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Distribution Concourse: Concepts for a Post-Commericalized Landscape Within an Increasingly Networked Culture

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CONCEPTS FOR A POST-COMMERCIALIZED LANDSCAPE WITHIN AN INCREASINGLY NETWORKED CULTURE
As the “last remaining form of public activity” becomes de-territorialized by digital commercial models and distribution networks, architecture must become an urban instrument for managing the slippages of public and private behavior as they occur within a continuous, responsive surface of commerce.
DISTRIBUTION CONCOURSE

by Nathan Miller

A terminal project presented to the faculty of the College of Architecture at the University of Nebraska in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture.

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DISTRIBUTION CONCOURSE is design research thesis which proposes a reconfiguration of large “emptied-out” blocks of commercial space. Space planning strategies which have led to the emergence of commercial artifacts, such as the dead mall, are evaluated against new commercial models which rely on distribution and digital networks.

Under the premise that digital commercial practices are changing how we consider the private-sector in relation to urban infrastructure, DISTRIBUTION CONCOURSE promotes a new urban organizational scheme which may thrive in post-commercialized areas of the city.

Services such as Amazon.com and the availability of wireless internet across entire city grids have made ambiguous where private and public sector activity occurs. Cookies are place on personal computers which track consumer habits. Fed-Ex circulates consumer goods through private neighborhoods. Coffee shops are used as home offices. Lobby spaces are living rooms. The commercial event, once easily located in malls and big box stores, is becoming temporal: occurring nowhere and everywhere simultaneously.

DISTRIBUTION CONCOURSE...

1. Maps out a new trajectory using emerging global-cultural trends that problematizes the “terrain vague” of emptied out commercial zones of the city.

2. Diagrams a new set of parameters which organize a new system for inhabiting post-commercialized districts.

3. Conceptualizes a new architectural prototype which acts as an urban instrument for managing and responding to the activities and events that emerge out of the new system.

dis·trib·ute
v. dis·trib·ut·ed, dis·trib·ut·ing, dis·trib·utes
v. tr.
1. To divide and dispense in portions.
2. 1. To supply (goods) to retailers.
   2. To deliver or pass out: distributing handbills on the street.
   3. To spread or diffuse over an area; scatter: distribute grass seed over the lawn.
   4. To apportion so as to be evenly spread throughout a given area: 180 pounds of muscle that were well distributed over his 6-foot frame.

con·course
n.
1. A large open space for the gathering or passage of crowds, as in an airport.
2. A broad thoroughfare.
3. A great crowd; a throng.
4. The act of coming, moving, or flowing together.
“In these prototypes are expressed the new opportunities and new problems which the regional suburban shopping center as a building type of the second half of the twentieth century opened up. This building type is of historical significance because its planning, design and execution offered opportunities and raised questions which had not previously been experienced in private projects.”

-Victor Gruen
1974
Shopping Mall Prototypes
Victor Gruen’s sketch studies on shopping mall composition and orientation. The shopping center negotiated between an internalized organization for shopping and the external organization of parking and access.

Left Column:
Shopping in relation to parking surface.

Right Column:
Spatial relationships scenarios in relation to consumer movement.
A NEW TYPOLOGY

In his 1964 book, *The Heart of Our Cities*, architect Victor Gruen proposed two alternatives in reaction to the decentralization of the city: the death of the city or its transfiguration. For the idealist in Gruen, the death of the city was not an option, and, as such, much of his theoretical and practical concern was in the city’s transfiguration. Transfiguration, for Gruen meant “a change in urban pattern, a new order that can be superimposed over the existing one, transcending what we have inherited from the past with the spirit of the present and the immediate future.”

This definition led Gruen to develop the suburban shopping mall: a new building typology which would serve as a center of market and culture in cities rapidly becoming de-centered due to the popularity of the automobile and privatization. “We are convinced” begins Gruen, “that the real shopping center will be the most profitable type of chain store location yet developed for the simple reason that it will include features to induce people to drive considerable distances to enjoy its advantages.” On average, these structures attain a size between 500 thousand and one million square feet. Apart from their mammoth size, other physical characteristics include large parking lots to accommodate automobile use and an environmentally-controlled interior containing numerous retail stores and other commercial services.

