the topology of electronic ether with no plenum. This endless grid becomes now the plane of action, search and observation that is timeless and ignores the notion and limitations of distance.

Cursor and keyboard are becoming the primary tools for the detection and discovery of the constantly evolving chaotic landscape that the cyber explorer traverses, substituting at the same time bodily functions and objects that the adventurer of the past used in order to approach inscrutable areas. The expedition of the supra material landscape that has occurred over the last decades is a rather lonely procedure, revolving around the close relationship of the person and the screen, transposing the acting and the nature of staring and contemplating through a different kind of frame, enhancing the perception that in the interface of the screen, everything is always already there, offered to view in the immediacy of an instantaneous transmission.<sup>3</sup>

Albeit the fact that the expedition is a process of singular mode, the very construction of the digital landscape resides in the "multiple." The endless Net.territory is an ever-expanding datascape, where users reclaim, classify and restore files in a constant act of sharing. Sharing has become the fundamental gesture for stimulating an online community, thus introducing a new side of collectivity. The ability of uploading any "bits" of knowledge has overcome former publishing booms and is constantly limiting the amount of inaccessible information. The digitization of printed material offers a bounding method through keywords and like-minded choices of the users. Hyperlinks are the centripetal force that keeps together heterogeneous aspects of the same subject, resulting in the birth of idiosyncratic constellations of





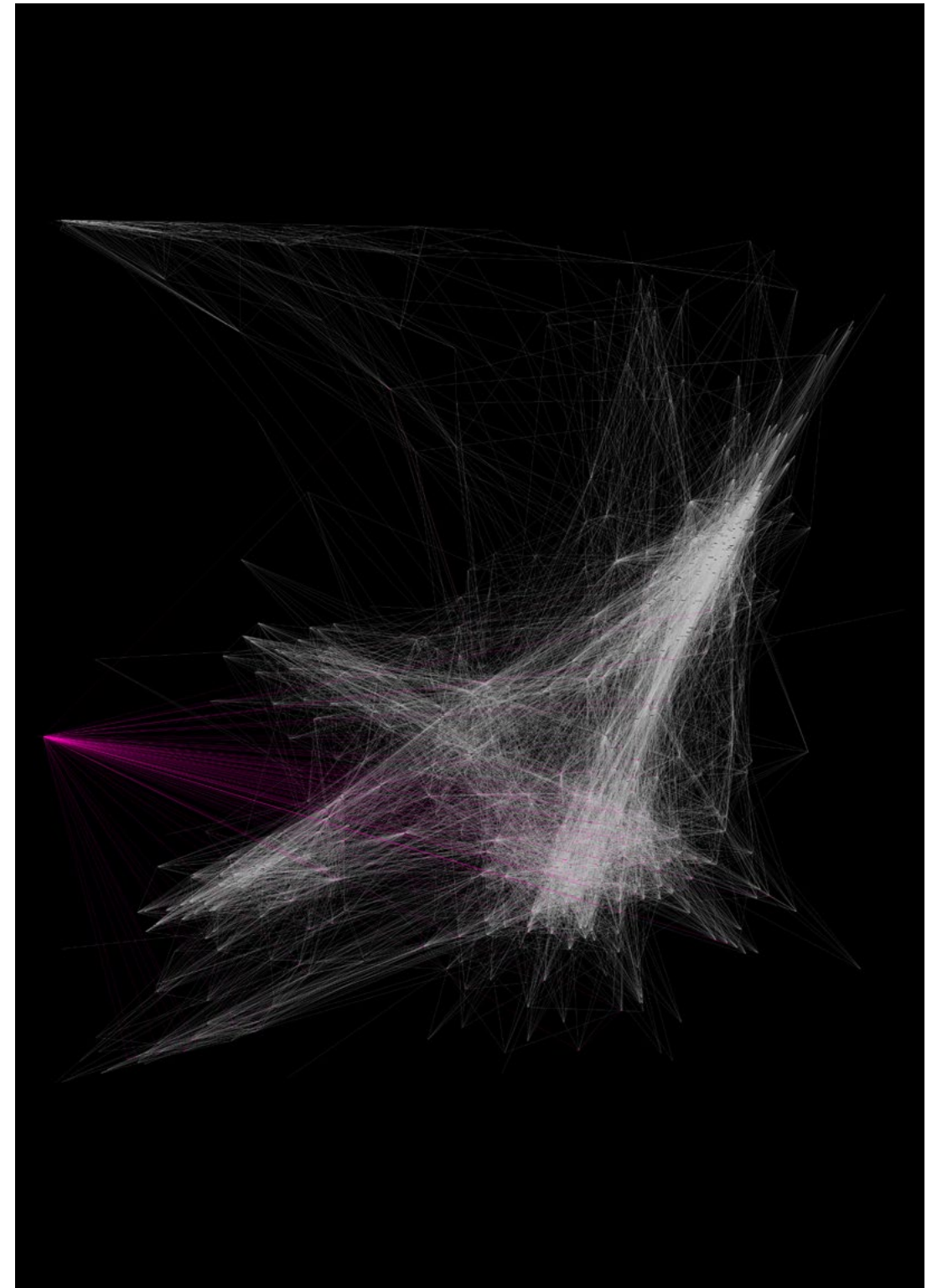
notions that compete the initial hypothesis. Users are becoming the “constructors” of a communal, virtual library, where each contribution of digitized knowledge (in arts, science, history, economy, etc.) is weaving a universal patchwork of culture. Open-access publishing like Issuu and Scribd and web services like delicious and flickr that enhance multi-disciplinary dialogues are strengthening the establishment of public communities. These kinds of interactions allow updates, corrections, and cross-referential interpretations of phenomena, benefiting the “research group” in multiple ways. Progress has always been accompanied by a stasis of openness, of revised feedback for the sake of common good.

Knowledge is claimed to reach its broadest disperse in the form of an open-access database. Initiatives like the Internet Archive Open Library and Creative Commons are efforts working towards this direction. These “New Alexandrians”<sup>4</sup> establish new forms of collaborating, which challenge *geopolitical extensivity* through the *opto-electronic ubiquity* of the Internet, thereby forming a dynamic type of collective intelligence.

The “democracy” of the medium meets the first and foremost value of every utopia imagined, the state of including anyone.<sup>5</sup> The notion of a rising Netopia, acquiring more intensively as the years pass by, the claim for globality is becoming gradually more stable. With every new user, Netopia’s limits are expanding, triggering a series of commands in World Wide Web and rendering tele-action as the *hic et nunc* of our times.

Online platforms underlined and enhanced the power of weak ties in social networking. Petitions for social concerns were now making difference even in a legislative manner. Such was the example of S.O.P.A, the radically growing participation of “weak ties” on the online petition achieved to delay and finally abort a bill for copyright infringement, which gave full permission to authorities to block access to websites and even impose imprisonment penalties to “traced” perpetrators. The fine line between copyrights and privacy violations was now disturbed. The body of protests directly structured online with clear will and aim gave a great fight not only for the suspension of government interventionism, but also for the freedom of speech, for the freedom to connect, for progress. Internet activism supercedes the binary messages and activates a physical political body defending universal human rights.

“Revolution will be twittered,” stated Andrew Sullivan, witnessing the deafening outcomes in Tehran that a 140-character message triggered. Faster than any other time before, people could be informed and organized for a protest. The very action of protest takes place in different kind of spaces. Firstly, there is this physical initiative of typing the message (having already sensed a common need of reaction to a certain situation). Then a series of comments and retweets opens a dialogue over the “tuning” of this protest. Organization takes place in cyberspace and aims at a physical event with people gathering in historically important public spaces. After the protest, images, videos, and documentations of this action are re-distributed through and within the digital world, becoming the de facto source for TV channels, newspapers and blogs. The power of the Twitter Revolution didn’t reside with Twitter itself, but in the very relationship of new media and citizens ready to take action. An unpredictable aspect of *ethos* is emanating from the digital world and is capable of re-informing the analog everyday life.





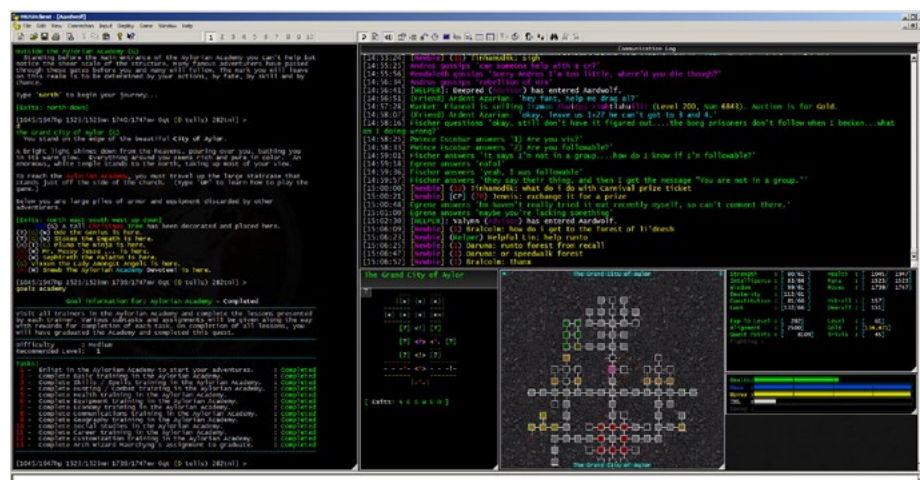
While former utopian proposals raised questions on the political and social role of architecture, today we are witnessing real-time political discourse and social aggregation in the absence of the built, in the excess of intangible “networking”. The requirement to express desire through an idealized condition is now capable of being fulfilled through intangible platforms hosted in cyberspace. Thomas More’s imaginary island (utopia) with a stratified social structure is now replaced by its virtual versions: worlds that are built by bits and bytes, conceived alongside with the rise of the Internet culture. The first virtual communities were only text based (MUDs) and included role-playing tactics along with some basic user-to-user interaction. Players started imagining themselves in the context of alternate places and communities existing a few centimeters away, behind their computer screen. With the rapid growth of broadband capacity and graphic technologies, these virtual worlds increased, from MUD1 to Habitat and Wow, constituting a common feature of cyberspace, inhabited by millions of users. One of the greatest paradigms of these ‘virtual land series’ is Second Life. Its user-created content and the vast amount of choices gave to the player-resident made this online platform one of the most popular virtual worlds of the Internet era. The user can create and customize his own land, travel among different worlds, wander around just like IRL, do the same routine actions, buy, consume, and work, but he can also fly, he can build a house with a few clicks, meet other avatars, choose to present himself as an animal or a vampire, visit islands and cities that could never exist in the non-fictional world. This new type of real time collectivity that is being created shapes a different kind of sociability and communication that Manuel Castells defines as ‘mass self-communication.’ User identity is being constructed constantly through the actions and decisions that players make, thus altering the results, timing and balance of the relationships that formulate cyberspace’s social substance. The virtual reality that dominates our experience has canceled the notion of time, as we live in the ever-present world of our avatars.<sup>6</sup> The question that arises is whether these virtual platforms became so prevalent because of their proximity to a utopian nature or because of their ability to resemble the real world. Bel



Utopia Island-Second Life Island © Courtesy of author

Muse, a blonde girl avatar in Second Life, states that in the real world, “I have to prove myself. I have to make a good impression right away—I have to come off nice and articulate, right away. In Second Life, I didn’t have to. Because for once, I can pass. I can’t pass in real life.”<sup>7</sup> The notion of identity that designates the virtual existence of user is being staggered during his/her abidance to this fabricated world and is strongly hinged from the input that he/she chooses to disclose each time. One of the most imposing lineaments located at the very core of these virtual worlds is the promise granted to their “residents” to actualize most of the desires of each one’s imaginary commands. Longing therefore finds an unhindered field to project itself to; users obtain the choice to express some of their most occult yearnings, even if they comprise a certain kind of aberrance. But existing and acting in a cyber land gives players the freedom to do almost whatever they can imagine. Punishment incurs nothing and that’s a quite strong particularity that weakens any limit or ethics prohibition and differentiates emblematically life in a real world from life in a virtual one that includes strong elements of fiction. Acting through an avatar often forms a liberating relocation to someone’s distinctiveness, thus detuning the confines of reality’s tight schemes (like “right and wrong” or “truth and lie”), restructuring the dynamics that compose the continuously changing cyber world stream. Interweaving of fantasy and real data is the very intriguing fact that one will experience in these lands made by ones and zeros which blur even more the boundaries that are set in front and behind the screen, allowing a certain kind of fiction to function in truth, resolving and reinstating a user’s status through keyboard commands.

Counter to other-topias, Netopia’s establishment of no-where succeeded to prolong the “visitor’s” stay due to immediate indulgence of desire. The imposed transaction between the user and the machine, through a protocol of choices and operations with multiple options ahead, has introduced an unprecedented transition from no-where to now-here. Finger-typing the keywords of intimate desires on a search machine has crossed a new hedonistic era for the user. Serendipity has been the most resonant “siren” for sustaining immersion in cyberspace with a pinch of cyber flâneur essence. 19th’s century flâneur was captured strolling the city attempting to “indulge the gastronomy of the eye” under the arcades. 21st century’s cyber-flâneur was captured navigating in Geocities. Streets entered the thresholds of digitalized homes, filled with the homesteaders’ favorable archival material. Cities were





organized in neighborhoods with thematic-similar intimacy. Zooming in and out simulated the new gestures of pleasure-seeking voyeur. If for Benjamin the flâneur went botanizing on the asphalt, cyberflâneurs went “botanizing” on the digits, but the effortlessly wandering through clicking lacked the sediment of thriving in the crowd, yet remaining untouched by it. That is the critical moment, when cyberflâneurs’ romantic profiles were agitated. The upcoming structures of Internet platforms were organized with a society promoting behavior for the user, giving strong incentives for the user to act online collectively. As Evgeny Morozov notes, “But if today’s Internet has a Baron Haussmann, it is Facebook. Everything that makes cyberflânerie possible—solitude and individuality, anonymity and opacity, mystery and ambivalence, curiosity and risk-taking—is under assault by that company. The state of art is that networks exist to provide more efficient ways to ‘get things done.’” Operating in cyberspace with an aim radically cancels the integral vagueness of the flâneur’s profile. Users are suffocated in endless expressions of home and self. Home pages are re-contextualizing the self in the cybernetic era; profile briefs are compressing and deducting life’s experiences in a functional scale for passing by faces to peep. Home is rebuilt with a frivolous view and an uncanny interior. Once you go online, there is no place for you to hide.

