URBAN BLOCK NETWORKS: CONCEPTUALIZING CHICAGO'S URBAN LANDSCAPE BASED ON INTERPRETATIONS OF ITALO CALVINO'S "INVISIBLE CITIES" AND HIERONYMUS BOSCH'S TRIPTYCH "THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS"

By

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2008

To the city that inspired the American Dream for my Cuban family.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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By

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May 2008

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Major: Architecture

My study explored current ideas of urban planning in Chicago interrelated among the art

forms of literature, painting, and architecture. Urban development in Chicago was examined

through several metaphoric relationships, identified in *Invisible Cities* and *The Garden of Earthly

Delights*. Italo Calvino (Italian writer of the twentieth century) casts the passionate human

experience as protagonist in Marco Polo's tales of "imagined" cities to Kublai Khan. At the

same time, he proposes these disparate cities a singular yet diverse place. The painted panels of

Hieronymus Bosch (an Early Netherlandish painter of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries)

illustrate an idealized Garden of Eden ultimately altered by the passions of man. These ideas

charge the exploration of Chicago as a city of memory, a city of desire, and a city of trade, while

simultaneously generating ideas on the poetic potential of urban development in conjunction

with economic networks.

As Alvar Aalto wrote, "[t]he most difficult problems do not occur in the search for the

form for present-day living, but rather in the attempt to create forms which are based on real

human values." My study shows that the elastic connections between individualism and

collectivism are often lost in the order of contemporary urban planning.

My study reevaluated modes of organizing urban space and proposes conceptual block networks that take into account the current development aspirations established in *Chicago Metropolis 2020*. Using my analysis of Chicago in relation to architecture, consumerism and lifestyle trends, I interpret and criticize its 'Invisible Cities.' I also incorporated Bosch's painting as a visual illustration of the Judeo-Christian idealized 'Paradise' juxtaposed to the waning contemporary Utopian ideology of the cityscape of Chicago, with a focus on progress and the collective human experience.

CHAPTER 1
PROGRAMMATIC DICTATES EXTRACTED FROM INVISIBLE CITIES

Social Identities

Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* consists of 55 small chapters. In each chapter Marco Polo describes to Kublai Khan, the emperor of China, the cities he has visited through his travels. Structurally the accounts of the cities are presented in 11 "thematic groups" according to one dominant line or quality of description, and also in 9 larger divisions, 5 accounts in every division (excluding the first and the last chapters, which have 10 accounts each). Every chapter is framed with dialogues between Khan and Marco that reveal the metaphoric relationships of the cities to the reader. I chose to concentrate on a closer examination of the five different accounts referred to in the text as the "Tradings Cities," because of Chicago's reputation as a center of trade and symbol of progress in the United States.

To begin, Platonic philosophy suggests that a city must be the reflection of the stories told about it. In Trading Cities 2, Calvino writes about the city of Chloe, where "the people who move through the streets are all strangers." To suggest that a city's inhabitants are isolated and have no interconnecting exchanges is to bring into question the existence of city. If a city were to exist without any connections, the very act of refraining from social interactions would create a vulnerability that could render the city susceptible to any salacious forces. Chloe (see Figure 1-1A) is a city that is unaware of itself and has no stories to give it an identity. In *The City of Words*, Alberto Manguel states that "stories can feed our consciousness, which can lead to the faculty of knowing if not 'who' we are at least 'that' we are, an essential awareness that develops through confrontation with another's voice.[1]" If there are no social interactions then there are no experiential qualities that provide context for a city to establish any identity. It is my position

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[1] A. Manguel, *The City of Words* (Toronto, Anansi Press, 2007), p. 10.

that Calvino would find it presumptuous to assume that once a city establishes an identity, whether social or economic, the inhabitants could adapt and change that identity under varying quantitative conditions. In Trading Cities 3, he introduces the city of Eutropia, which continually rotates identities "but always remains the same." The movement of Eutropia is compared to the shifting movement of pieces on a chessboard, and the reader must assume that this is a game in which the inhabitants of Eutropia are participants who cannot escape their own rejected societal identity (see Figure 1-1B). We hold fast to a social identity that we believe lends us a name and a face, but equally fast we move from one definition of society to another, altering again and again that presumed identity.[2] I resolve that there is no merit in assimilating different social identities if the results produce the same tired social networks held within idealized constructions; these are the negative proliferative cycles that spawn homogenous cities.

Connections and Networks

Ersilia in Trading Cities 4 poses the inverse paradigms of Chloe or Eutropia. Calvino writes that "traveling in the territory of Ersilia, you come upon the ruins of the abandoned cities, without the walls which do not last,…spiderwebs of intricate relationships seeking a form." The complex networks of social and economic interactions that constitute Ersilia (see Figure 1-2A) are stronger than the forms which contain them. The forms of a city will work to maximize the potential of our complex webs through social or economic means or they will be abandoned for newer models. Economic life permits us to develop cultures and a multitude of connections, and in *The Nature of Economies* Jane Jacobs poses that the development of such networks is the most meaningful contribution of economic life.[3]

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[2] A. Manguel, *op. cit.*, p.144.

[3] J. Jacobs, *The Nature of Economies* (New York, Vintage Books, 2000), p. 147.

If our networks are pulling the chains of the economic machine, then it is also important to find the joy in the rhythm of the machine. In Trading Cities 1, Calvino describes the city of Euphemia, "where the merchants of seven nations gather at every solstice and equinox." These merchants arrive at Euphemia for trade, and simultaneously develop an evening cultural exchange, "sharing tales of wolves, sisters, treasures…," unifying merchants from different nations along their travels for financial gain. The merchant exchanges often amount to the sharing of second hand experiences of the world. The gaining of second hand knowledge was described by Alberto Manguel as a form of learning without action and fulfillment without accomplishment.[4] This type of exchange contributes to the emergence of a collective symbolic experience that can be connected to a consumer lifestyle, generating another type of economic connection. The interactions of the merchants exchanging goods, serve to connect them to a specific lifestyle, thereby giving Euphemia (see Figure 1-2B) a distinct social identity. Economies generate an intersecting grid of networks which rely on diversity of interactions to serve several different purposes simultaneously.[5]

Obsolescence of Place

Ersilia was previously described as a "…spiderweb of intricate relationships seeking a form." These relationships are viewed as functions of economies and technologies, which have become both the internal and external skeleton of our societies, allowed for by our laws and customs, and paradoxically the source of our laws and customs.[6] The ongoing conflict between what a city looks like and what a city is illustrates this paradox.

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[4] A. Manguel, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

[5] J. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

[6] A. Manguel, *op. cit*., p. 118.

In Trading Cities 5, Calvino describes Esmeralda as a system of canals and streets that intersect each other through a network of routes that follow an "up-and-down course of steps, landings, cambered bridges, and hanging streets." Esmeralda operates on many different networks and as a result the city's inhabitants must navigate among the various routes these systems generate. The various user routes generate more opportunities for diverse interactions. When Calvino states that "the most fixed and calm lives in Esmeralda are spent without any repetition," he qualifies developing cities in conjunction with established networks as a means of invigorating other social networks (see Figure 1-3). To prescribe methods as solutions automatically blocks development of better methods.[7] Ersilia, inadequately accommodating its vast networks, became a wasteland of obsolete structures that were not as efficient as Esmeralda's structural forms that developed in conjunction with its own distinct web of networks.

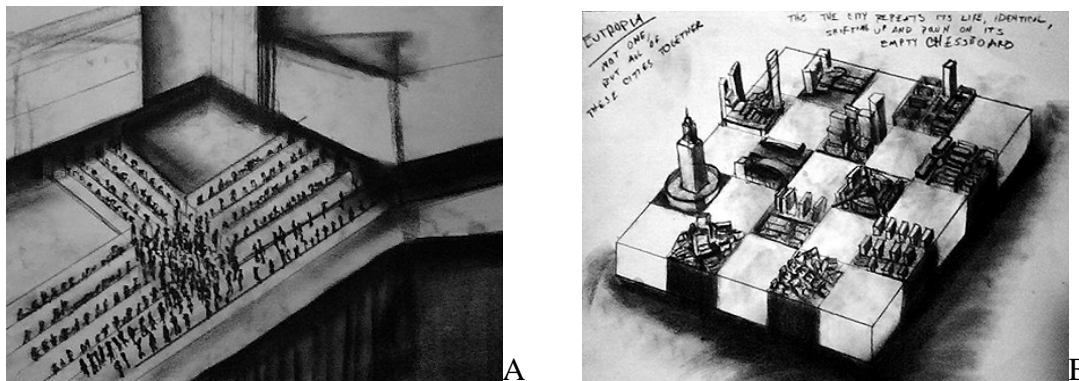Figure 1-1. Original interpretations of social identities: A) Chloe. B) Eutropia. (Source: illustrated by A. Angelbello).
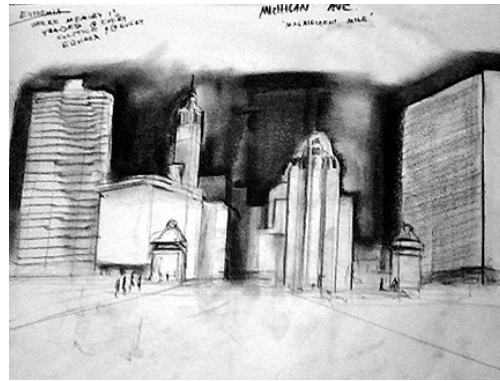
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[7] J. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
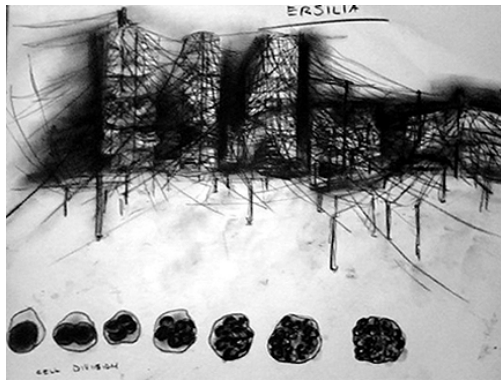
Figure 1-2. Original interpretations of social identities: A) Ersilia. B) Euphemia. (Source: illustrated by A. Angelbello).
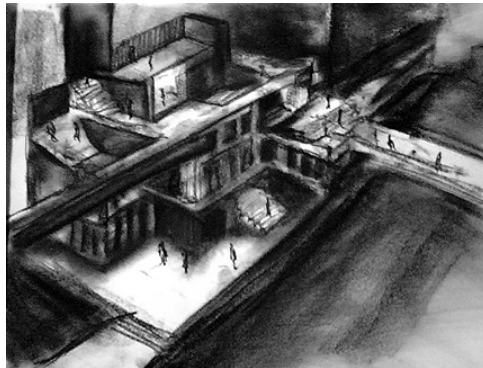
Figure 1-3. Original interpretations of social identity: Esmeralda. (Source: illustrated by A. Angelbello).

