An event in which a dictatorial regime entitled informal dwellers as owners is the lens through which the difference between freedom and liberalism is exposed. The place that hosted this event – Chile’s National Stadium – is the architecture of a paradox: the same panoptical layout that served as a detention campus in 1973 became, six years later, the stage for the biopolitical formalization of urban inequality by granting ownership in the periphery of Santiago.

The topic of the last Venice Architecture Biennale – which took place between May 26 and November 25, 2018 – was ‘Freespace.’ Both open and ambiguous, Grafton’s proposal recalls the German saying ‘city air makes you free,’ where the alleged alliance between urban space and freedom reveals its own weakness. With the exhibition ‘Stadium,’ the Chilean Pavilion faced this contradiction at both the scale of the building and the city. In its origin, the word stadium referred to a distance measure: the length of the first race at the Greek Olympic Games – 600 feet, approximately 185 meters. Likewise, the pavilion aims to be a distance measure: between the past and the present of a building (Chile’s National Stadium); and between the center and the periphery of a city (Santiago). By recreating a particular historical event – the delivery of 37,000 domain titles to residents – the exhibition shows a brief moment that rendered an entire city within a building. For the event in question,
the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism prepared a blueprint that, instead of seats and bleachers, draws the perimeter of over 60 shantytowns on the outskirts of Santiago, rendering the geography of the city’s poverty within the stadium’s floorplan. From the oval’s center, a panoramic view of shantytowns and the city is exercised. The same building has assembled and indoctrinated different subjects: not just slum dwellers but fans, spectators, parishioners, partisans, mourners and prisoners, reconfiguring itself in each event by speaking about our history and memory. However, even the freedom of the Coliseum typology finds its limits as a panoptic diagram for the exercise of power. Architecture not only accommodates the subject that observes – a place occupied by different personalities throughout the stadium’s history, from Neruda to Fidel, from Pinochet to the Pope – but at the same time operates as a visibility mechanism that produces new subjects: in this case, transforming slum dwellers into property owners. Freedom and property, liberalization and privatization, were the rhetorical keystones that day.
2. Evento prensa oficialista y de oposición
2. Event official and opposition press

3. Horizonte - Estadios del estadio
3. Horizons - Stadiums of a stadium

5. Estadio en la ciudad
5. Stadium in the city

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at the stadium, the basis of a discourse that dismantled the project of a liberal city.

The power of architectural drawing to identify problems beyond itself is evident: the synoptic ability of that stadium floorplan allows visualizing what was previously invisible. It was David Harvey (2005) who already compared the city not with a stadium, but with a theater: those who arrive first get to choose the best seats, the central ones, leaving those who follow with fewer and fewer options and freedom, until the last ones simply stay out. The exhibition narrates a double story interwoven in one drawing: that of a building (with its dissimilar uses) and that of a city (with its neoliberal development), both converging in a single moment in time. On the one hand, the exhibition celebrates the free features and flexibility of the building – the stages of the stadium – while questioning, on the other hand, the consequences that the rhetoric of freedom has had on the city: the naturalization of uncontrolled sprawl and the consolidation of private property logic were massively celebrated in one of the most public buildings in Santiago, at the stadium’s full capacity.

A thin line between planning and deregulation, between intervention and self-regulation, marks this event while exposing the inherent friction between freedom and liberalism that – beyond the Chilean case – is connected to experiences in places as distant as the United States or the United Kingdom. Although freedom is a philosophical concept, liberalism is a political-ideological one and, despite its etymological origin, the two words are not synonymous. Actually, they are antonyms, and that is where liberalism exposes its own paradox. Chile’s National Stadium was both a building and city for a day, proving that ‘city air’ does not necessarily make us free. ARQ

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**Bibliografia / Bibliography**


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