

CAUTIONARY TALES

from the land of freedom

Keywords

Freedom
Idea
History
Critique
Interview

Instead of freedom, we should talk about freedoms, Felicity D. Scott argues in this interview. With the book *Outlaw Territories* as a starting point for this conversation, Scott warns us about the cynicism or ambivalence inherent in the notion of freedom which, in the USA, has been raised a flagship argument by almost everyone: from hippies to corporations, or even from drop-outs to libertarians.

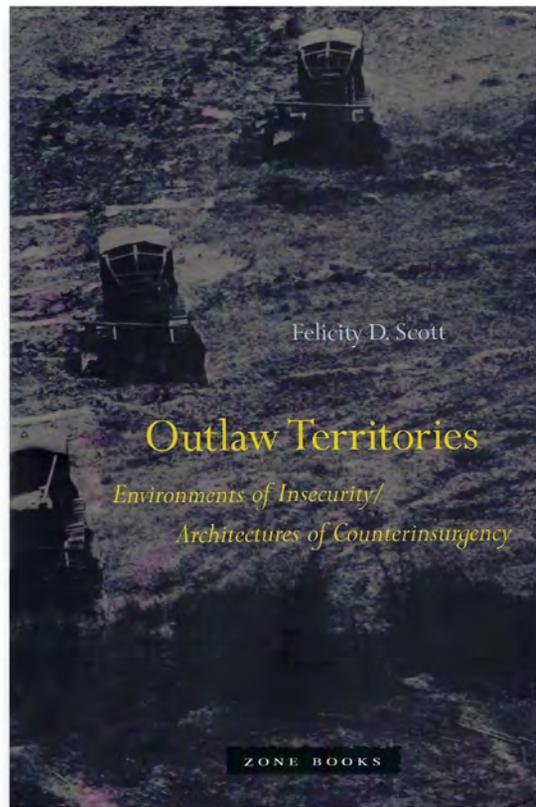
FRANCISCO DÍAZ: In your most recent book *Outlaw Territories: Environments of Insecurity / Architectures of Counterinsurgency* – as well as in previous ones – we see a comprehensive analysis of several episodes in which the notion of freedom has been raised within architecture. What is particular about your research, though, is that you not only stay in the argument but you also point out its usually contradictory consequences, as if freedom were always a double-sided coin. Based on that, I'd like to invite you to review some of these episodes.

We can start by talking about Giedion's assertion that the international character of the Crystal Palace in London was born out the principle of free-trade. You realize that Giedion "did not speak to contradictions at play between what he cast as the 'urge to master the earth's resources and draw out all its wealth' and Prince Consort Albert's more idealistic hope that it might 'unite the human race'" (Scott, 2016:59). Here is worth noticing that, in 1851, the freedom to trade was based on a colonial order; that is, it was born out on the lack of freedom of the majority of the planet.

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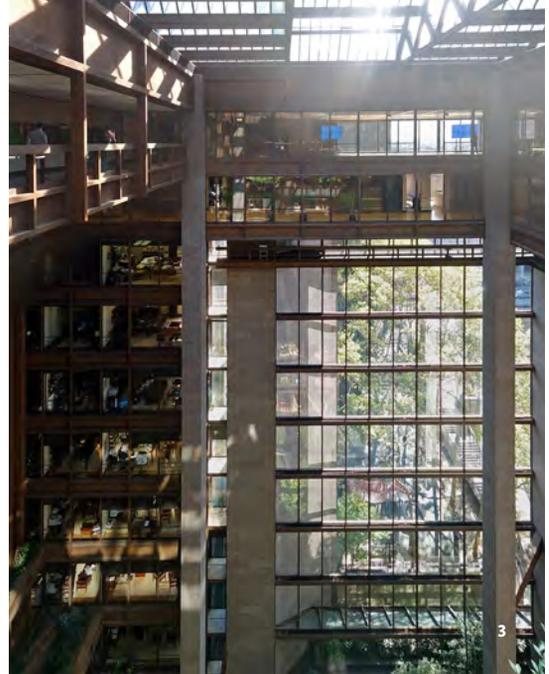


1 Felicity D. Scott. *Outlaw Territories. Environments of Insecurity / Architectures of Counterinsurgency.* New York: Zone Books, 2016. Portada / Cover.