CHAPTER 2
METAPHORIC ICONOGRAPHY IN THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Alchemy and Paradise Reborn

The Garden of Earthly Delights, Hieronymus Bosch's best known work (see Figure 2-1), is unique among Renaissance panel paintings.[1] When opened, the triptych reveals three scenes that, at first glimpse, present a straightforward Biblical account. Adam and Eve appear in the left panel, their many children in the center panel, and a monstrous scene of hellfire and damnation in the right panel. However, upon closer inspection, things are not as they should be.

As in many of Bosch's other paintings, the process of alchemy[2] provides a sub-theme that juxtaposes the triptych's Biblical program while also explaining its odd configuration. Alchemical imagery provides a way of accepting the co-existence of Biblical, heavenly, human, salacious, millennial and aphorismic imagery in the *Garden of Earthly Delights*. By the fifteenth century, the philosophical side of alchemy had reached a summit of intricacy, most notably in its visual metaphors. A religious quest by scholars preoccupied with cure-all remedies, the ancient search for an elixir of life reached a climax at this time. The conclusive goal of alchemy was eagerly desirous–to discover a way to return the world and its inhabitants to a new Garden of Eden, where aging, sickness and death became circumstances that solely plagued the past. This is one market demand that continues to manifest itself within contemporary social and economic networks, illustrated by billion dollar revenues from cosmetic, beauty, and health and fitness marketing.

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[1] Its daring combination of religious imagery, eroticism, and alchemical motifs stand out among contemporary works of the same genre.

[2] An early form of chemistry and speculative philosophy practiced in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and concerned principally with discovering methods for transmuting baser metals into gold and with finding a universal solvent and an elixir of life.

Alchemists during Bosch's time believed that the first step in every distillation cycle was built upon the ashes of a previous cycle; thus, the first step in a process was also the last. Within this system, every ending was a beginning and every beginning contained an end, in imitation of the rhythm of nature and the Biblical rise, fall and renewal of the world itself, described in the legend of Noah and predicted in the Revelation.[3] The path of creation, multiplication and destruction in the interior panels is superseded and obliterated by the final cleansing, or "redemption," of the chemist's materials.[4]

Early chemists viewed their research as a Christian duty because their work was considered a means of bringing them nearer to God. Bosch's era witnessed a revival of alchemical philosophy, which emphasized the redemptive power of the work. Thus, the central panel of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* suggests a future Eden, where there is no illness, sin or other imperfection–the result of the alchemist's success, made possible with God's help. It can be read as the focal point of the triptych: a reminder of Paradise regained, the reward that awaits all devout Christian men and women after Christ's second coming. Alchemy's eschatological relevance[5] was important to Bosch and his educated patrons, who feared the coming Apocalypse.[6]

Life Cycles

Hieronymus Bosch's triptych is organized into a two panel verso,[7] opening to a three panel recto.[8] Once open, the interior panels must be read from left to right. Thus, the left recto

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[3] L. Dixon, *Bosch* (London, Phaidon Press, 2003), p. 271.

[4] By proper imitation of God's creation of the world and its inhabitants, devout chemists intended to save the human race from obliteration and guide it to an age of grace and renewal (L. Dixon, *op. cit.*, p. 276).

[5] A system of doctrines that promise an earthly paradise achieved through science.

[6] L. Dixon, *op.cit.*, p. 278.

[7] The 'verso' refers to the backside of the triptych.

represents the last three days of Creation, while the center represents the Fountain of Life. Real and fantastic animals, the latter drawn from bestiaries that go back to Alexandrian[9] prototypes, fill the scene.[10] In the foreground, God introduces Eve to Adam, who has awakened from her slumber, after which Adam proceeds to inspect the companion created out of his rib.[11]

The theme of the center panel, while unique among the works of Bosch, is not unknown in medieval painting or literature. Representations of love gardens used as settings for lovers and lovemaking are part of the prevailing imagery. Eroticism and even the representations of the sexual act are not uncommon in paintings, engravings, and book illuminations of the period. However, it is the interpretation of the scene's representation that is of primary importance. Bosch's construction of Paradise as a love garden is noteworthy. He places a pool of maidens in the center of a large park, around which a large circle of riders revolve counterclockwise. The foreground is filled with nude men and women, peacefully frolicking and enjoying the presence of birds, plants, and other companions.[12] Erotic connotations abound in plants and fruits, as well as in metaphors of the sexual organs. The upper portion of the panel is inhabited by phantasmagorical forms of fountains and pavilions around a lake extended backwards towards the horizon, while figures with fragile wings take to flight. Here Bosch is presenting a type of utopian paradise ingrained in religious ecstasy, human interconnectedness and experiential organic spaces, existing without man-made constructs of hierarchy, organization or government.

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[8] The 'recto' refers to the front of the triptych.

[9] That is, Ancient Egyptian.

[10] E. Larsen, *Bosch* (New York, Smithmark, 1998), p.131.

[11] God, appearing Christ-like, is blessing the first couple in the words of Gen. 1:28, "Be fruitful and multiply," (E. Larsen,, *op.cit.*, p. 133).

[12] The author compares the scene to the Golden Age described by Hesiod "when men and beasts dwelt in peace together," or, in a more modern vein, to a global love (L. Dixon, *op. cit.*, pp. 239 – 240).

The right recto depicts Bosch's vision of hell, a place of contrast between civilization and damnation. In the middle of the last panel we find the so-called Tree Man.[13] The torso is egg-shaped, and the lower part of the body consists of rotting tree trunks. Bosch has taken up in this panel the metamorphosis of man into beast, which is a well-known medieval tradition for depicting deserved punishment of vices and depravities.[14] On the verso of the triptych (see Figure 2-2), Bosch painted in grisaille[15] the Creation of the world, enclosed in a crystal globe[16] and seen as of the third day of Genesis. The presentation of the panels in sequential order illustrates the destiny of man from creation to self-destruction, but Bosch's use of alchemical imagery and the physical act of opening and closing the verso panels to reveal the recto are suggestive of a life cycle and the sequence of changing states that, upon completion, produces a final state identical to the original one.

Paradise through Progress

One can construct an analogous Boschian paradigm where architectural imagery presents a metaphoric program, informed by collective human experiences and civilizations under the guise of utopian ideology. Architecture does not have the freedom that other art forms have because it is a means to an end, and only the beginning stage in the process of building.   In *Synopsis, Painting, Architecture, Sculpture* Alvar Aalto[17] states that "although we know that poor man can hardly be saved, whatever we attempt to do, the main duty of the architect is to humanize the age

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[13] The 'Tree Man' is a form seen in Bosch's previous sketch work (L. Dixon, *ibid.*).

[14] One might be led to suspect that this hell panel was executed as a kind of self-flagellation for having enjoyed too much the invention and execution of a paradise that cannot be (E. Larsen,, *op.cit.*, p. 133).

[15] A style of monochromatic painting in shades of gray, used especially for the representation of relief sculpture.

[16]Medieval symbolic alchemical imagery

[17] Twentieth century Finnish architect and designer, sometimes referred to as the Father of Modernism. His work includes architecture, furniture and glassware.

of machines. That must however be done without disregarding form."[18] If one considers *The Garden of Earthly Delights* and its depictions of the Judeo-Christian notions of paradise, creation, sin, and hell, which are themselves an illustration of a process and cycle of humanity, then architecture must negotiate between idealized utopias, like the "Paradise" depicted in Bosch's central panel, and the impediments of contemporary civilizations. For every architectural utopia there is an antipode that is rooted in our own human nature. I subscribe to the idea that "a city is the form of its inhabitant's passions and all the events which they experience or imagine are the imagery of their passions."[19]

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[18] A. Aalto, *Synopsis, Painting, Architecture*, *Sculpture* (Berlin, Birkhauser, 1980), p. 20.

