

PUBLICACIÓN VIAJE CHICAGO.

CHICAGO, CITY OF OVERLAPPINGS.

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Thinking on the invisible, on what is but does not appear evident, on what one can suspect but not directly see, is one of the most suggestive themes in architecture. When visiting now in 2012 the city of Chicago for the third time after the previous 2005 and 2009 encounters, I couldn't avoid thinking and reflecting over the other city that coexists with the one visible at an inferior and unknown stratum. That analogue and parallel city cropped up after the constantly growing population hygienic sanitary demands provoked one of the largest artificial human interventions over a natural landscape. Revealing that coexistence is my intention.

Chicago set herself up as a strategic farming, livestock and industrial distribution centre placed between the East and West coasts of the country, in the middle of XIX Century. Its emplacement in the Great Lakes's area, even though it was a perfect location in commercial terms, it became a contentious site due to its marshy grounds where the high water table made waste disposing of and drainage rather difficult. Besides that, the existing inefficient drinking water and sewage treatment triggered typhoid and dysentery periodic epidemics that culminated with the 1854 highly lethal cholera. It is then decided to face an ambitious engineering work to completely transform the city: connecting Chicago river with Des Plaines river by means of digging a channel between them and changing Chicagos's flow direction to follow a Mississippi's affluent towards Mexico Gulf and so avoid discharging onto the lake. Waste disposal of and drainage pollution was so avoided over the lake, being it the city's drinking water resource. But apart from that, it proved to be necessary to raise the low existing street level to enable a new urban sewerage and waste disposal of system.

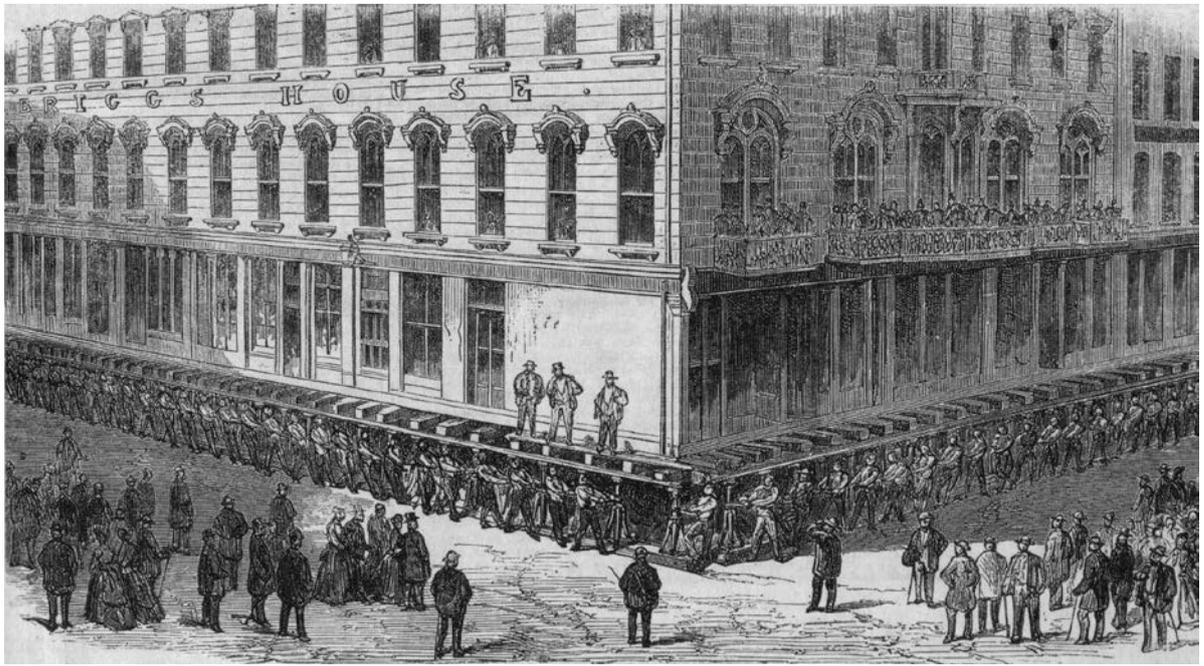
In 1856 the Town Hall authorities gave their approval to a plan to build a new sanitary system and its channel and to take the street level up. It supposed to transform the building's old ground floor into a basement or even literally remove the buildings. Teams of engineers worked with mechanical jacks, and even with hydraulic ones at the end, to lift somewhat five square kilometres of city, including whole lots of brick and stone buildings, over almost 20 years. Most of the better of buildings endured that titanic action, but the lowest quality ones went through substitution or removal processes using cylinders under their bases. One can imagine the astonishing effect produced by the physical uprising of large buildings, or some of them's removal to new sites, over the population of a city with urban profiles on a constant transformation.

