A BRIDGE THAT TURNED INTO A PIER.
Late Epilogue to Karel Prager′s Vision of Prague′s Košíře District (1975) [1]

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Abstract: ***Karel Prager's project of the experimental housing development in Košíře (1975) was doomed to be an ultimate failure from the beginning. As a specific variation of Yona Friedman's vision of the "city above the city", it was supposed to hover above the town, exploiting inaccessible or built-up terrain, as well as avoiding a costly and painful redevelopment. It promised to be just a small sample of a universal solution for overpopulated cities, as well as a universal construction set for any unforeseen requirements of the future populations. For these purposes, the simple frame utilised the bridge-system, and also relied on the logic of the labyrinth. Yet in doing so, however unintentionally, it both turned the existing city into a second-rate underworld and imposed on its inhabitants a most determinative system of limited variations, trading the burden of architectural responsibility for the apparent freedom of combinatorics. The essay analyses both the key structural elements of the superstructure – the bridge, the labyrinth, the environmental aspect – and the logic of the megastructural movement which presents a proper context for Prager's vision.***

Keywords: ***architecture; urbanism; bridge; megastructure; superstructure; Situationist International; Prager; Friedman; Maki***

Karel Prager's unrealised design of the monumental superstructure for Prague's district Košíře (1975) oscillates between the architecture of the bridge and the architecture of the pier. Prager's vision is born as a bridge: its longest axis spans the valley between the streets Vrchlického and U Šalamounky, it hovers above

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the garden colony Na Popelce and effectively polarises the continuous hillsides into the opposite banks of a traversed canyon. Yet it matures as a coastal pier, for it never reaches those banks. These only serve as a meta-physical embedment of the building's magnificent spacing, whose devil ingeniously hides in the details. In the name of reconciliation – of an unforeseen future with an irredeemable past, of children's wishes with the sins of their fathers – it turns its inhabitants into detached daydreamers, ensuring that they would never have to face any of the obstacles of the city's mortality.

The Bridge

It is true that Prager did not design the edifice as a bridge per se, but utilised its handy form to exploit any sort of wild, built-up, or otherwise inaccessible terrain, whether natural or urban.[2] Once applied, however, this elementary and highly performative architectural solution could not but take over the project's best intentions and unwittingly yet adamantly implement its own insidious logic: the one of a bypass and space-time alienation.

Let us bring to mind two essays that draw on the bridge as a structural metaphor of human dividing and ruling thought: Georg Simmel's *Die Brücke und das Tor* (1909, 1957) and Martin Heidegger's *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken* (1951, 2000). These texts, of course, differ in many respects; nevertheless, they both conceive a bridge as a quasi-natural structure that essentially corresponds to a formative experience of space. To put it with utmost brevity, the idea of a bridge (as well as that of a threshold, laid by an anxious savage yet stepped over by a Promethean architect), stems from the initial need to articulate and pacify an originally chaotic environment. The bridge stands against the resistance of nature and her unleashed elements, but as a result it does much more than just traverse obstacles. The bridge cultivates the land without regard to momentary human necessities, it transforms earlier needs – to travel, to trade, to conquer, to flee – into passive and timeless options, and informs the landscape with an analytical framework of a higher unity, charging otherwise indifferent slopes, ravines, or abysses (whether of the sky or of the land) as discontinuous but bridgeable sides that belong together. That is the major trick a bridge plays on nature; it subordinates the landscape to the analytical

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2 As did the building of the Federal Assembly (1973). The very same design was applied by Giorgi Chakhava for the building of the Ministry of Highway Construction in Tbilisi, Georgia (1975).

interface and simultaneously fits itself into the newly born quasi-natural unity, creating a neutral conjunction within the established landscape grammar. But the bridge not only effectively prescribes all the possible compound or complex performatives; it embraces the landscape's innocent arrangement and turns it into only seemingly natural, but in fact already utilitarian architecture.

Not without consequences. A bridge knows neither direction nor destination, and except for suicidal or romantic souls, no one really dwells there, not even Heidegger, who just contemplates the form of a bridge from the nearby holistic shores. Without the ground under our feet and with the sky still too high, one finds themselves almost out of place; a bridge bonds only for a price of itself being a no-man's land. And it is precisely at this point where both of the aforementioned essays – without notice – encounter a problem that undermines Prager's project as well: a bridge can well synthesise the sides, reconcile the human space, and stabilise its entropy. But what is going on under the bridge?

