

MEGAFORM AS URBAN LANDSCAPE



Kenneth Frampton

University of Illinois Plym Distinguished Professor 2009

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KENNETH FRAMPTON

THE 2009 RECIPIENT OF THE PLYM DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP

The Plym Distinguished Professorship is a very special position within the School of Architecture. It was made possible by a gift to the School in 1981 by the late Lawrence J. Plym of Niles, Michigan, past president of the Kawneer Corporation. Mr. Plym and his family have a very warm association with the University of Illinois and the School of Architecture.

The School of Architecture at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was delighted to appoint Kenneth Frampton, an internationally renowned Scholar of modern architectural history, as the Distinguished Endowed Plym Professor in Architecture for the 2008-2009 academic school year. The Plym Professorship is conferred upon an architect who has a distinguished record of achievement and can make a positive contribution to the enrichment of the professional education of students in the School. Our past Plym Professors have included Gunnar Birkerts, Paul Rudolph, Joseph Esherick, Minoru Takeyama, Edmund Bacon, Thom Mayne, Carme Pinos, Dominique Perrault, Frances Halsband, William Miller, Norman Crowe, Ken Yeang, and Kengo Kuma.

Kenneth Frampton is the Ware Professor of Architecture at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University. Earlier, he also worked as an architect and architectural historian and critic in England, Israel, and the United States. He is the author of such distinguished books as *Modern Architecture: a Critical History (1980)*, *Modern Architecture and the Critical Present (1980)*, *Studies in Tectonic Culture (1995)*, *American Masterworks (1995)*, *Le Corbusier (2002)*, and *Labor, Work and Architecture (2002)*. An updated and expanded fourth edition of *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* was released in 2007.

Professor Frampton received his Dipl. Arch., Dipl. Trop., Architectural Association (London), 1956; A.R.I.B.A., 1957; Honorary Doctorate of Technology, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, 1991; Honorary Doctorate in Environmental Studies, University of Waterloo, 1995; Honorary Doctorate in Environmental Studies, California College of the Arts and Crafts, 1999.

The School of Architecture was fortunate to have Kenneth Frampton enrich its program through a series of public lectures as well as a

contemporary design seminar. His seven lectures focused upon issues covered in his major book, *Studies in Tectonic Culture*, while his seminars expanded on those subjects. Furthermore, he conducted faculty colloquiums and guided students in New York when they visited current architectural practices and prominent contemporary works.

Kenneth's longstanding scholarship in academia and efforts in our School exemplify Mr. Plym's intentions of sharing the unique, intellectual, and creative perspective of a Plym Professor with the faculty and student community. Ken's willingness to engage students and faculty at all levels, sharing his breadth of intellect in architectural history and theory along with his warm collegiality and ready wit have left an indelible mark on the School of Architecture. This incisive and timely essay of his "Megaform as Urban Landscape," published here for the first time, is to serve also as an indication of our intent to continue a close relationship with Professor Frampton in the times to come.

David Chasco
Professor and Director

Botond Bogнар
Professor and Edgar A. Tafel
Chair in Architecture



(Fig.1) Percier & Fontaine, Galerie d'Orléans, Palais Royale, Paris, France (1829). This top-lit, luxury goods arcade, while hardly a megaform, nonetheless constitutes the commercial heart of the Palais Royale, Paris, transformed into a 'city-in-miniature' par excellence, was created by Louis Philippe in 1780. As Michel Verne has pointed out, the Palais Royale functioned in the 1780's as a 'free-port' space within the interstices of the capital in which everything that came under the rubric of commerce could be carried on without any restriction, irrespective of whether this happened to be prostitution or political debate. Here, bourgeoisie capitalism and theatrical culture flourished under royal patronage without redress.

Megaform as Urban Landscape

The space-endless megalopolis, as a sub-urbanized form of limitless land settlement has long since been a universal reality in the late modern world, certainly since the end of the Second World War. In this regard I recall Françoise Choay's critical observation of the late 60's to the effect that were it not for the graphic signs that are of necessity incorporated into the freeway system, one would not be able to negotiate it at all. In other words it was not only the placelessness of the megalopolis but also its tendency to be devoid of any significant landmarks, that made it so unlike the traditional city or the metropolis in its prime. This is perhaps the most fundamental difference between the metropolitan city of the 19th century and the urbanized region of the 20th. It is this last, late modern condition that informs the French geographer Jean Gottmann's revealing study of the North American continent, published in 1962 under the title *Megalopolis*.



(Fig: 2) Renzo Piano & Richard Rogers' Centre Pompidou

All of this leads to the sobering conclusion that urban design today manifests itself primarily as an academic discourse. It is a field that is largely impotent when it comes to actual urban development. As the late Jerzy Soltan once put it with urban design in mind, “What would happen to the field of surgery if it were never practiced?” And the paradox is of course that urbanization, or rather sub-urbanization continues its unremitting expansion across the earth’s surface with precious little planned intervention, save for the essential infrastructures of sewerage, water, power, and above all, highways – without which the fabric could be neither accessed nor sustained. So that apart from infrastructural planning and the seemingly spontaneous, suburban sub-division and development, together with the proliferation of ill-assorted objects that follow in its wake, no kind of culturally significant place-form comes into being.

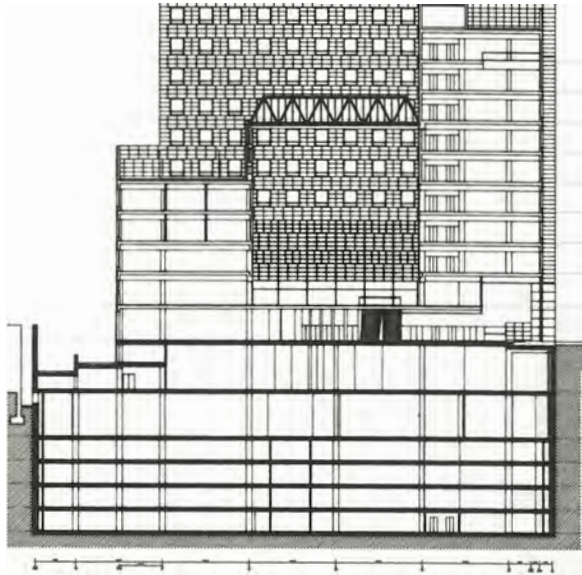
This brings one to the stratagem of the megaform although what exactly this term may signify as distinct from the more familiar term of megastructure, remains somewhat elusive. Clearly the term megastructure has been part of our professional discourse ever since Reyner Banham’s study *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past* of 1976, and the realization of the Centre Pompidou in Paris (Fig: 2) as an exemplary megastructure during the first half of the 70’s. For me the main difference between the two resides in the emphasis placed on the overall form and its intrinsic spatial order as opposed to the expressivity of the structure so that while the megaform may display certain megastructural characteristics, the large scale manifestation and expression of its intrinsic structure is not its primary significance. What is much more pertinent in the case of the megaform is the topographic, horizontal thrust of its overall profile together with the programmatic place-creating character of its intrinsic program.

What prompts one to evoke the contemporary pertinence of this type is its landmark / place-creating potential as this was recently demonstrated by the l'Illa block built to the designs of Rafael Moneo and Manuel de Sola Morales, along the Avenida Diagonal in Barcelona in 1992. (Figs: 3 & 4). Initially, what is most striking about this work is its capacity to function as a decisive landmark when viewed from the rather chaotic, inner suburban development of Barcelona that from the mid 70's has accumulated, with ever increasing complexity, around Ildefonso Cerda's grided 19th century expansion of the original medieval city. What this form immediately denotes from a distance, is the trajectory of the Avenida Diagonal along which it is built. Needless to say, this is not the only attribute that justifies our acknowledging its status as a megaform of equal importance is its hybrid program and the fact that at grade it succeeds in maintaining the traditional shopping frontage along the avenida while at the same time housing within the body of its form a large multi-leveled shopping mall that assumes the character of a top-lit arcade cradled within the cross section of a predominately horizontal multi-storey office building that extends for over 800 meters down the length of this major thoroughfare, as laid out by Cerda at mid-century, as one of two diagonal axes, cutting across the otherwise totally grided fabric of his planned extension.