Within these networks of overexposure, peer-to-peer processes favor expressing and promoting political and social activities. The Internet is not just a virtual space, or a space of pleasure, but a place of action.<sup>8</sup> Consisting of one of the oldest architectures in the world of peer to peer technology (the Internet was initially conceived in 1960’s as also a peer-to-peer system) has created a kind of restitution, returning the Internet to its original vision, in which everyone creates as well as consumes.<sup>9</sup> Decentralized distribution systems and infrastructures enabled extensive storing and exchanging of files and information.<sup>10</sup> Combined with the increasingly evolving mobile networking, these practices are establishing during the last years a different kind of floating invisible communication and transmittal fabric, unsettling and re-inventing at the same time the balance between physical and digital plain, between city and cyber grid, but also the timing and spatial conditions that govern person-to-person relationships. Mobile and wireless communication rearranges the conditions in which we experience and perceive urban context; technologies of tracking, GPS, a vast amount of applications, instant messaging, a constant stream of news are only a few offerings that characterize the everyday life of the urban citizen and give chance to immediate and ad hoc situations to happen, thus imposing an alternative kind of synchronicity, abolishing the notion of strict local boundaries and introducing a type of network glocalization. Horizontal networking, as an outcome of such technological novelties, is expanding more and more, stabilizing itself at the center of today’s nexus, affirming the existence of self and community through its web connections; this horizontal access cuts across vertical locations and restrictions. Mapping, followed by the action and practices of *dérive* and *détournement* now happens mostly through our mobile phones rather than wandering to the urban terrain, through particular applications someone can tag, characterize or add data and information to a place thus embedding, through the mechanism of tracing, social knowledge in the landscape of the city for others to retrieve later.<sup>11</sup> Mobile networking re-contextualizes and reconfigures the way that people interact with the city, objects and in a



Internet Dictionary (screenshot from <http://netdictionary.tumblr.com>) © Courtesy of author

more extensive base the public sphere. Having a smartphone, even if you are hundreds of kilometers away from home, automatically creates a very puissant liaison with your surroundings; it is an extra node added to the huge field of nodes, redefining the place of individual among the ocean of networked publics.

During the recent 00s, immersion in cyberspace implied a staying still in the physical world. Today, evolving technological accomplishments managed to reach inaccessible areas through the installation of enhanced broadband networks. At the same time, computer capacities were merged into cellphones and coped with the miniaturization challenge. Hence, human anatomy is becoming more and more receptive to newly conceived devices which are modified appropriately so as to adjust better to our body parts and are designed so as to minimize unneeded gestures and motions, thus conducing to the gradual construction of a constantly plugged-in individual who participates in the wider network of a pauseless, wireless digital community. The conquest of speed and broad accessibility is influencing strongly the way that we perceive the environment of the city. The constant flow of information and data will be characterized by a supra local condition; the new territory is no longer aiming to the ground but is dispersing through the ‘invisible’ infrastructure in which the human body becomes an integral part of the networking wetware. Activities that were traditionally hosted and exclusively took part in the physical urban space are now re-territorialized at the cyborg body, thus re-establishing the norms that rule the relationship and balance between user and urban terrain. The city becomes the locus where human body betakes in between its digital abidance and obtains traits of a “ruin”—in whose rareness lies its nostalgic value—since the cyborg body no longer depends sturdily on it, but is more related to the ever expanding network that resides within. The cyborg stroller revisiting the city could actually be a future experience for “tasting” our analog past. Although cyberspace has outreached any attempt of



simulating and condensing the experience of world, has amplified the sense of everyday life, and has re-invented communities' *modus operandi* it is nevertheless a world collapsing within the seconds of a switching-off button. The improbable scenario in which a power shutdown occurs will always reveal the in-limbo possibility of a total reboot to a primitive life.

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# Exit Strategy : From Improbable to Impossible

Essay by David Karle

*Everyone knows that more than half of mankind lives in cities, that everyone is moving to the cities. And I became interested in simply, what did they leave behind. ... I am discovering the countryside now is a totally undescribed field and nobody thinks about it. In spite of that, it is changing very fast. The countryside is no longer an idyllic environment.<sup>1</sup>*

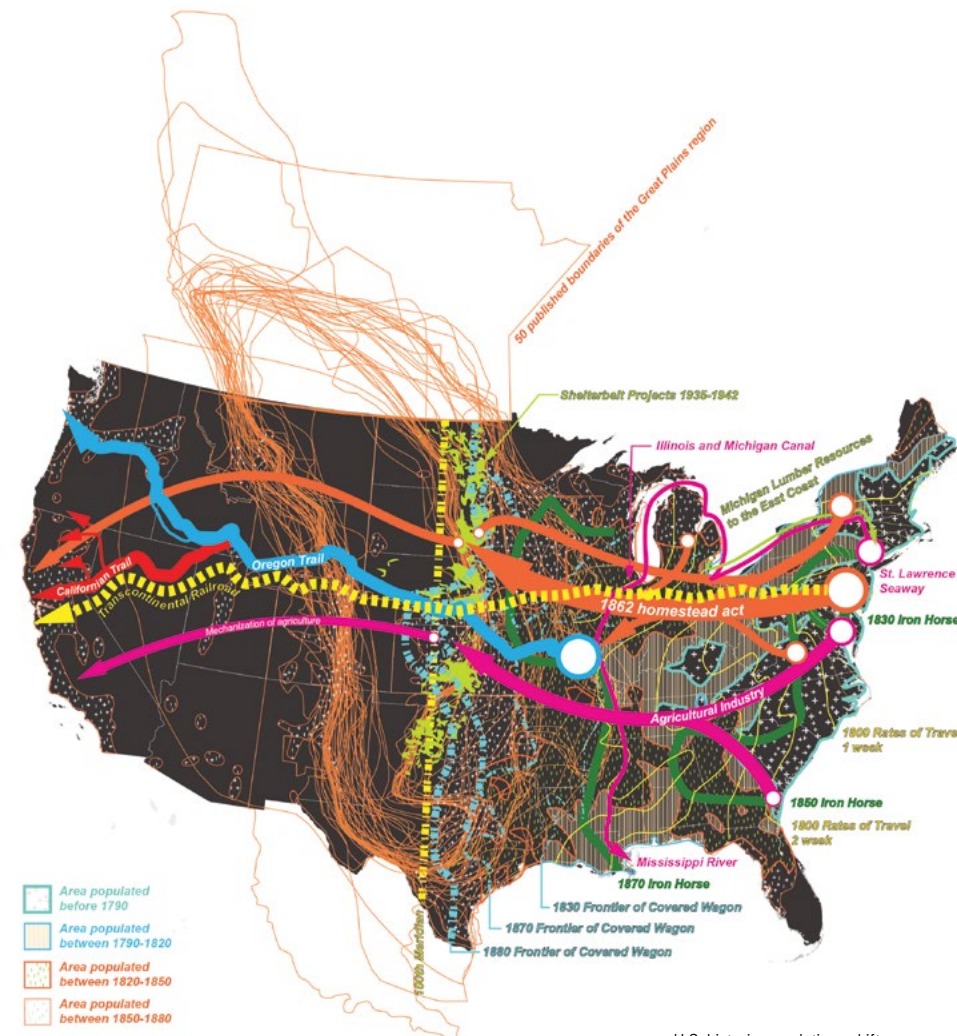
Rem Koolhaas, Office for Metropolitan Architecture



The Great Plains region of the United States has always been a territory of contested aspirations and viewpoints. Historically, the central Great Plains was known as the Great American desert, the final frontier, and seen as agriculturally fit to support the coastal cities. Attempts to inhabit the region often met with failure, but only after brief moments of opportunity and prosperity. According to Randolph Cantrell, “The first Nebraska settlements were either staging areas for an arduous westward journey, or service centers for those passing through. It required the advent of rails and mechanized agriculture to change that.”<sup>2</sup> Over a 100-year period the government and local communities have been forced to address the issues of survival and inhabitation with regional, territorial, and local strategies, from the government-assisted and influenced forms of urbanism in the mid-1800s (Homestead Act and Railroad Act), to natural and environmental consolidation acts in the late 1800s (Timber-Culture Act, 1873; the Desert Land Act, 1877; the Timber and Stone Act, 1878; and the Timber Cutting Act, 1878), and the unstable natural and economic cycles throughout the 1900s (the Dust Bowl; Agriculture Department’s Soil Conservation Service, 1937; the New Deal, 1933-1942; and the Farm Crisis), attempts to develop this region that have been continually flawed. Yet with each successive movement came achievements in infrastructure and the built environment, including the transcontinental railroad, the interstate highway system, local grain elevators and silos, and various civic architecture typologies scattered across the landscape, such as single room school-houses, churches, train depots, opera houses, and post offices. Some of these once-necessary constructs have now become abandoned and consolidated spatial artifacts of the past.

Through various economic and environmental cycles, the speeds and forms of American urbanism, population shifts, and migration patterns have significantly impacted the development and sustainability of the Great Plains’ architecture and infrastructure. The pace and fluctuation of development in the region, or lack thereof, highlights these movements and patterns more clearly than the speed of a growing metropolis. Even today, we can see the residual spatial and architectural relicts formed by these rapid patterns of urbanism in the Great Plains. Examples include the sod houses in rural communities, the streamlining of dimensional lumber and the method of balloon frame construction deployed through the Midwest in the later 1920s. Larger spatial implications were impacted by cross continental trails and infrastructure at various scales and speeds, from the Oregon and Mormon Trails to the government-assisted Railroad Act and Highway Act. However, today these historic forms of development are underperforming. With decommissioned regional railroad tracks, fewer farms and farmers, and the reduction of regional dependency on forms of agriculture, the state of Nebraska has created small isolated towns and communities disconnected from the state infrastructures that are slowly becoming ghost towns. This trend is continuing, but should efforts be made to engage large regional consolidation strategies as a means of survival?

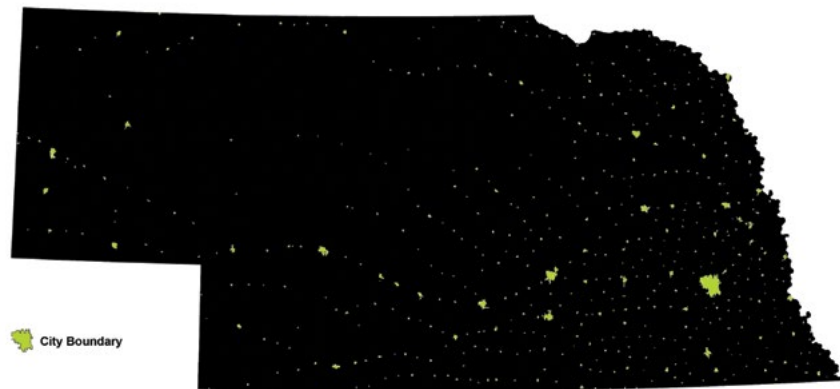
Scholars Deborah Epstein Popper and Frank J. Popper believe “that over the next generation, the Plains will, as a result of the largest, longest-running agricultural and environmental miscalculation in American history, become almost totally depopulated. At that point a new use for the region will emerge, one that is in fact so old that it predates the American presence. We are suggesting that the region be



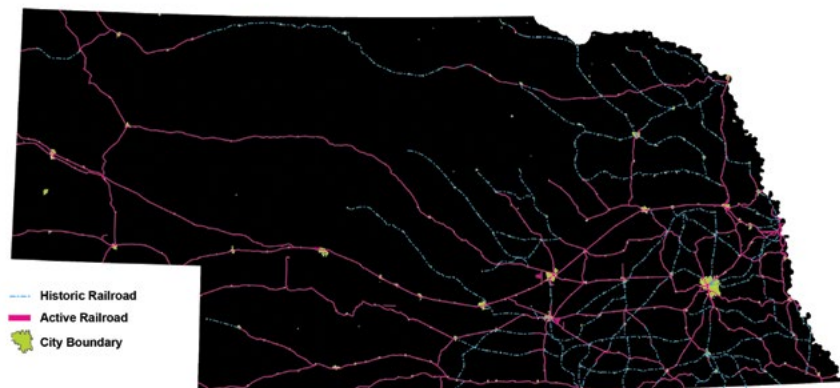
U.S. historic populations shifts  
© David Karle



Series of Nebraska diagrams © David Karle



Nebraska City Boundaries



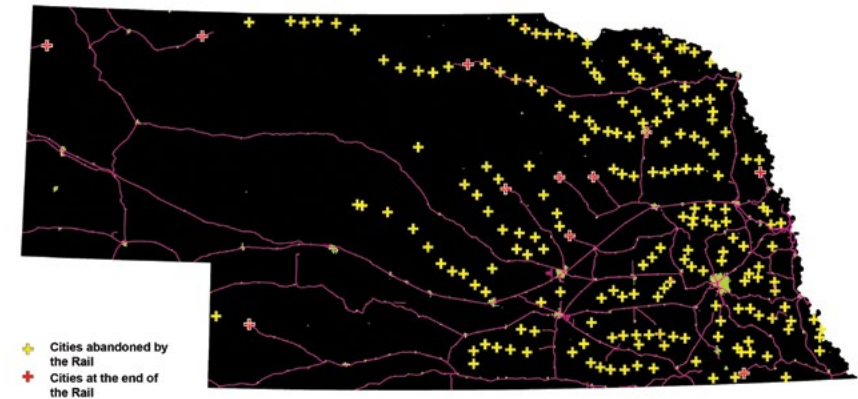
Nebraska's Active and Historic Railroad Network



Nebraska's Active Railroad Network



Nebraska Communities and population  
at the end of an active Railroad



100+ Communities Abandoned by the Railroad



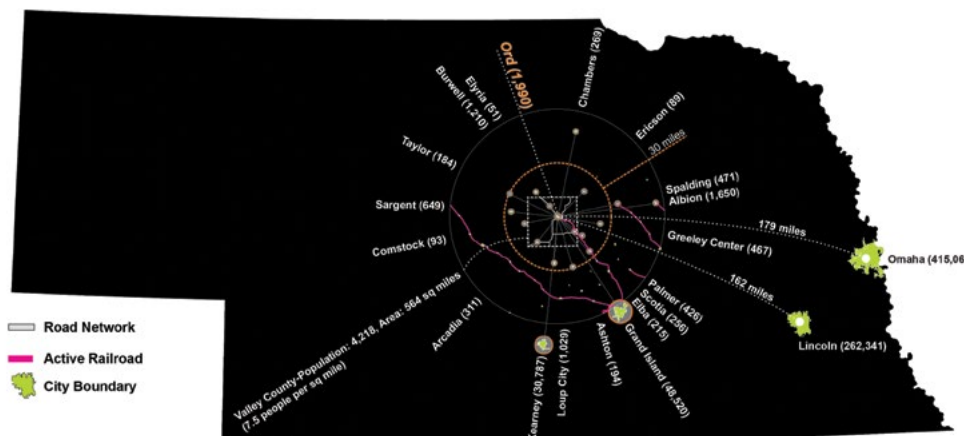
90 Nebraska Post Offices Considered for Consolidation, 2011



returned to its original pre-white state, that it be, in effect, deprivatized.”<sup>3</sup> A long-standing suggestion is the *Buffalo Commons* proposal to return 139,000 square miles, affecting ten Great Plains states, to short grass prairie for the American bison. This leads one to ask, should we be considering the myriad isolated small communities finding themselves on the brink of no return? Learning from historical events in the region, we should be able to reasonably predict what will happen and propose an exit strategy for them.