The Megastructures

It is by no accident that the tendency that directly inspired Prager's project, the so-called megastructural movement of the 1960s, significantly utilised the bridge form. Megastructures take the shape of intercontinental bridges in the work of Yona Friedman, they develop into the habitable bridges found in the designs of Arato Isozaki, bridges constitute a key component in the iconic (albeit never built, nothing truly exceptional in the case of megastructures) Tokyo Bay (1960) of Kenzo Tange. New York's George Washington Bridge, together with the adjacent Nervi's terminal (1927, 1965–6), meets the criteria of a megastructure as well. In Czechoslovakia, with some understandable delay, the "bridge-type skeletal structure" (Kozák 1958, 1991: 378–379; Rojík – Nováčková – Šimek – Voves – Krchov 1980: 344–347) presented a key feature of the plan for multi-purpose constructions, leading directly to Prager's design for Košíře or to his vision for a similar extension of Prague's Main Station. Even the attempts to put this immensely influential movement into the historical context referred to bridges: to Ponte Vecchio in Florence, to the old London Bridge, or to Le Corbusier's plans for Algier (1931), whose monumental longitudinal highway served both as a barrier and as a habitable bridge above the city (not to mention the central bridge connecting the town and the harbour).

These structures fascinated architects with their spontaneous yet highly functional versatility, with their multilayered character that enabled a symbiotic

coexistence of diverse activities and, last but not least, with the possibility to extend or rearrange the existing order whenever the future called for a revision. The inhabited bridges seemed to casually possess something that the megastructuralists had to laboriously invent for themselves: as *megastructures*, they were independent enough to be applicable as organised units that could be easily plugged in or out. Being able to cross rivers as well as cities, they could leave all the historical mess behind without the painful and costly destruction phase of redevelopment. As *metastructures*, they erased the difference between paths, buildings, and blocks, being themselves the infrastructure of the complex city life. And as *superstructures*, they promised to solve the pressing housing problem, providing the affordable skeletons for thousands of replaceable and adjustable units that could flexibly and cheaply react to the unpredictable needs of the inhabitants. Seen in this light, the megastructuralists wanted to reform cities once and for all, not far from the utopian spirit of the times. No longer did a building have to face the future. Megastructuralists made it a problem of the architectural combinatorics.

Of course that the bridge was not the only point of departure for megastructuralists or Metabolists; Moshe Safdie's Habitat (1967) took inspiration in Italian terrace towns, Guy Desberats' Man The Producer (1967) applied a crystal principle, Archigram's Plug-In City (1961–64) grew like a coral, to name just a few distinct examples. Yet all of these projects integrated the bridge-system as an inevitable nervous system of their sophisticated organisms.

The analytico-synthetic, even dialectic logic of the bridge proved necessary if only to connect the megastructure to the existing network. Again, it is not by accident that one of the other acknowledged predecessors of the megastructural movement was the concept of Milan Central Station (1912) by Antonio Sant'Elia. Megastructures could and did serve as specific urban transformers, converting the manifold of a city's currents, the multilayered traffic junctions or intersections, and changing the different speeds of airplanes, cars, or trains to a common user's denominator. The ability to filter and process a city's activity without standing in its way was a key feature of the whole series of projects from the late 1950s to the early 1970s; one of the most illustrative and illustrious examples is the unique physical manifesto of the megastructural movement, the 1967 International and Universal Exposition (EXPO 67) in Montreal, which demonstrated how the megastructural city could possibly look like. To put it simply: as a highly functional motherboard. And it is a most telling fact that should we look for an actual megastructure that would resemble the still rather

utopian Montreal exhibition, we would find one in the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport complex in Texas (George F. Hellmuth, Gyo Obata, George E. Kassabaum, 1966).

More importantly, the administration and organisation of the manifold of energies, signals, and motions constituted an integral dynamics of the megastructures themselves. Let us not forget that one of the founding ideas for developing megastructures was the suggestion that a single structure, at least its interior dispositions, should be variable enough to meet the diverse requirements of the users, as well as flexible enough to be able to embrace unexpected "things to come". For these purposes, the integrated bridge-system enabled one to implement a simple, yet most effective bypass system that could synchronise a whole array of motions and motivations under one roof.

Not without consequences. Such an idea of a supporting, internally diversified frame that could carry and bear the whims of the times seems simple enough, even generous. But in the end, it turns a megastructure into a peculiar restrictive environment, much closer to an enclosed and claustrophobic landscape than to a traditional building, whose rigid microcosm is always part of the bigger world.

The Landscape

To clarify this analogy, so powerful in Prager's project, we have to take a small step back and shed some light on the conceptual beginnings of the megastructural movement. In 1964, Fukimiho Maki defined a megastructure as "a large frame in which all the functions of a city or part of a city are housed. It has been made possible by present-day technology. In a sense, it is a human-made feature of the landscape. It is like the great hill on which Italian towns were built. Inherent in the megastructure concept, along with a certain static nature, is the suggestion that many and diverse functions may be beneficially concentrated in one place. A large frame implies some utility in combination and concentration of functions" (Maki 2008: 47).

According to Ralph Wilcoxen, a megastructure was "1) constructed of modular units; 2) capable of great or even 'unlimited' extension; 3) a structural framework onto which smaller structural units (for example, rooms, houses, or small buildings of other sorts) can be built – or even 'plugged-in' or 'clipped-on' after having been prefabricated elsewhere; 4) a structural framework expected to have a useful life much longer than that of the smaller units which it might support" (Wilcoxen 1968: 2).