FELICITY D. SCOTT: Thank you for an excellent question, and one that gets precisely to the heart of the type of cynicism and ambivalent valence, or even semantic slippages, reversals, and obfuscations that I am trying to elucidate in engaging somewhat passing references to the Crystal Palace of 1851 found in writings about the Ford Foundation Headquarters, which dates from the late 1960s. At stake for me is not just identifying paradoxical claims at work in liberal notions of freedom, although that is absolutely key, particularly on account of the ways in which, as



2 Vista interior del Crystal Palace durante la Gran Exposición de Londres de 1851. / *Interior of the Crystal Palace in London during the Great Exhibition of 1851.*
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3 Sede de la Fundación Ford / *Ford Foundation Building.* Kevin Roche, New York, 1968.
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you note, claims to so-called free trade were and can remain structurally related to violent forms of subjugation, whether in the Victorian era or in the late 1960s, or even today. Additionally, I am trying to trace some of the ways that such political strategies are staged through technocratic mandates and claims to rational economic paradigms, while simultaneously appealing to the elevated language of liberty and a global humanity. This rhetoric also appears repeatedly in accounts of the Ford Foundation Headquarters and might alert us that something suspicious is going on, or even help to identify elements of a neocolonial apparatus seeking to install updated techniques of unfreedom affecting the lives of the vast majority of Earth's populations. Hence, in the sentence you cite, I am pointing to Giedion's symptomatic reference to the entanglement of extractive processes – long tied to the violence of colonial expansion and exploitation of resources and populations – with claims to a universal humanity that appear to be speaking the language of the good. Taken out of context, it might appear that I was situating Prince Consort Albert's idealism regarding a unified humanity in a positive light, in contrast to the more evident problems of exploiting resources belonging to others. What I was actually trying to recover was the symptomatic fact that Giedion brought extraction practices and free trade together within his reading of the Crystal Palace.

For me this was a way of framing a methodological stake as well. I wanted to mobilize Giedion's reading and to speculate on why the Crystal Palace resurfaced as a referent for the Ford Foundation Headquarters, as in a review by

Ada Louise Huxtable. I was using the familiarity of Giedion's touchstone narrative in order to start to unsettle the critical framework through which architectural critics and historians conventionally address such a 'work' and to cast it as a component of an imperial strategy, or in the case of Ford a neo-imperial machinery for governing.

Huxtable suggested that the Ford Foundation had built themselves a "shimmering Crystal Palace," celebrating such corporate patronage by casting the foundation as a Medici for the 20th century and attempting to thus tie the building to "a humanistic, rather than an economic environment." As I point out, a more apt reference than the Medici's would in fact be the connection of the Crystal Palace to British imperialism during the Victorian period, suggesting not just an economic environment but one that violently reordered forms of life. It is at this point that I turn to Giedion, reminding the reader of Giedion's influential narrative of the origin of modern architecture, in which the Crystal Palace stands as a landmark within the story of heroic glass and steel structures emerging from 19th century engineering rationale. Focused on industrial materials, 'rational' systems of prefabrication and mass production, as well as aesthetic effects, his reading of its modernity, or at least the tropes deployed, persist in most accounts of modern architecture, at least as taught in architecture schools. I wanted to strategically desubliminate less commonly cited references to free trade and liberalism also found in Giedion's writings, but largely falling out of subsequent accounts, including the sort of questions which predominate in other (non-architectural) histories that mark the connection to the violence of an imperial order. As an example, I cite Paul Young's reading of the Great Exhibition, which situates the Crystal Palace as a "validation of free trade's new world order," tying it to exploitative, coercive and violent logics of the global capital dreamt by British imperialism, again under the palatable language of a "glorious humanity" coming together in such a new world order.