The American historian, sociologist, philosopher of technology, and influential literary critic Lewis Mumford describes four definitive historical flows of population: the outflow led by the covered wagon; the reflow led by the iron house (train); the inflow attracted by the skyscraper; and the backflow forced by pressure from the skyscraper.<sup>4</sup> The historic shifts and speeds of development described by Mumford are no longer sufficient representation of patterns found in the Great Plains, specifically in Nebraska. The state is actively forming two additional population flows based on migration patterns and consolidated architectural and infrastructural networks. The first new type of flow includes rotational flow in the form of micro-regional networks. This method will work with existing communities to generate and enhance partnerships between communities within close geographic proximity. The second type of flow is compressible flow and tracks population drifts toward the I-80 and Platte River corridors.

Ord, Nebraska, micro-regional network © David Karle



### Rotational Flow: Micro-Regional Networks

Moving beyond the European city model or those of iconic cities in North America, areas outside the mega-regions, specifically the Great Plains, can be investigated and used as a case study for new forms of agrarian and micro-regional urbanism. For decades the label and role of cities has been questioned as terms such as rural, suburban, urban, and mega-region became ambiguous and multifaceted. A new scale of analysis is needed to identify emerging strategies of survival outside the scale of the mega-regional.

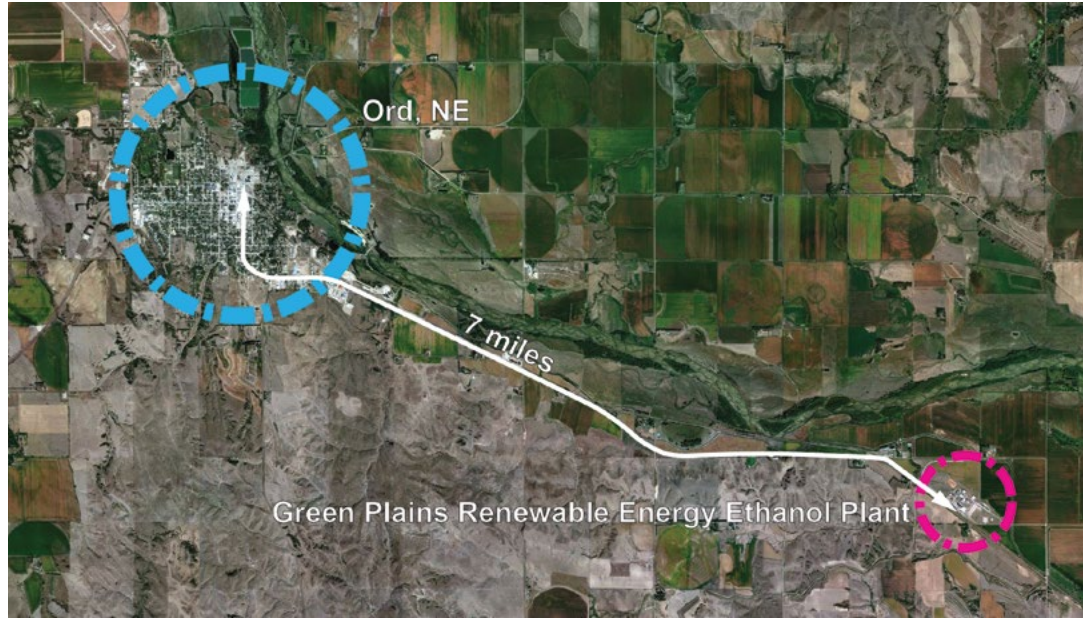
In 2008, the America 2050 Mega-Regional Plan re-contextualized the way we read city boundaries and ex-urban developments. The plan introduced a new way of viewing and connecting cities and communities via environmental, infrastructural, economic, and cultural networks. The strategy was divorced from county, state, province, and governmental lines in hopes of achieving new regional relationships. According to this plan, the eleven mega-regions consist of 75% of the total U.S. population, but only 25% of the total U.S. square miles. Given these staggering statistics, a sustained focus on the liminal areas outside the mega-regions is needed. Looking outside the mega-region and beyond the compact city will expose new spatial strategies that allow us to think strategically and act locally. Communities outside the mega-regions are operating as micro-regional networks, expressing a spatial co-dependency of development and participating in local, national, and international economic cycles. Examples include such middle tier metropolitan areas as Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska, Des Moines and Ames, Iowa, and Kansas City and its surrounding communities. However, by investigating the inner workings of micro-regional networks, specifically in the Great Plains, new spatial strategies will be uncovered.

An involuntary case study of new patterns of urbanism emerging from massive patterns of non-urbanism is Ord, Nebraska, located geographically in the center of the state. With a population of 1,990 people, the town is an example of a community participating in a multi-scalar regional network. Ord is also a unique case study because the town is at the end of an active railroad line and has an active ethanol plant. Previously the railroad connected Ord to two communities to the north, but now the railroad tracks stop at the ethanol plant. Ord forms the center of a rotational flow providing goods, services, and resources for less populated communities within a 30-mile geographic radius. Most of the adjacent small towns were once connected to an active railroad track, but in recent years the tracks have been decommissioned and the communities have depended on trucks to transport their corn, which is more expensive. Ord has become a micro-regional hub for agriculture and ethanol processing, school districts, healthcare, and retail. At a macro-scale, Ord is within 60 miles of two larger communities, Kearney, Nebraska, and Grand Island, Nebraska. These two larger communities are located within seven miles of I-80 and a major east-west railroad line, which reconfirms the notions that people want to live in close proximity to large-scale infrastructural networks.



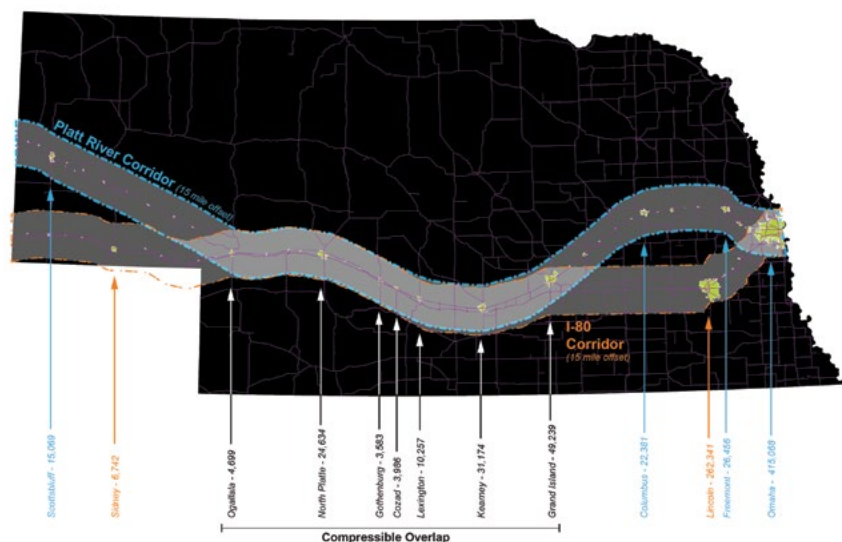








Nebraska compressible flow © David Karle



### Compressible Flow: Offset Infrastructural Consolidation

The second new type of flow in Nebraska suggests a compressible flow towards the I-80 and Platte River corridors. This more extreme strategy will consider the active population shifts to consolidate and enhance population, economic resources, and personal amenities along these corridors. The current small-scale building consolidation strategies in the region have influenced this speculative exit strategy. The region has always been considered a pass-through or flyover territory, but with recent demographic trends showing a continuing population decline, small communities need to assess and act before it is too late. According to the US Census and as reported by Brian Williams, "A record one in three U.S. counties are dying, hit by aging population and a bad economy. That hurts the employment base. The downward trend stretches from the Ohio Valley, out through the plains to parts of California."<sup>5</sup> Population shifts over the last few decades in the state of Nebraska have shown that small isolated communities are continually losing population, while communities along the I-80 corridor are sustaining population, and iconic cities like Lincoln and Omaha are gaining population. Documenting these population shifts throughout the state of Nebraska will illuminate the need to generate and support an exit strategy for small communities towards the I-80 and Platte River corridor.

Currently 83% of Nebraska's total population lives in the counties adjacent to the Platte River. Of that population, 64.73% live in what the census classifies as urban areas (2500 people or more) and 35.27% live in rural areas.<sup>6</sup> The only major city not included in this area is Nebraska's capital of Lincoln. However, Lincoln is located along the I-80 corridor. The I-80 corridor contains 67% of the total Nebraska population including the two largest cities Lincoln and Omaha. As a consolidation strategy towards densifying the I-80 corridor the compressible flow strategy merges multiple historic and contemporary viewpoints. Contemporary examples include hybrid

coupling strategies described by mega-regional theorists and medium density infill described by Charles Waldheim and Ellen Dunham-Jones. The compressible flow exit strategy merges the spatial qualities of density and the micro-regional strategies of proximity with the residual territorial solution of Buffalo Commons. The rotational and compressible flows actively forming in Nebraska could be a viable exit strategy for consolidated towns and architectures throughout the state.

However, in order to survive, small communities must prepare for unstable natural and man-made cycles and anticipate aging and migrating youth populations. Based on survival tactics, these communities are forced to reconsider their future and stability. To negotiate these issues along with consolidated architecture and infrastructural networks, Nebraska communities are voluntarily and involuntarily forming two new spatial relationships, introducing new ways of connecting towns and communities via environmental, infrastructural, economic, and cultural networks. These relationships are similar to the large-scale mega-regional networks described in contemporary planning and design, but have more urgency. No longer can we view urbanism only through metropolitan cities or mega-regions. As communities in large mega-regions continue to be the focus of research, resources, and government supported infrastructural projects, we must remember the small isolated communities throughout the Great Plains. Viewing forms of urbanism in the Great Plains through small isolated rural communities will illuminate the duality between loss and stabilization.

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# Beyond Index and Over the Limit

Essay by  
Martin Abbott

Gasping for Air in the Megacities of Asia



This urban narrative sets out to introduce readers to the growing megacities of Asia: Beijing, Delhi and Jakarta, where often-neglected urban environments and improbable levels of airborne pollution are slowly becoming areas of greater public concern.

In terms of capitals, cities don't come any more urban than Beijing, Delhi and Jakarta, urban giants that distinguish themselves as much by their geopolitical reach as by their size and growing consumption of natural resources. For the most part, they're big and boisterous, home to populations in excess of 10 million and rapidly expanding. They also happen to be the political capitals of three of the world's four most populated nations, a combined total that accounts for some 2.8 billion people or a staggering 40% of the world's population.<sup>1</sup> While the scale and density<sup>2</sup> of their urban landscapes are immense, so too are their tarnished reputations, stained by the failure to reign in surging levels of airborne pollution that denote some of the most toxic metropolises' on the planet.

Across Asia, urbanisation has progressed at an unprecedented rate and in the last 30 years, more than 1 billion people have swelled the ranks of cities across the region.<sup>3</sup> Remarkably, even though India can count an urban population of close to 380 million people, seven out of ten Indians still live in rural areas. In China and Indonesia, an urban tipping point has recently come to pass, whereby a small majority of people in both nations live in urban situations. In India, this point is still many decades away and not slated to take place until the middle of the century, when some 900 million people will live in cities across the country.<sup>4</sup> Urbanisation is a trend long underway in Asia and should only be expected to continue, at least in the foreseeable future. If as expected, Beijing, Delhi and Jakarta continue to welcome growing numbers of rural migrants, which in the case of Delhi is expected to be about 750,000 people a year during the coming decade or so, how will governments meet the basic infrastructural needs of residents while reducing harmful levels of pollution that seem predicated on such rapid urban development?

As urbanisation gains pace, more people will find themselves living closer together than ever before, an urban reality that will increase demand for limited resources, taken from an increasingly depleted natural environment. In global terms, cities occupy only 2% of the earth's total land area, yet they account for 75% of total resource use and unsurprisingly account for a similar share of total waste generated, the latter including air pollution, toxic effluents, and solid waste'.<sup>5</sup> Extracted in increasing quantities and consumed like never before, non-renewable resources such as coal, oil and gas fuel modern urban life and damage local and global environments in the process.

In principle, it is not only the transport sector's inefficient combustion of fossil fuels that exacerbate levels of extreme air pollution in these cities, but the growing scale at which it is occurring, along with growing demands for electricity that is generated largely through coal and expanding industrial activity. For example, a World Bank research paper notes car ownership levels in Beijing doubled to 3 million vehicles between 2000 and 2007, and demand for space on the city's roads is now far in excess of what is available. Consequently, the city is congested and air quality is the number one environmental concern.<sup>6</sup> In Delhi, the Economic Times, a local newspaper, states that more than 1400 vehicles are added everyday to an

urban fleet in excess of 8.1 million units.<sup>7</sup> While in Jakarta, notorious for its snarling kilometre-long traffic jams, the government has admitted there is little it can do to limit the growing number of vehicles on city streets, which account for more than 11.3 million vehicles.<sup>8</sup> In turn, organisations such as the World Health Organisation are increasingly warning of the risk of respiratory disease and other related health problems caused by the catastrophic effects of contaminants in the atmospheres of these urban environments.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), the United Nation's public health agency, tells us clean air is considered to be a basic requirement of human health and well-being. However, air pollution continues to pose a significant threat to health worldwide.<sup>9</sup> As part of its 'Air Quality Guidelines', the WHO identifies four distinct types of pollutants that cause harm: nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, while emphasising the serious health risks of dangerous levels of ozone and particulate matter with a diameter of 10 micrometres or less that can enter deep inside the lungs and eventually, the blood stream, that is to say, the total mass of particulate matter with a diameter of 10 microns or less. A human hair in comparison has an approximate diameter of 70-microns. Accordingly, its guidelines recommend maximum safe atmospheric levels of particulate matter with a diameter of 10 microns or less (PM 10) should not exceed 50 micrograms per cubic metre ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ). In comparison, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set this number at 54 micrograms and the European Union, 40 micrograms per cubic meter.