Nicolaas John Habraken, another influential theorist of the concept, formulated a simple but very important condition. The support structures, quite congeneric with the megastructures, are all constructions "which contain individual dwellings as a bookcase contains books, which can be removed and replaced separately; constructions which take over the task of the ground, which provide building ground up in the air, and are permanent like streets. (...) Every construction, enabling us to build independent dwellings which do not stand on the ground, is a support structure" (Habraken 1962, 1972: 59).

Just to say in advance, Prager's project of the experimental housing development in Košíře explicitly meets all of these conditions, from the attempt to come up with a double architectonic and urban solution, to the emphasis on multi-generational and social interconnectedness, to the suggestion of the personal and creative engagement of the individual users, who were supposed to administer the finalisation of the unspecified interior dispositions in the pre-set skeleton.[3]

Let us keep Prager aside for a little longer. It seems that Maki's definition of a megastructure establishes an ambiguous claim to the union of architecture with the landscape, a relation that far exceeds the usual requirement of architecture being merely in harmony with the environment. Maki himself does not clarify this relation, and his reference to Italian terraced towns or Tango's *Tokio Bay* does not help much, either. We can, however, reconstruct his dualistic argument of urban landscape from the context of his later considerations (Maki 2008: 68–79, 92–94, 118–139). On the one hand, the landscape represents a simple metaphor of the megastructure, into which smaller units are placed and mounted as the houses in(to) the Italian highlands are. Using such a metaphor, Maki still treats megastructures as a human intervention, which, despite all compatibility, is anti-thetic to nature. On the other hand, however, a megastructure does not merely follow and rationalise nature with architectural grammar; it even represents the landscape itself, an architectural a priori of a sort, a substitute for pristine nature.

This quasi-natural quality is reflected not only in Maki's, but in Habraken's or Friedman's thoughts as well, including Prager's project as the (relatively) modest implementation of Friedman's bold vision of the "city above the city", which, by the way, carries a hint of architectural alienation already in its name

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[3] See the Karel Prager's project documentation *Experimentální bytová výstavby v Praze* (June 1973) or *Experimentální bytová výstavba v Praze-Košířích* (September 1975). We also refer to the text *Polyfunkční urbanistické struktury,* which we, however, possessed only as a typescript. For additional references, see the bibliography at the end of the essay.

(Friedman 1960, 1970, 2001). In fact, the quasi-natural aspect is absolutely crucial for understanding the megastructures and their ultimate despotism. A megastructure, at least in the context of the aforementioned authors, is not so much a completed building as it is an ideal platform for the restricted human territorialisation of Euclidean space, an urban framework that works as a quasi-natural given fact, as a departure point for the individual creativity or as a perspective that also pretends not to be our invention. It is an environment for building and rebuilding rather than just *a* building.

In this regard, a megastructure as a hybrid of a house and a city block is literally earthbound, and looks up at the "city above the city" as at the proper fulfilment of its own potential. Only the frame that creates its own space in the conquered air is truly unlimited by the obstacles and their variables that have no logical place in the algorithm of a megastructure. A megastructure and its perspective skeleton is not only able to expand in all directions after the founding architectural big bang; it actually has to expand until it metabolises the last remains of the inefficient cities that are simply incompatible with its performance. Such a transformative expansion no longer decreases (as the chaotic growth of the traditional cities), but increases entropy, establishing the most rational environment there could be: one coordinated cosmos of all possible things within the universal physical laws.

Yet despite such a potential for infinite expansion and its apparent openness towards the unanticipated, the generic megastructural cosmos remains somewhat claustrophobic. For the whole system to work, the replicating frame and its algorithm have to protect the order from anything that would be truly other; in the name of the sustainable compatible future, it does not enable, but prevents the attacks of the unexpected. The celebrated degree of freedom masked a high level of determinism, way more despotic than the hated ad hoc architectural development that supposedly burdened future generations with unjust obligations. The megastructural landscape finally lacks the endangering and enriching transcendence of the horizon – it cannot have any real suburbs, for example – and remains enclosed in itself. Its physical boundaries are always its absolute discursive limits. The megastructures can either contract into fortified isolated islands, or merge into one omnipresent megastructure, as the city above the city which, in the end, is nothing else than one large, complex, four-dimensional metabridge linking heterogeneous places as well as times. But the fundamental unit of such a system is neither a metre nor an hour, not even a man. It is a situation.

The Labyrinth

To elucidate such a strange assertion, we have to make one last detour, to one of the manifestos of the Situationist International, Guy Debord's *Report on the Situation of the Situation and on the Terms of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency* (1957). Its connection with the megastructural movement is not so anachronic as it may seem at first glance. Not only did situationist ideas directly influence one of the most genuine and radical megastructural project, Constant Nieuwenhuys' New Babylon (1959–74); the manifesto formulated suggestions that most of the designs may not have dared to embody, but that nevertheless help to understand megastructures in a way they themselves do not allow.