One may identify other salient features that, in my view, establish its status as a megaform. First, there is the fact that it is a mixed-use development comprising, besides the shopping frontage and the mall, rental office space, a hotel, and a school; second, the office space is fenestrated in such a way that it could in theory be converted to residential use, unlike most curtain-walled structures, and third, the fact that it is well served by multi-storey parking below grade for its entire length so that as a three-dimensional commercial strip, it refers as much to the consumers living in the

inner suburbs and even further afield as it does to the residents of the original inner city, on the edge of which it is embedded; a population who may readily gain access to its amenities as much on foot or by public transport as by automobile. In this respect, it possesses a quasi-catalytic function in as much as it may be seen as the kind of urban intervention that stimulates hitherto unforeseen consequences. In this sense we may regard it as exemplifying de Sola Morales's concept of urban acupuncture; that is to say, a topographic but decidedly limited and hence realizable civic intervention, that is inserted into the urban fabric in such a way as to fulfill the double function of both overcoming certain manifest disjunctions in the continuity of its current form and use, while at the same time stimulating further future activity and development.

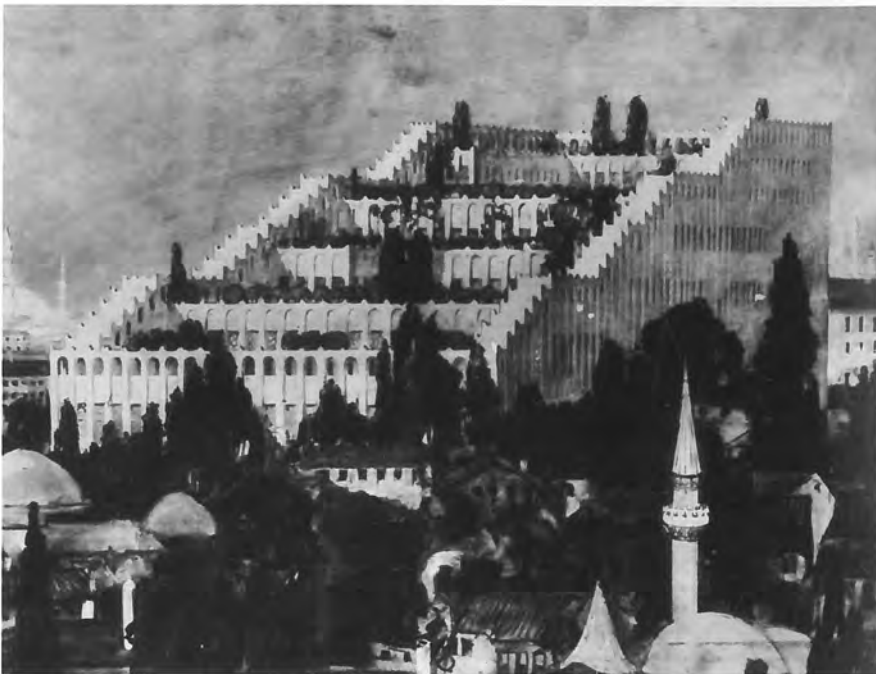
After coming across this work and acknowledging its attributes in a somewhat circumstantial manner, I began to ask myself what other interventions from the past could be said to display similar characteristics. It occurred to me that much like the perimeter block, the arcade and the enclave this is a place oriented genre, that has its antecedents not only in the city-in-miniature as we find this in the Palais Royale, Paris at the end of the 18th Century, but also as a trope, occurring here and there throughout the history of the last century, beginning with Hans Poelzig's House of Friendship competition entry designed for Istanbul in 1916 (Figs: 5 & 6). Obviously inspired by the mythical hanging gardens of Babylon, this work was projected on the horizon of Istanbul like a geological outcrop; a stepped terraced profile resembling the section of an escarpment. This notion of a topographic, building reoccurs in Bruno Taut's idea of the City Crown of 1919 and in his Alpine Architektur of 1920, wherein crystalline structures are projected as being built in the alps, this concept resurfaces in the European organic tradition first in the German expressionist line



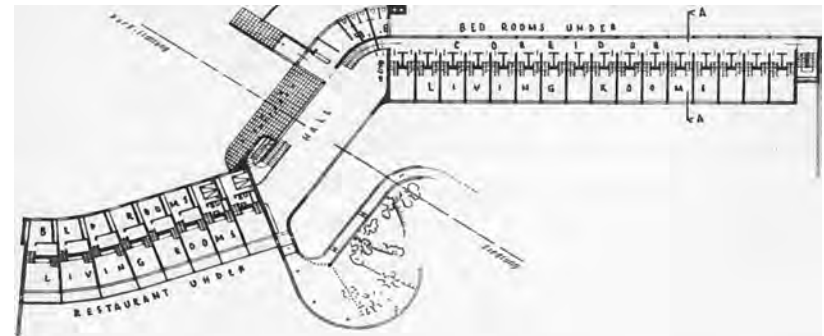
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(Figs: 3 & 4) Rafael Moneo & Manuel de Sola Morales. L'illa Block, Barcelona Spain 1992. This 800 meter long megaform has the capacity to sustain the existing shopping frontage of the Avenida Diagonal and at the same time to serve as a landmark in relation to the inner suburbs surrounding Cerdà's 19th century expansion of the city. The long and transverse sections show the way in which the top-lit shopping mall is well positioned to support the commercial frontage on the avenue. The continuous block rising from 4 to 10 stories in height above the sidewalk may be easily adapted to a variety of functions owing to the fact that this rental volume is lit by a grid of regularly spaced square windows.





(Figs: 5 & 6) Hans Poelzig, House of Friendship, Istanbul, Turkey (1916). One of the earliest examples of a horizontal megaform in which the building is projected upon the skyline of Istanbul like a geological outcrop. At the same time, it makes an explicit reference to the mythical terraced gardens of Babylon.



(Figs: 7 & 8) Hans Scharoun, Breslau Building Exhibition, Germany (1929). The collective dwelling conceived as an organic continuous building form, blending into the terraced landscape as an earthwork.

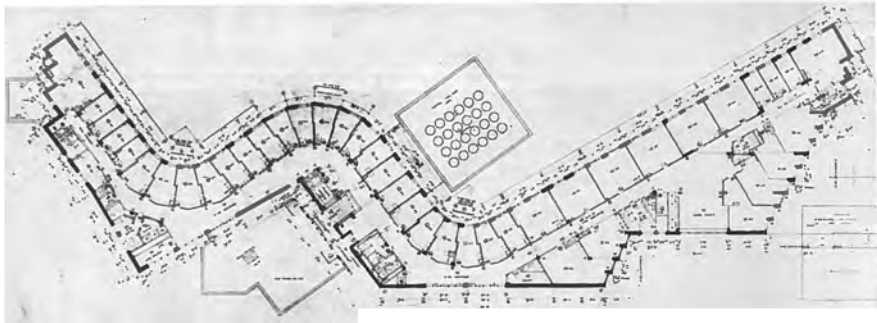
as we find this in the work of architects like Hugo Haring and Hans Scharoun as in Haring's Gut Garkau Farm of 1924 or Scharoun's prototypical collective residence built for the Breslau Building Exhibition for 1929. (Figs: 7 & 8) A similar topographic impulse is evident in Aalto's Baker Dorm built in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1944. On the entry side with its stepped staircases, the Baker dormitory has a crystalline, geological character, while we may liken its river frontage to an undulating cliff-face in brick in the midst of which a cubic cafeteria projects out of the mass form as of micro public realm. (Figs: 9 - 11)

However utopian it may be, Le Corbusier's Plan Obus for the corniche of Algiers (Fig: 14) dating from 1930 constitutes a fundamental, scalar and programmatic shift. Based on an earlier sketch for the corniche of Rio de Janeiro in 1929 (Figs: 12 & 13), this is no longer a finite building or a discretely bounded city-in-miniature: Here the form, the infrastructure and the natural contours are virtually fused together. At this juncture, the megaform passes from being a horizontal landmark to becoming a land form at a vast scale.