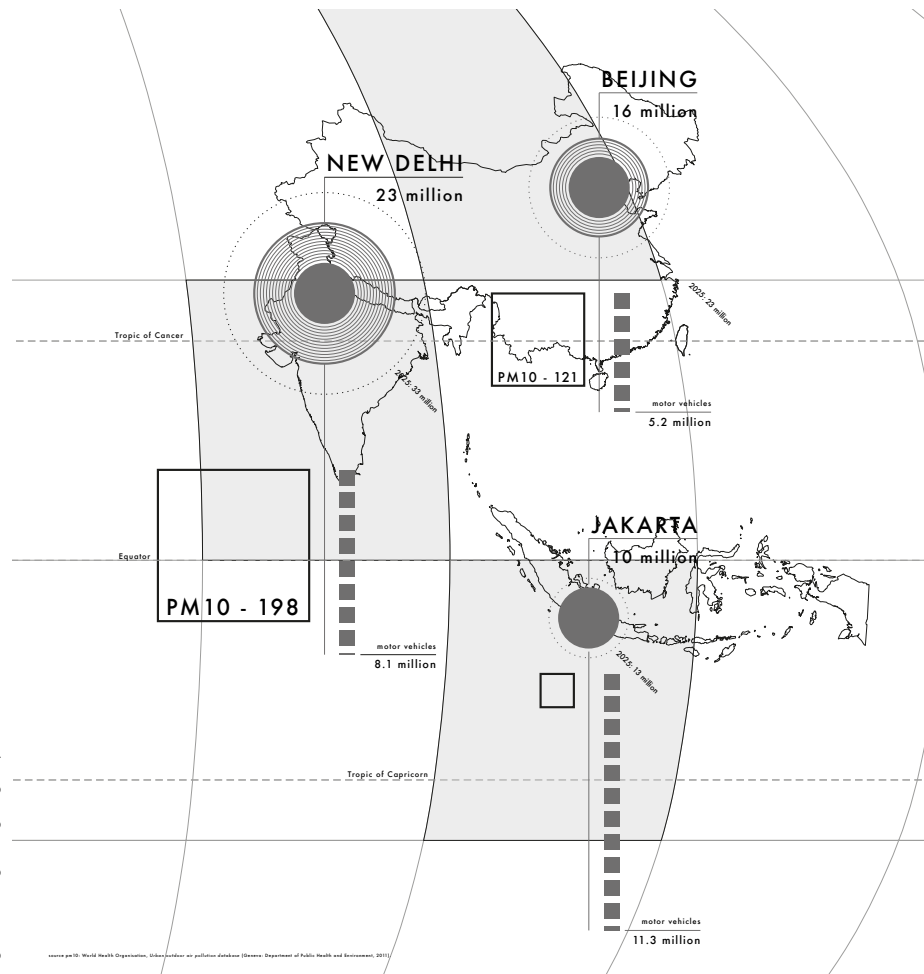
With the WHO guidelines in mind, any assessment of air quality across the three megacities during this northern winter would prove exceptionally bad, particularly in Beijing and Delhi. In Beijing, the US Embassy takes the time to measure and tweet the quality of the city's air on a daily basis. It uses the EPA's new air-quality index to measure the concentration of PM 2.5, which is of course correspondingly smaller than PM 10 from a device attached to its Chinese Embassy. On the 12th of January, 2013, a particularly bad Saturday in the city, a recording of 886 was measured from a device whose maximum capability is 500. At one point, the device read 'Beyond Index',<sup>10</sup> an apt description of the situation. In comparison, WHO guidelines recommend levels of this tiny particulate should not exceed 25 micrograms, while the EPA notes any reading above 500 to be hazardous. The impact of such high levels of airborne pollution has wide ranging implications and a person's health is probably one of the more pressing areas of concern. As such, recent medical studies have linked the poor quality of urban air in China to more than 1.2 million premature deaths across the country in 2010.<sup>11</sup>

In Delhi, too, extraordinary levels of PM 10 have been frequently recorded. A recent high of 749 micrograms/ $\text{m}^3$ , that would make even the national cricket team proud, was measured in November last year and reported by The Economist, as more than seven times the governments own prescribed local standard and many times higher, 30 odd in fact, than the WHO guidelines.<sup>12</sup> The same article estimates that 10,500 people are killed each year due to the high levels of airborne pollution. Frustrating as it may be for residents, a casual glance on the 18th of April at the government website that publishes real-time data showed a PM 10 twenty-four hour high of 328. Better, but still more than three times the local limit.<sup>13</sup>



Heading east to Jakarta, a sprawling coastal city on the island of Java, the local Environmental Management Agency (EMA) reckons the level of PM10 in the city was around 70 micrograms per cubic meter in 2011, impressively lower than its northern counterparts. According to the Asian Development Bank's Green Cities report, the annual cost of such high levels of airborne pollution is in the order of US\$1 billion.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, quantitative data suggests a correlation between economic growth and particulate matter in the city, substantiated during the financial crisis when the levels of airborne pollution dropped. Right now, both are increasing.

It's clear the poor quality of air in Beijing, Delhi and Jakarta is of major environmental concern. In human and political terms, the ramifications are ongoing and cast a dark shadow over the lives of people who must deal with it everyday. But how are people coming to terms with such extreme levels of pollution and are governments making anything better?



In Beijing, affluent schools such as Dulwich College and the International School of Beijing have recently finished constructing enormous plastic domes covering basketball courts and soccer fields with filtration units to protect students and reduce particulate matter in the air. 'When the fine particulate matter in the air reached 650 micrograms per cubic meter, well into the hazardous range, the measurement inside (the dome) was 25.'<sup>15</sup> Innovative ideas are emerging, too, in Delhi. Kamal Meattle, who lost a considerable chunk of his lung capacity because of the city's foul air, began experimenting with plants inside his home in an attempt to improve the quality of air. Along the way he discovered that he could generate more than enough clean air using plants in his home. Since then, he has upscaled the concept to his workplace and increased the number of plants to meet the needs of more people. Using only plants, he now grows fresh air, enough to better the quality of air inside entire commercial buildings. On the other hand, the city government of Jakarta has responded to concerns about traffic related pollution and shut down some city centre streets to traffic on Sundays so as to encourage patronage of public transport and invite pedestrians back into the city.

In human terms, the effects on quality of life can fluctuate enormously. At times when pollution reaches peak levels, people rush out to buy air purifiers,<sup>16</sup> designer facemasks and more recently, air pollution apps' for their phones to keep track of the latest data readings.<sup>17</sup> But it is the rise of respiratory related disease and other ailments caused by such high levels of air pollution that are most troubling. Worried mothers in China are keeping their children inside, in the hope of preventing



Dome at Dulwich College in Beijing © Courtesy of Dulwich College



long-term health issues. The government, who bluntly warn their citizens to avoid exposure to extreme levels and communicate in plain language to remain indoors while airborne pollution levels are high, reinforces this response. Startlingly, of the 57 most polluted cities in the world, 34 or 60% are in Asia.<sup>18</sup>

Internationally, too, the visual implications of smog and haze that reduce vision has led to airport closures and long flight delays for international travellers. While further afield in Japan, authorities are reporting airborne pollution from China is reaching its shores after travelling hundreds of kilometres across the Sea of Japan, the debilitating effects of which are being overtly registered on pristine island landscapes in the southwest of the country. Even the US is not immune and research published in the academic journal *Environmental Science and Technology* indicates almost one-third of particulate pollution in California originates in Asia.<sup>19</sup> It is, however, only somewhat recently that governments have begun to take notice, spurred on by growing political unease. In Beijing, calculations of premature deaths because of outdoor air pollution are politically threatening in the eyes of some Chinese officials.<sup>20</sup>

It is through good urban policy that government can work to mitigate urban pollution. For example, introducing new regulation to reduce emissions from the transport sector and industry. In 1996, the Supreme Court of India did just that, issuing a directive to Delhi's bus, auto-rickshaw and taxi fleets to switch to compressed natural gas, so as to limit their impact on the city. A few years later, almost 90,000 vehicles had made the change. Even so, the Government of Delhi no longer allows diesel powered trucks into the city from 6am to 9pm. Furthermore, a modern and reliable underground transport system cuts strategically through the north-south axis of the city, helping to keep a few more cars off the city's clogged roads. Similar to Delhi, China's government is in the process of adopting stricter diesel and gasoline fuel standards. And being China, when pollution is bad, government vehicles are sometimes ordered off the roads until the smog clears. In Jakarta, the city government recently announced that construction would begin soon on a new metro-like, rapid transit line through the city in the hope of improving transport in the congested city centre. Incidentally, plans to extend the line have already been brought forward.

If better air quality improves life in the city, is it not odd, then, as the incidence of pollution related disease and mortality increases, so too do the number of cars that intensify harmful levels of toxins in the air? And as another billion people come to live in Asia's cities during the next 30 years or so, spare a thought for the future scale of this serious and ongoing problem. The sheer number of new residents has the potential to exacerbate further already high levels of pollution and place increased strain on a global environment struggling with the effects of climate change. The OECD opines "urban air pollution is set to become the top environmental cause of mortality worldwide by 2050, ahead of dirty water and lack of sanitation." It estimates as many as 3.6 million people could die prematurely from air pollution each year, mostly in China and India. While cleaner air would instantly improve the quality of all urban lives in these cities and reduce the incidence of respiratory disease for example, it seems the political will to do anything at a scale that would have any lasting effect is sadly slow in coming.





Few things are more important than the air we breathe. In the case of Beijing, Delhi and Jakarta, it has been the size, speed and density of at-all-costs development that has caught city governments off guard. The environmental consequences are slowly being felt while they shake the life out of three of the largest cities in the world. Perhaps, fortunately, air does not discern between rich and poor, though indoor air pollution is made worse by a reliance on certain biomass cooking fuels, something only the poor seem to be able to afford. Will this shared environmental reality eventually choke communities and their leaders into action? Unfortunately, it seems likely that the situation will get a lot worse before it gets any better and a sweet of long term solutions can be found and implemented. An unwelcome prospect of recent atmospheric measures recently surpassed 400 parts per million, a barrier scientists estimate have not been seen on Earth for at least a few million years.<sup>21</sup> If no change is forthcoming, the environment itself might just prevent us from carrying on in the same way. If not, the megacities look set for many a long winter of urban discontent.

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# The Possibility of a Purpose

Short Essay by Mike Peart

Imagine a vast reality, (just) one of infinite possibilities. A universe, so to speak. From nothing to something in a fraction of a moment, it defies causality.

Time begins. What might have been cold, dark and stagnant is inexplicably animate, punctuated by bursts and streams and pockets of warmth and light.

In a corner, arbitrarily at best, a pathetically small ball of energy burns, its glow illuminating a set of even tinier spheres, its gravity keeping them in motion and check.

It seems innocuous, this little system. Yet something about its particular conditions allows for an anomaly.

Matter, otherwise shaped and guided strictly by inertia, begins to act on its own accord, growing and moving and multiplying without explanation or aim. Precisely 93 million miles (no more, no less) from that ball of burning hydrogen, energy perverts into life.

The impact is systemic. Birth, pain and death poison the purity of reality. The universe, otherwise pristine in its order and objectivity, is corrupted by a single, cancerous blue node.

Time goes.

Slowly, out of the same absurd process of production and reproduction that polluted the essence of existence, an antibody emerges. Upright. Walking. Thinking. Talking.

Consuming.

Compelled by the relatively simple neurochemical reactions of "hope," "ambition," "love" and the like, swarms of unwitting soldiers commit themselves wholly to the gradual eradication of the disease. Their success is by no means certain, but the probability is high.



# Radiation and Telecom : Émission

Project by Jordan Geiger

“Émission” refers to both radiation and broadcast in the word’s French usage, identifying an important relation between electromagnetic frequency radiations and new technologies, especially communications technologies, in our world now.

The title frames a set of critical fictions based on current research, speculations on future convergences between EMF radiations of different sorts, public health, and the built environment. These scenarios look at the air constructed and mediated by architecture as highly saturated with invisible elements in dynamic play with our bodies.

First presented as an installation in a Modernist villa that once housed a doctor’s office, posters and objects for consultation imagined where we are going in the next 25 years. Each poster described a possible scenario involving health, law, materiality and modernist culture. These narratives have specific places and dates that corresponds with real global changes documented in research, with references to the sources. The didactic posters take form as one might find at the doctor, with an associated anatomical model or instrument from these speculative futures. In this way, architectural, urban and global development scenarios are explained through the intensive mix of influences that are distant results of Modernist ideas.

Project Team:  
Jordan Geiger, Adam Laskowitz, Daniel Barry

Commissioned by “Diep Biennial” International Arts Festival and funded by the Ministry of Culture of France and the FRAC, Normandy.



The early 21st century's trends in lifestyle medicine and medical tourism (lasiks in Bangkok, anyone?) gets a further turn as cancer patients give new meaning to "getting a Brazilian."

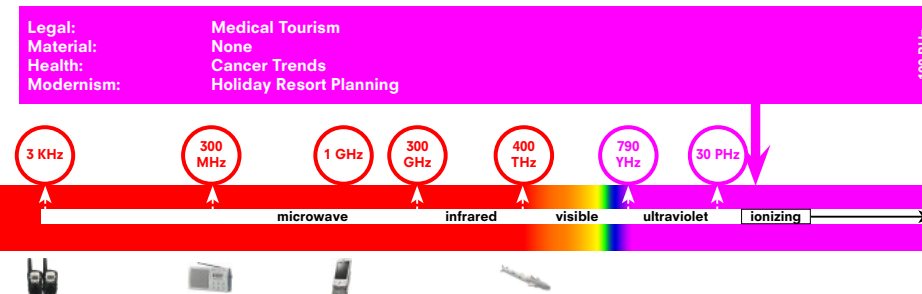
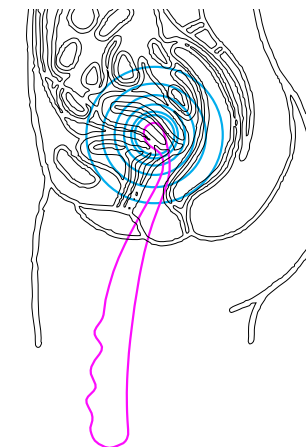
Rio de Janeiro's resorts have cleaned up safety issues around kidnapping of the wealthy, and their use of new self-administered radiology tools around highly-controlled doses of spot-therapy for cervical cancers.