THE GRUEN EFFECT

The Gruen Effect, sometimes referred to as The Gruen Transfer, is a retail theory which proposes that the design of the shopping mall has the ability to “excite, persuade, and ultimately control consumers’ emotions, responses, and pocketbooks.” Under this premise, the free-will of the shopper is ultimately subverted by the spectacle of the shopping environment allowing the mall tenants to entice consumers to purchase their products. Shopping is conceived as a disciplined ritual: consumers shuffle in, find the products they want (or are told they want) and are then funneled out through the registers. Meanwhile the introductory sounds of Pink Floyd’s Money can be faintly heard as the consumers return to their cars and drive back home to their suburban house.

Just as disciplined, the commercial landscape of the later half of the twentieth century exhibits the same mechanical viewpoint towards urban and suburban environments. Commercial areas are clearly distinguished from private residential space. Compositionally, property exists as precise zones marked off as orthogonal geometry with the ground existing as flat surface for parking and structures as a rectangular mass. Interior spaces, break down like Russian dolls by replicating determinate configurations down to the product-to-shelf dichotomies.

While not “site responsive” or “site specific” from a high-design or ecologically friendly standpoint, the structures of commercialism respond to a landscape of economics. Diagrams and spreadsheets by Gruen Associates catalogue data related to traffic patterns and access points in order to establish the optimal positioning of their shopping centers. On a smaller scale, a Starbucks appears across the street from a Starbucks not because of negligence but because of attention to micro-movement among consumers in a complex urban setting.

Victor Gruen once proclaimed the shopping mall to be a “machine for selling” demonstrating a modernist, and consequently mechanical, worldview of spatial relationships especially between consumer and producer. The world of the shopping mall, for Gruen, is black and white. Amusingly, the connection of the shopping mall to a high-modernist attitude is further illustrated in a very satirical way in the Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping as Le Corbusier’s Domino is shown to have been transformed into the basic unit of commercialism thanks to the introduction of the escalator. Whereas Le Corbusier introduced a diagram which outlined modern concepts for small scale construction, the shopping mall prototype promotes the modern ideal of the Domino in a mega-structure enabled by air conditioning for larger free plans and escalators to ease the floor-to-floor transitions.

FALLOUT

Consumers are not the only things being escalated in the world of contemporary commercialism as physical scale of structures continues to increase. Rem Koolhaas observes in his essay Junkspace that “Air conditioning has launched the endless building. If architecture separates buildings, air conditioning unites them.” Mall of America, the largest mall in the United States, features 4.9 million square feet. This however pales in comparison to The Mall of Arabia in Dubai which will feature over 10 million
However, as the scale and spectacle of the commercial structure continues its ascent, the modernist program for regulating space begins to meltdown. The day after Thanksgiving, also known as “Black Friday”, is the busiest day for shopping in the United States. Crowds amass outside of Wal-Marts, Best Buys, and shopping centers across the nation awaiting the start of the Christmas shopping season. As the stores open, the consumer mob funnels through the automatic doors trampling those who might trip or move too slow to keep up. Shopping carts overflow, fights break out over products, and lines become locked as the check-out registers are maxed out.

These melt downs feedback into the drive for bigger spaces, more products, and more spectacle; leaving behind a trail of outdated and underperforming selling machines. The Gruen Effect, used earlier to describe the subversion of consumer identity through the power structure of commercialism, simultaneously describes the fallout caused by modern commercialism’s failure to manage the emergence of spontaneous, temporal events.
“The landscape of the contemporary, horizontal city is no longer a placemaking or condensing medium. Instead it is fragmented and chaotically spread, escaping wholeness, objectivity, and public consciousness - *terra incognita.*”

- Alan Berger

*Drosscape*
The term "post-commercial space" refers to commercial space that is sits un-used for an extended period of time. The term "dead mall" is used to describe this condition specific to shopping centers, however, a dead mall is often indicative of problems facing an entire commercial district. According to Alan Berger, "As of 2001, more than 400 regional indoor malls, representing 21 percent of all malls, were declared abandoned, dead, or dying."