[19] A. Alto, *Ibid.*

Figure 2-1. Bosch's triptych recto panels. Source: E. Larsen, *Bosch* (New York, Smithmark, 1998), p. 103.
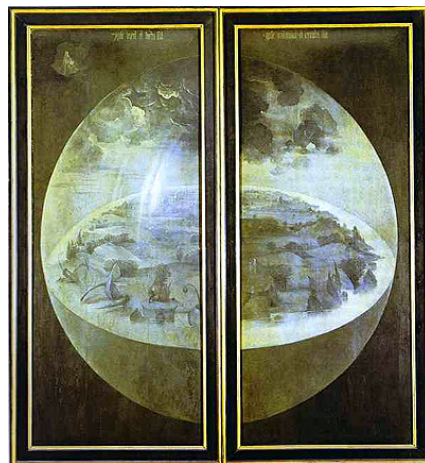
Figure 2-2. Bosch's verso panels illustrating the creation of the world. Source: E. Larsen, *Bosch* (New York, Smithmark, 1998), p. 132.

CHAPTER 3
PERSPECTIVE DRAWING

Art Becomes Science

According to Robin Evans, Erwin Panofsky's original writing in *Perspective as Symbolic Form* is considered one of the beginnings of a new form of interpretation of perspective.[1] Panofsky draws on a large pool of knowledge that ranges from the history of art to theology, science, and philosophy. He defines and arranges a characterization of ancient Western cultures and their representations. In regard to perspective, Panofsky believes in an articulation of intention joining the civil/societal, cerebral, and mechanical practices of a culture into balanced and continuous wholes, although the continual design of each historical era or culture is dissimilar. He believes that each gives rise to an altered but abundant perception of the world. Panofsky categorizes these spatial field systems, drawing parallels to their harmony with the different conventions of knowledge, faith, and interchange that distinguished the cultures in which they emerge.

Major achievements regarding perspective portrayal elevated art to a "science"; the subjective visual impression was indeed so far rationalized that this very impression could itself become the foundation for a solidly grounded and yet, in an entirely modern sense, "infinite" experiential world.[2] Projective geometry, limited in geometric accuracy, succeeds in bringing the pure ideas of geometry to mind. Therefore, since there is no such thing as a perfect materialized triangle, the essence not only of architectural geometry but of architecture in general

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[1] R. Evans, *The Projective Cast* (London, MIT Press, 1995), p. 126.

[2] One could compare the function of Renaissance perspective with that of critical philosophy, and the function of Greco-Roman perspective with that of skepticism. The result was a translation of psychophysiologcal space into mathematical space; in other words, an objectification of the subjective: E. Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*. (New York, Zone Books, 1997), p. 66.

is not in the concrete object but in the cerebral design.[3] The architect actively constructs his or her own perception of the world and, thereby actively participates in the fabrication of the world. The allure of perspective drawing is due to the communication of experiential qualities that externalize, or appear to externalize, an aspect of perception as if the viewer were seeing the thought itself. The imagination continues to exist but not in its traditional location. Imagination is not held within the mind, but is potentially active in all the areas of transition from persons to objects or pictures. It operates, in other words, in the same zone as projection and its metaphors.[4]

Diverse cultures have distinct symbolic methods of staging the world in pictorial images, and each method can communicate to the vigilant observer a foundation of intelligence about the mentality of its people or time period. Before referring to several noted utopian perspective drawings from modern and post-modern architectural history, it is important to establish how these perspective drawings are infused with such metaphoric relationships by categorizing the functions that are involved in staging them.

Imagination and Visual Perception

There are several ways of understanding space and several ways of translating between the varied concepts. There are not an infinite number of combinations, but in *The Projective Cast*, Robin Evans relates several of these combinations to each other, often extending beyond their respective definitions.

The two broadest routes from Euclidean[5] space seem to lead in the opposite directions, toward palpable experience and toward abstract mathematics. Of particular interest to Evans is

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[3] R. Evans, *op. cit.,* p. 354.

[4] R. Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

[5] Euclidean geometry describes physical space.

the way in which projection has been used as a connecting thread between these extremes. He

defines the different fields of projective transmission that concern architecture (see Figure 3-1).

In the figure, ten fields of projection are shown joining five types of targets. Four of the

targets are almost always thought of as pictures or picture like. The one exception is the

designed object. Evans attempts to portray the extent of projection and its metaphors, so the

diagram treats varieties of real and imaginary spaces as if they were all the same. The part

behind the dotted line cutting (2), (6), and (7) represents the observer, or someone who is

looking.[6]

The following is a brief itemization of the transitive spaces numbered in Figure 3-1, that

correspond to the sequence I will be exploring:

Perspectival space (6) is three-dimensional, consisting of a two-dimensional graphic

drawing with a third dimension imagined within the picture. The reverse relationship would

make the observer the manipulator/creator of the picture and this is the case when setting up a

perspective drawing. Two further targets are the perception (9) and imagination (10) belonging

to the observer and the two further projective spaces behind them.

Imagination (10) and visual perception (9) are shown as pictures, because that is how they

are normally described. They are not pictures, but the very fact that both are thought of in that

way is very significant.[7]

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[6] The status of these lines as they pass across the border into consciousness is not clear.

[7] R. Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 370.
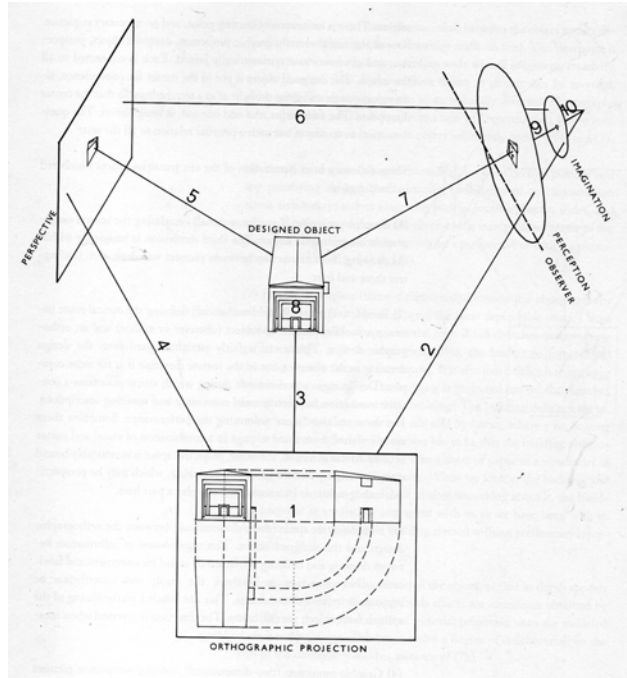
Figure 3-1. Perspective projection and its analogues. Source: R. Evans, *The Projective Cast* (London, MIT Press, 1995), p. 367.

CHAPTER 4
COMMUNICATING UTOPIAN IDEALS

Megastructures: Pre-Vietnam Heroics

Panofsky believed "when work on certain artistic problems has advanced so far that further

work in the same direction, proceeding from the same premises, appears unlikely to bear fruit,

the result is often a great recoil, or perhaps better, a reversal of direction."[1]

Considering the current political climate, the costly and lengthy war in the Middle East, the

false promises of progress, and the recycling of older models of urbanism, many parallels can be

drawn between contemporary architecture and the pre and post-Vietnam War era models.

Utopian drawings of the twentieth century emerged as a reaction to the charged cultural,

political, and technological climates in the 1960s and 1970s. Throughout this era,

megastructures, the final provocation of the heroic vision of pre-war modernism, acquiesced to

the first inklings of postmodernism's roots.

These megastructures originated in reaction to the architecture of the 1950s and, most

importantly, to the modernist overhaul of urban post-war Europe. The 1960s ushered in a

younger generation of architects who were generally dissatisfied with modernism's functionalist

criteria and drained social idioms. These architects widened the generational gap by taking cues

from pop culture, comic books, the Beatles, and the radical politics of the 1960s as

accoutrements to revolutionize culture and improve the state of the world. The global and often

disconnected, nomadic projects that resulted from their movement surpassed the scale of prewar

architecture, and marshaled in the megastructure campaign.

The urban redevelopment schemes of the 1950's favored the disseverance of the urban

landscape into transportation, work, living, and recreation. The pioneering megastructures

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[1] E. Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (New York, Zone Books, 1997), p. 47.

intended to reintegrate these four functional networks back into the city. Leading architects at the time, Paul Rudolph and Raimund Abraham, believed that the compartmentalization of these networks had divested the city of its vitality; hence, the complex relationships that energize a city would be best served by restoring emphasis to the connections between the house, street, district, and city instead. Forty years later, modern urbanism is still challenged by strikingly similar paradigms (i.e., the compartmentalization described above). The selected architectural works of Rudolph and Abraham succeed mostly as visual translations of verbal metaphors and puns drawn from contemporaneous cultural sources, a Boschian allegory of abstract cultural ideas presented by events in narrative pictorial forms.

Paul Rudolph, 1918 to 1997

In the late 1960s, Paul Rudolph proposed a Y-shaped corridor as a response to contemporary discussions about constructing an expressway running across lower Manhattan. The expressway would have served as a link from New Jersey to Brooklyn, Queens, and Long Island via the Holland Tunnel and the Manhattan and Williamsburg bridges. His design (see Figure 4-1) operated around the city's infrastructure at the time, leaving it intact, and suggested a new approach to city building emphasizing transportation networks as a means of connecting rather than dividing communities. He proposed placing multilevel, pedestrian plazas; people movers; and parking both above and below existing bridge and rail systems; at key intervals along the interrelated transportation corridors, thereby forming hubs. High-rise residential buildings would step back from these hubs, providing light, air, and views for their residents. The resulting megastructure would generate urban space by joining the new building types with corridors at points of entry into the complex.