From the perspective of architectural history, my interest in turn was not just to identify the symptomatic manner in which Giedion's narrative in *Space, Time and Architecture* was haunted by economic liberalism but to suggest the importance of paying attention to the economic and geopolitical dimensions informing a building like that designed by Kevin Roche for the Ford Foundation, expanding from accounts of its technical and aesthetic prowess, its environmental conditioning, and its supposedly humanistic character. If the Ford Foundation Headquarters might indeed point to a continuity with the Crystal Palace, what is important is asking why its material,

technical and aesthetic character resonate with such an archaeology, as institutionalized through such narratives, and to complicate the ways those concerns potentially mask economic and environmental exploitation and the structural hierarchies engineered by powerful states and corporations to perpetuate their power. So I wanted to speak to the structural violence in whose service the building operates. When I point to Giedion's remark about the "idealistic hope" of Prince Albert, I was not suggesting that such idealism was any less pernicious than the violence wrought on environments and populations through resource extraction in the name of industrial wealth of those in the Global North, but that it was part of the very same colonial apparatus, one that should thus haunt our reading of the Ford Foundation Headquarters.

Indeed, the building's very program is historically tied to the fall of an older model of European imperialism and the rise in its place, in the wake of independence struggles and 'decolonization,' of a USA-driven neoimperial enterprise promising peace and the betterment of humanity through development aid and resource management, while continuing to serve the interests of those nations and corporations in power. Idealism, as noted repeatedly in *Outlaw Territories*, can be dangerous. So, you are entirely correct that at stake is speaking to the lack of freedom perpetuated by free trade paradigms, including within 'post-colonial' contexts that tend to experience the effects of neoliberal and neoimperial forces in ways that are both continuous and discontinuous with that colonial past.

FD: The Open Land movement is another interesting episode. It "was at once a manifesto for freeing the land or ceding it (back) to the commons and an invitation to participate in testing the limits of the tolerance of the police and the legal system" (Scott, 2016: 77), while aiming at ceding "property rights to a largely undefined domain of communal stewardship and to make land available rent free for anyone to use" (Scott, 2016:73). You also mention many other attempts to 'liberate' land for common use. Yet, most of them faced a disproportionate reaction from police, as if discussing the notion of private property – even in the name of freeing things – was heresy.

FS: You are right that, within my reading of Open Land communes, once again there are competing or contradictory notions of freedom at play, and I am trying to delineate these competing notions and the political valences affiliated or potentially affiliated with each, while also tracing how they interact. While I hadn't considered 'freedom' or really different or competing claims to freedom

(for we need to pluralize the term here) as a central thematic within *Outlaw Territories*, it is certainly interesting to revisit the book's problematics through this lens, and it helps draw out certain connections.

In the case of the Open Land communes, the ideal of freeing the land is at once a gesture attempting to 'liberate' the land from the state or apparatus of government, a gesture dreaming of the possibility of demarcating a territory free from the rules and regulations the commonards believed to overly constrain or even determine forms of life, and adversely configure the environment, but also an attempt to disarticulate the land from forces of capital, hence the importance to them of making land rent free and not subject to laws regulating private property. So we are not faced with claims that free trade or a global economic order is somehow in the interest of humanity, that it operates outside the framework of national states, but in the midst of claims wherein both capitalist or market-based forces and the regulation of government – the ways in which a government is supposed to care for the wellbeing of its citizens, and for their wealth – are being rejected.

This poses an interesting anomaly with respect to neoliberalism as well. I am thinking of Michel Feher's reading of the emergence of neoliberalism and free market advocates' battle against Keynesian economics. Recalling Michel Foucault's 1979 lectures on neoliberalism he writes, "Mont Pelerin doctrinaires lay *laissez-faire* to rest once and for all by showing that the restoration of the liberal order was less about getting the state out of people's lives than about getting public officials to govern in the interest of the market. Indeed, for them, a good government was not primarily meant to refrain from encroaching upon civil liberties and was certainly not supposed to shelter the governed from the hazards and harshness of the capitalist mode of production: instead of protecting the most fragile sectors of the population against the violence inherent in market competition, it should assume the task of preserving the fragile mechanisms of the market from the impatience of the crowd and its exploitation by demagogues" (Feher, 2018:14). I realize this might seem a strange point to bring in here. I am trying to point out the connection to libertarian thinking that informed Open Land communards' attempts to be rid of state control, and the more radical claim to be able to escape the market as well, not through an appeal to class based struggle or communist ideals but simply through withdrawal and the dream of reversing enclosure to restore something like a commons. In this light, we can see why the state would react so strongly to both sides of their attempted 'liberation' of space or territory – for it attempted to be free not only from an administrative apparatus but from capital as well, and at a moment when the state