The reasons for this are broad and numerous and often revolve around economic patterns and demographic shifts. More often than not, a dead shopping mall is replaced by a larger center that can handle more consumer traffic and provide stores that require more square footage. As with Omaha, Nebraska the shopping mall may be used to track the expansion of the city to the west. Southroads mall is considered dead and is located in the east closest to the city center. Shopping malls get progressively larger and more profitable as they are built farther and farther west.

The “death” of Southroads mall in Bellevue, NE occurred over a short period of time due to a combination of three primary factors. In the late 1980s the Kennedy freeway re-routed major north-south traffic around Fort Crook Road and the Southroads commercial district. Secondly, Oak View Mall in the west became the largest indoor shopping center in Omaha making Southroads outdated. Thirdly, a Wal-Mart opened just south of Southroads with direct access to the freeway effectively replacing Southroads as a major retail center. With Southroads and the surrounding commercial district cut off from consumer flow, the mall “died”.

From a conceptual standpoint, the dead mall enables an inquiry into how one approaches the composition of urban space. The post-commercial landscape exists as a kind of counter-place which, to quote Alan Berger, escapes “wholeness, objectivity, and public consciousness – terra incognita.”

As discussed in the preceding chapter, a commercial district is planned under a set of economic parameters in conjunction with a determinate modernist mentality. Under the conditions of the terrain vague of a post-commercial district it becomes problematic to introduce a redevelopment scheme which operates under similar premises. Since the context upon which the now-dead shopping mall depended upon is no longer accessible, a new context must be introduced which reframes the post-commercial space in such a way that makes it relevant to the culture which surrounds and inhabits it.

DE-MALLING IN 4 EASY STEPS

1. Locate mall built circ. 1965 in growing city. (bonus if designed by Victor Gruen)
2. Build new mall twice the size in growing part of the city.
3. Rerout major traffic around the mall (bonus if rerouted traffic leads to the new mall or other major commercial endeavor. re: Wal-Mart)
4. Check Pulse. If alive, repeat steps 1-3.
DeadMalls.com tracks dead mall activity throughout the country. Their listings and summaries of known dead malls, while incomplete, serve as a means for understanding the phenomenon on
1966-1990

The Fort Crook Rd Corridor in Bellevue, NE is established as a major retail corridor attracting businesses such as JC Penny, Bandeis, Woolworths, and Sears. Fort Crook Rd is the major artery for south-bound traffic. Southroads mall expands to accommodate more businesses and shopping activity.
1990-Present

The Fort Crook Rd corridor is replaced by the Kennedy Freeway and I-29 as major south bound traffic arteries. Omaha continues a westward expansion where new malls, such as Westroads and Oak View attract consumer business. Big Box stores, such as Wal-Mart attract consumer attention in Southern Bellevue. Major businesses vacate Southroads and retail programs slowly start to be replaced with temporary commercial headquarters. Southroads is now a programmatic half-way house.
“The processes that organize contemporary commercial exchange are not as easily located, interrupted, or contained as their predecessors, and as such, the traditional categorization of the “commercial event”... is no longer applicable. They cannot be solely defined through or against traditional design conventions resulting in a difficulty, therefore in synthesizing their operations into a new articulation of public sites.”

-Clare Lyster

Landslapes of Exchange: Re-articulating Site
Distribution Course

13

THE FedEx DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

BROWSING HISTORY

CONSUMING FUTURE

BEHAVIOR TRACKING

BROWSING Amazon.com
In response to this context, Distribution Concourse proposes a new planning strategy and architectural prototype for the emerging networked culture and late-capitalist economy. The commercial presence within the city is de-actualized in favor of digital commercial models such as Amazon.com which circulates surplus throughout the city. Simultaneously, we are seeing cities becoming wireless and connected: the internet is to the point of being a free amenity with wifi signals being distributed across the city grid thanks to the abundance of coffee shops, hotels, and wireless hotspots. People no longer need to be in a specific place to get access to the goods and services they require or desire. The home and the mall are simultaneously nowhere and everywhere.