Finally the city could enjoy an urban sewerage and waste disposal of system that guaranteed population hygienic sanitary demands; Chicago's 1871 fire destroyed the city and a great deal of the previously upraised buildings disappeared. Nevertheless, a new reconstruction of the city was immediately set forth keeping the previous criteria about raising up over the lake's water table the street level. New constructions would allow the use of a new foundation methodology, so called "Chicago's Method"; it consists on a strategy that, when foundation piles deep over the water table, wooden jackets with steel rings are used as the excavation goes on and down. This system was for the first time used in 1894 by Sooy Smith Company. If the ground is strong enough when reaching the wished depth, the consistent concrete is poured into the formed bell foundation. These piles constructed by means of the Chicago's Method can reach 60 meters in depth with up to 3,5 meters of diameter. Future development and growth so were guaranteed.

The new city emerged from the devastating fire's ashes saw the birthday of an innovative use of steel technology and structural frameworks, - School of Chicago -, that soon would make possible the growth in height with the first modern skyscrapers. And while the city stretches and looks from increasingly dominant positions, an underground sub-city, grows stronger as its inferior counterpoint. The street elevation - 0 floor raising allows the existence of a hidden street system that acts as a flow of goods and loading docks, a real service stratified city that supplies goods and energy to the visible city. A thin tarmac conglomerate line separates these two worlds; along the main street Michigan Avenue, - the Magnificent Mile-, most luxurious buildings, bank headquarters, commercial firm brands, most representative hotels, etc., vertically overlap with the inferior tertiary substrate. Only a stretch staircase goes down to the other latent, half-light and continuous traffic city, where Chicago's " facilities " are revealed and where, against the upper and visible Ritz , homeless seek out their refuge and real misery can be observed.

Walking Chicago one can detect signs of that other city; as bridge boards street slabs address construction joints and sidewalks appear as cantilevers built between buildings and traffic pathways, with their joints revealing that one is at a floating level over the sub-city void. And when one looks upwards new resonances of this strata system are discovered: buildings like the Marina Towers, that occupy several floors with parking places over the street and pile their office or housing programme on them, with their entrance halls really placed at the + 14 floor level and, specially, buildings in height that have raised the idea of public space - plaza to their tops by creating lookout areas over the city landscape. To go up the Skydeck or the Willis Tower or, above all, the Hancock's Tower Observatory gives not only a visual fascinating experience of Downtown and its flat extension along the Midwest plane, but the feeling that a public meeting point could be situated between 350 and 450 meters level, as a feat or tour de force of the being thought city as the overlapping of layers and functions, vertically connected by fast elevators tying together the diverse cities inside the city.

Chicago-Madrid, January 22 - February 25, 2012



Briggs House 's raising lithograph. Chicago Tribune.



Building 's moving by rollers lithograph.



Cantilever sidewalk at Mies's IBM Building detail. The analogue city under it. Construction works in front of the Tribune Tower. 2005.



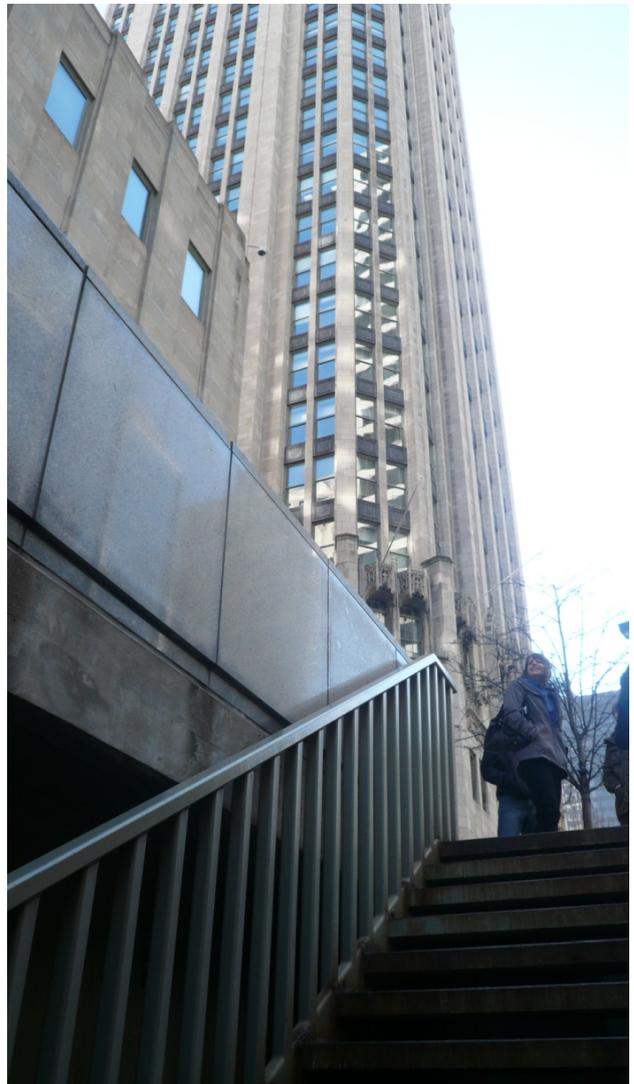
Construction joint between sidewalk and street detail. Michigan Avenue. 2005.