Figure 2.10 Hippias at Wheeler Ranch commune, c. 1970. This image was appropriated in a famous Superstudio collage for *Fundamental Acts: Life, Supersurface* of 1972. (Bob Fitch Photographic Archive, © Stanford University Libraries).

4 Hippias en Wheeler Ranch, c. 1970 / *Hippias at Wheeler Ranch commune*, c. 1970. Bob Fitch Photographic Archive, © Stanford University Libraries. Publicada en / *Published in: Felicity Scott. Outlaw Territories. Environments of Insecurity / Architectures of Counterinsurgency*, 92.

was faced with addressing the shifting vicissitudes of market mechanisms.

Another stake here for me, throughout the book, was tracing how libertarians such as Stewart Brand mobilized the language of freedom from regulation in a manner that seemed to be in line with the freedom from social strictures and norms sought by American hippie culture and the counterculture, but which was also distinct and came to be revalenced through Brand's entrepreneurial, pro-capital stewardship. Retrieving the story of Open Land was motivated, in the first instance, by trying to understand its particular and quite insightful and radical critique of the capitalist system, its technical infrastructure and governing apparatus, along with identifying the many limitations born of this idealism, particularly a blindness to the politics of indigeneity, forms of inequity and racism. In the second instance, though, I wanted to retrieve the moment when this distinctly American idealism and ethic encountered voices from the Global South and those operating in political solidarity with them, which I do through reading Stewart Brand's transposing of that ethos and its theatricality to the 1972 United Nations

and even standards of plumbing, lighting, and hygiene. Or where they were adopted—in the use of new materials such as plastic, the demarcation of a “functional” nook for meditation, or in the literal dissolution of interior and exterior spaces in open walls—they could be read only as unwittingly parodic. Most had no kitchens or sanitary facilities, and their materials and forms were intentionally “funky.” Following the failure of the dream of a codified, regulated, technologically advanced and universal modernism to achieve the goal of housing for all, its unregulated hippie other was stepping up to fill the gap left by both the state and capitalism.

Modernist environmental ideals of access to light and air were key terms with which institutions such as the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) lobbied both the profession and governments, justifying the discipline's role in social, hygienic, and economic terms. And these ideals persisted. However, the statistically driven logics of building rationalization and regulation (those operating, or so it was thought, below the radar of aesthetic codes) were increasingly coupled during the late 1950s and 1960s with the discipline's embrace of the human and social sciences and facilitated by the data-processing capacities of the modern computer. Spreading from Western Europe and North America to less industrialized countries, this globalizing logic infiltrated architectural pedagogy and thinking through programs such as the Architectural Association's Department of Tropical Architecture, as well as through publications and “think tanks” such as Constantin Doxiadis's Ekistics project, and, in turn, global development agencies such as those affiliated with the UN.¹⁹ We will return to this nexus in later chapters. I mention it here for two reasons: in the first instance, these forms of rationalization marked exactly the points at which architecture was deployed within a logic of governmentality, giving it a role in what Foucault theorized as the biopolitical regulation of the population. In the second instance, it brings us back to the identification “down,” in this case, with the pressures on developing countries.

In a remarkable text on the alternative architecture of the communes, William Chaitkin invoked a connection to (or projection onto) architecture's shifting roles with respect to “development.” He noted that “what was expected was found: vernacular revival, simplified self-build, and low-gain energy systems—all on the

Conference on the Human Environment, aka the Stockholm Conference. That is the subject of the chapter right after that on Open Land. Here those blindness become even more evident, as does the way they were put into the service of American economic and political interests.