As our culture becomes increasingly networked we are simultaneously staring in the face of a new domestic program: one which takes the program for the typical house and distributes it across the urban field: negotiating the need for personal space with the domestic roles that restaurants, coffee shops, hotels, bars, and gyms now serve for the connected and distributed populace.

Distribution Concourse reassesses of an urban viewpoint which has led to the emergence of large blocks of commercial space. In the broadest terms the project serves as a critique of the modernist worldview in general and looks for new theoretical ground to support a new kind of urban and architectural logic. To propose a complete reconfiguration of our current urban system is, no doubt, counter productive from a pragmatic standpoint. However, the pockets of undefined territory within post-commercialized zones offer an opportunity to rethink the relevance of determinate, mechanical urban thinking and propose new architectural concepts which may yield fruitful explorations in how the contemporary city operates.

The increasing popularity of the internet and the efficiency of delivery services have caused a paradigm shift with when, where, and how commercial exchange occurs. Alejandro Zaera Polo, in his essay “Order out of Chaos: The Material Organization of Advanced Capitalism” argues that “if urbanization has historically developed as a process of accumulation and location of surpluses, within late-capitalism the city is determined by its capacity to incorporate a circulation of surpluses.”

The consequences of this assertion on city composition are made apparent if one accepts the link between structure and the economic context within which they were created. If early-capitalism produced the familiar modern commercial landscape, then late-capitalism, operating under a different set of parameters, must necessarily produce a different set of spatial relationships.

Late-capitalism is capitalism made mobile: commodities and money exist in a state of constant circulation with exchange occurring “instantaneously on a global scale resulting in a devaluation of spatial delimitations.” The urban surface, in support of the late-capitalist regime, must forgo the specifics of location, boundaries, and site-specific composition and instead produce models of organization which construct a terrain-mobile which manages the flow and movement in an economy based on distribution.
The re-articulation of the “terrain vague” of post-commercial districts for use in a mobilized economy requires land-ownership distinctions to be blurred. The term “Local land ownership” is nullified in order to take part in the distributed market.

The key amenity for gaining interest from the “touristical consumer” is the provision of infrastructure to support their transient behavior. Wireless internet, the availability of coffee and fast-food, public spaces, and transportation are provided.

Domestic - Commercial dichotomies are avoided. Inhabitation occurs within a continuous moving surface of commerce. The consumer is left to make-do by territorializing a temporal space of privacy “in-between” zones of intensive public use.

The creation of commercial centers is avoided. Instead, access to goods and services occurs through delivery (Amazon.com, etc).

The infrastructure continues to develop and evolve to form a fully distributed network. Users now generate their own network signals and communicate on a peer-to-peer level through a network unique to the community.
Distribution and Urban Space-Planning

Programmatic Relationships
The post-commercial landscape exists as a blank area between various suburban housing developments in Bellevue. Commercial activity has moved to the south.

Fort Crook Road is activated as a distribution corridor and space for pedestrian movement. Access is established through a series of control points: bus stops, drop off locations, etc.

Distribution nodes, public space, and personal spaces are woven together to create a device for local accumulation of activity and flexible programs.

Activity is regulated by forming zones of user activity allowing the system to manage density and urban events.

**Southroads Post-Commercial District**
Program Multiplicity
“Urban populations are fragmented, collectively and individually, their brains riddled with a confusing mixture of local experience and global information. As a result, they become less and less like residents (indigenous producers) and more like visitors (touristical consumers)… Reflecting and conforming to this change, the very architecture of the city will be compelled to lose its factual producer identity and dissolve into discontinuous hotel-style, time-based consumer accommodation…”

-Martin Pawley
Terminal Architecture
The planning of Distribution Concourse is enabled by the necessity for late-capitalist economies to articulate a space of flow to support the distribution of commodities. To compliment the planning scenarios, a new architectural prototype to support a de-territorialized, distribution economy is developed. The architecture of a Distribution Concourse gives up clearly defined boundaries and the mechanical logic of Modernism in favor of a fluid space which articulates points of control to manage the free circulation of consumers, commodities, and capital. While the determinate modern structures clearly organize urban dichotomies such as public-private, figure-ground, and consumer-producer, the inhabitants of Distribution Concourse find themselves occupying the in-between of a continuous surface of movement that is at times smooth and ambiguous, other times striated and specific.