Jacob Bakema will entertain a similar stratagem in his plan for Tel Aviv of 1963 (Figs: 15 - 19) and in his Pampas Plan for Amsterdam of 1965 (Figs: 20 & 21). In contrast to the Plan Obus, both of these schemes are flat sites in which the existing urban fabric comes to be bracketed and extended through a spinal, landmark building which is articulated at a regional scale. The subsequent Manhattanized development of Tel Aviv over the past half century suggests that a similar expansion in floor space could have been achieved horizontally rather than vertically and something similar obtains, in the case of Bakema's proposal for the expansion of Amsterdam, where in typical Dutch fashion one would have expanded the city

laterally through land reclamation on the water, in which existing land tenure would no longer have been an obstacle to development at a vast scale. I would like to return via this example to a consideration of megastructural interventions in relation to existing urban fabric; as diverse in scale as Brunswick Center built to the designs of Patrick Hodgkinson in the Bloomsbury area of London from 1964 to 1974. (Figs: 24 & 25) and Henri Ciriani's concept of *la pièce urbaine* as this would be applied to a relatively small sector of the French new town of Marne La Vallée. (Figs: 22 & 23).

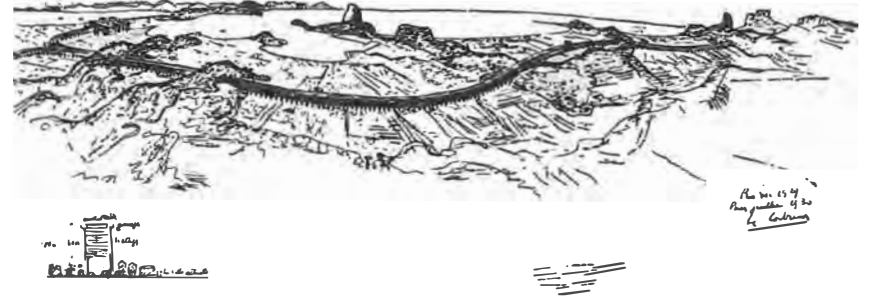
The equivalent of this kind of intervention in a territorial context would be elaborated by the Italian architect Vittorio Gregotti in his book *Il Territorio dell'Architettura* of 1966. One of the theoretical antecedents of this approach was Friedrich Ratzel's turn-of-the-century concept of anthropogeographic form, the idea that first recognized that what we inherit is an artificial nature that, with the exception of the vast untamed domain of the ocean, is just as man-made as the built form by which the earth is marked throughout its extent. Gregotti's critically strategic concept of an earthbound architectural territoriality led him to posit with his associates one panoramic, topographic megaform after another, beginning with their proposal for the University of Florence in 1971. This admittedly rather utopian proposal envisaged five comprehensive faculty buildings set against a north-south administrative spine, incorporating public transit and other amenities. Many other megaform proposals were to continue to issue from the hands of Gregotti Associati, including the seminal University of Cosenza under construction on a site in Calabria between 1973 and 1980 (Figs: 26 - 28) and the so-called Zen Housing Settlement built outside Palermo between 1969 and 1973. The horizontal emphasis of the long perimeter blocks of the low-rise terrace houses, from which it is composed, constitutes a landscape in itself.



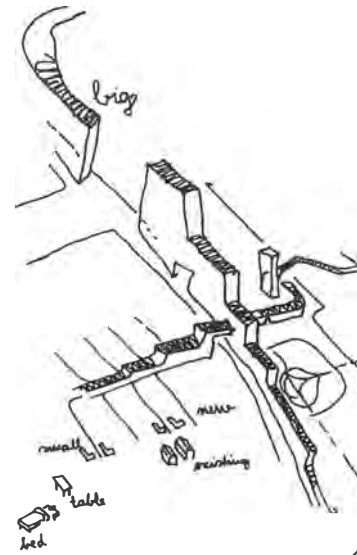
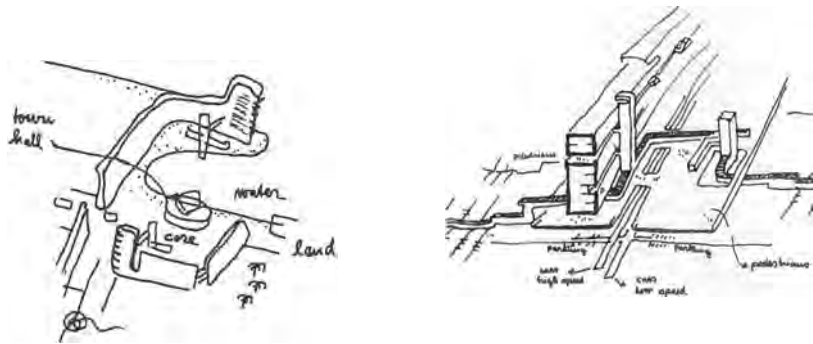
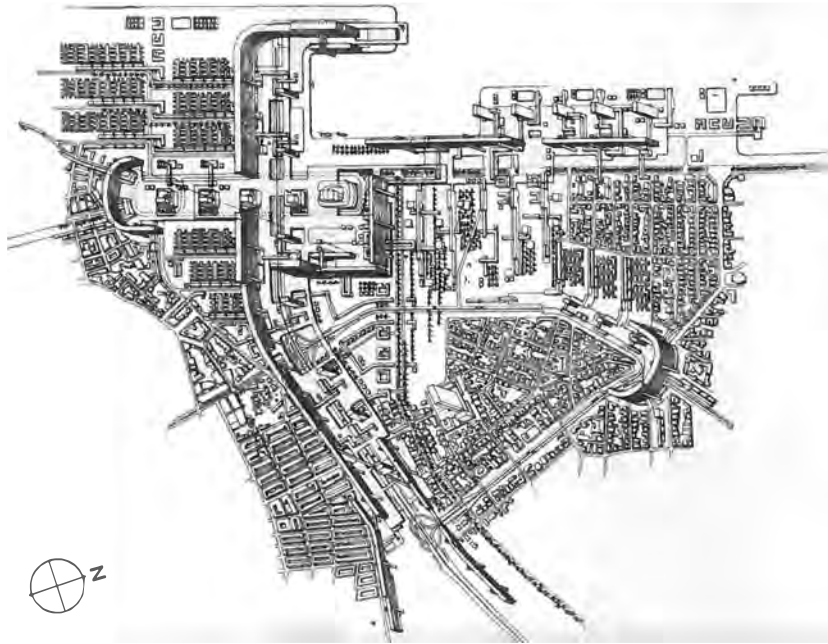
(Figs: 9 - 11) Alvar Aalto, Baker Dormitory, MIT, Cambridge, USA (1944). As with the work of Poelzig and Scharoun, Aalto's dormitory assumes the character of a geological formation which has two distinctly different aspects; one looking out over the Charles River and the other looking back onto the main body of the campus. The main floor of the river frontage building is elevated on an earthwork-podium above the riverfront promenade. The central cafeteria is accessed directly from this level.