Construction joint between streets as board bridges detail. Michigan Avenue. 2012.



Construction joint between streets as board bridges detail. Michigan Avenue. 2012.



Stretch staircase to sub-city. Michigan Avenue, close to Chicago Tribune. 2012.



View of the staircase that connects Michigan Avenue with the sub – city stratum, close to Chicago Tribune. 2012.



The analogue city. The services city. Chicago 2005



Downtown building connecting bridges. Chicago 2012



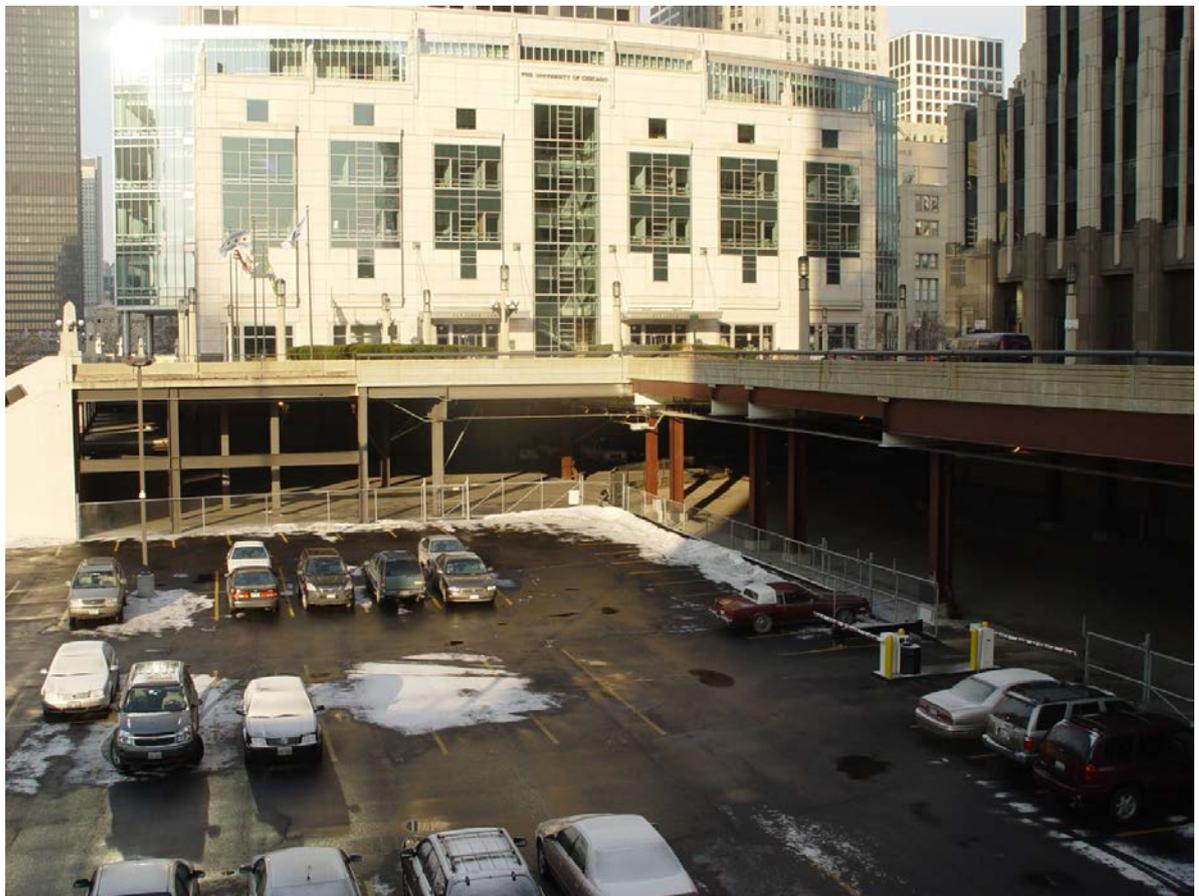
Downtown building connecting bridges. Chicago 2012