Consider the following passages: "We must try to construct situations, i.e., collective environments, ensembles of impressions determining the quality of a moment. [...] The situation is thus made to be lived by its constructors. The role of the 'public', if not passive at least a walk-on, must ever diminish, while the share of those who cannot be called actors but, in a new meaning of the term, 'livers', will increase. [...] There is our entire program, which is essentially ephemeral. Our situations will be without a future; they will be places where people are constantly coming and going. [...] Situationist theory resolutely asserts a noncontinuous conception of life. The idea of consistency must be transferred from the perspective of the whole of a life – where it is a reactionary mystification founded on the belief in an immortal soul and, in the last analysis, on the division of labor – to the viewpoint of moments isolated from life, and of the construction of each moment by a unitary use of situationist means. [...] The situationist attitude consists in counting on time's swift passing, unlike aesthetic processes which aim at the fixing of emotion. The situationist challenge to the passage of emotions and of time will be its wager on always gaining ground on change, on always going further in play and in the multiplication of moving periods. [...] In each of its experimental cities, unitary urbanism will work through a certain number of force fields, which we can temporarily designate by the standard expression district. Each district will be able to lead to a precise harmony, broken off from neighbouring harmonies; or rather will be able to play on a maximum breaking up of internal harmony. Secondly, unitary urbanism is dynamic, i.e., in close touch with styles of behaviour. The most reduced element of unitary urbanism is not the house but the architectural complex, which is the union of all the factors conditioning an environment, or

a sequence of environments colliding at the scale of the constructed situation. Spatial development must take the affective realities that the experimental city will determine into account" (McDonough 2002: 44–49).

The active role of the public, temporary settings of life, ephemeral situations, games, dynamic urbanism... However lunatic an impression this manifesto may give, as far as the much sober tone of the megastructural theorists is concerned, it almost suspiciously well reflects the highest ambitions and, at the same time, limits of the megastructures, which we can on this occasion designate without any exaggeration as the architecture of tomorrow or even as the architecture of the wish.[4]

Let us focus first on tomorrow. Both Habraken and Friedman are deliberately vague in their visions. If both of them think in terms of supporting skeletons, they have no other choice than to be somewhat reluctant to deliver specific solutions, for if one of the key ambitions of a megastructure is to incorporate the wishes of the future inhabitants, which are always supposed to be other than ours, then even our imagination would be violating their individuality. The expected tomorrow is an absolute measure.

And one of a complicated nature. While a classical building or a city block can undergo reconstruction, redesign, or redevelopment while still remembering all of these changes without losing the sight of its origin, megastructure can, as a rule, regroup without leaving a trace of the past. While the today of a megastructure is always just a provisional leasehold on time, the anticipated tomorrow as the proper fulfilment of its purpose resets any previous arrangement, as a new beginning, which, nevertheless, is itself just another temporary setting. Such a tomorrow imprints the megastructure's chronicles as the permanent return of presence, and expropriates any today for the benefit of the future oblivion. Taking into account that the quasi-natural skeleton itself remains unchanged while the habitat is permanently reorganised and its time is overwritten, a megastructure presents a very hollow environment that does not have a past. Or rather: no past or historicity can be attributed to it, because it cannot hold memories and keep secrets.[5]

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4 Not an unusual term in the 1960s, considering the influential magazine *Architecture d'aujourd'hui* or Michel Ragon's *Où vivrons-nous demain?* (1963).

5 By the way, although we do not want to psychologise Maki's earlier quoted reflections, it is worth noting that his personal memories of Tokyo portray a city where its own inhabitants were used to waking up as strangers, simply because it developed and changed so fast, no longer able to read their own memories off the streets and walls (Maki 2008: 82–89).

Unlike obsolete cities or outdated buildings, against which the megastructurists rebelled, a megastructure does not age, not because of its ability to adapt, but because time cannot survive in it. If the Japanese Metabolists, Friedman, or Prager considered the lifespan of a megastructure in terms of centuries, then all of them came to no surprising conclusion that one of the many advantages of a megastructure is that it can be easily removed. The city above the city can disappear without a trace, as the quasi-natural skeleton of a future whose tomorrow ceased to be relevant.

What about the wish? So far we have reflected on only the common or communal qualities of the megastructures. However, if tomorrow could be still imagined to be readily welcomed jointly by all, the situation is much more complicated on the level of individual will. For what is exactly meant by the omnipresent "unexpected future" that the megastructures were charged to encompass? At the most radical level that interests us here (because it exposes megastructures better than more or less compromised solutions), the future does not wait in the distance in the form of some general ideas of housing, but happens whenever somebody has a wish that the architecture is bound to fulfil. A megastructure – not far from the situationist fantasies – should be in fact not so much a machine for the living as a machine for situations, reflecting the caprices and fancies of every single occupant. Should a megastructure fail to accomplish this impossible task, as it naturally did by virtually assuming a hypothetical collective will, then it is fair to ask what is the difference between obeying the dominant will of the living and adapting to the heritage of the dead.