Raimund Abraham, 1933

Raimund Abraham's Continuous Building project, consisting of a fluctuating mechanical system, serves as a metaphorical exploration of New York City. In this drawing (see Figure 4-2), the future growth of the city is ominously represented by a hexagonal tubular system that extends *ad infinitum* in different directions. The nature of the system is speculative but its nightmarish, contextually-disconnected representation reflects an invasive megastructure that is far removed from Rudolph's more optimistic vision of the future.

The center panel of Bosch's triptych and Rudolph's drawing can both be interpreted as embracing a utopian view of human social organization. Although Bosch's work predates Rudolph's proposed megastructure by more than five centuries, the two share the ideal of a harmonious, integrated, densely connected society. On the other hand, Abraham's drawing suggests that such a society, when taken to its logical extreme, is more nightmare than utopia. The same holds true of the right panel of Bosch's triptych. Whereas Bosch extrapolates such a state to an inevitable Apocalypse, Abraham sees the end result as the extreme mechanization of humanity. Both extremes are equally ruinous.

Bosch's triptych, as a whole, illustrates the Judeo-Christian notion that man, because of original sin, cannot be saved. Rudolph counters with the proposal that man can indeed be saved by his own design, or more broadly that mankind can save itself by imposing structure and interconnection on its nature (i.e., that human nature can be overcome). Abraham appears to reject this notion, suggesting that although humankind may be able to impose structure on itself, even to the extreme, such structure will not result in mankind's salvation, but rather in its conversion into an over-mechanized social automaton.

Postmodernism: Re-Infuse Social Meaning

At the beginning of the 1970s, the megastructure movement failed to produce anything more substantial than idealized architectural drawings. The post-war optimism of the movement seemed irrelevant to a society dealing with the escalading Vietnam War and the political uprisings of the late 1960s. The megastructure lacked the allure of innovation; therefore, its demise heralded the emergence of a new avant-garde movement: postmodernism.[2] Divorcing their pre-Vietnam War technocratic utopias, architects such as Steven Holl and Gaetano Pesce began searching for fresh ideas and diverse references to reinfuse their designs with meaning.

Steven Holl, 1947

Steven Holl's Gymnasium Bridge project had altruistic aspirations of relating four intersecting and overlapping bridges, each of which contained usable space while doubling as a passageway. The bridges were proposed so as to cover the area between New York's impoverished South Bronx neighborhoods and the parkland of Randall's Island. Holl's project (see Figure 4-3) was one of six projects commissioned by the Wave Hill Center with the intention of fostering economic development. Holl's scheme sought to take advantage of an economic system in which community members would generate income through employment opportunities, servicing organized recreational activities housed in the bridges. These recreational activities, such as boxing, basketball, rowing, and ice skating, would attract visitors and customers to the area, which would allow the unemployed and poor back into the city's economic system. Holl envisioned the municipal funding of the Gymnasium Bridge as a connecting point for transportation and economic networks.

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[2] V. Lampugnani, *Visionary Architecture of the 20th Century* (London, Thames-Hudson, 1982), pp. 14 – 16.

Gaetano Pesce, 1939

Gaetano Pesce's observations and experiences in New York in the 1970s inspired him to design the Church of Solitude (see Figure 4-4). During this time, Pesce observed the people of New York living together haphazardly in disorderly haste. His project proposed a below-grade sanctuary from the chaos of urbanism by providing a serene place for introspection and contemplation buried under an unoccupied lot among the towers of the city. The church included small individual chambers allotted for further escape from New York's corporate and institutional culture. Pesce explored the possibilities of excavated landscapes as a way to capitalize on the hidden potential that these overlooked spaces provide for people's future needs.

Whether the ideal of an interconnected society is found held together in one large complex—as in Rudolph's proposed megastructure—or joined together by infrastructure and economy—as in Holl's proposed bridges—the two drawings share the ideal of a harmonious, interconnected society similarly depicted in the center panel of Bosch's triptych. On the other hand, Pesce's drawing suggests that dystopias, such as Abraham's social robot and the looming Apocalypse in the right panel of Bosch's triptych, can only be escaped by urban withdrawal, solitude, and introspective transcendence. In proposing this sanctuary, Pesce embraced the Eastern philosophy that life is full of suffering caused by urbanism as the embodiment of desire, and that the way to end this suffering is through enlightenment that enables one to halt the endless sequence of life to which one is otherwise subject.

Pesce's sanctuary proposal rejects the Judeo-Christian philosophy outlined by Bosch's triptych, and subscribes to a more Buddhist philosophy, signaling a shift in thinking from social collectivism and salvation to the individual experience and transcendence. This shift is most significant to the current paradigm facing architecture and the urban landscape. Since architecture cannot actualize mankind's salvation, what can it do for the individual? Like Pesce,

many post-modernist architects felt that the truly transcendent architectural solutions to urban

dilemmas could only be found on the intellectual fringes of pop culture, isolated from corporate

America. This anti-corporate sentiment was echoed in their projects, many of which proposed

funding of their social projects with local tax dollars and municipal funds. The new paradigm

facing those architects who wish to realize their innovative urban ideas in the twenty-first

century will require a shift in thinking from the isolated periphery of culture to the center of

consumer and economic models. Until then, innovative design ideas that have potential to be

catalysts for urban renewal may never eclipse conceptualism.
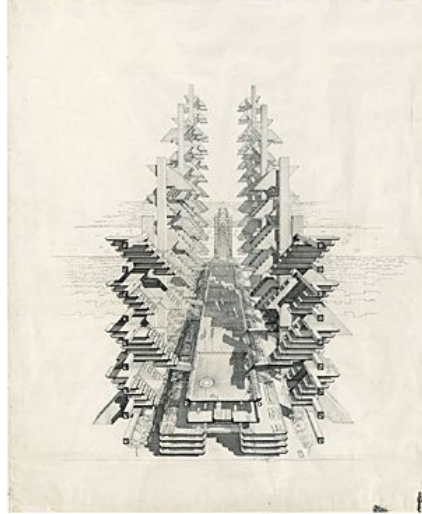
Figure 4-1. Century tower lower Manhattan expressway, New York, New York. Project, 1967 – 72, (Source: http://moma.org/exhibitions/2002/gilman/)
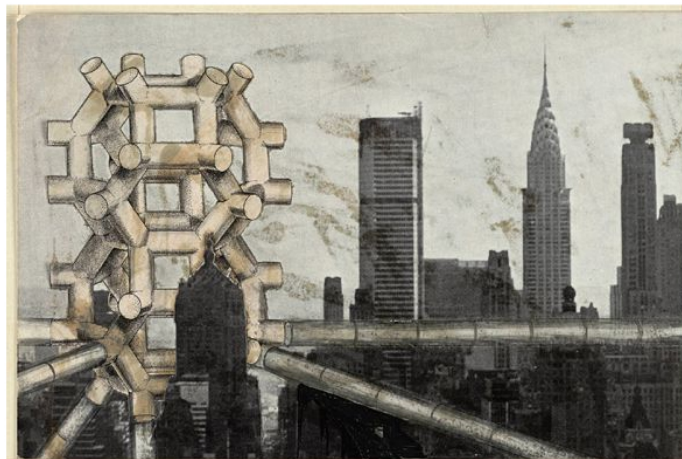
Figure 4-2. Continuous building, 1965. (Source: http://moma.org/exhibitions/2002/gilman/)
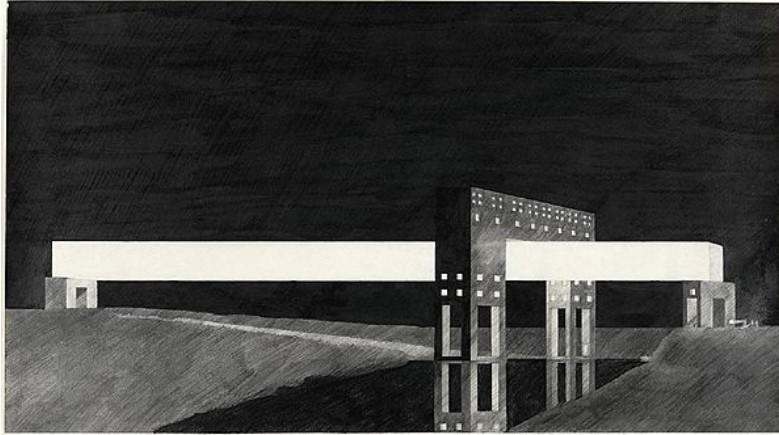
Figure 4-3. Gymnasium bridges, New York, New York. Project, 1977. (Source: http://moma.org/exhibitions/2002/gilman/)
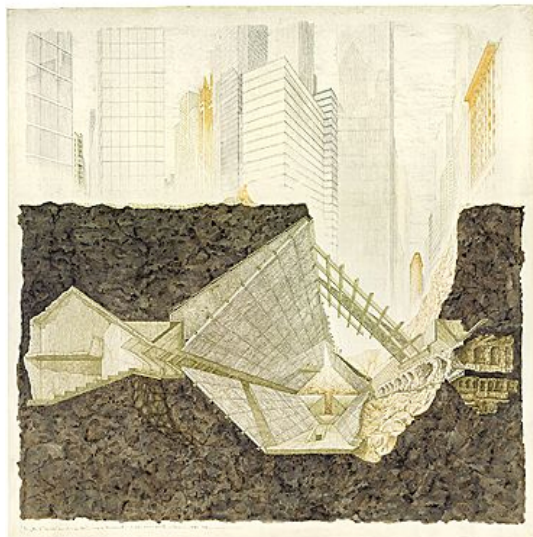
Figure 4-4. Church of Solitude, New York, New York. Project, 1974-77. (Source: http://moma.org/exhibitions/2002/gilman/)