FD: You have also researched what you call “the refusal of work” – not a banal call for laziness but rather a political claim aimed at challenging the system by not doing what the subject is expected to do. You quote Peter Rabbit who says “we are dedicated to not being employed, being employed truly by ourselves in the making of things. We have found freedom in the action, freedom in the making of things” (Scott, 2007:174). This is freedom in another register, closer to emancipation. Yet, it's hard to assess these movements' outcomes, since they didn't manage to survive or were silently integrated into the system.

FS: This point raises questions of ‘emancipation from what?’ and ‘emancipation for whom?’ Not that the answer could be found in the singular here either. My goal was not really to assess the outcomes of these gestures, in the sense of asking whether they succeeded, failed, survived, or were integrated into the so-called system. Narratives of decline are all too prevalent in the literature on the American counterculture, as if they had sought, unsuccessfully, to implement a practical set of social and political aspirations. Yet, I am interested in tracing and in thinking about the afterlives of these movements of the 1960s and 1970s. In some ways the contemporary stakes of retrieving these practices lie in the ways that contemporary struggles often resonate with or depart from those of that moment. I am trying to understand how we might conceive modes of engagement that operate with similar precision (if less idealism) in their reading of the emergence or transformations of contemporary techniques of power, whether taking the form of strategies of intervention or engaged modes of withdrawal. In terms of the evolution, or subsequent episodes in which traces of a similar ethos or their legacies can be identified, it is perhaps important to say that at the time of writing *Architecture or Techno-utopia*, there were a couple of trajectories that fascinated me, and that continue to do so.

First, as I already alluded to, the institutionalization and instrumentalization of alternative communities and technologies through the entrepreneurial agenda of Stewart Brand, which by 1972 was aligned with a pro-capitalist, libertarian agenda, ultimately evolving into his sponsorship of space colonization. In some respects, this is the story of what you call the silent integration of these movements into the system – and, as we know,

many hippies became highly successful businessmen and entrepreneurs. In some instances, though, we might read that integration of certain concerns, such as that with the environment, as having sowed the seeds of potentially important shifts in policy and public opinion. This is one thread I trace in *Outlaw Territories*, albeit focused not only on the American context but on the encounter of such ideals with the politics emerging from voices in, and neoimperial strategies at work within the Global South.

Second, as evident in the theoretical coordinates of both books, I am interested in the ways in which the search for non-normative forms of life and the conception of a refusal to work, played out in the work of Michel Foucault and, perhaps more prominently, in the radical politics of the Italian extra-parliamentary Left, or *Autonomia* movement, for whom the refusal of work and claims to political and economic autonomy became central strategies. Both were highly cognizant of the actions and ethos of the American counterculture, even if what they took from them was far from identical in character. In other words, there might be many trajectories along which this evolution or transformation takes place, and they would look quite distinct.

I should also add, that others, such as the Swedish artist Love Enqvist, have documented the ways in which countercultural ideals and communities did survive, not just in the USA but also in South Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere. You can find this in his book, *Diggers and Dreamers* of 2009. The persistence and even later emergence of similar agendas gives lie to the idea that the movement simply died off.

FD: When analyzing the power relations in the 1976 UN Habitat Conference in Vancouver, you quote Foucault when he says “power relations are fixed in such a way that they are perpetually asymmetrical”. Then, you add that “in principle, liberal forms of governance help to minimize the latter by opening fixed hierarchies up to creative struggle, facilitating a degree of freedom for ethical decisions, rendering power relations reversible” (Scott, 2016:230). It’s curious that you say “In principle”, as if ‘in practice’ or ‘in reality’ things didn’t work as expected.