It is truly telling that one of the most visionary and radical megastructures was a huge playground. The Fun Palace (Cedric Price – Joan Littlewood, 1964) was supposed to be as interactive as possible, and, in a very situationist way, invited the visitors to "choose what you want to do – or watch someone else doing it. Learn how to handle tools, paint, babies, machinery, or just listen to your favourite tune. Dance, talk or be lifted up to where you can see how other people make things work. Sit out over space with a drink and tune in to what's happening elsewhere in the city. Try starting a riot or beginning a painting – or just lie back and stare at the sky". With a quite significant postscript: "We are building a short-term plaything in which all of us can realise the possibilities and delights that a 20th Century city environment owes us. It must last no longer than we need it" (Cedric – Littlewood 1964).

As a true megastructure, The Fun Palace represented a city that could simply disappear once it started to be outdated or boring. Its anticipated short

lifespan – around a decade – only concisely mirrored and exposed the true character of the duration of megastructures; the megastructures could well stand for centuries, but their own oblivious time would constantly disintegrate into singular fleeting situations, into a succession of total disappearance.

Similarly symptomatic is the inconspicuous but very instructive suggestion: "...or watch someone else doing it." Plaything or not, most of the participants could not and would not be creators, but passive spectators, enjoying the building as an imposed scenography that substitutes the will for the emotional abundance. No wonder that the intention to construct a liberating space with "no doors, foyers, queues or commissionaires", which promised that it would be "up to you how to use it", whether you "take a lift, a ramp, [or] an escalator to wherever or whatever looks interesting" (Cedric – Littlewood 1964) finally found its true followers in the contemporary shopping malls.[6]

Such a radical megastructure does not offer a playground, but differentiates itself into a distributive labyrinth; it generates a system of vicinity that makes everything to be within imaginary reach, while it separates events or people into mutually heterogeneous spaces, preventing unfortunate collisions but excluding any disturbing encounters as well. In other words, a labyrinth creates a conglomerate of places that have nothing in common despite the nominal closeness, since every place, every joint and every layer unfolds its own perspective.[7] It is nevertheless important to understand that a space becomes a labyrinth not because it has a complicated structure, but because despite its evident simplicity, typical for the megastructural principle, it is not possible to contemplate such a structure as a whole, at least from the inside. Getting lost in a labyrinth means that every place is both familiar and alienated and every way out always begins anew at the actual coordinates. A labyrinth is infinite, because the algorithm of the escape is myopic (Damisch, 2001: 31–35).

Moreover, as we have seen, the megastructural logic results not only in the atopy of places, but relies on the analogical asynchronicity of times, as well as guaranteeing that the singular situations would not interfere with each other and the expectations would never collide with the memories.

It should not be surprising that in the case of the already mentioned pavilion Man The Producer at Montreal's EXPO 67, "the tetrahedral planning was often

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6 MyZeil Shopping Mall (Studio Fuksas, 2009) is a very good example.

7 A striking similarity with Piranesi's Carceri is most illustrative; these prisons are unbreakable not because of their thick Roman walls, but because any possible way out is encrypted into mutually excluding layers and perspectives. There is no way out, because there is no coherent path through.

confusing, so that minor constructed situations would arise as visitors found themselves on an unexpected exhibit, confronted by the silhouettes of thousands of other visitors in superimposed layers on bridges against the sky, or at the top of an escalator they were sure they had just descended" (Banham 1976: 116).

However anecdotal such en experience may seem, the implication of these constructed situations, superimposed layers, bridges or labyrinthine confusion far exceeds an everyday inconvenience, for what was happening in the pavilion in Montreal was supposed to happen in a megastructure on a daily, annual, or centennial basis. As a matter of fact, Friedman's elaboration of La Ville Spatiale (1958–62), obvious inspiration for Prager's project, was accompanied precisely by such an idea: by the vision of an "interwoven city – a labyrinth".

The Underworld

Now, if a four-dimensional maze is the true pattern of megastructures, the bridge is its main executor. Which also finally brings us back to Prager's project and to the question: what is going on under the bridge?

Prager's vision was naturally much more restrained and realistic than most of the aforementioned radical examples and ideas, yet standing above the city and consisting of the mutually crossed (cut) bridges, it absorbed and utilised all of the discussed characteristics, including the environmental character of a superstructure that would eclipse the original terrain it occupies. It is noteworthy that none of the advocates of the "city above the city", whether Habraken, Friedman, or Prager, bothers much with the serious problem that their dreamy structures would usurp the sky and create a second-rate land of shades. Like Simmel and Heidegger, they simply never posed the question, as if the darkened zone between the pillars and under the arcs was a displaced territory of the analytical thinking itself.

