

11.329 Social Theory and the City

Session 9: "Structuring Beyond Architecture" – DRAFT, M.Arch Thesis, David M. Foxe

Abstract:

This project investigates ways to conceive and design positive relationships between internal structure and the urban realm; to analyze how the structuring of individual projects can contribute to the whole of communities and cities rather than remaining isolated resolutions of internal concerns. Often *infrastructure* – literally something which is *beyond* the scale of a typical structure – is conceived within the realm of engineering, and tasks of structural design are therefore isolated into discrete, optimized solutions. Drawing on precedents of Technological Modernism at various scales, this project seeks to focus on how individual architectural works can use the process and design of structure to become catalysts beyond their literal limits, to show the importance of **structuring beyond architecture**.

Under this framework structural technology becomes a means for elements of architectural design to become interdependent, and therefore greater than their sum, rather than a collection of independent, unrelated ideas. This investigation thus situates the role of technology within a proposal for architectural quality at the intersection of value structures, physical structures, and urban structures. Architecture is therefore the boundary, the liminal space between the scales of structure within a place, and urban life beyond a project.

Examples cited in thesis proposal:

Unit Block System by Alden Dow

Monsanto House of the Future

Shore (Belt) Parkway, Brooklyn, NY

by Robert Moses/Aymar Embury/Gilmore Clarke

Spodek and other works by Waclaw Zalewski

Milwaukee Art Museum by Santiago Calatrava

Theoretical issues underpinning the content through the course of the discussion:

- Form as a result of metamorphosis vs. rupture
 - o Rupture as a reversal
 - o Resiliency of physical/political power
 - o Designed rupture as a statement
 - Is rupture always a bad thing?
 - Lefebvre: Build social fabric through conflict
 - Coser: Conflict creates stronger bonds than agreement
 - o Possibilities for metamorphosis as organicism

- Biological models, not biological forms
- Physicality of form and memory
- What are the norms? What is the community (that is being impacted by the structures)? Consider (and perhaps contrast) these various other approaches:
 - Christopher Alexander. *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1977. ISBN: 0195019199.
 - William Whyte. *City: Rediscovering the Center*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1988. ISBN: 0385054580.
- The degree to which dissonance is built into design
- Form as a result of process.

Focal Examples:

- Les Halles, Paris
- Markets generally

Suggested Exercise:

Take the theoretical propositions of the piece and order them using no examples. Can the theory hold itself up through these propositions alone? What is the logic that emerges from these propositions?