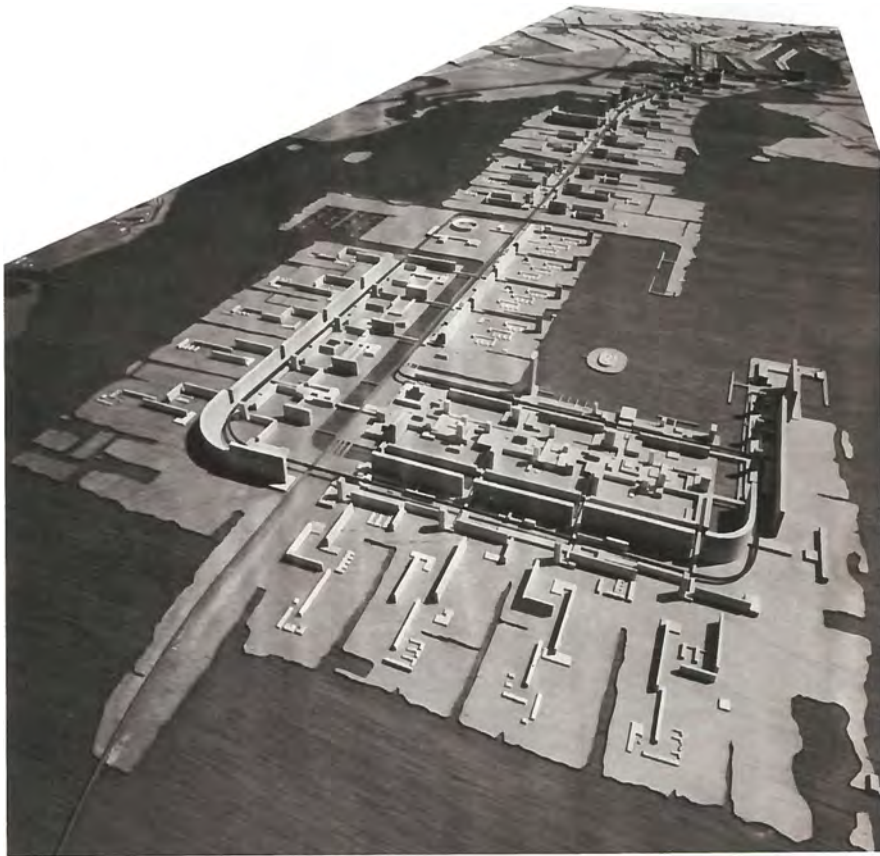
(Figs: 12 & 13) Le Corbusier, Project for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. (1929). Here, the expansion of a land-locked city turns on an elevated auto route into the roof of a continuous residential building. This radical project arising out of the exotic volcanic topography of the city and its site seen from the air is obviously the origin of the Plan Obus for Algiers.



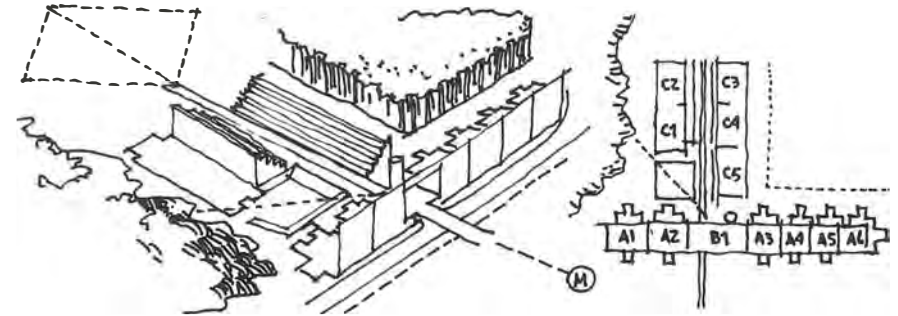
(Fig 14) Le Corbusier, Plan Obus projected for Algiers, North Africa (1930). At this juncture the megaform follows the contours so precisely as to be indistinguishable from the form of the topography.



(Figs: 15-19) Jacob Bakema, Plan for Tel Aviv, Israel (1963). Here Bakema adapts the Corbusian concept of the corniche-megaform to a relatively flat, ocean front city. In this instance, the large sweeping megaform parallels a double-level autoroute as it sweeps into the existing low-rise fabric of the city to culminate in a new city hall to be built in relation to the ancient harbor of Jaffa. What is remarkable about Bakema's sketches accompanying this proposal is the way in which he attempts to bracket the six storey scale of what was then the existing residential fabric of Tel Aviv with horizontal medium rise spinal elements implicating the scale and form of the existing Dizengoff Circle, shown at the bottom of the model photograph.



(Figs: 20 & 21) Jacob Bakema, Pampus Plan for Amsterdam, Netherlands (1969). Here the architect applies the same megaform strategy to the amplification of an existing 17th century city. As with Kenzo Tange's Tokyo Bay proposal of 1960 the audacious move is to build on the water which prior to the realization of the Kansai Airport may have seemed to be totally utopian. Clearly such horizontal extensions would have demanded to be accompanied by high-speed, light-rail, transit.



SECTION DE LA 'PIECE URBAINE' ...

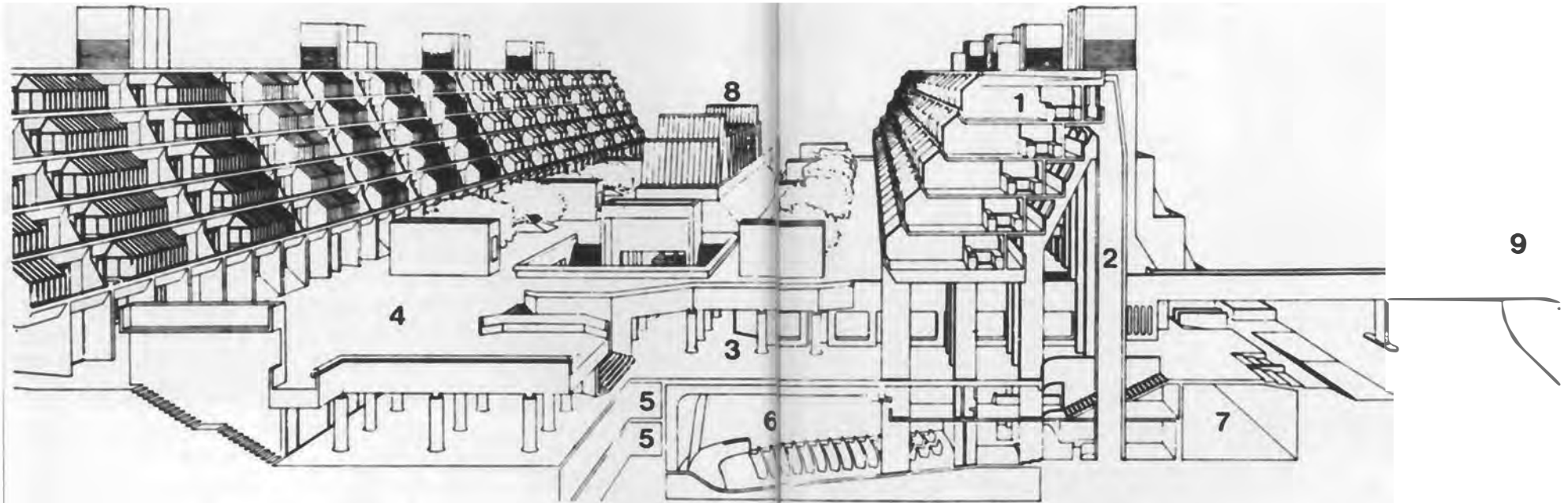


(Figs: 22 & 23) Henri Ciriani Noisy II La Barre a Marne, Marne-la-Vallée, France (1980). This work demonstrates Ciriani's concept of La Piece Urbaine as worked out with his colleagues at UPB, Belleville, Paris. Of this concept he has written: "Our intention was to create an urban piece which would integrate the urbanistic requirements of a new town. The organic link line orthogonally crosses the trunk road on the boundary of the site, proceeds in a straight line across the small block of houses opposite and finishes at a regional metro-station and the local shopping center."