Commercial enterprise is no longer restricted to clamoring for place over time; time and movement now hold systemic primacy. Items are no longer picked up, they are distributed. The disciplined ritual-based shopping-physical is dying in favor of the shopping-digital which, instead, embraces points of control to mediate the flow of product and consumer: hyperlinks, search engines, purchase tracking, passwords, accounts. This is the new programmed space of commercialism. In the “Postscript on Control Societies” Deleuze states:

"We’ve gone from one animal to another, from moles to snakes, not just in the system we live under but in the way we live and in our relations with other people, too. Disciplinary man produced energy in discrete amounts, while control man undulates, moving among a continuous range of different orbits. Surfing has taken over from all other sports."

The commercial paradigm we are familiar with is moving towards virtuality: occupying a place between the immediate past and the immediate future. The question for the newly emerging commercial being is not so much what we are buying now, but what we will want to buy soon.

Amazon.com “Recommends for you...” A suggestion that “Other users also bought similar items...” Your shopping history is your shopping future. The digital consumer undulates between the generalities of network infrastructure (html, java) to the specifics of user habits (purchase history, personalized item lists).

Based on these observations, three spatial concepts emerge which are then combined into a single architectural prototype which is used to organize and structure the landscape of Distribution Concourse:

**HABIT-HOMES**

Rather than prescribe difference (programatically and formally), personal space, as enabled by new commercial trends, calls for an alternative strategy: repetition breeding difference. An endless feedback loop of differentiating surfaces and volumes based on habitual behavior.

**DEMOCRATIC NEIGHBORS**

Strong markets win out over weak ones. Recurring habits win out over infrequent ones. In the democratic neighborhood, it is not a question of property, but of collective desire.

**COLLISIVE ZONES**

The free-for-all. Users in movement, generate spontaneous areas of collision and intensity. Children play. Friends meet, workers commute. The collisive zone folds and adapts with the event as well as induces events to occur.

From DoMino to Cookie
The prototype’s flexability is studied through a series of morphological diagrams which specify the kinds of surface conditions that may occur. Also studied is the seemless replication and proliferation of the surface prototype to generate large scale developments.
CONTROL PARAMETERS
Local user intensity

Overlap areas specify pockets of prototype control

Site access points form controlled intersections for new circulation

Site access network is identified

Main circulation artery

Existing organization of site
RE_PLANNING STRATEGY

ACTUALIZED MALL PROPER
(Shopping Centers, Big Box Retail)

VIRTUALIZED COMMERCIAL MODEL
(Amazon.com, FedEx, eBay)

DE-MALLING, DE-COMMERICALIZATION

TECTONIC RESTRUCTURING

SPATIAL PROBLEMATIZATION
If we share the belief that 6th Year design thesis projects are an opportunity to engage the discipline of architecture differently from the architectural profession, then the 2006-2007 design thesis of Nate Miller has certainly exploited this opportunity. While the project began with a desire to engage and breathe new life into a commercially-irrelevant location, it soon expanded from a programmatic exercise into one that, ultimately, looks to use architecture as an artistic medium. In the same spirit that Archigram, Lebbeus Woods and Douglas Darden built distinctive portfolios out of speculative projects, Mr. Miller’s final solution is not one that can be straightforwardly evaluated in terms of its specific response to the interior aspects of Site, Program and User. Beyond its engaging aesthetic qualities, Mr. Miller is proposing a series of non-programmatically-specific spaces that can be engaged and used in a multiplicity of ways. While this new proposal maintains a commercial agenda, Mr. Miller has clearly removed the physical Point of Sale aspect of consumerism away from the spatial composition, creating instead, more of a commercially-subsidized gift of public space to the public realm. While the motivations of corporate entities to generate such a facility remain largely unanswered, to second guess the actual circumstances and conditions necessary for this to happen in 2007 would be to miss Mr. Miller’s critique of blighted commercial infrastructure – His ultimate goal is to use this dead mall site as a vehicle for pushing himself into discovering new architectural possibility.