These cancers occupy a strange place in medicine, as their increase in occurrence is unexplained and yet they are not met with popular alarm since treatments have drastically cut their life threat.

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Émission / Year 2019  
**R(ad)io Therapy**



Jordan emerges as the middle east's nexus of modern democracy and new technological innovation under Queen Dowager Noor, with the side effect of new consumer electronic usage and a movement for digital landscape urbanist interventions in the nation's capital.

Amman therefore establishes an elevation clear-zone, a parks district between 800-830 meters above sea level: Meridian Park.

The park is protected from wireless emissions and intended for day-to-day recreational use, pulmonary health and for more general testing against dangerous rads, this cuts an invisible band across the city's 21 hills and valleys where wireless signal would usually drop off anyway in the past. Now, it serves as a kind of haptic elevational mapping tool: if your radio or phone signal drops as you walk or drive up a street, you have entered the Meridian. Also, the Meridian is an empirical device: since it has no EMF in the lower bandwidth, it leaves testing for any leakage from nuclear power facilities in Asia to be clearly identified if it enters the city's atmosphere.

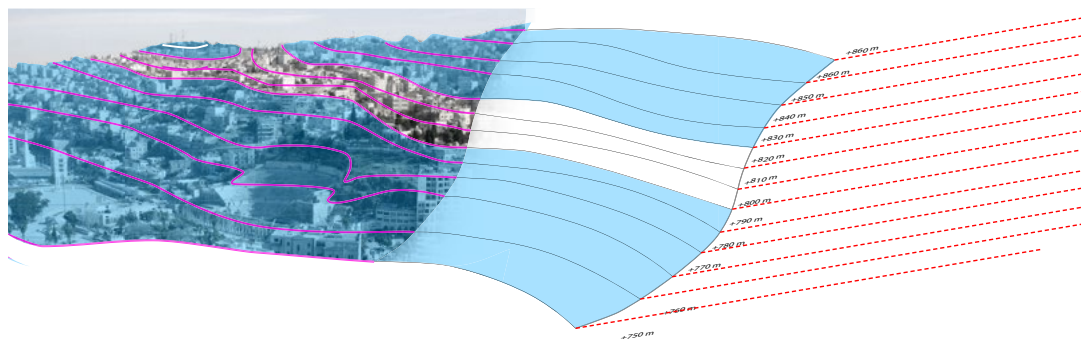
The Meridian is constructed with disruption nets around the city that sparkle with flashing OLEDs as they detect and cancel signal, much like blue-light fly-zappers. These nets are made from recycled silicon and aluminum detritus of the tech industry to the south and in neighboring Israel.

## SOURCES

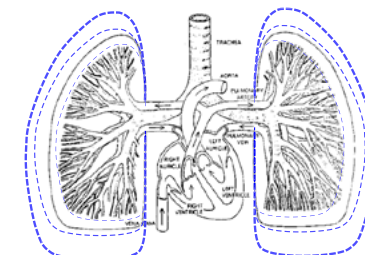
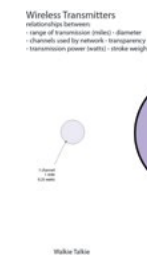
World Health Organization on Cellphone Radiation and Cancer: "Possibly Carcinogenic" – May 2011  
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ITU (International Telecommunication Union) founded in 1934, it regulates all international frequency allocation, orbital positions, parameters of satellites, frequency coordination, and notification/registration. Approved Frequency Ranges: 806-960MHz, 1710-2025MHz, 2110-2220MHz, 2500-2690MHz

Cell Phone Towers and Cancer <http://cancer.org/Cancer/CancerCauses/OtherCarcinogens/AtHome/cellular-phone-towers>



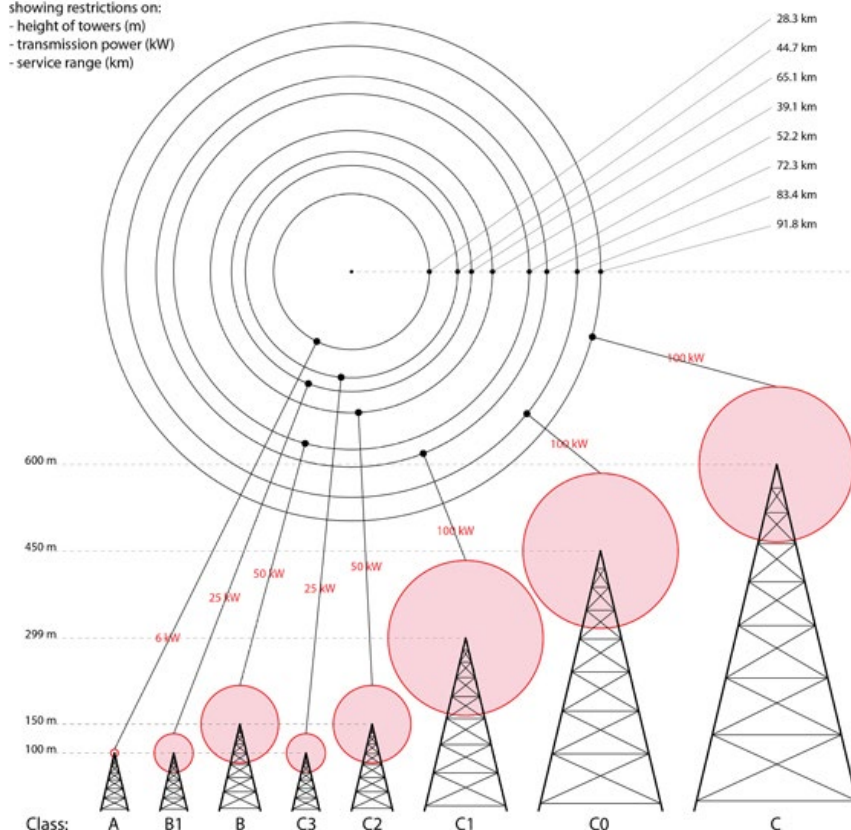
Émission / Year 2020  
**Meridian Park**



## FM Radio Station Classes

showing restrictions on:

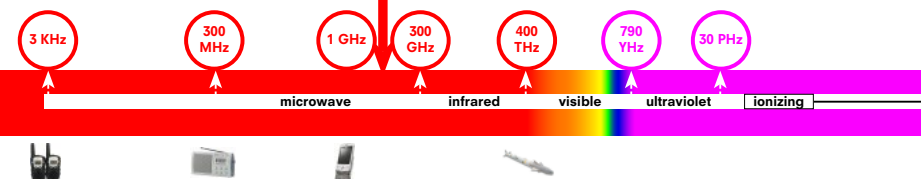
- height of towers (m)
- transmission power (kW)
- service range (km)



Legal:  
 Material:  
 Health:  
 Modernism:

New Democracies, Urban Design  
 None  
 Fresh Air Protection  
 Boston's "Emerald Necklace"

100 PHz





After mass availability of TCR (tooth chip radio), technologies and infrastructure advance for widespread TCC (tooth chip communications).

People are not only connected but the connection is physically implanted on the body, thus exponentially increasing stress levels. 6 years after mass implantation, the Somali Parliament declares a 1-hour relaxation period to support the practice of sieste that was cultivated during Italian colonial rule.

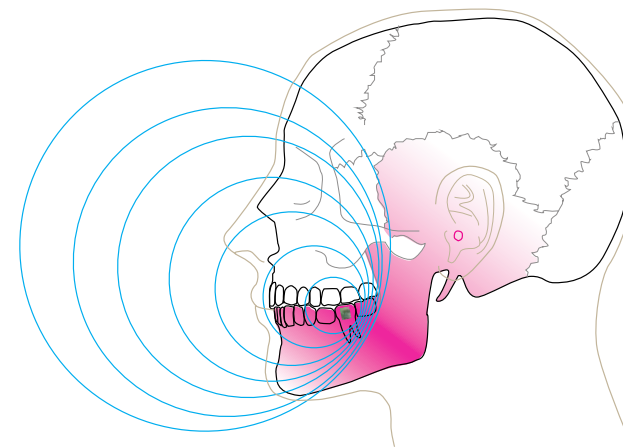
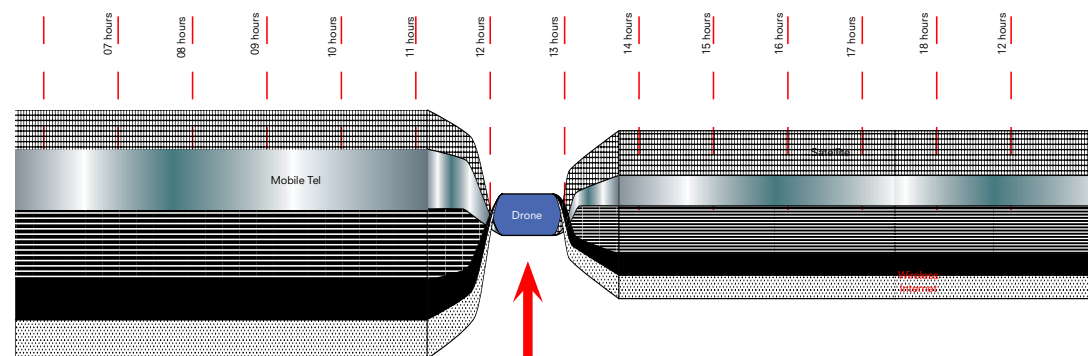
This allows wireless communications to be run by the government for that hour, transmitting synchronized meditative aural and physical rhythms over the air throughout Mogadishu.

## SOURCES

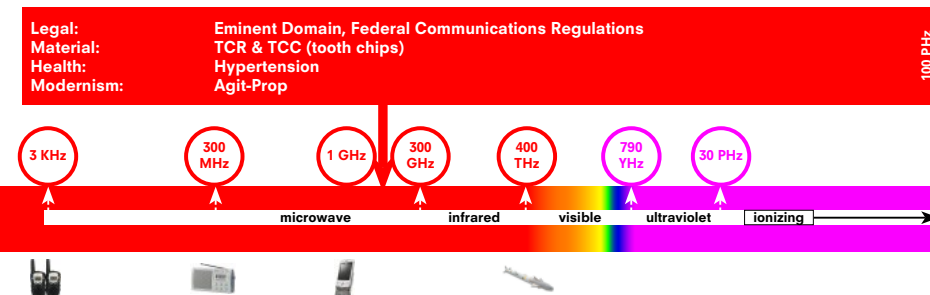
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Excuse Me, Is Your Tooth Ringing?  
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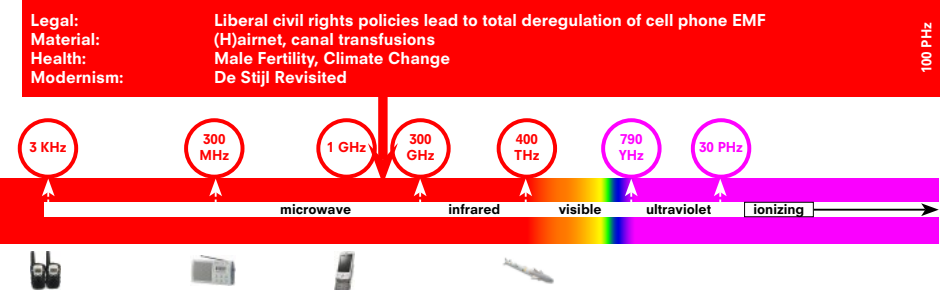
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Émission / Year 2023  
**Mogadishu Siesta**









Conductive ink tattooing has presented the artistic practice with a new up-scale market.

Recent trends have shown that many individuals are now readily shaving their heads in order to have a protective shell tattooed around their skull as a preventative measure against the biological risks associated with cell phones. As a continuous conductive surface, the tattoo redirects electromagnetic fields around the brain, limiting the potential for the penetration of microwave radiation through the blood-brain-barrier. Some opt for full body murals, a medical-ornamental status symbol. Gradually infants start to be given full body tattoos, a sort of latter-day inoculation, as a lifelong EMF shield.

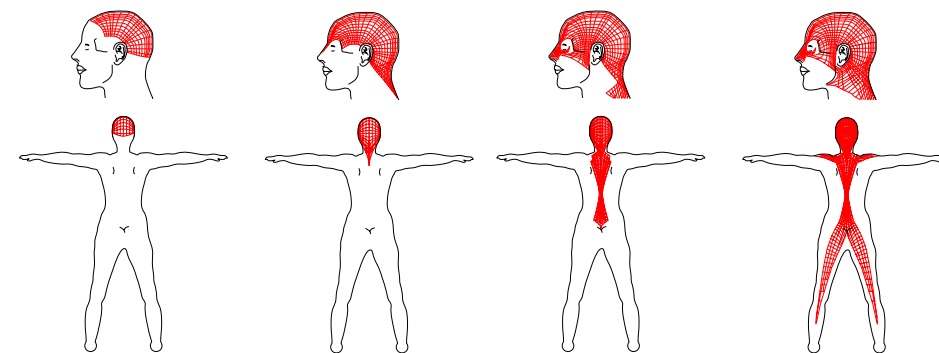
This gives rise to "Clean" Camp Colonies, summer camps for pre-teens where activities like Archery, Horseback Riding and Kayaking are reintroduced in an EMF-free zone that hosts kid on an architectural and landscape of equal ground: no augmented reality, no GPS, no assisted communications. Children in the American Northeast develop muscle tone, tans and basic hunter-gatherer skills as a break from the urban setting of their school year lives.

