



The City and the Megastructure

Introduction

Are megastructures a form of sustainable development and do they hold any promise as a mode of urban development? It is believed that Fumihiko Maki invented the term in 1960s to describe large projects, even though his own schemes never reached the scale of a megastructure (Bognar, 1996). The nature of a megastructure, however, has not been clearly articulated. 'Megastructures were large buildings of a particular kind, though what kind remains difficult to define with neat verbal precision' (Banham, 1976, p. 7). Maki (1964) suggested a megastructure is a '...large frame in which all the functions of the city or part of the city are housed'. He compares megastructures to Italian hill towns, with its frame being the hill on which the towns were built. A large frame (or supporting structure) implies a concentration of functions, similar to those contained by the walls in a medieval city.

Historical examples

An understanding of what makes a development into a megastructure can be gained from a brief historical review. The Romans constructed buildings on a massive scale. With the fall of the Roman Empire some of these vast structures were transformed by their inhabitants into the fabric of their cities.