FS: In many ways the answer to this question returns us to the ways in which the language of the political good can mask ongoing forms of exploitation. Here too we find claims to democracy or to the ‘freedom’ inherent in liberal forms of democracy as seeking to perpetuate older hierarchies born of colonial rule, even if they now appear and operate quite differently, and can be read as including a wider range of actors. The context is a section of the book addressing the rising power of the Group of 77 and nonaligned countries as a voting block

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within the United Nations, and some of the ways in which the United States responded strategically to contain them. But my point here is not simply a melancholy one, but an attempt to identify political potentials and a futurity that remain inherent within such struggles, as they operate within and upon unstable battlefields. Hence my appeal to Foucault and also to theorists of radical democracy who insist on the instabilities inherent to liberal forms of governance, and hence the potential reversability of power relations. So when I invoke Foucault on the “strategic games between liberties,” it is not to deny the ongoing structures of repression and systems of domination at work, but to refuse the idea that they can’t be overcome, or worked around, or transformed. I do want to suggest that in principle, and in the right hands, creative strategies can give rise to new ethical and political potentials, can increase degrees of liberty and open up spaces for more just forms of life. But I should stress here that I am not interested in presenting myself as a political theorist, or a theorist of political economy, but as an architectural historian and theorist engaging with theoretical and political concepts, including Foucault’s work of the 1970s grappling with neoliberalism. These concepts are critical in my understanding of how architecture is entangled within and contributes to emerging techniques of power at work within a rapidly transforming economic paradigm and governing apparatus which is always an apparatus of power.

I am also alluding here to debates around notions of ‘actually existing’ forms of democracy at play within poststructuralist and feminist theorization of radical democracy, and their recognition of the importance of claiming rights. As Rosalyn Deutsche argued decades ago, in a text that remains an important point of reference for such debates within art and urban history, one cannot simply celebrate the “triumph of democracy” in the wake of the rise of so many dictatorships and “Soviet-style state socialism.” In dialog with Nancy Fraser, Chantal Mouffe, Claude Lefort, and others, she writes, “Powerful voices in the United States often convert ‘freedom’ and ‘equality’ into slogans under which the liberal democracies of advanced capitalist countries are held up as exemplary social systems, the sole political model for societies emerging from dictatorships and actually existing socialism. Yet the relentless escalation of economic inequality in

Western democracies since the late 1970s – the U.S. taking the lead in this respect – the growth of corporate power, and fierce attacks on the rights of expendable groups of people reveal the dangers of adopting a celebratory attitude” (Deutsche, 1996:271-272). She goes on to cite Claude Lefort’s distinctly poststructuralist arguments that “the important point is that democracy is instituted and sustained by the *dissolution of the markers of certainty*,” and that “the essence of democratic rights is to be declared, not simply possessed” (Deutsche, 1996:273).

A more succinct answer to your question might be that I too want to foreground potentials inhering within liberal forms of government, now the dominant paradigm across most parts of the world (even if increasingly at risk), while recognizing that any such governing apparatuses cannot be considered through abstract principles, but need to be understood in their specificity, and situated historically as well as within a larger political battlefield. So, if we hold out hope for forging new political openings that, in Foucault’s phrasing, increase degrees of liberty while minimizing states of domination, then we should pay attention to the impossibility of forging such spaces without understanding their complex entanglements. Here is a lesson pertaining to architecture. One can’t design an architecture of freedom, one has to situate architecture within a battleground in which it maintains a self-conscious relation to its position within hierarchical systems of power.

FD: Regarding the PLO’s participation in the 1976 UN Habitat Conference, you assert that this forum not only allowed “the unlikely proximity of a national liberation organization and hippies” but also that its “dominant development narrative, technocratic agenda, and rhetoric of the human settlement at Habitat” were disturbed by the Palestinian question (Scott, 2016:231). Clearly, technocratic agendas are not so willing to accept emancipatory claims. Later, however, you indicate that, at the end “all liberation movements are described as terrorists by their oppressors” (Scott, 2016:426). It seems that, when facing the question of political

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emancipation, actors in power initially deploy technocratic, unchallenging, apolitical rhetoric, and when such strategy doesn't work they switch towards the 'us and them' discourse.