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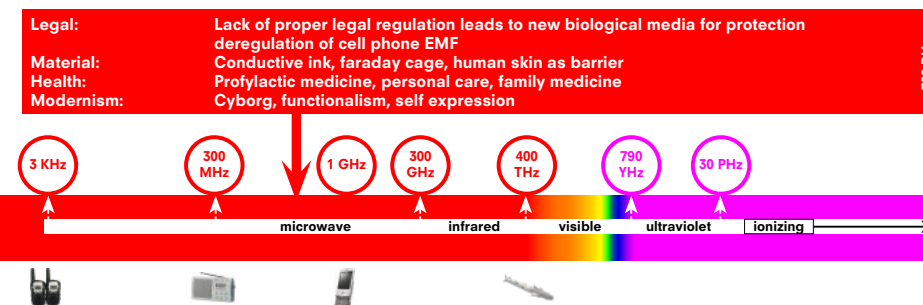
How to make conductive ink:  
[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_5031497\\_make-conductive-ink.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_5031497_make-conductive-ink.html)

Mobile Phones and Cognition: The rise of mobile devices has initiated many studies into cell phone EMFs as a series of preventative measures to avoid biological risks. <http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2010/moral-control-0330.html> — [http://journals.lww.com/neuroreport/Abstract/2000/03200/Effects\\_of\\_electromagnetic\\_field\\_emitted\\_by.21.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/neuroreport/Abstract/2000/03200/Effects_of_electromagnetic_field_emitted_by.21.aspx)

The God Helmet: Other researchers have developed similar prosthetics such as 'the God helmet' which allows people to experience spiritually phenomenological events through similar electromagnetic coils to that of Tesla. It is a pretty famous project, so there is a lot of documentation on it. Here is the wiki and a Science channel video narrated by the one, the only, Morgan Freeman. <http://www.youtube.com/embed/nN3ggRgY7Ac>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God\\_helmet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_helmet)



Émission / Year 2031  
**Ink Defense**





Small cities along the English Channel such as Dieppe and Dover had been suffering economically for decades at the erosion of tourism and maritime industry, as warmer climes like Mallorca won out on the former and tax policy favored faraway nations in Asia for the latter. As early 21st century population migrations saw the Earth's population tip over 50% urban for the first time in history, so too came an unprecedented concentration of urban airs saturated with all spectra of electromagnetic field radiation.

At this time, cities like Dieppe saw an unexpected revival as a new form of spa landscape and the site of a new European Union Research Zone. Sea water had long been known to have high electrical conductivity due to its salinity, but the particular spray found around these cities on the channel—with their high chalk cliffs—were discovered to dissipate dangerous wavelengths.

More provocatively, fishermen and locals who had spent their lives in contact with the waters had developed resistance in their very bloodstream to ambient EMF, yielding an unusually long lifespan up and down the channel. The entire zone was cordoned off by the EU in 2022 to and major landscaping projects, and huge swaths of lands seized under Eminent Domain toward the construction of a constellation of universities under the protective mists. Between them, wealthy urbanites come for months on end to heal in the seaspray.

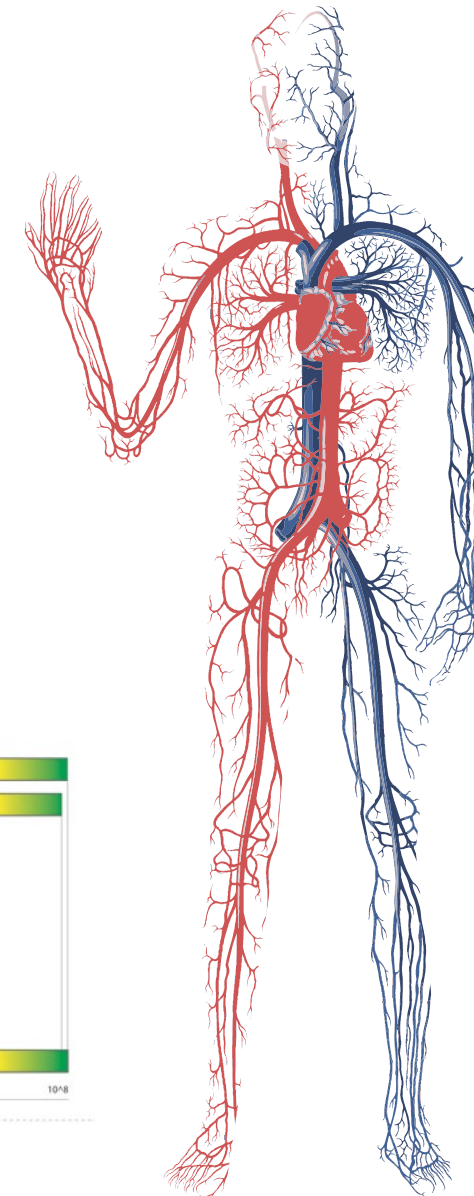
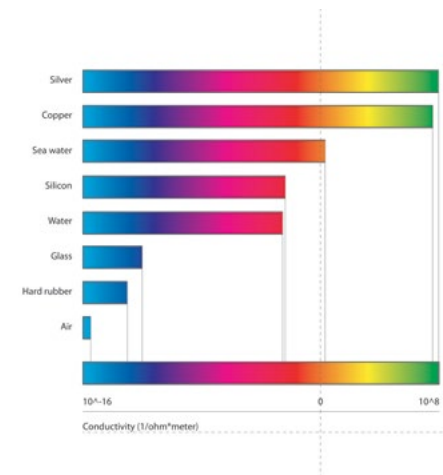
## SOURCES

Residents living next to a phone mast vs. the mobile phone company Bouygues Telecom

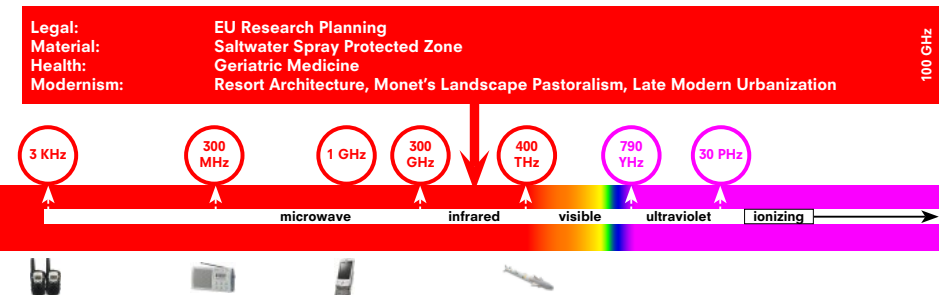
French mobile operator Bouygues Telecom was 4 sentenced in February to remove a mobile mast in Charbonnières, France. The neighbors said they had health problems of the mast.

Court sentence translated into English:  
[http://next-up.org/pdf/France\\_Versailles\\_Court\\_Of\\_Appeal\\_Judgement\\_Local\\_Living\\_Phone\\_Masts\\_Against\\_Compagny\\_Bouygues\\_Telecom\\_04\\_02\\_2009.pdf](http://next-up.org/pdf/France_Versailles_Court_Of_Appeal_Judgement_Local_Living_Phone_Masts_Against_Compagny_Bouygues_Telecom_04_02_2009.pdf)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electrical\\_resistivity\\_and\\_conductivity#cite\\_note-15](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electrical_resistivity_and_conductivity#cite_note-15)



Émission / Year 2035  
**Wisdom Channel**





# (Im)possible Chicagos



Hallucinatory joyrides through one hundred and twenty-five asynchronous Chicagos envisioned by Alexander Trevi.



### (Im)possible Chicagos #1

After scientists had perfected the technique of splicing human DNA into the DNA of a tree, the Bureau of Forestry entered into a business partnership with the multi-billion dollar funeral industry to turn the city's urban forest into a living necropolis.

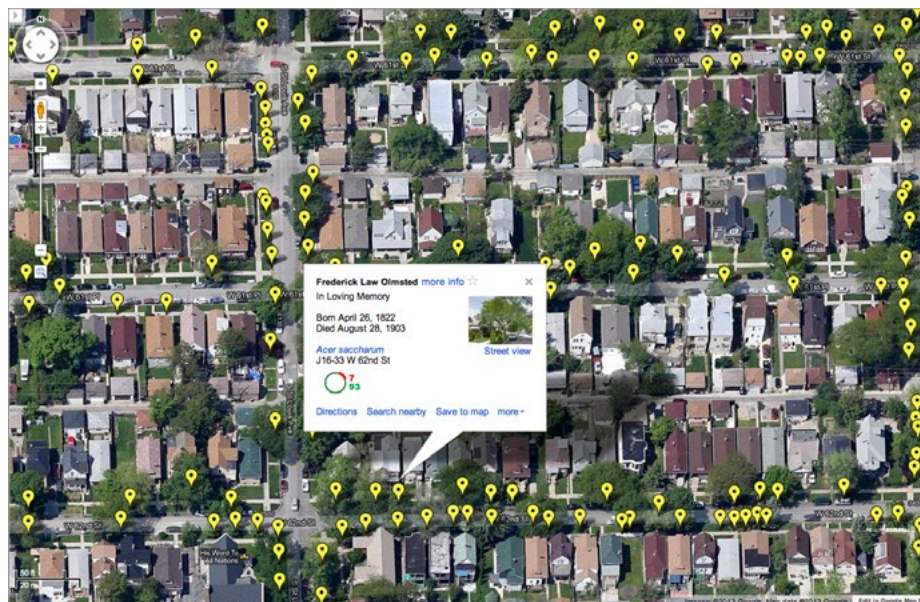
In previous revenue-generating schemes, the perennially cash-strapped city had privatized its airports, toll roads and parking meters—much of its public infrastructure, in fact—which proved disastrous. Not so with this arboreal venture.

The number of trees increased exponentially, even the types of species used. Every tree is lush and vigorous, since not only are they well-maintained by caretakers with an eternally flowing revenue stream but also by the bereaved, who in their grief come daily to tend lovingly to the trees and the surrounding planting beds. Tear-drenched anguish has been appropriated into the city's beautification program, in other words.

Sidewalks, too, look immaculate. Not a single stray candy wrapper can be found, and no one dares urinate on the botanically re-encoded dead. The pavement, after all, is now hallowed ground.

On the Day of the Dead, the streets in the city's many Hispanic neighborhoods become the site of deliriously exuberant block parties. Arbor Day is moved to coincide with Memorial Day.

Google inevitably came along and networked the data from all the trees onto its suite of web mapping service applications. Now gravesite visits needn't be performed exclusively in real space: the pilgrimage can now be undertaken virtually. You can check up on how the tree is faring, see it grow from a seedling, mature and finally bear transgenic fruits. From anywhere and anytime, you can watch as your loved ones unconsciously experience a sort of after life.



### (Im)possible Chicagos #4

The Chicago whose subterranean infrastructure is classified as a state secret. Anyone looking to work for the Public Works Department must undergo extensive background checks and sign non-disclosure agreements when hired. Those who break their contract, Guantanamo awaits. Similarly, urban adventurers are charged with espionage if found hiking down in the sewers and subway tunnels. If they try to evade capture, security forces have orders to shoot to kill.

Digging is banned, so among other things, this means that gardening is all done on walls and rooftops. Neighborhood parks are mere concrete prosceniums on which plants-on-wheels and fountains-on-wheels and benches-on-wheels—everything is on wheels—are rearranged in countless configurations by parkgoers and passing storms. Any remaining exposed ground is carpeted with prairie grasslands that once grew thick in the region, or whatever the wind brings in.

Fearing they might sprout DIY tunnels that will brush up against or puncture the network, a lunatic Rachel Whiteread was let loose in all the city's basements. Open any door that once led to those lower levels, and you'll be greeted with bare concrete.

New structures, from houses to streetlights to skyscrapers, must use non-geologically invasive support systems. You cannot break ground. As a result, the city's famed skyline is beginning to look like Tatlin towers wrapped inside a jungle gym with buttresses sloping down towards the periphery.

A boy went missing once when he fell down a hole that mysteriously opened up on the ground, but not a single search party was organized. There were no prayer vigils, no strapping firemen, no television vans camped for days on end in front of the boy's home to provide 24-hour news coverage of a local melodrama for international consumption. There was no prolonged national hysteria over his fate and definitely no photogenic hero confected by the whims of the masses.

The missing kid was simply censored from the day's news.

If only his parents knew the existence of anarchist cartographers, those shadowy spiritual descendants of Harry Lime. At night they infiltrate in secret these dark geographies to map them anew, to reclaim a lost cultural heritage, and ultimately to solve the mystery of why these rhizomatic contours were erased from the records in the first place. But the grief stricken parents didn't and so couldn't seek out their help. Eventually they were plainly and firmly told that they never had a son in the first place.

The boy, like all the maps of the underground, was redacted.



### (Im)possible Chicagos #9

The United Great Lakes is a hydrostate encompassing the entire drainage basin of the Great Lakes plus a chunk of the St. Lawrence River Basin. These territories ceded from Canadian provinces and American states are organized into administrative cantons coterminous with the sub-basins of each individual lake. The capital city is Chicago.

The choice of Chicago as the capital was controversial at first, because for decades it had allowed the Illinois and Michigan Canal to wastefully drain water out of the lakes. But no one vetoed in the end, as the infrastructure to service the parched city-states of Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Phoenix, their main hydro-export markets, was already in place.

Indeed, freshwater is their main commodity. It is also their only major industry. Gone are the Boeings, the GMs and the Dow Chemicals: they've all either moved to the low-tax pastures of Texas or gone bankrupt. But with unquenchable demand not only from their Southwestern clients but also from the petrostate of New Alberta and assorted frackstates, the economic impact of their desertion and erasure were minimally negative.

Below the city and following its grid are the cavernous reservoirs of thousands of Mega-Notre-Dames, ribbed with flying buttresses and aisled with service passages and emergency tunnels. Jutting out from each one and puncturing the surface are Neo-Gothic spires housing pumping stations, pressure release valves and permanent crew quarters, with the grander ones additionally housing the federal government of the water cartel. Some are quite tall, even reaching the height of the once standing Sears Towers. Not for anything is Chicago now nicknamed The City of Spires.



### (Im)possible Chicagos #10

Every ten years the fires come.

Ignited on the outskirts of the city, they come howling, coronal, as though the prairies have sprouted solar prominences arcing and looping eastward towards the lake. They stream through the fire avenues of the Emerald Necklace, relandscaped with dead vegetation and flammable pavilions. Once a neighborhood is surrounded, the fiery noose contracts and gorges on the trapped kindling.