Such a situation can be briefly but aptly summarised as follows: "Finally, there is the space beneath the bridge (the place of secrets, of trolls and tramps, a refuge for wanderers and homeless, a site of crimes, graffiti, the damp smell of water, earth, stone and concrete, of urine, faeces and of hasty sex). Bridges gather to themselves an underside. To construct a bridge is always to construct an underworld. This is a place of stillness and exile, a world of alternative aesthetic possibilities as well as devalued real-estate. It is outside the rush and flow taking place above, over the bridge. There is something about bridges as a whole that is uncanny, but this uncanniness is at its maximum in the spaces

beneath the span. The underside of bridges is both a literal and metaphorical underworld" (Bishop 2008: 35–36).

We could add with Virilio that we all are now living under the air-bridges of air traffic, but the point is that however (relatively) gentle, Prager's vision was meant to be a universal solution for the city, a replacement rather than a considerate extension. The difference is well illustrated by a contrast of a superstructure and a skyscraper: both work with a symbolic shift to the heights, yet while the skyscraper belongs to a tower, rising from the ground and reigning the area, a superstructure of Friedman's or Prager's type simply ignores the land.[8]

Such a megastructure floats in the air like an island, like an enclosed more or less self-sufficient little world whose branches stretch into (potential) infinity, just like the seaside piers, which reach into the ocean only to confirm its boundlessness. Yet it also stands above the land as a bridge that obscures and alienates the transcended territory, leaving behind not only the lesser kinds of buildings, urban blocks, or – inevitably – people, but also all of the inconvenient, burdensome, and mummified historical heritage.

This is the ultimate sin of a megastructure: it simply denies the debts of the past, shakes off the responsibility for history, and forces out all of the too-traumatic necessities of redevelopment, always on the verge with a sacrifice, always pressing on the citizens to choose. A megastructure removes the burden of irretrievable and painful decisions, only to impose a carefree but false freedom of the decisions already made for us.

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8 That would also be a difference between Prager's project and El Lissitzky's Wolkenbügel (1923–25).

◀ Karel Prager, design for the megastructure of Košíře in Prague (1975) (Earch).

▶ Giorgi Chakhava, The Ministry of Highway Construction in Tbilisi, Georgia (1975) (Decorative Art of the CCCP).

▼ Karel Prager, design for the megastructure of Košíře in Prague (1975) (National Museum).
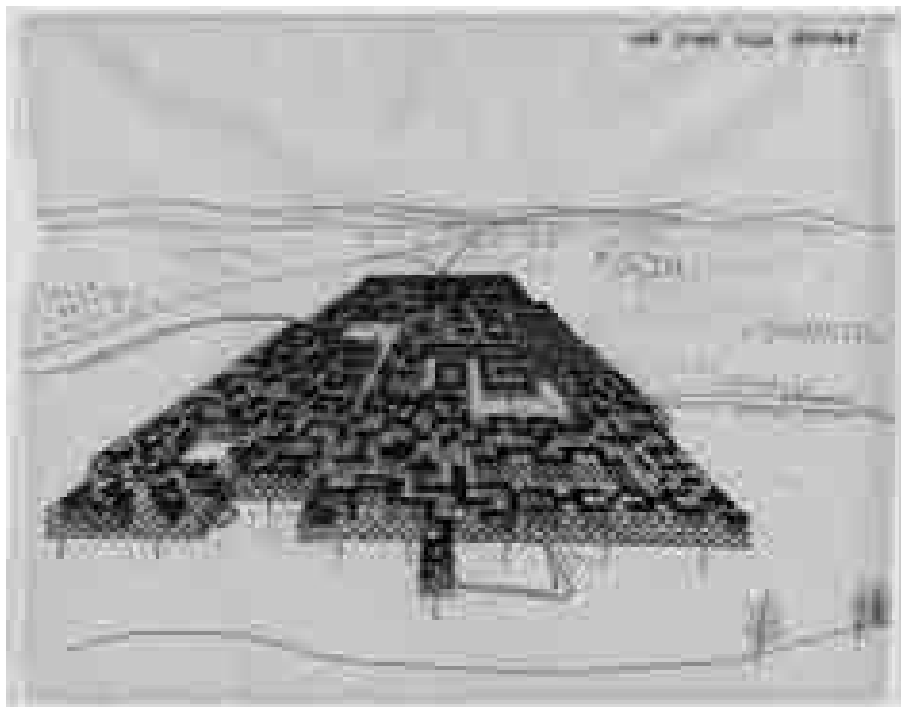
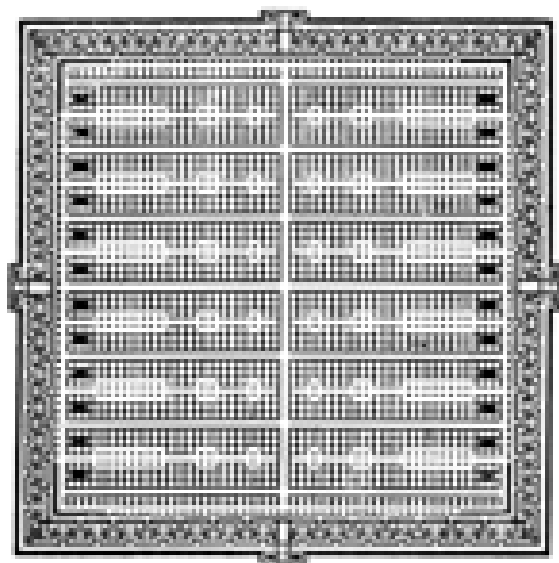Yona Friedman, La Ville Spatiale, (1958–1962) (Pinterest).