The LOOP, elevated train passing by the Millenium Park surroundings. Chicago 2012



The LOOP, at Downtown core. Chicago 2012



The analogue city. The services city. Chicago 2012



City layers at a river bank. Chicago 2005



Parking places piled up to floor + 15, entrance hall to housing. Marina Towers complex. Chicago 2012



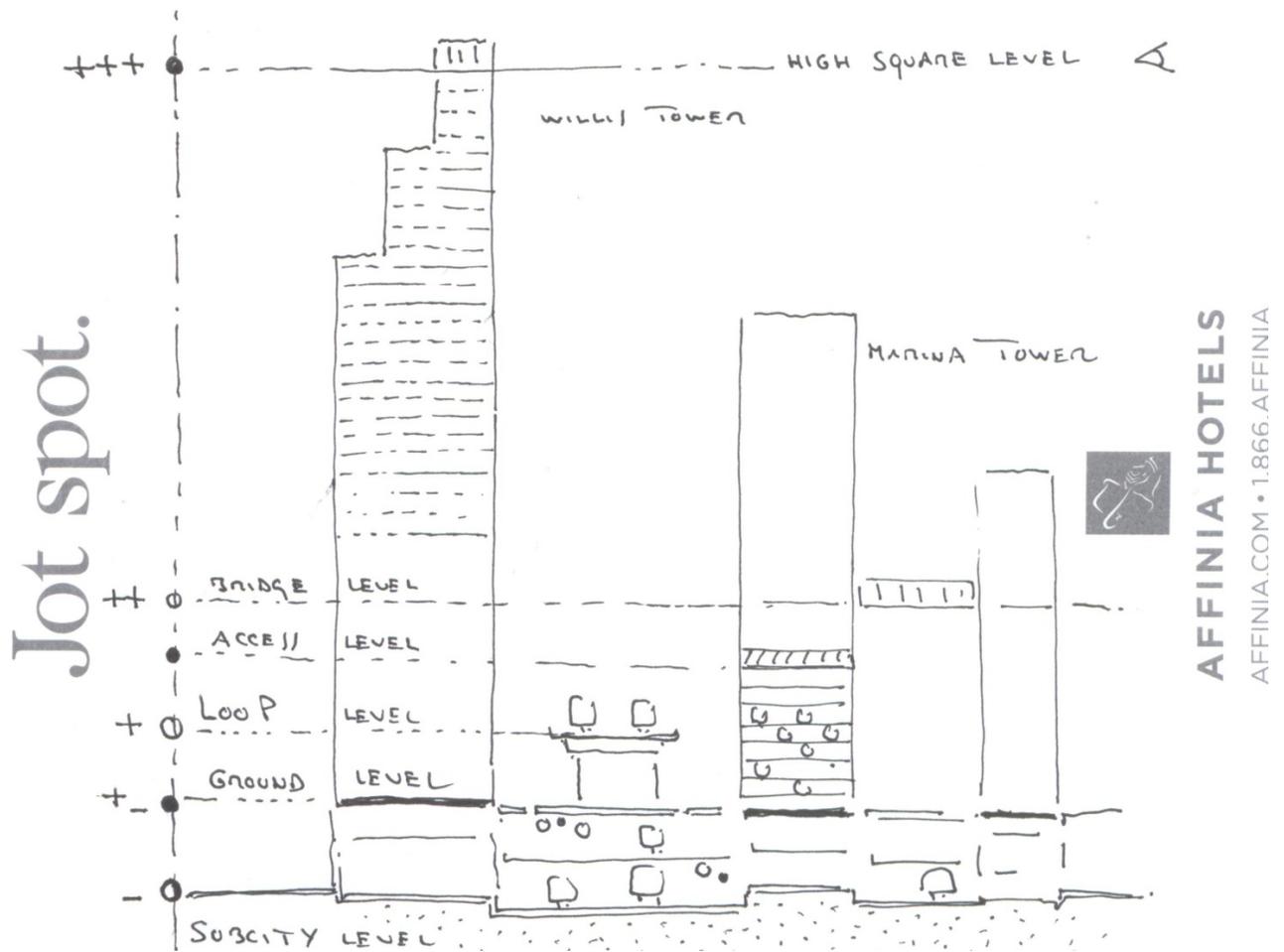
Square in height. John Hancock's observatory. Chicago 2005



Square in height. Skydeck. Willis Tower (old Sears Tower). Chicago 2012



Square in height. John Hancock's observatory. Chicago 2012



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City superimposition - overlapping diagram. Chicago 2012