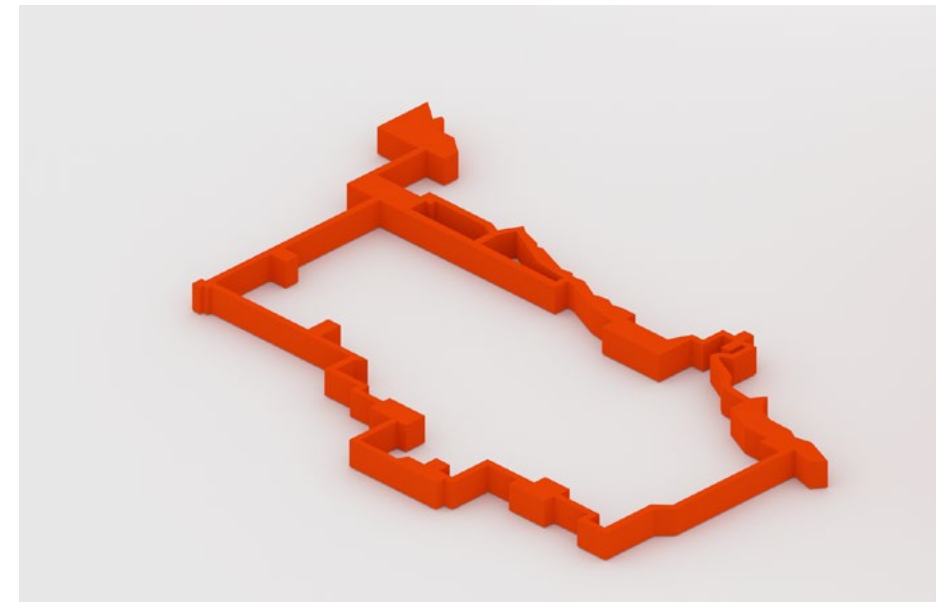
Some residents take this time to go on vacation, but most decide to just ride out the firestorm holed up in neighborhood bunkers. Except for the clothes on their backs, they bring nothing else. There is no such thing as sentimentality. The city, in any case, provides them with scrubs to change into, along with food and water to last a week and, most importantly, breathable air pumped in from an underground network of oxygen tunnels.

To pass the time, they tune in to *The Burn Channel*, watching Anderson Cooper survey the ongoing conflagration inside his Nomex suit. A solitary astronaut on the surface of Mercury.

They check when the nearest firefront will singe through their street, scorch their gardens and evaporate the past decade's urban fads. The sights of skyscrapers collapsing are eagerly anticipated.

They also participate in online public forums to design the next city. All aspects of the city-in-waiting are decided by popular vote, a participatory form of urban planning that in the past had equally produced carbon copies of the White City and wildly experimental urban forms.

But whatever city they end up with, it will be yet another fleeting thing, turning fugitive in ten years' time.

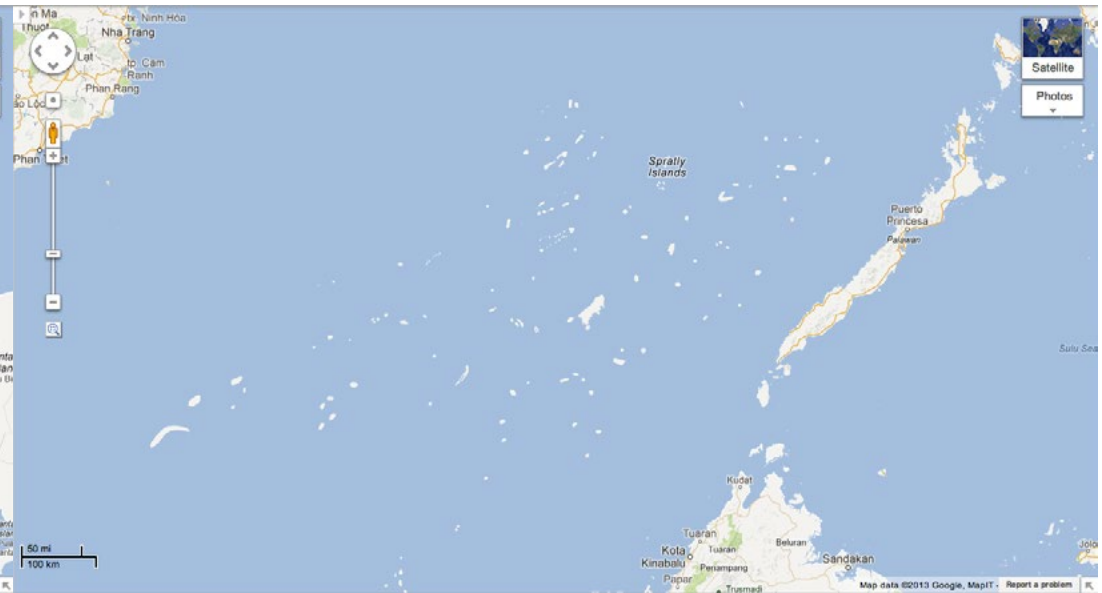




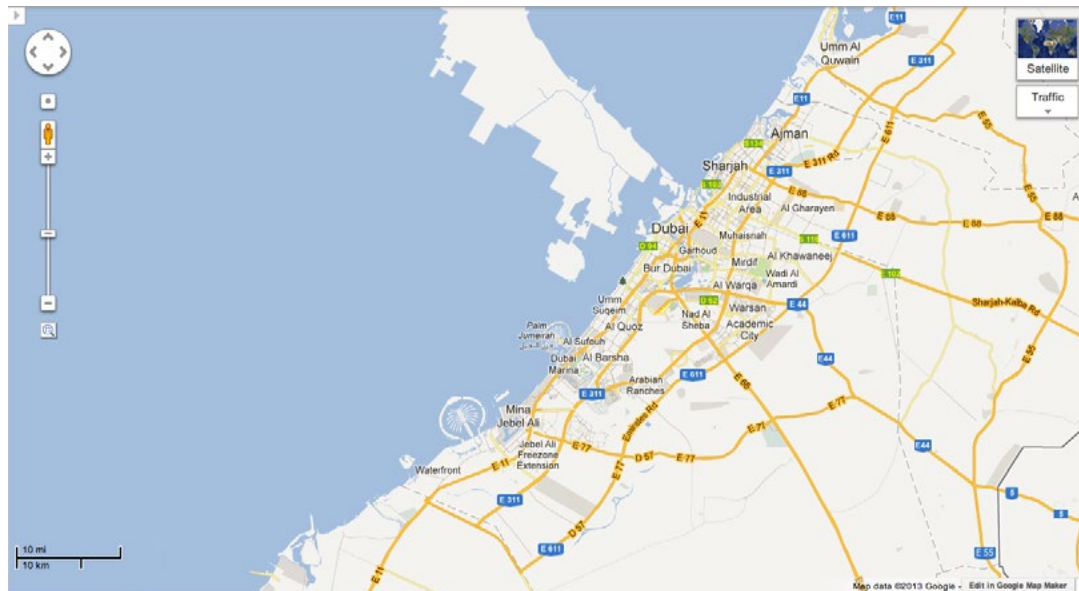
## (Im)possible Chicagos #24-27



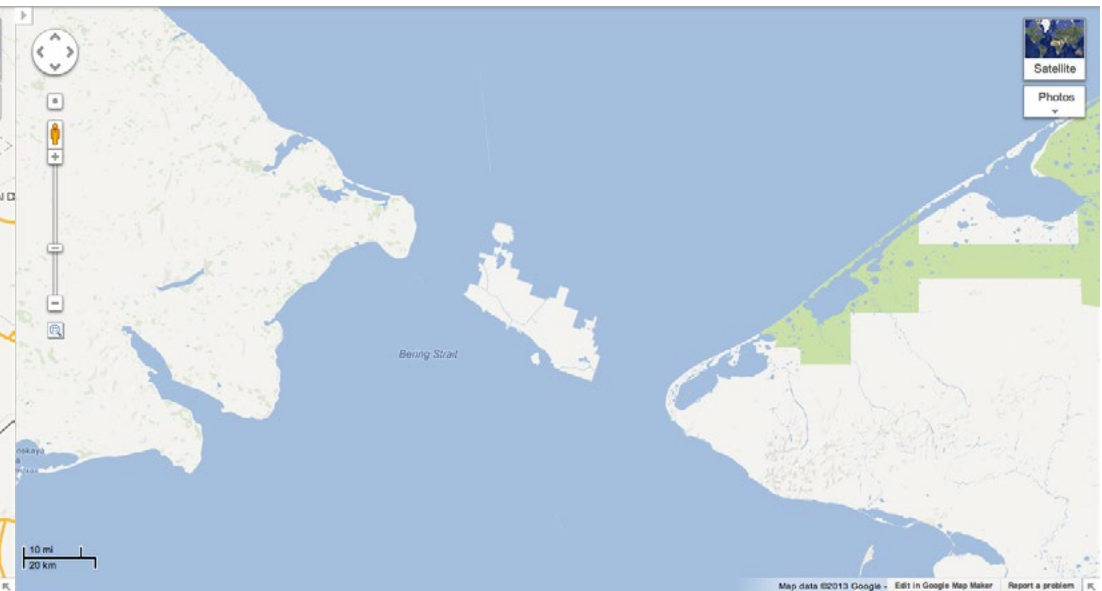
[The Chicago which is an artificial island on the Straits of Singapore.]



[The Chicago which is an artificial island in the South China Sea.]



[The Chicago which is an artificial island in Dubai.]



[The Chicago which is an artificial island on the Bering Strait.]



**(Im)possible Chicagos #43**

The Chicago which was turned into the largest wind farm in the world—for who was left in this radioactive no man's land, the Chernobyl of the Midwest, to protest hysterically, "Not in my backyard!"

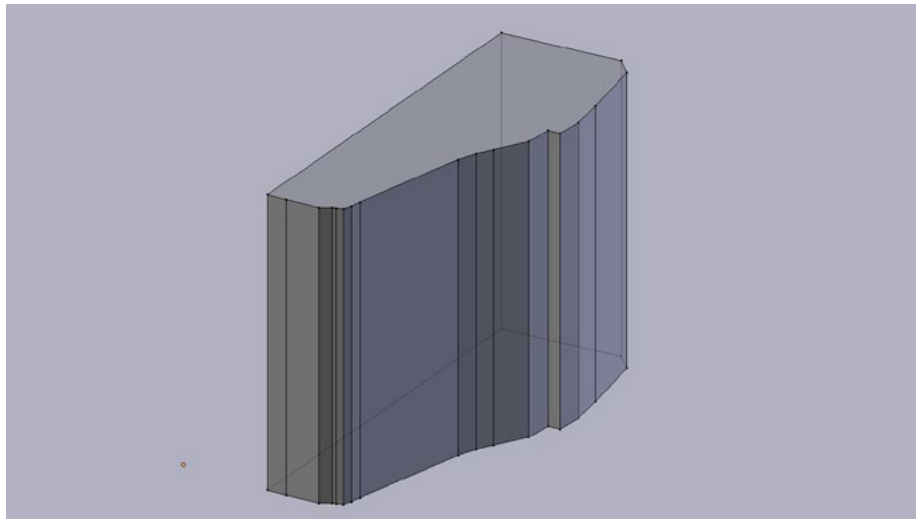
Jason lives in Bunker Pullman, directly below its eponymous neighborhood. There are seventy-six other bunkers, each one also named for the neighborhood they lay directly under. They were originally excavated to house the massive army of workers hired to manufacture and install the thousands of turbines on the surface, but now accommodate just a skeleton crew for maintenance. Jason is part of this crew.

Every morning, he makes his way past empty hollows to the staging area, where he puts on his NBC suit and runs through a long checklist of safety protocols, first on his own gears and then, as in a buddy system, on a co-worker. The elevator ride up to the surface takes about half an hour. No one utters a word the entire time, for this job, carried out mostly in solitary, always attracts hermits.

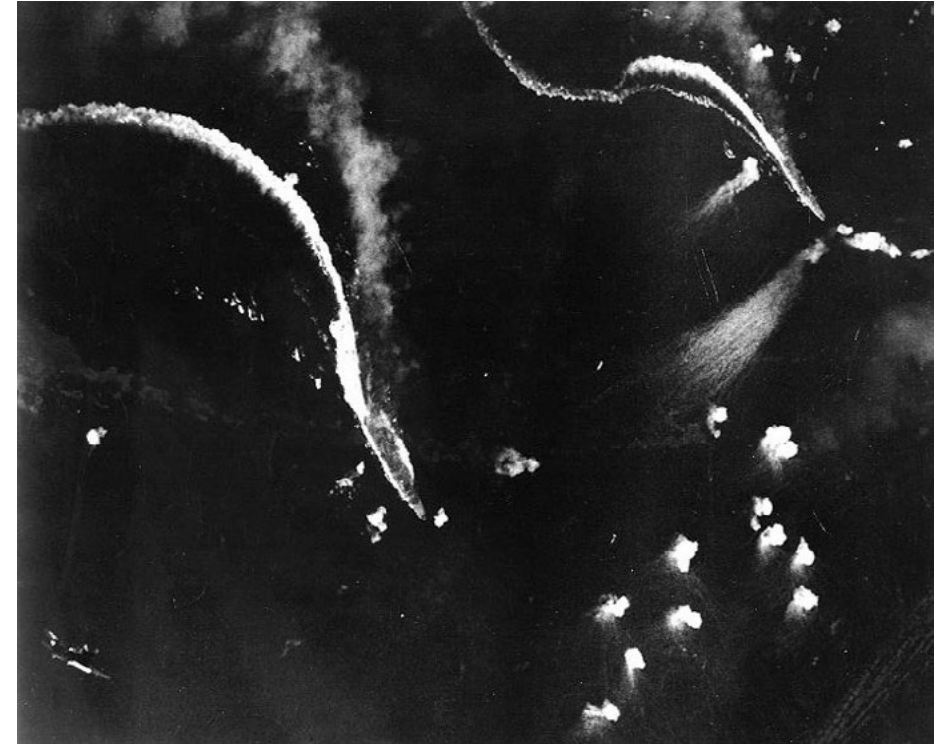
Jason is assigned to look after a hundred towers. It takes him about a month to finish one inspection cycle, longer if something breaks down. Climbing up and down these towers is not what makes the job take so long, or even the repair work. It's the radiation that severely limits the amount of time he can stay on the surface.

The same elevator ride brackets the end of his short shift, followed by the same monastic rituals observed in the morning, except in reverse and with the addition of a shower protocol, when even through the noisy, scouring jets in the decontamination room, the melodic plainchant of the crew spills out into the subterranean city, echoing from one desolate vastness to another.

*Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea: et a peccato meo munda me.*

**(Im)possible Chicagos #44**

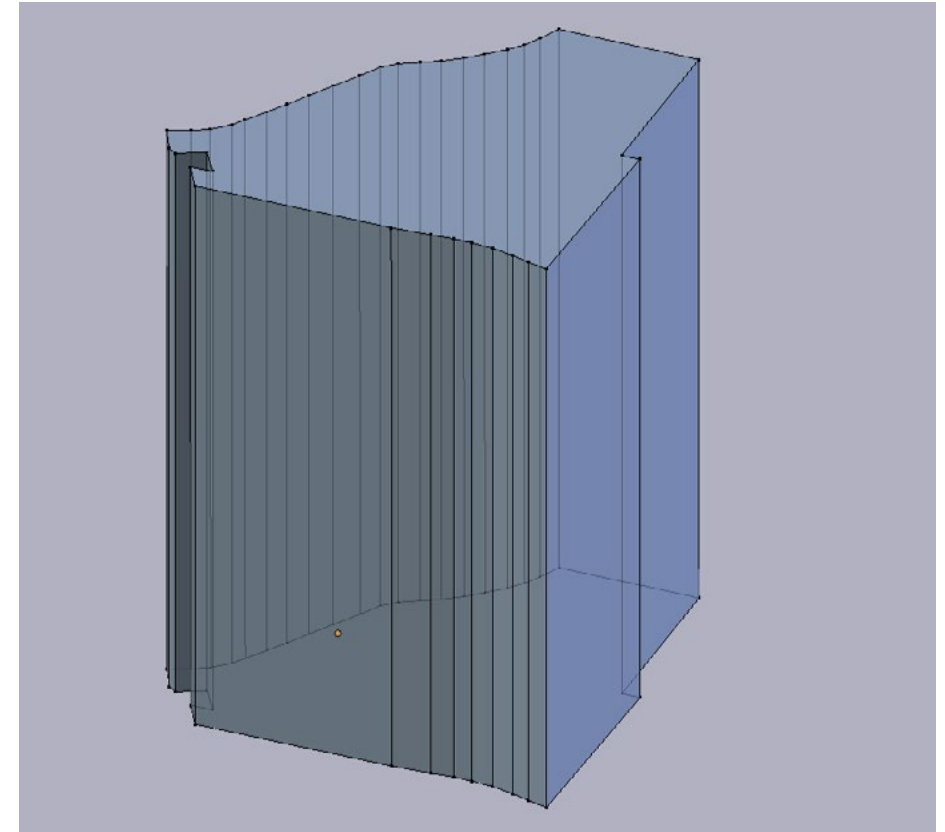
The city-state of Chicago which is at war with the city-state of St. Louis. It's largely a naval conflict in which ironclad navies battle in the Mississippi, Illinois, Missouri and Ohio Rivers.





### (Im)possible Chicagos #46

The Chicago which, condensed into the modest acreage of Chinatown, rises above the sprawling expanse of the Great Swamp, with only a dozen concrete pillars supporting its cybercafés where the local branch of Triad farm for bitcoins and WoW gold, its McDonald's franchises outfitted with hot pot dining tables, its ping pong halls, its mobile phone repair shops, its capsule hotels, its transient hotels, its brothels inside its International Youth Hostels, its pieds-à-terre, its student dormitories crammed high into the ceiling with bunk beds, its nuclear power stations, its apothecaries, its antique shops selling Ming vases of questionable provenance, its IMAX movie palaces built in the Art Deco Chinoiserie style, its chapels for Western-style white weddings, its acupuncture centers, its discothèques, its Dance Dance Revolution arcades, its coin-operated pissoirs, its shadow puppet theaters, its landscape architecture offices, its mausoleums with the embalmed bodies of Richard M. Daley and all the mayors who ruled after him, its topiary gardens, its haberdasheries where tourists can order custom made Mao suits to be picked up in just an hour, its Michelin 3-star restaurants, its noodle shops, its pig roasters and Grant Achatz take-aways, its cloud servers, zombie botnet servers and forward operating server farms of the P.L.A. Unit 61398, its CIA safe houses, its DARPA offices, its Freemason lodges, its exoplanet radio observatories, neutrino detectors and proton shower arrays, its aviaries and apiaries, its abattoirs, its laundromats, its nail salons, its self-storage units holding the collections of the Art Institute, its slave labor camps, POW camps and re-education camps, its mahjong parlors, its tattoo parlors, its Barack Obama Presidential Library and Museum, its fake Apple Stores selling dim sums at the Genius Bar, its miniature golf courses and miniature soccer pitches, its batting cages, its CCTV foreign news bureau, its petting zoos, its payday loan bodegas, its Buddhist temples on the grounds of its Protestant cemeteries on the grounds of Holy Name Cathedral, which rents out one of its towers as a Falun Gong meditation center, the other as a synagogue, its fog water catching stations, its algae farms, its zeppelin loading docks, its convention centers, its Starbucks, its emergency AC cooling centers, its bôiteries, its karaoke bars, its oxygen bars that fill up during high methane alert, its venues for *Postopolis!* Chicago, its AM radio stations, its numbers stations, its fabulous fabulous ballrooms hosting drag shows, hot-body contests, mock same-sex weddings, Chinese opera performances and the Miss Transgender USA beauty pageant, its fishmongers, cordwainers, cobblers, clockmakers and fortune tellers cheek by jowl inside its 7-Elevenses, its startup hubs, its Tower Records stores, its secret supper clubs, its tea houses, its opium dens, its bingo halls, its night schools, culinary schools and calligraphy schools, its ballroom dancing schools and lion taming schools, its English language schools, its elite boys-only boarding schools, its charm schools, its finishing schools, its *Gaokao* preparation midnight schools where students get hooked up to oxygen tanks to increase their concentration, its leper houses, its fleet of execution vans parked in the parking garages of its Wal-Mart Express stores, its outdoor escalators, its sky elevators, its Great Swamp safari travel agencies, its fireworks factories, its cockfighting rings, its banana ripening rooms, its hutongs, its fully immersive Cave Automatic Virtual Environments (or CAVEs), its H&Ms, its Zen-inspired spas, its hipster boutiques, its white guy rental agencies, its expat



watering holes, its consulates, its organ harvesting clinics, its sanitariums, orphanages and missionaries, its global branches of the Louvre, the Guggenheim and the Tate, its heliports, its satellite campuses of the world's leading universities, its recording studios in which guests for *A Date with Luyu* are interviewed by "China's Oprah" via satellite, its metal fabrication shops, its crematoriums, its windmills, its grottos, its giochi d'acqua, its moon gates, its betting shops, its bakeries, its Bio-safety Level 4 labs stockpiled with Ebola viruses and its science laboratories prototyping the Internet of Animals, its abortion clinics, its cheap sex-change clinics, its comic book shops, its planetariums, its drone emplacements, and its nickelodeons playing nothing but the films of Jia Zhangke all the time.



### (Im)possible Chicagos #51

The Chicago which is swarming with biker gangs wearing helmets filled with soil and planted with trees.

They start gathering just before noon, on alleyways, underpasses and parking lots. Some of the young men tend to their motorbikes, checking the air pressure on their tires or polishing the chrome with yet another coat of wax, while others water and prune their saplings. Soon they'll be spilling out into the city amid a sonic cloud of revving engines and rustlings leaves. It's orchards on parade.

Depending on the day of the week, they pack one of the city's oblique avenues, Milwaukee on Mondays, Ogden on Tuesdays, Archer on Wednesdays, and so on, turning the street for an afternoon into the most densely tree-lined in the world. They are there for a bit of drag racing.

Two bikers from rival orchards weave through the narrow, vacillating spaces in the traffic, slowly but with enough velocity to generate a steady airflow to show off the lushness of their preening canopies. Along the route, other bikers sound their horns in appreciation or disapproval: it's not who crosses the finish line first that matters, rather how well one presents his organic coiffure to the city. When they've done a couple of blocks, another pair start their race.

When these competitions began, just your garden variety houseplants were used. But as with all young men in other parts of the world, they sought out ever increasing thrills, that bigger adrenaline rush. So they started using larger and larger plants, making the races even more dangerous. And deadly. It seems like everyday you hear of a biker snapping his neck and killing motorists and spectators in the ensuing crash.

However deadly these races may have become, the young men are still drawn to them. In a city blanketed by smoke produced by slash-and-burn agriculture, a permanent haze that before trapped them in mind-numbing indoor lifestyles, these reckless botanical races are their collective scream of environmental frustration, an outlet for green activism amid the suffocating smog.

Perhaps not surprisingly, many will become eco-terrorists, transforming their restless behaviors on the streets into acts of sabotage carried out on industrial plantations throughout the Midwest. They will polish their guerilla skills out in the quadrangles and quarter-sections, and when they've turned Chicago into a haven for green militancy, they will import their eco-jihadism to the rest of the world.

### (Im)possible Chicagos #53

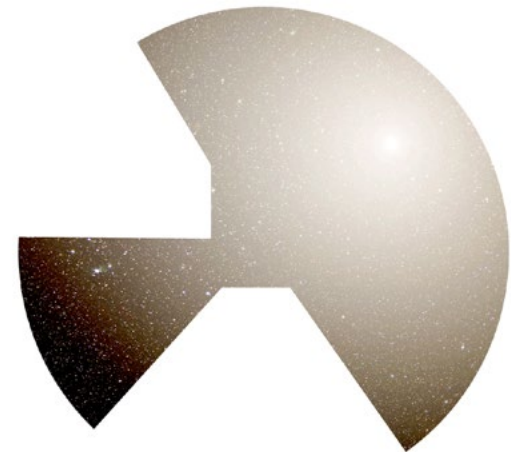
The Chicago which is inhabited by three million Fred Astaires.





**(Im)possible Chicagos #58**

The Chicago which roamed the earth on the backs of continents and supercontinents, migrating to the tropics and both poles, aggregating layers only to loose them to the corrosive flows of countless storms and oceans, until emerging a bit fossilized by design for use by our many-times great grandchildren as an observatory for the intergalactic collision between the Milky Way and Andromeda Galaxies.





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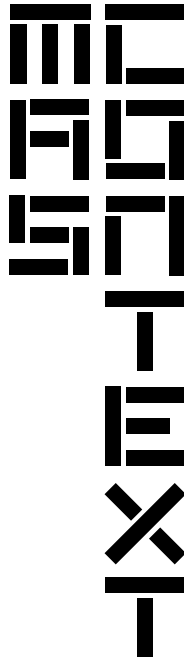
is a practicing architect and partner in Skoutelis-Zanon Architects, a writer obsessed with traces (philosophical and historical) and an assistant professor in Technical University of Crete, Department of Architecture.

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# MAS AGE SIX TEXT

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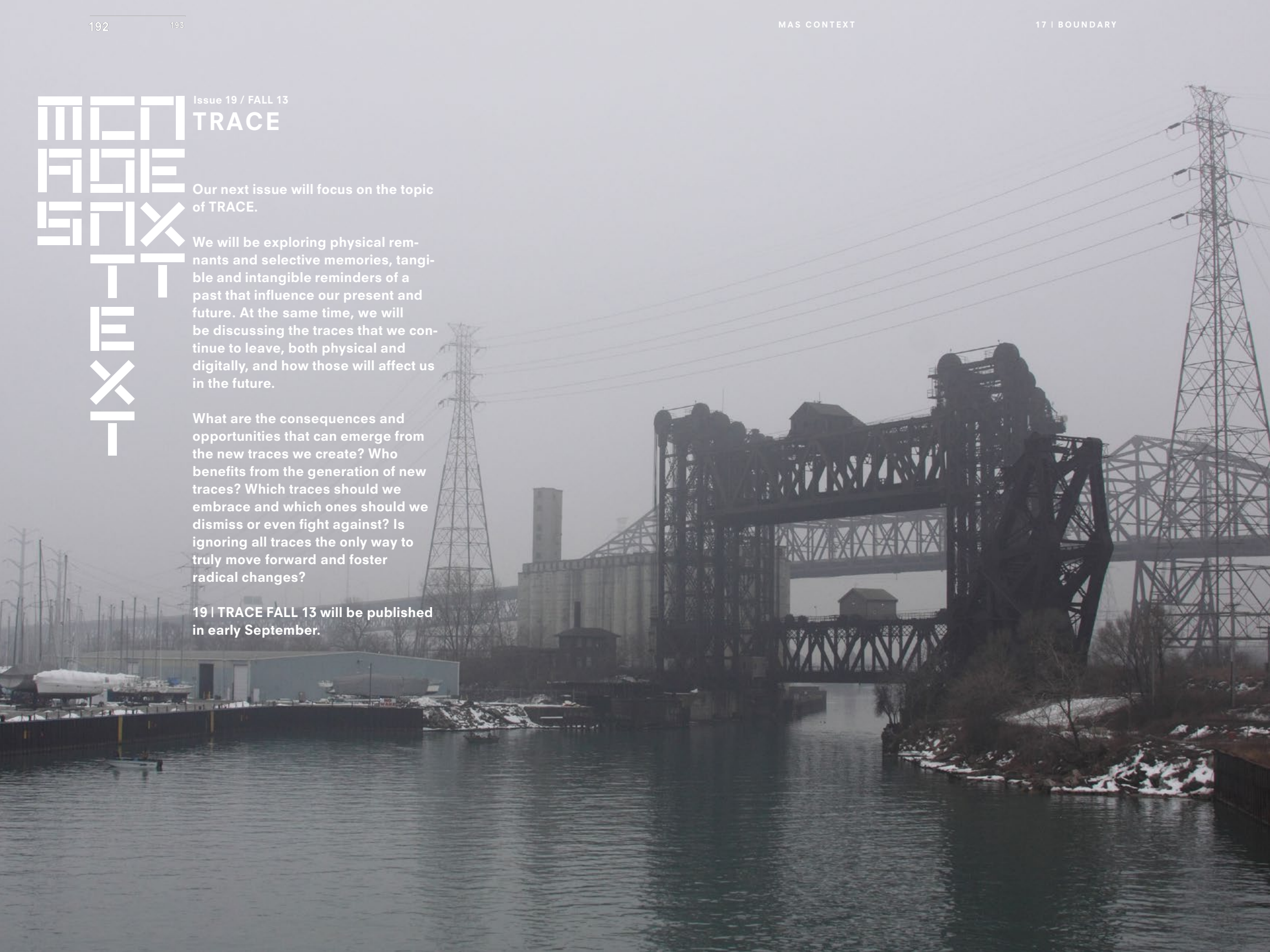
## TRACE

Our next issue will focus on the topic of TRACE.

We will be exploring physical remnants and selective memories, tangible and intangible reminders of a past that influence our present and future. At the same time, we will be discussing the traces that we continue to leave, both physical and digitally, and how those will affect us in the future.

What are the consequences and opportunities that can emerge from the new traces we create? Who benefits from the generation of new traces? Which traces should we embrace and which ones should we dismiss or even fight against? Is ignoring all traces the only way to truly move forward and foster radical changes?

19 | TRACE FALL 13 will be published in early September.





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IMPROBABLE

# THE FUTURE TEXT