FS: In the case-studies or events I focus on, particularly the United Nations “world conferences” of the 1970s, which emerged very much in relation to a world order rapidly being reconfigured in the wake of independence struggles, which threatened northern powers’ access to resources in the Global South, I think it is true that technocratic agendas emerge as more palatable stand-ins for actual political strategy, and that they are typically resistant to emancipatory or radical claims. Hence we find repeated claims to serving an abstract humanity, somehow beyond the political framework of nation states, and the idealization of a planetary politics advanced by dominant member states and seeking consensus. Yet technocratic norms and strategies have limits of rhetorical viability and do tend to switch to demonizing or overtly politicizing when persistently threatened. I don't think we could say that this dynamic is the only one affecting the outcome of emancipatory movements, but in the case of the Palestinian cause I think we can see it as one among many tendencies that foreclose other political possibilities and openings and hence contributes to the escalation or cycles of violence. It is just too easy to say, “look, we are providing humanity with low-cost shelter techniques, don't rock the boat, you will leave people homeless” as a way of diverting attention and resources away from addressing the violent forms of dispossession at work. So, yes, I think it does affect the outcome, even if not in a linear manner.

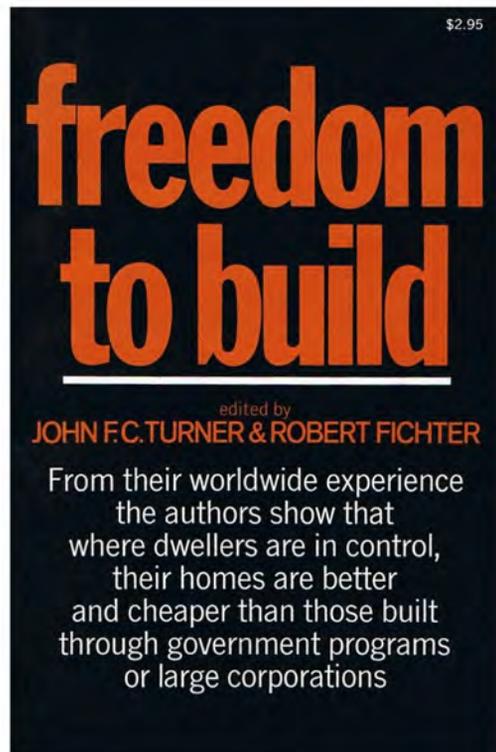
FD: Speaking of low-cost shelter, in the seventies, English architect John Turner became a reference for many architects engaged with 'social' issues. His work in the Peruvian *barriadas* and his book *Freedom to build* (Turner, 1972) were highly influential for they showed a different approach towards poverty: learning from and integrating them in the process by participation. Yet, you question his approach when you say, “Not only did people 'helping themselves' confirm that there was a huge pool of labor resources waiting

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to be tapped by global capital, it indicated that the responsibility for housing and other services could shift from capitalist to worker. Standards could be lowered, profitability increased” (Scott, 2016:242). Can you elaborate this critique further?

FS: The story of John F. C. Turner is, in many ways, an uncanny or inverted double to the far more cynical operations of Stewart Brand, insofar as it too appears as a cautionary tale in the book, a story about how alternative practices can become instrumentalized by – and on behalf of – capital and those in power. My ambition in foregrounding Turner is not to refute the well-meaning ethos and often life-improving techniques at work in his earlier engagement with the *barriadas* in Peru and strategies to house the ‘poor’ in other contexts as well. Rather, I am trying to trace the manner in which such site and services, do it yourself, and extremely low cost paradigms became weapons in the hands of World Bank on account of the cynical economic logics that it could also serve, and came to be a tool deployed within the increasingly ubiquitous paradigm of development that so radically and often violently transformed forms of life in Latin America, Asia, Africa and elsewhere. If we recognize that Turner’s work was long-entangled in aid institutions and participated in the rise of NGO culture in the so-called Third World, then we can start asking questions about the moment in the early to mid 1970s when World Bank recognized housing and social life not as a marginal activity with respect to economic growth but as a key. This is the moment that housing came to join agriculture, infrastructure, industry and other more overtly economic engines as a site of global integration. As I discuss in the two chapters dedicated to Habitat: The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, which took place in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976, architects were increasingly fascinated with squatter settlements and informality at this moment, something I try to understand and to trouble in relation to the heroic narrative of modern architecture as providing low cost housing for workers.