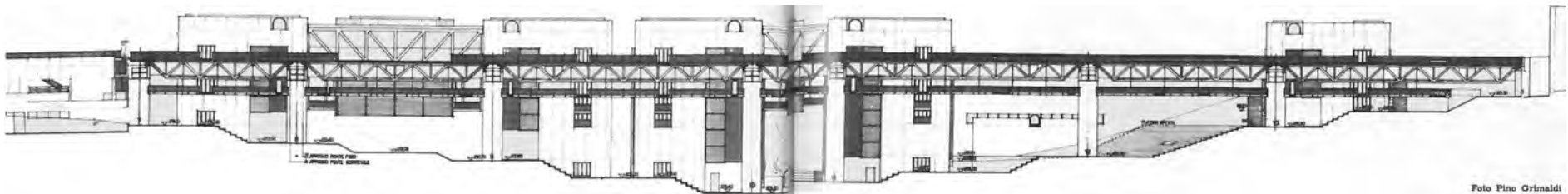
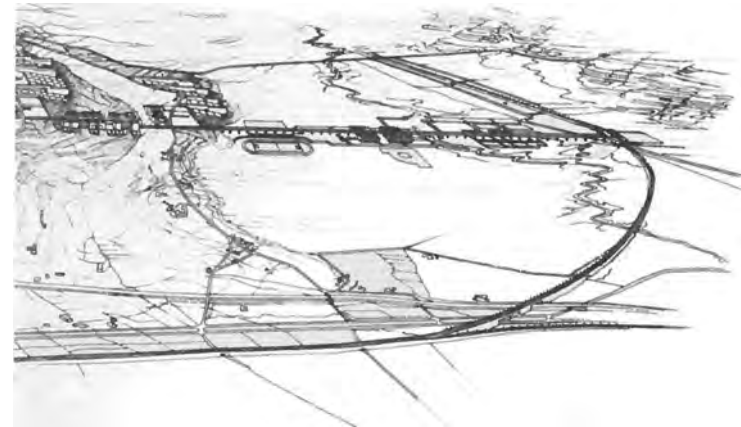
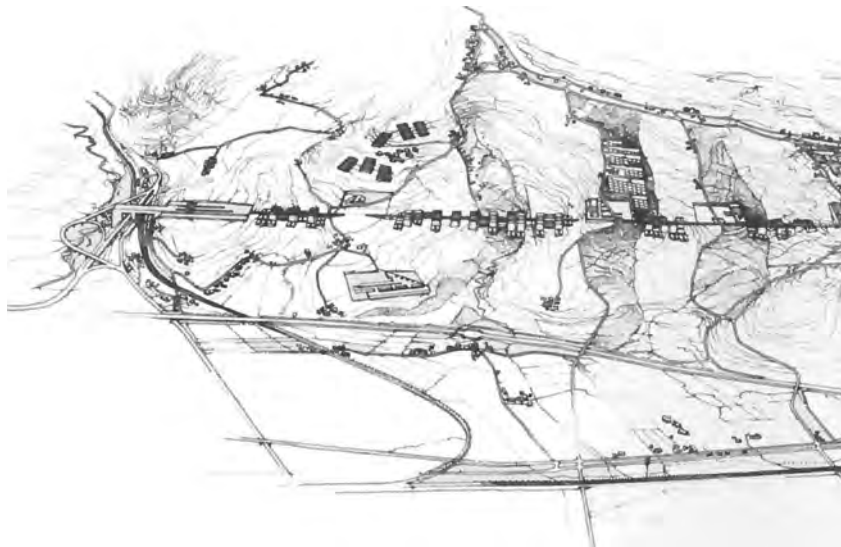


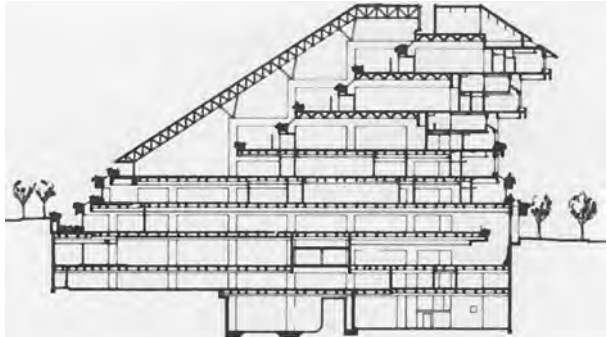
(Figs: 24 & 25) Patrick Hodgkinson, Brunswick Center, London (1964-74). Here as in Ciriani's concept of La Piece Urbaine, medium rise five storey stepped residential blocks, are mirrored about a central axis operating on two separate levels. Despite its extruded character, the complex confronts the surrounding urban context in a decisive way which is at the same time respectful of the overall grain of the city. The double-sided shopping street, running down the center of the block and the arts cinema, let into the undercroft beneath and impart a significant public character to the whole.

1. APARTMENTS WITH CONSERVATORIES
2. PYLONS
3. SHOPPING PRECINCT
4. ROOF TERRACE
5. PARKING
6. CINEMA
7. STORAGE
8. SKYLIGHTS
9. PASSERELLE TO PARKS

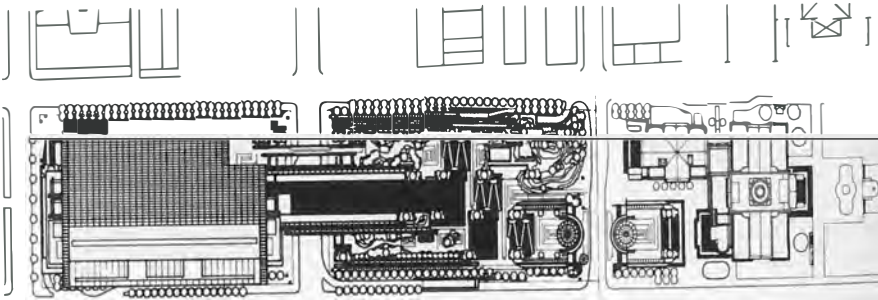


(Figs: 26 - 28) Gregotti Associati, University of Cosenza, Cosenza, Italy (1973-1980). Perhaps more of a megastructure than a megalom, this university complex, 3,200 meters in length, nevertheless has a marked territorial/topographic dimension as its primary axis crosses the Crati valley to the two main railway lines bracketing the limits of the valley on the east and the west, along with north/south and east/west autostrada connections. The individual faculties are linked to three level latticework spines that cross the entire site to connect the cubic modules of the university based on a 25.5 x 25.5 meter plan, extending for two modules in depth on either side of the axial access. The system currently accommodates 21 separate departments.



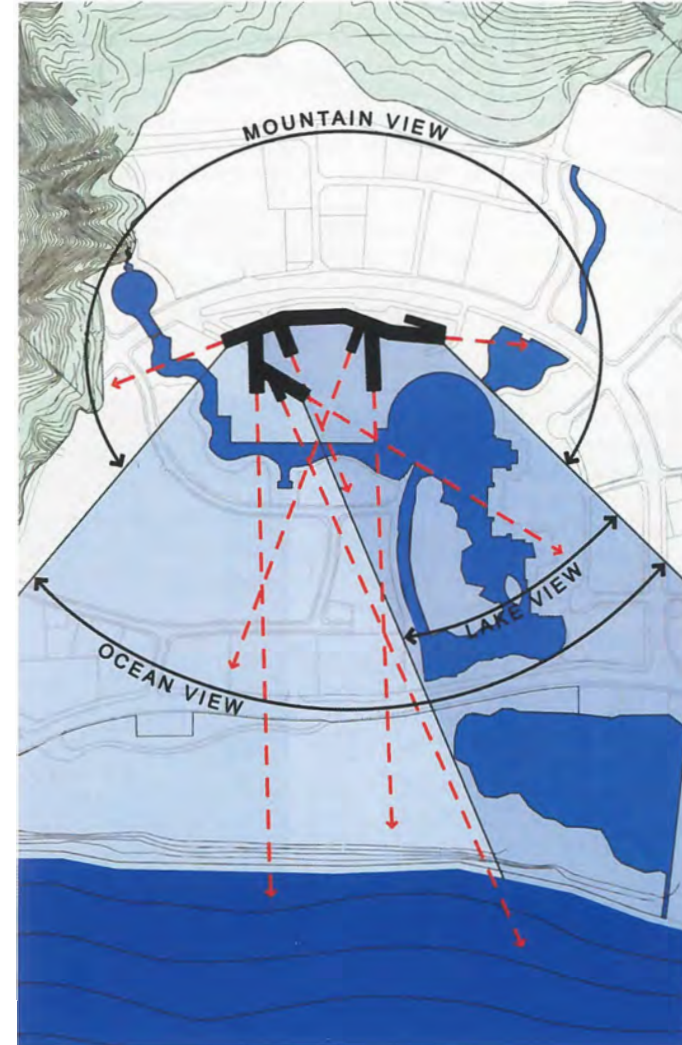


(Figs: 29 - 32) Arthur Erickson, Robson Square, Vancouver, British Columbia (1983-86) A paradigmatic megaform consisting of a seven story municipal building and law courts, linked to a linear rooftop park that descends in three long blocks across the central spine of the downtown. The water-garden weir and the stepped park accessed by ramps were detailed out to the designs of the landscape architect, Cornelia Oberlander