CHAPTER 5
THE CONTEMPORARY PARADIGM

Consumerism and Commodified Architecture

With the escalation of the "War on Terror" and the lack of effective political opposition, the postwar capitalist economy is selling optimism as consumerism. The iPod has been co-opted as a catalyst to enhance the perceived value of its user by endowing him or her with a particular identity and by triggering a particular brand experience.[1] Thus, the architect of today must confront hypocrisy and contradiction at every turn: the architectural branding of healthy and fit lifestyles, and the mass marketing of environmentally conscious, or "green" Utopian spaces coexist uncomfortably amongst an increasingly obese populace who drive gas-guzzling tanks to the local fast food "drive-through." The prevailing socio-architectural paradigm has left the architect no choice but to "produce" architecture for a culture that has been commodified.[2]

I will draw from the poetic works of Bosch and Calvino to propose an architectural solution for urban development in Chicago which acknowledges and embraces the imperfect realities of modern human experiences and interconnectivity. The current Utopian architectural paradigm[3] will be exposed for what it is: a misguided and failed attempt to assuage society's excesses and overindulgences with spatial constructs that provide only an illusion of progress and transcendence.[4]

In Trading Cities 3, Calvino suggests that Eutropia "repeats its life, identical, shifting up and down on its empty chessboard." Examined closely, the name Eutropia may have hidden

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[1] A. Kilingmann, *Brandscapes* (London, MIT Press, 2007), pp. 6 -8.

[2] Culture becomes a product instead of a behavior or belief.

[3] Prefabricated "sustainable" lifestyle packages for an "enlightened" population.

[4] Sustainable" McMansions" and green luxury office towers illustrate architectural practices supporting and perpetuating those illusions.

implications by the author's combination of "utopia," a visionary system of social perfection and "tropia," a deviation of an eye from the normal position with respect to the line of vision when the eyes are open. Combining these two words to form the name Eutropia could suggest the city is itself a manifestation of an incorrectly perceived utopian vision. Adopting a different utopian ideal does not alter the inhabitants' qualitative interactions that paradoxically give a city its true quantitative or social identity. Because of deeply embedded social and economic relationships, the true identity of a city cannot be retrofitted to subscribe to any architectural ideal.

Plugging into a Network

Considering Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, the human experience is presented against a Biblical narrative with moralistic overtones. Even in the absence of gods, our unique planet Earth and its sky are present as a ground for our full, embodied experience, one through which we may now be capable of questioning the hegemony of abstract constructs. In view of this realization, we are called to transform our own individual, often arrogant, relationship to the world and explore the qualitative relationships that define our social identity. Contemporary economic models[5] have proliferated because they propose a means for an individual to purchase an identity that the consumer feels represents the social elite, leaving out huge segments of the population based on income and differing beliefs. Individualism does not contribute to the emergence of collective symbolic capital; instead, we must plug into the diverse networks that give us a unified identity and that benefit the communal realm of the city.

In his *Invisible Cities,* Calvino established that the meaningful qualities that distinguish the unified identity of a trade city are the social interactions generated by participation in a city's economic networks. It has been established that these economic networks must be diverse to

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[5] The Chicago School of economics considers value to be subjective, varying from person to person and for the same person at different times, and thus reject the theory of value brought on by labor.

allow for the continual renewal of developments that serve to improve interconnectedness.[6]

Stemming from increased digital reliance, the contemporary analogy for being an active member of the social economy is characterized by the act of 'plugging into' a larger concept marketplace. Over five centuries after Heironymos Bosch painted *The Garden of Earthly Delights* with alchemical metaphors, key words like "green" and "sustainability" are used by corporate networks to capitalize on a new movement that has transcended architectural design and urban planning, to infiltrate a vast array of consumer markets, promising the elixir of life, or renewal of earth, and hence consumer alchemy. Marketing strategies have successfully yet unaccountably bestowed consumerism the power to demonstrate social and ecological responsibility, which often substitutes the essence of these interconnected relationships with increased revenue and lifestyle branding. Examples of this phenomenon can be found in catch phrases like "Go Green" and "Live Green".

Brand Lifestyles

In *Brandscapes*, Anna Klingmann attempts to inspire architects to build an open-ended, relationship-oriented culture that fosters creative questioning of the status quo. Architecture, informed by market and place, encompasses a larger social and cultural context through connectivity. She believes that for architecture to become a viable catalyst for corporations in today's global marketplace, it must aid in developing a specific personality that gives the company character and prominence; create a public interface; advocate a flexible and open organizational structure that allows for multilateral connections, both internally and externally; and fit the company's interests to the cultural, social, financial, and ecological goals of a specific

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[6] See J. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

region.[7] This commodified approach to architecture may benefit many markets, but adopting its

principles requires architects to willingly abandon their elitist seats upon the fringes of popular

culture and work within the mainstream to actualize any of their ideas. Whether branded

architecture goes beyond the green-light excuse for architects to sell out is debatable, but the

push for innovative design will necessitate innovative ways of obtaining capital.

Chicago has its own brand, with its history and economy closely tied to its proximity to

Lake Michigan and the prevailing winds. As Chicago tries to move away from its industrial,

steel and railway past to a global market based on intellectual capital and knowledge economy, it

maintains its identity as a major port and the commercial, financial, industrial, and cultural center

of the Midwest. Upscale shopping along Chicago's Magnificent Mile, thousands of restaurants,

and the city's rich architectural history (developed since the 1893 World Columbian Exposition

and the inception of the steel-framed skyscraper era) continue to generate revenue for the city's

economy. These intersecting networks give Chicago its identity, but the cultural, social,

financial, and ecological goals of the city are changing, and thus offering up the future of urban

development for new branding strategies more in tune with consumer-driven markets.

Superstar Architects

The Chicago Planning Commission unanimously approved the final iteration of Santiago

Calatrava's 3-million-square-foot Chicago Spire (see Figure 5-1). Designed for a 2.2-acre

lakefront site, the one hundred fifty storey, seven-sided glass tower twists like a drill-bit to 2,000

feet, making it the tallest building in North America. Although impressive, the significance of

this development project is tied to its close proximity to Frank Gehry's Millennium Park's

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[7] Klingmann, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

Pritzker Pavilion. It is also just around the corner from the project of Renzo Piano, who has been commissioned to design the Art Institute of Chicago's new building expansion across the street.

These major architectural gestures, created by signature architects, are just a sample of newer development tactics that will undoubtedly begin to have greater implications. Continual development of superstar architectural interventions will change the urban landscape of Chicago beginning with the blocks on which they are built. If this continues to become a trend, then Chicago blocks will begin to lose their identities to the large isolated structures that may or may not relate to their surroundings. I believe that current trends in brand architecture will lead to an icon-based association with city blocks, similar to the paradigm exhibited by hotel casinos along the Las Vegas Strip.

It is conceivable that each of the most economically-valuable blocks in Chicago will be sponsored by an architectural gesture designed by a superstar architect; this would make accessible for consumers his or her own branded "style" of architecture. At this point, the once valid rationale of protecting architecture from the ravages of the marketplace has lost its relevance.[8] Therefore, what is considered respectable architecture is no longer defined with regard to its social value, but much like commodities, is founded on its popular appeal. The blur between highbrow and lowbrow architecture is legitimized by the idea that shopping has become the defining activity of public life. Consequently, architects may unapologetically rationalize participating in brand lifestyle marketing that kneels to corporate strategy.[9] Brand architecture should not be used as a way for architects to obfuscate real problems with extraneous design

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[8] Klingmann, *op cit.*, p. 125.

[9] The most important driving force behind Chicago's increased support for strong city-wide branding is the accelerating pace of globalization.

(although the allure to do so undoubtedly exists).[10] Rather, as in the case of most consumer

markets, different brands with varying intentions appeal to different markets.

Prada was one of the first companies to commission architects with prominent names, like

Rem Koolhass and Herzog & de Meuron, in an attempt to reinvent its customers' retail

experience. For example, the company's new epicenter in New York City, designed by Rem

Koolhaas, offers an architectural design that enhances the diversification of the shopping

experience by infusing its commercial function with a series of trendy experiential themes,

including a "clinic" (a space for personal care and service), an "archive" (an inventory of past

and present collections), a "trading floor"(new commercial applications), a "library" (zones of

information allocated to the progress of the fashion house), and a "street" (a public space for

varied activities, seemingly free from retail pressures).[11] While presenting an individual brand

experience for Prada, the store's design also serves as a place where people are invited to interact

with inventive displays or simply to experience the social ambience of space.[12] Combining a

brand product campaign and brand architect solution yielded a privately-funded public space that

facilitates social and economic exchanges.

Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS) are not new concepts in urban development.