FD: Buckminster Fuller's ambiguous notion of freedom is another of your targets. As you say, "With a dream of freedom founded on overcoming troublesome legal codes and regulations (while he personally benefitted from patent laws), Fuller's libertarianism appealed to both political conservatives and the counterculture alike." (Scott, 2016:248). Yet, Fuller's ideas were very influential. How can you explain this? Is it related to the North-American ambivalent notion of freedom?

5 John F. C. Turner & Robert Fichter. *Freedom to build*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972. Portada / Cover.

FS: The traction gained by Fuller's libertarian, pro-capitalist, pro-multinational corporation, and distinctly American ideology, particularly among those who considered themselves on the political Left or at least socially radical, is totally fascinating to me. I can't really explain it, but I try to trace its contours, including the ways in which Fuller's paradigm was so closely aligned with the emerging socio-technical, economic and political apparatus, which in seeking to manage and regulate populations and environments serve to close down degrees of freedom, even if less evidently than physical confinement, dictatorships, etc. And, I think Fuller's media savvy had a lot to do with it, as you note, not unlike the ability to capture media attention we are now all so familiar with, given our current president here in the USA. I think you are right that the seductive nature of the language of freedom, whether in free-market ideals or in claims to assuring the liberty of the individual to choose, helps to drive the widespread and long-lasting

appeal of figures like Fuller. My interest, I should add, was at once to identify moments at which different notions of freedom (economic, political, spatial, social) are unwittingly or knowingly collapsed or conflated, while also insisting on their possible differentiation. My hope, as a historian, is that by more thoroughly marking out these distinctions and contours, and by questioning those moments of indistinction or coupling that serve to close down more liberatory political potentials, that one can help others identify the pitfalls of previous generations and in turn help conceive of, or strategize towards, opening up more radical possibilities and new political spaces. Not just in an instrumental sense – I am not trying to write a new *“Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth,”* to cite just one of Fuller’s best-sellers of the 1960s – but by providing a map of the minefield at work such that multiple strategies might proliferate and be tested, including those coming from other epistemologies and cultures or discourses which I could never conceive in advance.

FD: Since you brought the current USA president to the discussion, how do you see the notion of freedom nowadays? Is still a viable concept or has it become just an empty rhetoric? Are there still spaces of freedom to conquer?

FS: I think I have largely revealed my answer to this question in the previous ones, so I would like to point to yet another insight from Foucault that remains important to my thinking about freedom. During the famous interview published as “Space, Knowledge, and Power,” Paul Rabinow asked Foucault if he could identify in any particular architectural projects as “forces of liberation or resistance.” Foucault responded that he did “not think that it is possible to say that one thing is of the order of ‘liberation’ and another is of the order of ‘oppression.’” Citing the concentration camp as an extreme case, he insisted, in turn, that “no matter how terrifying a given system may be, there always remain the possibilities of resistance, disobedience, and oppositional groupings.” That is, potentials remain. As a counterpoint he clarified

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that nothing was “absolutely liberating,” that liberty could not be assumed as automatic or assured, for instance by institutions or laws. For, as he argued, “liberty is a practice,” “‘liberty’ is what must be exercised” (Foucault, 1994:354). This was, of course, the statement of an ethical position not simply an expression of naivete, or an inability to recognize the magnitude or violence of oppressive forces. So I would continue to call for caution when encountering the rhetoric or concept of freedom, but I would not want to give it up. I want to recall that for Foucault, in addition to his insistence that freedom was a practice not a given quality, space remained relevant. “Men have dreamed of liberating machines,” he recalled, “but there are no machines of freedom, by definition,” adding “this is not to say that the exercise of freedom is completely indifferent to spatial distribution” (Foucault, 1994:356). I would hope that freedom can still be practiced, even that the potential of designing spaces more conducive to freedom remains, but I am not entirely sure what they would look like today. That is a task for architects, experts in how space, or spatial distribution might be reconfigured or reconceived. **ARQ**

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