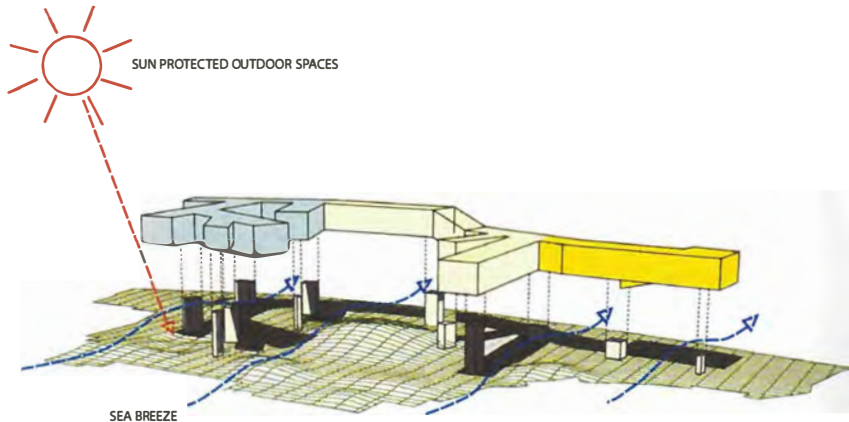




(Fig: 33) Steven Holl, Hybrid Building, Beijing (2003-09). This conglomeration of eight, medium-rise towers, linked by aerial bridges, accommodates 2,500 people in a 'loop' around a retention lake, a cinemathèque and hotel. This compound is flanked by a series of artificial green earthworks, known as 'mounds', ostensibly representing the four ages of man. The entire complex is heated by 100 foot deep geothermal wells. The aerial bridges accommodate such facilities as a swimming pool, a fitness room, a cafe and a gallery. As the architects put it, the overall aim was to "express a collective aspiration rather than towers as isolate objects or private island in an increasingly privatized city."

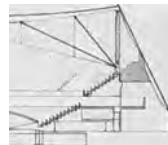
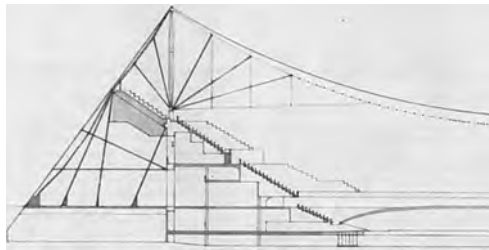
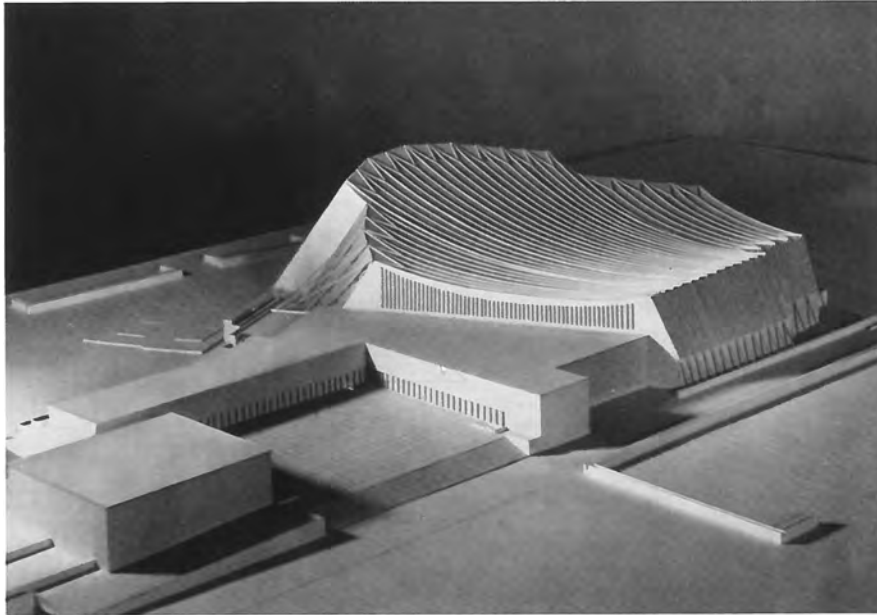


(Figs: 34 & 35) Steven Holl, Horizontal Skyscraper, Vanke Center, Shenzhen, China (2006-09). In this instance, one large structure suspended just below the 35 meter height limit, enables one to generate a large continuous green space open to the public beneath the building. This structure provides for panoramas of one kind or another for 360 degrees beneath its hovering horizontal, multi-use form; thus affording views of the mountains towards the north and of the ocean and the lake towards the south and the southwest. The four to five storey structure provides for offices, a hotel and multiple residences.



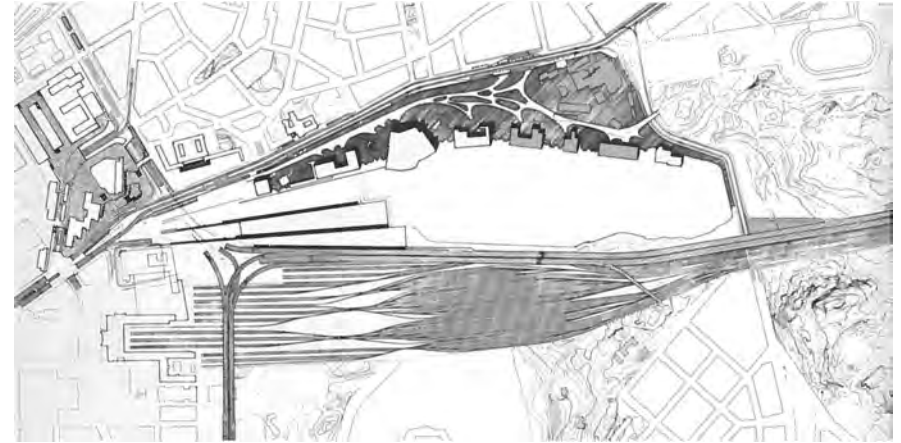
SUN PROTECTED OUTDOOR SPACES

SEA BREEZE



Schnitt durch die Haupthalle / La coupe sur la grande salle / Section through main hall

(Figs: 36 & 37) Alvar Aalto's Sports and Concert Center, Vogelweidplatz, Vienna 1953. A transposition of Bruno Taut's "city crown" concept into a large stadium for 25,000 people covered by a copper standing seam roof, supported by a catenary wire-cable, sub-structure. About ten orthogonal sports halls of various sizes, one of which is gathered into an irregular pattern about this form which serves as a unifying 'geological' figure.

