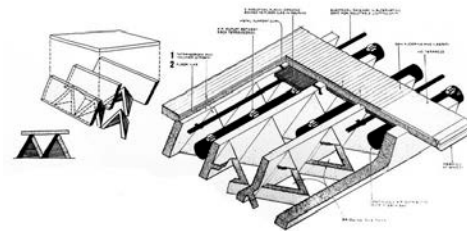


Erica Goetz
Columbia University, GSAPP
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CORELESS



LARKIN BUILDING, FRANK LLYOD WRIGHT; SENDAI
MEDIATHEQUE, TOYO ITO; YALE ART GALLERY,
LOUIS KAHN; JUSSIEU LIBRARY OMA

In order to rethink the program and cultural context of a branch bank, we must first reconsider the building's organization, at the heart of which is the building core. Technological advancements have pushed us to the point of being able to think of freeing the building from the constraints of the core. And the bank, with its mix of public space and office space, whose old traditions are most threatened by the technological realities of today, provides a ripe ground on which to dissolve the building core. This studio posits the possibility of a coreless building, one in which the typical circulation, structure, services and data feed are thrown into question.

CORE AS POCHE

A well-packed core can eat up more than thirty percent of the building floor area. The circulation and distribution of people and services is often treated as an immutable and impenetrable block in building design. As an amalgam of the necessary evils of design, the building services are tightly jammed into a solid mass. The core often becomes something to design around in an effort to create "free" space. Yet beholden to this massive block, is the space truly free?

We can trace the history of core design and its impact on building organization. Its relative position to the floor plate -- central, split, explicit, displaced, dispersed -- can allow or inhibit true spatial freedoms and ultimately provide for new forms of program. Inventions in core design and the distribution of services -- seen notably in Wright's Larkin Building, Kahn's Yale Art Gallery, Piano and Rogers' Pompidou Center, Roche's Ford Foundation, Ito's Sendai Mediatheque, OMA's Jussieu Library -- has spurred new program types and at times radically transformed the way we use and experience space. In this moment, when banking pursuits have become increasingly digital and

decentralized, the role of the branch bank is being transformed, and its architecture must respond. The old norms of teller lines, private vaults, cubicles and ATM's have been trumped by the power of our pocket devices. So if the branch bank then serves as a place for informational transactions and social interchange, how do we define and organize this new program to prevent it from becoming blank, generic and formless?

CORE IS PASSÉ

The practice of driving ducts and pipes through the "left spaces" of a building's poche is bygone. As Reyner Bahnman argues in *The Architecture of the Well Tempered Environment*, architecture has historically remained in a *reactive* position, to both technological invention and to cultural demand. Architectural advancements are predicated upon the introduction of a new material or adapted from an invention in another field. Historically, this profession has taken several decades to fully adopt technological solutions into building practice. It's not just that architecture assumes a position of *reaction*; it's that architecture assumes a position of *delayed reaction*.

It is easy to observe the physical effects that the digitization of our culture has had on the way we work and live. We continue to become myopically focused on our individual electronic devices, but those devices in turn, offer us immediate access to anyone and anything from anywhere. Yet architecture's *reaction* to the mandates of new technology has been one of overlay. The obligations of the core-- to enable us to create interiors that are airtight, dustproof, drip-free, soundless and odorless-- are increasingly taxed by the demands of new technology. Digital feed has been treated as another layer of services to string through the floors and walls—a new cable in an old infrastructure.

FREE THE CORE

In our studio, we will find ways to react to and harness the technology to blow up the core rather than stuff more things into it. To conceive of a building without a core is to free the plan and the section, to invent new means of circulating people and distributing services and data, not as pipes and stairs packed in walls, but rather as spatial experience conceived of at the scale of building organization and evident at the scale of the user. If the bank is not beholden to a core "block" cannibalizing the floor area, how can massing, skin and program distribution be reoriented to reveal new experiences?