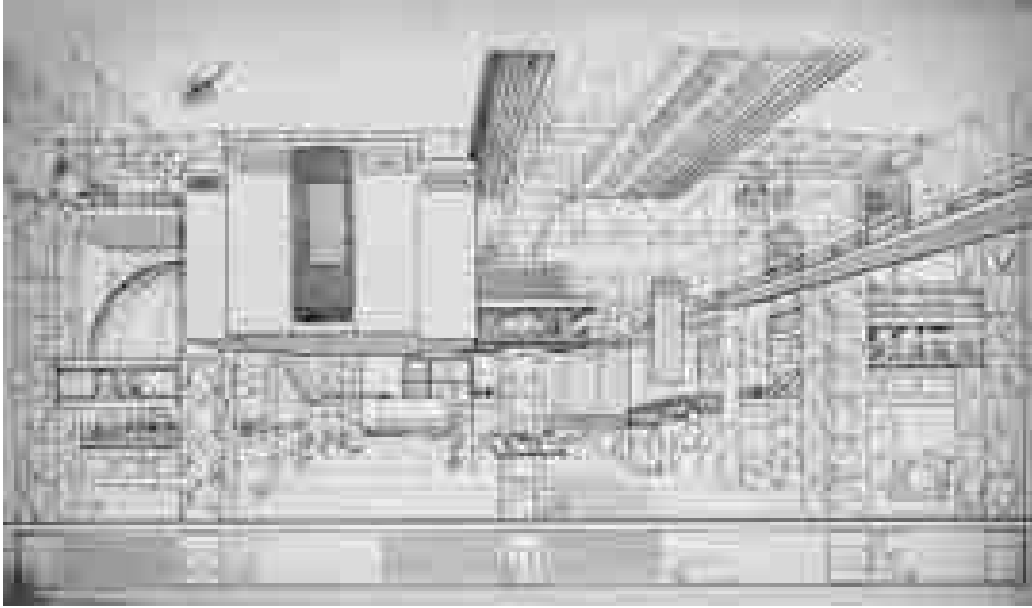Yona Friedman, La Ville Spatiale, (1958–1962) (openarchitectures.com).