Chicago's James R. Thompson Center (formerly known as the State of Illinois Center), designed

by architect Helmut Jahn is an example of a successful, seemingly public atrium space that is not

open and accessible to all, nor is it necessarily publically owned. This and other similar projects

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[10] Attitude branding, commonly used by companies like Nike and Apple, is the choice to represent a feeling, which is not necessarily connected with the product or consumption of the product at all.

[11] Klingmann, *ibid*.

[12] Brand extension is a strategy where an existing strong brand name can be used as a vehicle for new or modified products; for example, many fashion and designer companies extended brands into fragrances, shoes and accessories, home decor, hotels, etc. The progression of brand extension into areas of architecture and the public realm is socially significant to urban development.

in Chicago[13] were funded in part through density incentives, city programs that allow developers to increase the size of a given project, or transfer development rights to another site, in exchange for community benefits.[14] Most POPS in cities like Chicago and New York arose from zoning resolutions which allowed developers to construct taller structures with additional building floors if a public space was provided inside or in front of the building.[15] The successes of the POPS in Chicago have set the stage for new means of funding programs that will help endure growth. Instead of trading added building height for community benefits, the city could require developers to include minimal requirements for public amenities, from schools to grocery stores. If this were allowed, then Chicago's zoning department could allow a density bonus for expansion of amenities instead of allowing for more public spaces and preservation initiatives. If density and amenity bonuses will lead to more private sector funding of public amenities, then it is feasible to anticipate privately owned, on-site public extensions within block development projects.[16]

<div align="center">

From Placement to Choreography

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Staging City Blocks

Realizing that brand names can add increased revenue to their projects, real estate developers are increasingly hiring star architects to raise the market value of their residential and commercial towers. This new design consciousness will undoubtedly infiltrate suburban

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[13] Density incentives awarded to developers that incorporate rooftop garden projects to mitigate urban heat island effect, which is a process whereby highly urbanized areas with hard surfaces tend to be degrees hotter than green areas

[14] Chicago currently offers several different density incentive options. Developers can choose from a menu of bonus options, ranging from child-care centers and rural land protection to public art and public transportation improvements.

[15] K. Miller, *Designs on the Public* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 71.

[16] An urban block would contain one development project that accounted for residences, infrastructure, and amenities servicing that block.

developments, as private investors will utilize their increased significance as a strategic

marketing tool for the production of symbolic capital. The symbolic capital attaches partially to

the fame of the architect and partially to consumers' rising desires to live near an exclusively-

designed development. As a result, Chicago may find itself the beneficiary of a dynamic surge

of profit-driven "designer buildings" that directly engage the desires of specific lifestyle groups

who seek staged "designer city blocks."

Suburbs Plugging into the City

Architects and designers have condemned suburban sprawl for several decades,

proclaiming its various detrimental effects on society and ecology. Yet the nationwide public at

large continues to view the phenomenon favorably.[17] Market research confirms that consumer

choices greatly outweigh the tendencies of most planners and architects to subscribe to

sustainable higher-density developments, greater social diversity, mixed use, a diversity of

design, and close proximity to mass transportation and services. Consequently, developers of

residential projects have rejected many of those ideas, underscoring the enormous divide

between consumer values and the ideals pursued by architects.

The suburbs have surrendered the idea of public spaces to vehicles, wider roads, manicured

landscaping and bigger parking lots. The proliferation of this paradigm has lead many of us to

discover that the sanitized suburban enclaves where we sought privacy, safety, exclusivity, and

prestige have proved to be shallow and empty substitutes for the intimate human connections our

past generations once enjoyed. The American suburb is the land of private wealth and public

impoverishment.[18]

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[17] In the United States, there ia a preference towards lower-density development for increased privacy and status, less noise, better schools, less crime, and a generally slower lifestyle than the city.

[18] D. Nozzi, *Road to Ruin: An Introduction to Sprawl and How to Cure It* (London, Praeger, 2003), p. xix.

Developers have long benefited from the promises of privacy, exclusivity and prestige associated with suburban lifestyles. Inevitably, corporate brands have begun operating in symbiotic partnerships with these developers, each providing fuel for the other. By joining strategic marketing with the staging of experiences, the Disney suburban development projects have exhibited huge financial gains. Moreover, they have exerted a substantial influence on the design of many inner-city revitalizations, in which the perception of public space is increasingly associated with carefully-staged surroundings commanded by profit-oriented production of culture, history, and tradition. The seamless progression between staged experiences and urban reality is best illustrated in Celebration, built by the Disney Corporation in Florida as a prototypical 'brand city.' For the residents of Celebration, Disney has achieved the ultimate goal of lifestyle branding where the brand becomes life itself.[19]

Architects can no longer operate along disconnected utopian ideals (megastructures) of social possibilities (postmodernism). They must begin with today's realities, operating within existing cultural, societal, and economic networks alongside Chicago's consumer economy. The interdisciplinary approach to design must be encouraged to restore the vital relationships between architecture's economic and public dimensions, among Chicago's civic representation, urban development, and aesthetic experimentation.

Lessons from Las Vegas

Las Vegas, a city governed entirely by consumerism and the production of profit, provides a compelling case for the potential of coordinating branding techniques and pedestrian mobility with block architecture. While the design of casino hotel architecture in Las Vegas aims at the creation of spaces joined with transit systems that can be exploited to maximize profit, the

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[19] Klingmann, *op. cit.*, p.77.

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primary strategies used there to elicit consumer experiences can also be applied as a set of conditions across genre and type, by expanding the reaches of architecture beyond built form to include dynamics of use, behavior of people, and a more adaptable ground-up approach, which seeks to reevaluate current modes of organizing city blocks.

Architectural experience in Las Vegas is a product of the qualitative addition of drama, diversity, and detail.[20] Casino architecture provokes drama through the juxtaposition of different scales, programs, signs, and events; the manipulation of volumes; the expressiveness of iconic forms; and the exploitation of virtual and material effects. The staging of atmospheres through visual imagery, symbolic motifs, and material articulation define the necessary criteria of event spaces that guarantee an active interaction among people and programs. Casinos create variety through hybridized impressions, utilizing strategically-selected settings and symbolic signals that cause new behavioral reactions to take place within the principal programs of dining, gaming, entertainment, and shopping. Experiential spaces are therefore strategic contrivances used to elicit particular moods and emotional reactions among the guests. Nevertheless, an authentic hybrid in casino architecture is created by diversifying and cross-programming with a combination of backdrops, which are often strategically designed to work in association with the programs, but more frequently exist completely removed from functional considerations. By loosening the constraints of programmatic sequences, the architectural design can abide by a more subjective method of social allure. In addition, each staged environment is carefully detailed to elicit an impression of authenticity that is alluring to the guest and grants plausibility to the appearance of the constructed drama.

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[20] Klingmann, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

The major tactic used by the casino hotel to ensure participation in these spaces is removal of the automobile from the equation, thereby orchestrating pedestrian transit around the allure of consumer experiences. In addition to stacked parking in back lots, casino hotels in Las Vegas have established no cost, privatized tram and monorail networks between development blocks to remove automotive dependence for transportation between participating properties. By plugging into these transit networks, each casino hotel ensures increased exposure and movement of people through their property's massive consumer experiential spaces. The tram connecting the Mandalay Bay, Luxor, and Excalibur property-blocks (see Figure 5-2) serves as an example of how the accessible and efficient transport of consumers can transcend location limitations and maximize economic exchanges.

The individual successes of all three of these properties—each located adjacent to, but not on, the popular Las Vegas Strip—are connected to their link to the private transit network. Differentiating casino hotel identities within the adjacent blocks allowed for co-development connections that further expanded by diversifying transport networks. Each property continued its self-refueling through consumer experiences, and ensured its stability through self-correction, joined with the unpredicted self-organization of consumer networks. [21] The urban mainstream will be found where post-modernist principles, armed with the lessons of consumer markets, interconnect with corporate branded megastructures to realize responsible urban renewal efforts that offer insights into the complex set of conditions that constitute a city.

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[21] J. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 145

Figure 5-1. Calatrava's Chicago spire project. Source: E. De Losier, 'Calatrava's Chicago Spire Wins Approval', (New York, *Architectural Record*, April 2007).

Figure 5-2. Mandalay tram to the Las Vegas strip. (Source: photograph by A. Angelbello taken from tram window).

Chicago Metropolis 2020 Plan

Chicago Metropolis 2020 is a plan that positions Chicago for the unprecedented challenges of the next century.[1] It is a visionary strategy that calls on Chicago to increase innovation in the fields of business, technology, and urban reform. The plan was prepared and sponsored by the Commercial Club of Chicago and written by Elmer W. Johnson as a challenge to those metropolitan groups that prefer development to remain the way it is.[2] The strategies set forth in the plan aim to repair the city and to continue doing what Jane Jacobs says all healthy cities do. "A metropolitan economy, if it is working well," Jacobs writes, "is constantly transforming many poor people into middle-class people. Cities don't lure the middle class, they create it."[3]

The Metropolis Plan sees the entire Chicago region as an interconnected system and presages a return to the symbiotic relationship between city and suburb that existed in the age of the electric streetcar. At the end of the nineteenth century, mass transit promoted, simultaneously, the growth of the central city and of the suburbs, and pulled them together into one network. But with the proliferation of the automobile, urban transportation corridors became escape ways from the city. And the linear logic of the railroad suburbs—village-like places situated along the tracks at decent intervals, with natural greenbelts between them—was broken, giving rise to the formless "spread city."