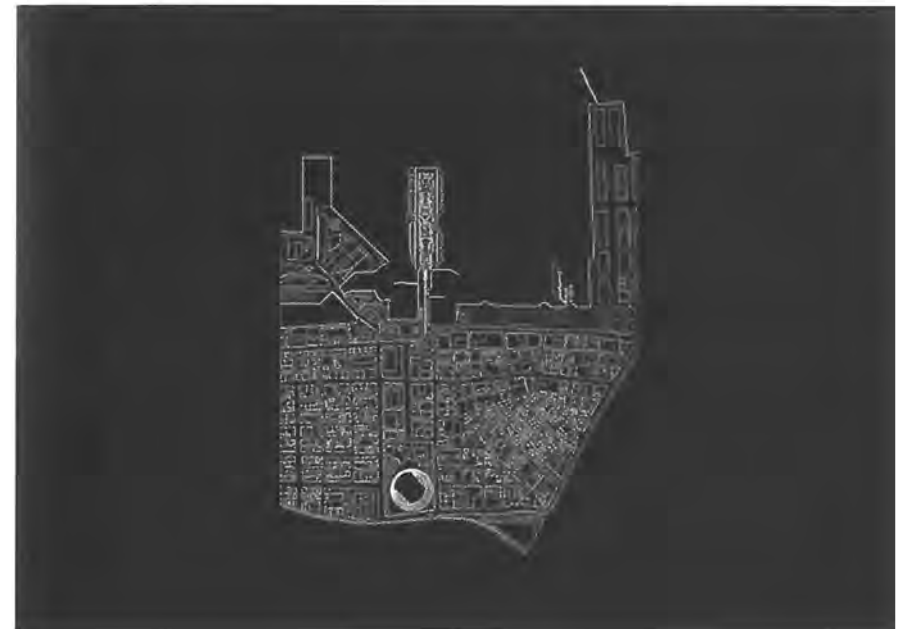
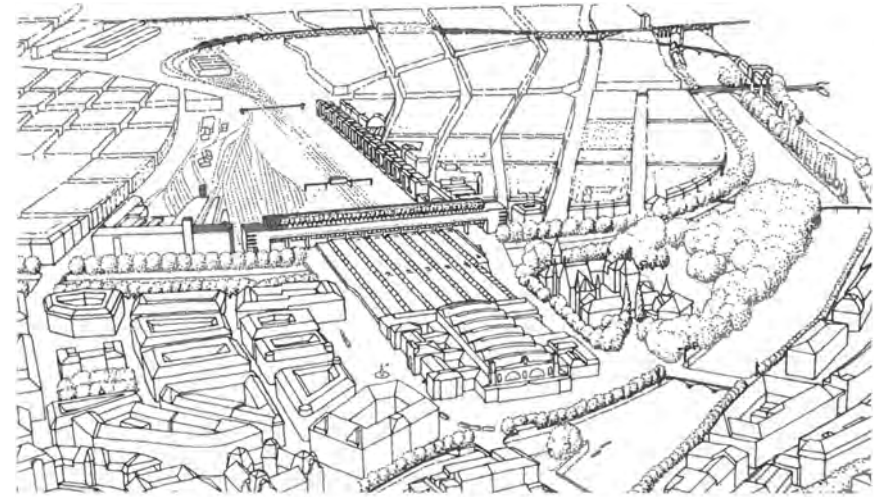


(Figs: 38 & 39) Alvar Aalto's proposal for new Helsinki City Center (1962). This project is structured about the introduction of an auto route into the center of Helsinki on the site of the existing rail yards entering into the main railway terminal. The new freeway is conceived as a dynamic form capable of transforming the topography of the Mannerheimintie area into three fan-shaped terraces with parking for 4,000 cars beneath. The opposing bank of the Toolo Lake is reserved for a continuous chain of cultural facilities (opera house, museum, library) of which only the Finlandia concert hall will eventually be built.

However, no work of Gregotti Associati demonstrates more dramatically the idea of a territorial architecture than their proposal for 3,500 housing units accommodated in eight bridge housing blocks projected across a valley in Cefalu, near Palermo in 1933.

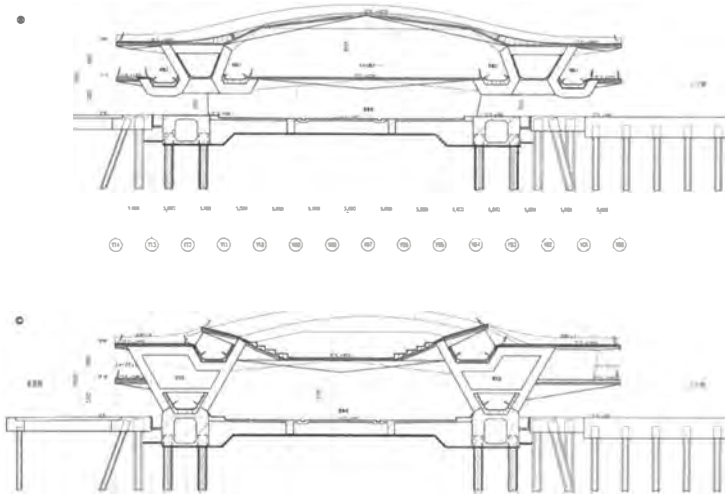
One may cite other instances in which pragmatically hybrid megaforms have either been applied to or projected for existing urban fabric as in a 1978 proposal for the main rail terminus in Zurich, as designed by Mario Botta and Luigi Snozzi, where the covered platforms of the existing terminals are curtailed by a bridge to be built over the tracks on the line of the buried Sihl River which is a tributary of the Limmat (Fig: 40). A comparable mixed-use megaform in the form of a viaduct block housing a new administrative / cultural center would be projected by the same architects for Perugia in 1974.

The Canadian architect Arthur Erickson was also committed to the idea of the territorial megaform as a catalytic intervention irrespective of whether this be applied to existing urban fabric as in the case of his 1983 Robson Square development inserted in the deteriorating downtown of Vancouver, British Columbia or alternatively, it be projected in form of a self-contained university on virgin territory as in his Simon Fraser University campus of 1965. Robson Square Vancouver is a hybrid program combining in one continuous spiral development law courts, a town hall and a public park. Of more recent date one may cite the Yokohama Ferry Terminal realized to the designs of Foreign Office Architects in 2002. (Figs: 41 - 43). Here again one encounters a hybrid program that in addition to serving as a ferry terminal also serves as a promenade-pier-cum-public park and houses within its cavernous interior a



(Fig: 40) Mario Botta and Luigi Snozzi's project for the expansion of the nineteenth century rail terminal in Zurich, Switzerland (1978). *Aerial Perspective.*

(Fig: 41) Alejandro Zaero Polo and Farshid Mousavi (Foreign Office Architects) Yokohama Ferry Terminal, Japan (2002). *Site Plan.*

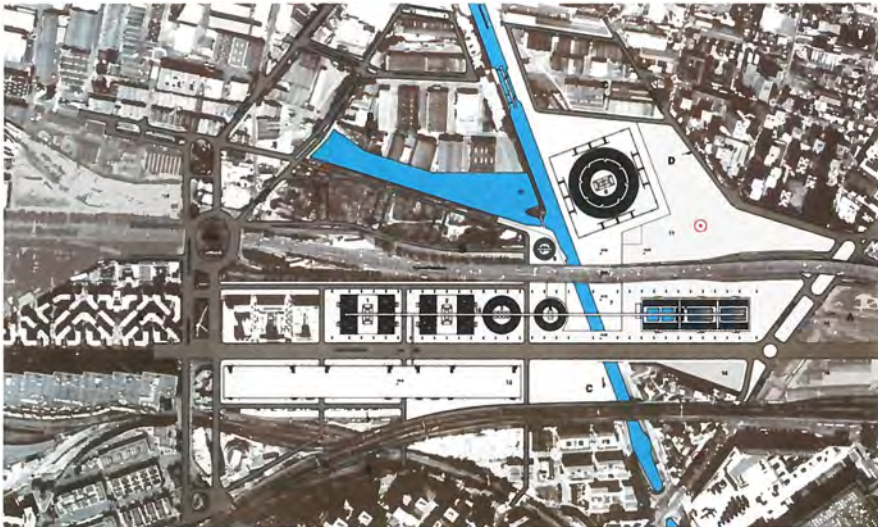


(Figs: 42 - 43) Alejandro Zaero Polo and Farshid Mousavi (Foreign Office Architects) Yokohama Ferry Terminal, Japan (2002) this terminal is a quintessentially hybrid megaform comprising, in addition to its basic terminal facilities, a promenade-pier and public park on top of a large reception space and auditorium. While this is an imminent demonstration of parametric method, the framed structure sustaining the terminal is transformed in section while maintaining its axial order and geometrical integrity.

large auditorium. Around the same, as an unrealized project, we may recognise as a megaform the Sports Boulevard, designed by the Brazilian architect Paulo Mendes da Rocha, as part of the unsuccessful Paris bid for the 2012 Olympics (Figs: 44 & 45).