Nonetheless, the larger and more interesting question regarding the relevance of Mr. Miller’s project remains. Consider a rubber band’s elasticity. It will agreeably stretch when force acts upon it, however every rubber band also has its own physical limitations which are found at its snapping point. Once snapped, the rubber band loses its usefulness. Ultimately, both critics of his project and readers of this document shall decide if Mr. Miller’s project has stretched its architectural relevance and applicability without snapping it.

Interestingly enough, I do not believe that there will be any moderate positions regarding this project. If you are currently reading this Postscript, then you clearly belong to the “stretched” group and possess a piqued curiosity. However, if you belong to the “snapped” group, then you have probably already slammed this document shut and have jammed it back onto its shelf.

In the best tradition of the design thesis Nate Miller’s work generates more questions than in answers. The transformation of the title itself is endemic of the course that the project took. From “the Dead Mall; a proposal for reconstructing the left behind” to “Distribution Concourse; concepts for a post-commercialized landscape within an increasingly networked culture”, the project evolved from one founded upon the dominant problem-solving ethos of the architectural profession (always intent upon improving things without ever questioning why they are that way in the first place) to one that problematizes contemporary spatial and economic conditions as part of a larger social critique.

The project is therefore much more radical than the forms embedded in its imagery. In fact, I would argue that the project far exceeds in depth the slippery formal resolution of its design proposal. This assertion is evidenced by the course of discussion at the final review – only seldom did the critics actually reference the design work in front of them (it is curious that the best design theses are those in which the formal qualities of the work receive the least attention).

Instead of retroactively offering new forms for existing urban spaces as the profession typically does, Mr. Miller digs beneath the physicality of the dead mall to reveal a root problem that underlies rampant horizontal urbanization - the proliferation of inflexible, static architectural fragments that resist the flows of capital and the fluid realities of cultural change. His design work is not presented as a solution to this problem but as a lens through which to see it in a new light.

Ultimately we are not asked to approve or disapprove of the forms before us (and those collected in this volume) but to speculate on the notions of urban culture that they reveal. By questioning this culture itself we transcend the limited field of architectural design (as solutions to spatial problems already framed) and we begin to consider broader and more crucial problems of the future city.

Rather than looking at a Design Thesis we are considering Thesis Design.
In the Wachowski Brother’s 1999 film, *The Matrix*, the writers/directors construct a narrative which tells the story of about “The One” who is able to break free of an elaborate system of control. “The One”, also known as Neo, “wakes up” and realizes that his freedom has been an illusion that he must mount a resistance to the system in order to reclaim his individuality. Neo is at this point viewed as the outsider to the system’s inside. He may transcend the system itself in order to bend it to his will.

In the movie’s sequels, *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Matrix Revolutions*, Neo discovers that he is not, in fact, an outsider at all, but that his resistance to the system was another layer of control built into the Matrix itself. Neo’s relation to the Matrix was never that of an inside-outside, subject-object relationship, but that of an endless feedback loop which propels a self-determining open system. Resistance is a simulation by the Matrix used to expand control.

At the final presentation, the idea of self-determining systems and endless feedback loops were at the core of the discussion regarding Distribution Concourse. Questions were raised regarding “Who starts the system.” And “how does one resist the system.”? Both questions set up a dualism between start and end as well as insider and outsider. However, these distinctions are inadequate when attempting to ascertain the workings of the system illustrated in the project. (at least for the time being)

Distribution Concourse’s success is based on the ability to conceptualize an open system of spaces which spread and grow based on endless response and feedback. Dualism is not how the world of Distribution Concourse is constructed. Instead, the concept being pursued may be termed (with a strong nod to quantum mechanics) duality.

