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An American story: from continental interior to continuous interior

Impossible to talk about the mall without talking about where it springs from, the notions of limitless freedom it is grounded upon: freedom of movement, freedom of access, freedom of action, freedom of choice, freedom to consume, freedom to realise oneself

A culture of individualism, a culture of tribal community

This is an American story, concerning the colonisation of the American continental territory, and the processes and features of its urbanisation

The colonial technique, common to all such enterprises: the creation of an originary space that is at the same time a familiar space, a beginning that already contains the image of home or an ideal towards the creation of a utopia, and crucially, within the space of the other

Thomas Jefferson and the Land Ordinance 1785: a projection, using a device—the grid: which serves as measure, technique, template, machine—indifferently cast over an entire unseen and unknown territory, and the space of the other

Parallels to Roman colonialism, without the significance of place: all is possessed; it is just a matter of claiming that already-possessed through a complex of interrelated agencies,

A spatial and ideological interior imposed through concept, projection, discovery, image, war, genocide, exploitation, and speculation

The pioneer/ the Army/ Industry/ the city all ranged against the land and the other, in processes that lead to complete occupation, the conquest of the Frontier

The God-given right: the claim of the ideology of Manifest Destiny (John L. O'Sullivan 1845)
Yosemite and Eden 1864

The continent is rendered an interior, of projected ideology readied to receive its subjects, and an interior of myth: God's country

The elimination and assumption of the place of the other and the absorption of nature as Eden, continuous with the city (Olmsted)

The Homestead Act 1865: land, labour, and self-realisation

The crossing of territorialisation, speculation, and laissez-faire capitalism

A territorial urban project (Chicago) and the division of labour

The suburb and the Edenic ideal

The legitimation of the urban project in the representation of nature (Olmsted)

2

In the nineteenth century, the railways were central to land speculation, the urbanization of the territory and the phenomenon of diffuse urbanism,

In the early twentieth century, it was the combined work of relief to urban congestion and regional infrastructural planning, both of which reinforced the notion of a dispersed city and an occupied, mythical territory

After the Second World War, a transformation of American economy, the turning of industrial military production to domestic goods for domestic and international sales, corresponding with credit for returning GIs, the construction of motorways and speculative suburbia, mediated imagery and the making and selling of a culture of consumption

A consumer's republic

That urbanism that corresponded to it was a network urbanism, one that fused the image of the territory and that of the city, very much in the spirit of Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities

of Tomorrow, the experiments of the 1920s and 1930s Regional Planning Group, and soon again idealised by both Victor Gruen in *The Heart of Our Cities* and Walt Disney's EPCOT
And in correspondence with this new version of the dispersed city—its regional urbanism—a new typology, the indoor shopping center (Gruen), soon to be known as 'the mall'
The exterior exhibits the properties of a machine, a delivery system
Characteristic of the interior: an elision of typologies: the space of consumption resembles a village as built for television, and the space of work: the office lobby
This makes it possible to imagine the mall, multivalent in meanings and utility, to cure the ills of the inner city, the urban centre: Fort Worth (Gruen) and the mallification of the centre
Environmental typology, continuity of place of work, leisure, consumption, home, tied by the automobile and motorway, and given an image in walking and access and transparency, translating territory into a continuous environment, with the illusion of freedom of movement, action

3

Prototype of the continuous interior: PVM as model of the suburbanisation of the centre and as natural extension of the diffuse urban pattern and its logic; the centre as continuous interior whose spaces, organized in three-dimensions are offered as, simultaneously, alternatives and extensions to the streets of the city
In period of crisis (political, economic) the territorial-regional typology of the mall returns to the urban centre in the form of malls and atria (Stubbins), to rehabilitate the centre and the corporate body alike: the corporate entity unlocked, given a new identity, 'democratised'
The recognition that there was now a continuous environment, one that tied the place of dwelling to the place of work, and all the places could be considered to be one place (Roche)

4

We have been here before: the utopia of the arcades, the ideal interior of the Crystal Palace: interior and nature appear at once, in one realm, eventually to be co-opted into the forms and expressions of the mall
Superstudio and Archizoom offer the critical image of the diffuse urbanism, or in Branzi's words 'weak and diffuse Modernity', and of the continuous interior of capitalism
An extension of freedom of the suburb—the diffuse all-over, all-interior, all-territory urb—is introduced into the realm of the city centre, replacing the freedom of the street, apparently a corporate gift, suggesting a public realm, and the image of freedom
A model for many buildings, from civic institutions to infrastructures, forced by economic necessity: malls, hospitals, stations and airports, museums: hubs
Their interiors continuous with all space, continuous with all time (Grand Louvre): all is drawn inside, there is only within
In the Louvre, the airport concourse under the monument; the tomb and the pyramid, animated by technology; lobby, concourse, mausoleum, monument; the spectacle of the ruin within
The continuous interior: an environment of agreement, from one of convention to one of always-expanding variety, all of which can be monetized, in which all identities can be identified, shared, lived, consumed and all experience is collapsed
Again, this realm is taken, in its imitation of public-ness, in its 'nature', natural, inducing a hallucination or mirage of freedom, to be public

Again, we find ourselves in a condition parallel to that of the American West in the mid-nineteenth century, at a crossing of ideology (extreme individualism powered by consumption) and neoliberalism

But if we take this realm to be public, and expect to be free, how can we claim that freedom when we are caught up in the spectacle and its programmed desires?

And what must we do to achieve that freedom, to take this promise of wandering, without borders, to confront and meet that other that has been vanquished, overwhelmed, enslaved, ignored?