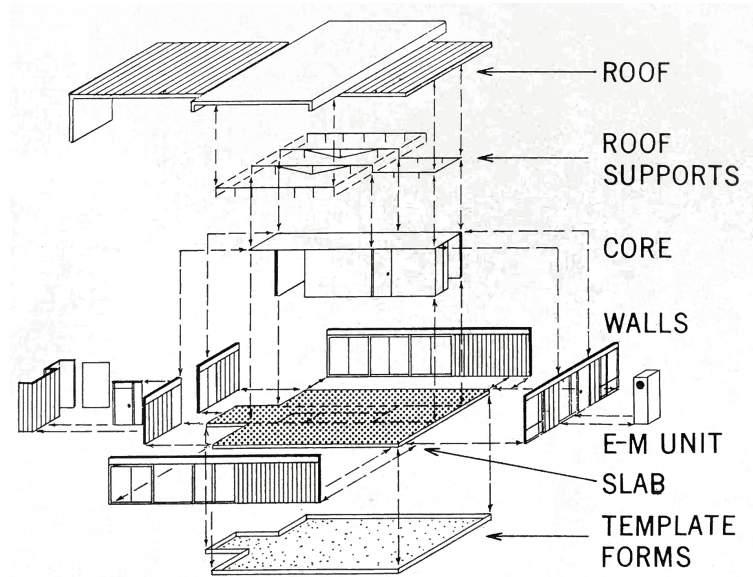


# Infrastructures of Modernity

## – Concepts for Histories of the Global –



Wexler & Harrison, Steel Development House with U.S. Steel Corporation, c. 1960.

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This course draws on recent theorizations of infrastructure in urban and architectural history, the humanities, and social sciences to rethink modernity and globalization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Taking as the starting point, not particular infrastructures, but the normative and analytic concepts that have historically been employed to enact or understand regimes of geographic integration, will allow us to consider how infrastructures themselves are enmeshed in the production of particular ordering logics, spatial patterns, and territorial textures of globality. The ordering concepts under examination are constitutive of “the infrastructural” as a category that, while inflected through geographic and political specificities, describes a typical mode of (liberal) globalization which foregrounds technical connectivity, reliability, interoperability, and environmental endurance—though not always delivering these conditions.

In this sense, railways, waterways, communications systems, supply chains, land surveying techniques, urban planning practices, organizational management tools, and marketing technologies, among others, are all to be understood as “infrastructural”—large-scale, complex assemblages combining material and ideological processes that generate particular landscapes and constellations of globality. Infrastructures are the mediatory tissues of a modernity bent on universalizing growth; challenging this seemingly automatic growth requires opening the analytical lens beyond sites of production to examine regimes of reproduction and jurisdiction. In other words, infrastructures will be examined as distributive mechanisms for the political and the ontological itself—not merely the economic—thus suggesting critical approaches for decolonizing capitalist globalization, showing its co-existence with other alternative modernities and globalizations.

These critical theories and histories of infrastructure provide a grammar and a vocabulary for thinking capitalist globalization, and its multiple antitheses, through different ways of ordering concepts and space. In turn, this will allow us to consider the relation between the architectural, the urban, and the rural, anew, providing a critical framework to engage with new infrastructural thinking, like the Green New Deal.