In his book, *Quantum City*, Ayssar Arida posits that “The urban realm consists of sets of coupled categories: public and private space, public and private property, urban and rural, community and individual…” and so on. The traditional way is to view these categories as dualisms: one or the other. The quantum worldview, as Ayssar Arida argues, is made up of dualities where “the two aspects complement each other and any system can be described as both whereas the degree to which it presents itself overall as either is a probabilistic statistical variable.”

It would be futile, perhaps, to try determining which variable takes primacy in how Amazon.com interacts with the user and visa versa: do the user’s purchases determine what Amazon.com suggests? Or do the suggestions made by Amazon.com inform the user purchase? Either position may be argued as valid, but what propels the system of online shopping is the feedback between consumer and producer.

The utopian (or dystopian, depending on your perspective) spatial scenarios of Distribution Concourse are enabled by this kind of feedback between wherein a new commercial model, exemplified by online shopping and product distribution, become a new planning experiment where spaces are not categorized as zones of exclusive opposition, but rather as zones of information feedback and control. An act of resistance (protest, terrorism, vandalism, etc), for example, is merely a kind of information which does little to upset the system but rather expand the parameters by which the system operates.

To propose a discussion on the specifics of power-relations and behavior at a localized scale within the system of Distribution Concourse is of considerable interest and a possible line of thought for future projects. At this time, however, the project allows for a very broad discussion into the big ideas related to the larger systems and networks associated with contemporary commercialism and their relationship to how we organized urban and suburban space.
ENDNOTES

   ibid., 58.


3 ibid, 8.

4 Refer to the poignant, comedic monologues of Lewis Black.

5 Hardwick, 8.


7 Rem Koolhaas. “Junkspace”. Published in Content. (Hochenzollernring: Taschen, 2004), 162.

8 Alan Berger. Drosscape, 186.


11 ibid, 27.


14 ibid, 143.


I would like to thank my mentor, Jeff Day, for his critical eye and enthusiasm. His abilities as an educator proved invaluable throughout the entire process.

I would especially like to thank Jeff Day and Chris Ford for their contribution to this document’s postscript. The intense discussions and debates with my critics were what propelled the work from the start.

ALSO, I would like to thank everyone who showed up to my reviews throughout the duration of this project. Your attendance was very motivational.
“It’s not a question of worrying or hoping for the best, but of finding new weapons.”

- Gilles Deleuze, *Postscript on Control Societies*

The architect is perhaps one of the more enigmatic characters to classify when attempting to locate its purpose within a broader discourse on society and culture. What do we do? Property owners provide sites. Engineers solve structures. Construction crews build. Are we idea people? Managers? Coordinators?

Categorization becomes even more problematic and ambiguous when considering how the architect is trained. Surely, an inquiry into how an architect is educated would provide some solid answer into what we do and why it is important that we do it. When setting out to execute my graduate design thesis, I had the motive for initiating an internal discussion into what an architect actually specializes in.

My project, in its execution and final form of representation, argues that the architect is, above all, a fashioner of conceptual weaponry that enables one to identify emerging cultural trends and map out a trajectory which extracts the potential a path may have for building new spatial relationships. In a sense, the architect occupies a strange location between philosophy, art, and science: we fashion new concepts, use these to critique the world we live in while imagining new ones, and then we attempt to make these worlds real (or prove that they already exist).

Distribution Concourse is an exercise in constructing concepts from emerging global-cultural trends in order to arrive at new diagrammatic organizations and tectonic prototypes. Much as the spaces we occupy in our everyday life depend on cultural and economic premises to support them. The spaces proposed in Distribution Concourse emerge out of a new systemic basis that we see at the fringe today’s increasingly networked world.

The impossibilities or the inevitable logical paradoxes that continue to make themselves apparent within this project do are not seen as failures or loose ends. Rather, they are viewed as fuel for a larger debate and exploration into how we live now and how we might be living in the not so distant future.