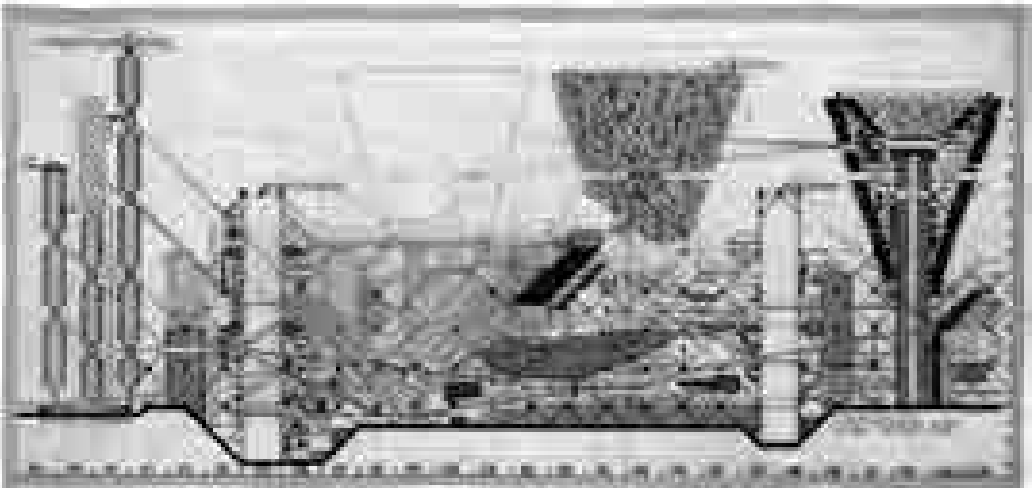▲ Yona Friedman, La Ville Spatiale, (1958–1962) (urbangamestrategies. blogspot.com).
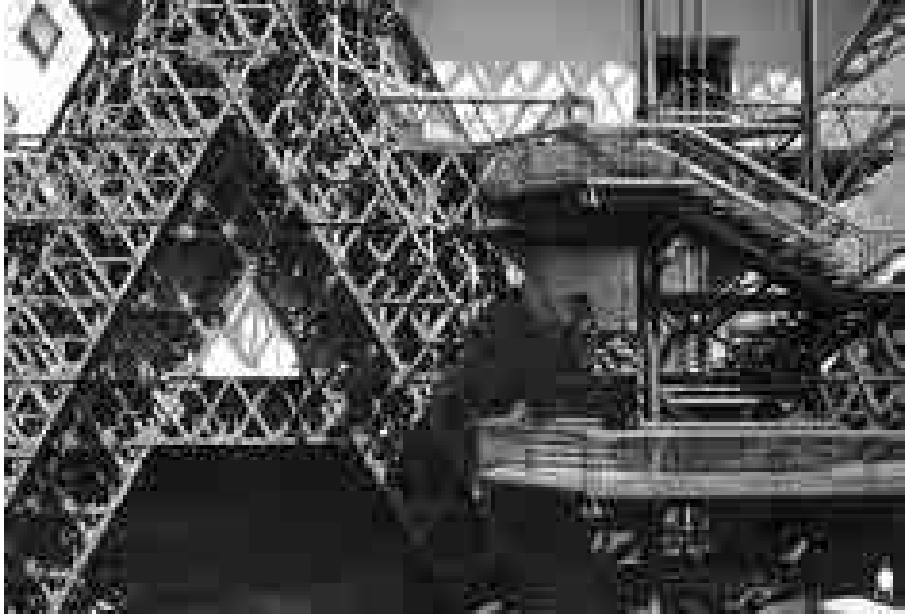
▶ Hawara (archive.is).

Fun Palace (1964) (AdSpazio).

Plug-in City (1964) (ArchDaily.com).

Man The Producer (1967) (World's Fair Community).

Václav Hollar, Old London Bridge (1647) (Historic UK).

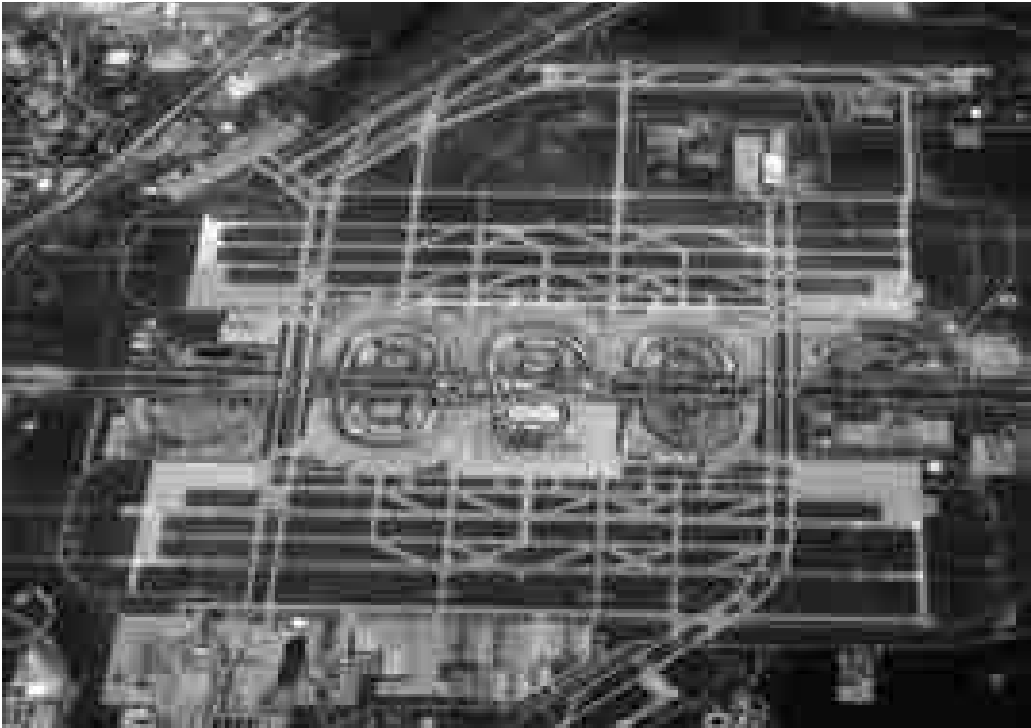Le Corbusier, Algier (detail of the highway bridge) (Pinterest).

Le Corbusier, plan for Algier (1931) (Bildoun).

Dallas – Fort Worth Airport (Airports Worldwide).

Dallas – Fort Worth Airport (Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport).

Kenzo Tange, Tokyo Bay (1960) (Pinterest).

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