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[1] Improving social and economic conditions for all people and promoting sustainable development.

[2] Uneven development has been apparent in Chicago for many years. Chicago has recently been riding an economic boom, occurring after the long decline of basic industrial employment that struck numerous Chicago neighborhoods at the end of the 1970s. Guided by this boom, development projects have crept into most neighborhoods, but the slow investment of money coming into many low-income communities has been surpassed by the inundation of money into Chicago's center and lakeshore neighborhoods.

[3] H. Husock, 'Jane Jacobs: New York's indispensable urban iconoclast', (New York, *City Journal,* April 2006).

Although the Metropolis Plan addresses reforms in many areas, including healthcare and education, I will focus on the three major components that directly influenced the scope of my investigation: economic wellbeing, land uses and housing, and transportation-oriented design (TOD),

Transportation-Oriented Design

The Metropolis Plan divides transportation into three different networks that must be developed simultaneously: personal mobility within the region; freight transportation to, from, and within the region; and air and rail transport of people to and from the region.

The first goal is to organize more compact growth at the regional level, so that the city may become transit supportive. To ensure this support, commerce, housing, jobs, parks, and civic uses will be oriented within walking distances of transit stops. A network of pedestrian-friendly streets will allow for safe travel between local destinations. The plan focuses on restructuring neighborhoods to provide a mix of housing types and housing densities, at different costs in the same community. Future developments and urban renewal projects will have to focus on public spaces along transit corridors within existing neighborhoods. These conscious changes will operate with the collaborative goals of preserving sensitive habitats outside the reaches of the city and protecting them from new developments while ensuring high quality open spaces within the city.

Housing and Land Use

The Metropolis Plan addresses sprawl and the associated consequences of high infrastructure costs, loss of open spaces, and geographic disconnection between housing and jobs. The plan is concerned with residential segregation by income and race, hyper-concentrated poor minorities, and the special housing needs of the elderly and people with disabilities.

The Metropolis Plan proposes to encourage the private sector to develop renewal efforts within the existing infrastructure of older communities, and discourage them from constructing new developments that necessitate high-cost extensions of the public infrastructure. The renewal of existing communities provides a more diverse choice of housing opportunities throughout the region and will enable many people to live in proximity to their work if they so choose, thereby reducing congestion and harm to the environment. Residents will be able to remain in their home communities through each of their life stages (if they so choose) thanks to ampler housing options, and no citizen will be denied housing opportunities due to ethnicity or race. Central city and suburbs will compete, not for tax dollars, but for recognition for excellence in community design and livability.

Economic Wellbeing

The plan focuses primarily on the local property tax and secondarily on the state and local sales taxes, which give rise to most of the fiscal disparities among the different parts of the region and create the most serious hurdles in the way of achieving the plan's economic and social goals. The guiding strategies for promoting economic development and growth must change to reflect the emerging economic international order.[4] Past economic strategies that attempted to address both poverty and urban development at the same time have been largely unsuccessful. The Metropolis Plan counters this failure by distinguishing them as two separate issues. Understanding this distinction is central to addressing Chicago's problems and identifying solutions.[5]

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[4] The number of independent states worldwide currently exceeds 185. At the end of World War II, governments were the main players on the global scene. Today, the growing influence of organizations of civil society and of multinational corporations has created a much more intricate global marketplace.

[5] E. W. Johnson, *Chicago Metropolis 2020* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 79.

The economic model proposed in the plan focuses on wealth creation through an energized private sector, the integration of the central city with the regional economy, the enlistment of the private sector to promote economic development, and a governmental focus on improving the environment for business. As the Metropolis Plan outlines goals that will help Chicago shift from its industrial and railway past towards a new dynamic and diverse identity, the plan sets the foundation for urban thinkers to envision Chicago's urban renewal beyond the conversion of abandoned rail-yards into high-rise luxury condominiums and office towers.

My recommendation for urban block networks in Chicago will incorporate the goals of the Metropolis Plan into my interpretation of the Chicago urban model of brand marketing, thereby allowing me to outline an architectural connection among current private sector development trends, transportation needs, residential diversity, consumerism, and economic development.

CHAPTER 7
CONCEPT URBAN BLOCK NETWORKS

Block Architecture

The contradictions that arise between people's beliefs and their everyday experiences are

resolved by the invention of apologues and myths. One example considered in my study was

Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, which infused narratives of trading cities with universal

metaphoric relationships regarding a city's identity, economy, and progress. Hieronymus

Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* sought to address the disconnection between Judeo-

Christian doctrines and the nature of man by staging a masterful allegory for civilization and the

ominous Apocalypse. Tumultuous political and social climates in the twentieth century rallied

confidence in progress and renewal which in turn generated new architectural themes that were

adopted by modernist architects, only to be contradicted by post-modern responses to the social

failures of those same paradigms, neither of which produced any tangible architectural solutions.

Similarly, contemporary societal beliefs and experiences contradict each other openly in the

branded advertising and real-estate economies; the most impressive architectural sites therefore

embody fiction that embraces a mix of reality, fantasy, and prefabricated desire. Today,

commercial environments, such as the Prada store in New York City, Disney's Celebration

suburban development in Florida, and casino hotels in Las Vegas constitute places where people

connect with core cultural ideas that define their individual lifestyles. It must be acknowledged

that the potential power of the mass-media to define culture and lifestyle identities by using

architecture as an instrument, irrespective of the messages they transmit, is significant and

something that should be considered in the context of urban development.[1] Many of the density

and transportation goals for Chicago outlined in the Metropolis Plan can be actualized by

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[1] Klingmann, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

working intuitively within the scope of current brand lifestyle marketing and new development projects.

Using the principles set forth in the Metropolis Plan, I propose to capitalize off of the private sector's increasing practice of enlisting superstar architects to create icon architecture that will inevitably change the nature of the city blocks of Chicago. If Chicago's real-estate market demonstrates a propensity for this kind of architecture, then I further propose allowing lifestyle co-development opportunities, or block developments conceptually similar to the Disney Corporation's aforementioned suburban 'brand city,' in direct association with the icons. The highly commercialized Las Vegas Strip demonstrates the economic success of uniting drama, diversity, and detail. My proposal for Chicago's urban development will work within a similar paradigm by investing in architectural icons to create the drama, allowing the residential and commercial co-developments within the block to create the diversity, and brand marketing and lifestyle identity to establish the details that distinguish each block. These mixed-use, mixed density co-developments will form symbiotic relationships with the superstar architectural gestures, whose developers in turn will provide funds for light rail transit systems and elevated pedestrian pathways that maximize transit between the surrounding development blocks. This interdependent relationship between blocks should increase pedestrian traffic through the blocks and engage economic exchange opportunities within the co-development networks.

The use of inter-property private transit networks has proved successful in the commercial environments of Las Vegas casino hotels as a viable catalyst for interconnectedness and increased revenue; consequently, its public implementation in an increasingly-commercialized urban context of Chicago should also increase economic gains and interrelated social benefits to those private developments that choose to participate in the transit network. These private sector

icon developers will also provide for elevated pedestrian street systems traversing and

connecting the proposed blocks. This system will infuse the pedestrian scale into their monolithic

constructions while retaining and enhancing storefront commercial exchanges at new points of

entrance along raised pathways.

Actualizing urban block networks in Chicago's city center poses many challenges. There

are already pre-existing, compellingly problematic areas in the city center that are below the

elevated train system.[2] Because of this, my proposal for new, expansive pedestrian and transit

networks built above the ground level of the city streets has the potential to generate additional

problems for Chicago. The fact of the matter is that innovative and beautiful design solutions

already exist for such areas, but the funds required to realize those solutions are unavailable.[3]

Moreover, the increased taxes and governmental spending needed to execute such projects can

result in political suicide for most elected officials. Under my proposal for block developments,

the private sector will provide the capital for these innovative solutions because doing so will

add to their development's marketing brand appeal through architectural identity and detail.

Chicago's presently neglected sites will be the future locations, under urban block networks, for

the poetic and intuitive architectural, social-interventions that post-modern architects like Pesce

and Holl envisioned but lacked the funds to actualize. If the entire infrastructure of a block is

accounted for within a development project, then the engineers and architects overseeing the

bock's development will have greater control and increased funds to respond to design problems

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[2] Streets that run under the Chicago Transit Authority's elevated trains are dark, dirty and gloomy. Spaces under the "El" are mostly devoted to traffic, thereby eliminating any other function for the spaces under the elevated line.

[3] Storage and parking have been important usages of spaces below elevated trains, but are only a fraction of the many possible solutions for these areas that serve to reduce urban fragmentation and promote efficient usages of space in the city center. Tokyo's JR Yamanote rail line has a variety of typologies for these lower spaces which offer alternative choices for general use. One example of this typology is the *Eki Biru* large-scale development projects which use the spaces as hubs for service and commercial activities along the rail line. These neglected spaces below elevated trains should be accounted for in Chicago's design, zoning and planning as much as other more prominent aspects of the city.

with intuitive and poetic design solutions, as opposed to the generic state mandates that

conventionally resolve the problem or ignore the matter altogether.

My proposal sets forth the following goals, which will define the mission of block

architectural development:

- Each block will consist of a large-scale development (office building, residential tower, etc.) that forms symbiotic relationships with co-development webs (apartments, terraced single family homes, commercial retail spaces) unique to that block design.