Steven Holl has repeatedly touched on similar preoccupations first in the megaforms that he projected at the scale of the American continent and then more practically in his residential work in the Far East. I have in mind in particular the various integrated residential enclaves that he designed for Japan, in particular his Fukuoka housing of 1992 and, more recently, his so-called hybrid building in Beijing of 2005-2010 (Fig: 33), which aside from a number of built-in civic amenities—a cinema, a swimming pool, a gymnasium, etc. —accommodates 2,500 people in eight linked apartment towers. More recently, Holl has realized that which he has had the temerity to call a horizontal skyscraper. This is in effect a hybrid building wherein different kinds of uses are accommodated in a single structure comprising a hotel, offices, condominiums, rental offices, recreation spaces, cafeteria, etc. This megaform is raised above the ground as a gently undulating cantilevered suspension structure, its status, as a landmark, being only too evident when set against the mountains of the rear of the city of Shenzhen. (Figs: 34 & 35) Although the elevation of the building makes it appear unduly monumental, its spread-eagled configuration enables it to function as a generic civic program with diverse amenities ranging from a park to civic amenities of various genres particularly incorporated within the undulating surface of the park.

(Figs: 44 & 45) Paulo Mendez da Rocha Sports Boulevard proposal for the Paris Olympiade, Paris, France (2008). This project comprises an irregular topographic earthwork integrated into an irregular site bounded by the Boulevard Peripherique and the Boulevard MacDonald intercepted by the Saint Denis canal. A variety of stadia and sports halls, ranging from 25,000 to 7,000 seating capacities, were to have been superimposed on this platform. The public arenas adjacent to the event halls were to have been equipped with giant television screens, in order to generate a sense of unity between the different arenas and to create a festive, civic mood at a territorial scale.



(Fig: 46) Weiss/Manfredi, Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle (2005). Here, as in other examples of landscape megaforms, the total project is inextricably integrated within the pre-existing infrastructural components.

We return to Aalto at this juncture not only for the alpine profile of the stadium with its catenary roof, such as he projected for the Vogelweidplatz in Vienna in 1953 (Figs: 36 & 37) but also for the road and rail waterscape that he designed in 1965 for the Tulo area in the centre of Helsinki. (Figs: 38 & 39) Herein, the auto routes entering and crossing the city are treated as elements of a giant plastic relief set into the ground at a vast scale. A comparable strategy may be said to obtain with the Weiss / Manfredi Olympic Sculpture Park realized in Seattle, in 2005, ingeniously woven into the existing overlapping rail and auto route infrastructure that skirts the edge of the ocean front. (Fig: 41). Conceived as an artificial topography and as a landform, one which totally transforms the surface of the ground to create a public domain and a landmark within the space-endlessness of the megalopolis.

One thinks at this juncture of the Igualada Cemetery by Carme Pinos and Enric Miralles of 1994 but one could by a similar token cite many other examples of what has become to be known as landscape-urbanism, in which a landform plays a decisive role in the creation of a perceivable place. What should we make of the seemingly spontaneous emergence of the megaform in the history of twentieth century architecture and to what extent, given the subsequent proliferation of motopia, may this genre still be viable as a cultural stratagem for mediating the “non-place, urban realm” of contemporary urbanization? The wide scope of this composite question may perhaps be most effectively addressed in the form of provisional manifesto:

1) Since 1960, when the French geographer Jean Gottman first coined the term Megalopolis, automotive regional urbanization has become the universal land settlement pattern of late capitalism. Stimulated by the mass ownership of automobile megalopoli are

coming into being all over the world today, accommodating populations of around 20 million apiece in the developing world to some 5 million in a number of major North American conurbations. With regard to this last, figure 1 may note that some 3 million acres of agricultural land are lost each year in the US through suburbanization, with little or no provision for public transport. The net effect is the proliferation of the “non-place, urban realm” as celebrated by Melvin Webber in his book *Explorations in Urban Structures*, of 1964. One might note in passing that as a corollary to this “motopian” dispersal, the world now consumes in six weeks the amount of gasoline that it burnt in a single year in the 1950’s.

2) Under these circumstances, the stratagem of the time honored master plan as an instrument of urban design would seem to be untenable, particularly given the relatively limited resources available for public intervention at a civic scale, along with the volatile rate of spontaneous growth and change in most urban areas. While master plans are surely still viable with regard to infrastructural organization and investment, in terms of auto routes, rail networks, sewage lines and the distribution of water, energy and information, they have precious little purchase today on the organization and consolidation of urban form.

3) The de facto emergence of megalopolitan patterns of land settlement present us with two alternative strategies as far as future urban development is concerned: a) the current “ad-hoc” proliferation of ill-related, relatively isolated, free-standing objects, which invariably go to make up the ‘non-place’ agglomeration of the contemporary urban environment; or b) the place-creating counter-thesis of the megaform, integrated into a site as a discontinuous exception to the otherwise undifferentiated urban cacophony.

4) It should be clear from the wide range of megaforms cited in the forgoing that a megaform may come into being at quite different scales and thereby assume a distinctly different place-creating potential depending, not only on the scale but also on the programmatic complexity of the form in each case. Thus, a megaform may vary from being an organic residential continuity, as in the case of Alvar Aalto's Baker Dorm on the edge of the MIT campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the relatively extensive, self-continued, civic complex of Arthus Erickson's Robson Square, where stacked law courts are combined with a municipal, offices and a stepped public park thereby establishing a new space of public appearance in the downtown of Vancouver.

5) A seminal attribute of the megaform is its quintessential horizontality, which is integrated as much as possible with the site on which it sits. At times this topographic character may be so dominant as to become a virtual landscape in itself as in the case of the Igualada Cemetery, built near Barcelona to the designs of Enric Miralles and Carme Pinos in 1992, or the Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle (2006) as designed by Michael Manfredi and Marion Weiss.

6) By definition a megaform is restricted in its extent. It may thus be realized by the society, in a limited time period, as a one-off urban intervention capable of affording a programmatically different experience within the seemingly infinite, space-endlessness of the contemporary megalopolis. It may thus be used to mediate the condition long ago satirized by Gertrude Stein with her ironic aphorism that "there is no more there, there".

7) As with the nineteenth century arcade, the megaform has the capacity of providing a public domain in what is otherwise a totally

privatized, processal, and largely placeless environment. One may note in this regard how a megaform may possess a catalytic potential in that as in the case of the large shopping mall running down the length of the building Illa Block, built in Barcelona in 1992, which patently served to maintain the existing shopping frontage of Avenida Diagonal.

8) Within the space-endlessness of the megalopolis, a megaform may also serve as a kind of a landmark feature, like a geological outcrop, as in the case of Hans Poelzig's House of Friendship, projected for Istanbul in 1917.

9) It would seem that certain contemporary building programs readily lend themselves to being accommodated as megaforms. I have in mind such types as universities, air terminals, railway stations, shopping centers, cemeteries, hospitals, sports facilities and convention centers, etc.

10) While megaforms would appear to be most readily applicable to the megalopolitan domains, they may also be integrated into traditional urban fabric as in the case of, say, Rockefeller Center in New York. Clearly mass housing may also be handled as a megaform as per Le Corbusier's canonical Plan Obus, projected for Algiers in 1930, although there are other examples where mass housing has been realized in the form of large scale perimeter blocks.