- Private sector capital will develop block communities and transit systems while maintaining and promoting their brand identity and lifestyle.

- Development and co-development webs are contained within each block.

- Floor area ratios (FAR) will be between 2.0 to 3.0 to promote higher density development of blocks.

- Each block will maintain housing-type diversity throughout the design block, encouraging numerous and intricate co-development relationships.

- Each block will maintain its own identity and provide a unique experiential quality for the community web.

Segregating the Automobiles from Consumers

The pedestrian streets integral to the success of the proposed urban block will form the

secondary network that connects the block developments. These pedestrian streets will be

elevated and released from automotive reliance, encouraging light rail transit, bicycling, and

walking. As a result, all automotive networks and related services will be segregated from the

lower levels of the blocks. Although there may be opposition to the abandonment of the

traditional street design by segregating the vehicle from the pedestrian[4], I believe that the

removal of the automobile will provide new opportunities for architects to design quality

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[4] Defenders of the traditional street believe that the interactions among the people who live and work on a particular street can reduce crime, encourage the exchange of ideas, and generally make the world a better place. My counter argument is that a street can do all those things, but with the increase in automobile dependence, traveling speeds and travel lanes, the streets have been transformed into roads. A street is characterized by the degree and quality of street life it facilitates, whereas a road serves primarily as a through passage for automobiles.

exchange spaces that promote consumerism and social interaction above grade, along pedestrian

pathways that are engineered to promote sustainable infrastructural design. Combined, these

efforts will set the stage for multiple and diverse interactions throughout the urban block

networks.

An additional issue confronting my proposal is that of cold-weather conditions and the

effects of Chicago's climate on store-front retail and commercial opportunities along the

expansive pedestrian pathways.[5] Today, Chicago's Magnificent Mile[6] caters primarily to

tourists and the affluent by integrating a mixture of upscale department stores, restaurants, luxury

retailers, residential and commercial buildings, financial services companies, and hotels. Since

the walkable yet narrow sidewalk stretches of the Magnificent Mile have proven successful and

popular through varying yearly weather conditions, similar successes are likely to be achieved

with elevated pedestrian streets that integrate retail and commercial networks above grade.

There are currently a number of intuitive, sustainable infrastructural solutions that account for

wind, snow, and rainfall[7] which are more efficiently incorporated when considering an entire

block system rather than one individual building or lot. Chicago's cold winters have been the

catalysts for the design of enclosed malls within high-rise buildings and atrium spaces,[8] and with

the shift I am proposing, there will be more opportunities for architects to continue designing

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[5] Shopping, restaurants and recreation are social activities that transcend the limits of cold weather.

[6] The Magnificent Mile is the portion of Michigan Avenue extending from the Chicago River to Oak Street. It is located one block east of nightlife of Rush Street, and serves as the main thoroughfare between Chicago's Loop business district and its Gold Coast.

[7] Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) began the Green Alley Program as a pilot in 2006. The Green Alleys incorporate permeable pavement — either asphalt, concrete or pavers — that allow rainwater to flow through the surface into the ground below. Some alleys include a filtration basin below the pavement that collects water, then allows it to seep into the ground. These permeable pavements not only help address the issue of rainwater collecting in alleys but also help recharge the underground water table. CDOT also recently completed a pilot test of sidewalks made of 100 percent recycled tire rubber. These and other infrastructure solutions can enhance the viability of the proposed urban block networks.

[8] An example is C.F. Murphy and Helmut Jahn's design for the James R. Thompson Center government building.

innovative atria and malls along new elevated pedestrian pathways to encourage consumer exchanges. Although there are both problems and benefits inherent in segregating the automobile from pedestrians, my overall intention is to free Chicago from its automobile dependence and to provide diverse consumer opportunities to all classes of citizens within safe, walkable traveling distances. Chicago's social interconnectedness will benefit from block development projects that provide open elevated promenades rather than corralling pedestrian traffic along narrow sidewalks at the ground level.

My proposal lays out the following goals, which will define the mission of pedestrian street networks:

- Blocks traverse reasonable walking distances (0.25 – 1 mile).[9]

- Blocks are designed to liberate and elevate pedestrian traffic pathways several stories above vehicular traffic.

- Pedestrian streets are open, human-scaled, and people-oriented.

- Bicycle corridors will be provided along pedestrian pathways joining the blocks.

- Retail storefronts are pulled up to and face the pedestrian street, so that the buildings lend their vitality to the pathway and make walking interesting and pleasant.

- Vehicular infrastructure and related services (parking, delivery, gasoline, auto servicing, warehouses) operate at the lower levels of the block development.

Light-Rail Transit System

The final stage of the proposal includes the following goals, which will define the mission of the light-rail transit system (LRT):

- Transit networks will operate along pedestrian streets, with all commercial, housing, and civic uses within walking distance of LRT stops along the block.

- The individual segments of the system will be subsidized by private sector large-scale development(s) within the block.

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[9] Currently, the standard block in Chicago is about 260 feet by 900 feet, or slightly over five acres. In some U.S. cities, standard blocks are as wide as 1/8 mile (660 feet), or 10 acres if square.

- The system will expand within self-operable segments, plugging different block developments into one network as they are constructed.

- The LRT will service15-20 dwelling units per acre.

- The transit lines will run along the elevated pedestrian streets for easy use.

Making mass transit a much more attractive option while simultaneously increasing the costs of driving will provide commuters incentives and options for changing their habits rooted in auto-dependence. This should in turn result in the block networking system gradually revealing itself as a more viable concept of development in Chicago. I propose to harness private sector funds in connection with urban development projects to establish a light rail transit system that can be augmented as needed[10] and dictated by the growth of different block networks. A light rail transit system (in addition to pedestrian pathways) will require subsidization from private sector block developers who wish to maximize pedestrian traffic through their blocks. Such a system will also provide numerous opportunities for promoting brand identities and new economic exchange possibilities to Chicago's commuting citizens. Figures 7-1 to 7-5 illustrate proposed block networks in Chicago.

Figure 7-1. Chicago at Randolph St. between Michigan Ave. and Lakeshore Dr. A) actual appearance of street in 2008, B) conceptualization of street incorporating block network systems. (Source: photograph and alterations by A. Angelbello)

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[10] Each development project serves as a link in the transit rail chain that forms the network.

Figure 7-2. Branded Chicago. Vision of urban block branded networks along Wacker Drive, Chicago River and Marina City Towers. (Source: illustrated by A. Angelbello).

Figure 7-3. Urban block model. Depiction of an urban block with a light-rail link and pedestrian street along the Chicago River. (Source: illustrated by A. Angelbello).

Figure 7-4. Pedestrian, light-rail and vehicular networks. Proposal of urban block network components incorporated with the "El" train. (Source: illustrated by A. Angelbello).

Figure 7-5. Block network aerial perspective. Vision of urban block network system encompassing higher density residences, pedestrian streets, lower automobile circulation, and light rail transit system links. (Source: illustrated by A. Angelbello).

CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION

We live in a time of objectively incomplete truth, in which repressive economic, political, and pseudo-religious values have intruded on and in some respects supplanted the strong urban values of the past. We should not readily abandon art and architecture as effective tools for the deconstruction and criticism of technology run amok and the prevalence of hegemonic institutions. The written words of *Invisible Cities*, the images of Bosch's triptych, and post-modern and megastructure perspective drawings are illustrated by their representations of society which have meanings beyond notions directly conveyed by narrative or a painted and drawn scene.[1] Yet we must accept that formalism is a double-edged sword: any sort of formalism, however sophisticated and despite its good intentions, when wielded unwisely can serve to exacerbate the more barbaric aspects of our nature. Instead of designing a democracy for creative and responsible individuals "beyond good and evil," we may end up crafting branded cages for violently territorial animals living in private, fenced-in suburban "communities" or urban "theme-parks."[2]

In my conceptual proposal for urban block networks in Chicago, I have conceded that Man cannot be saved,[3] and that the age of machines cannot be stopped; therefore, architects must connect man and machines in ways that embrace the realities of the different markets that constitute Chicago while exposing and then rejecting the hypocrisy of our idealized visions of the future that have proved to be disconnected from contemporary urban economies. In

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[1] Erwin Panofsky was first to look at art and perspective drawings not as isolated incidents, but as the products of a historical environment.

[2] A. Perez-Gomez, *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2000), p. 388.

[3] Alvar Aalto states that "although we know that poor man can hardly be saved, whatever we attempt to do, the main duty of the architect is to humanize the age of machines. That must however be done without disregarding form," A. Aalto, *Synopsis, Painting, Architecture*, *Sculpture* (Berlin, Birkhauser, 1980), p. 20.

contravention of this hypocrisy, and as an alternative to the conspiracy between architectural

Utopia and the flaws of twenty-first century urban development, my architectural investigation

accepts the limitations and imperfections of humankind, criticized in *Invisible Cities* and *The*

Garden of Earthly Delights, as fundamentally intrinsic yet potentially valuable aspects of the

human experience that can be harnessed to establish the architectural potential and limits of

urban renewal.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alexandro Angelbello received his bachelor's degree in studio art at Florida State University, in Tallahassee, Florida in 1998. From 1999 to 2004 he pursued various endeavors in painting, mixed-media, and digital arts. Since 2004 he has been working toward completing a master's degree in architecture at the University of Florida.