

**METROPOLITAN INTERIOR

- Interior Design as Urban Discipline -

대도시적 인테리어 디자인

- 도시분야로서의 인테리어디자인 -

마르코 부르노* / Marco Bruno

Abstract

인테리어 디자인학은 보편적으로 건물의 내부공간, 즉 매우 명확한 경계들을 전제로 잘 정의된 공간들에 관한 연구로 그 범위가 제한되어져 왔다. 따라서 건축, 도시, 또는 매우 광대한 의미에서의 환경디자인의 특권으로 알려져 있는 도시에 관한 쟁점을 그다지 자주 다루지 않는 편이라 할 수 있겠다. 그러나 극도로 고밀도화된 현대의 대도시들은 주요 지하 교통망을 중심으로 상업, 유흥, 업무시설 그리고 경우에 따라서는 주거단지에 까지 쉽게 연결되는 거대한양의 전이 실내공간들을 창출해내고 있다. 이것이 최근 홍콩의 건축가 게리 첵(Gary Chang)에 의해서 규정된 새로운 개념의 고밀도 도시 인테리어 랜드스케이프(interior landscape)인 것이다. 이러한 인테리어스케이프의 개념은 현대 도시의 모습 중에서 가장 흥미로운 개념들 중의 하나라 할 수 있는데 다양한 요소들이 혼합된 그 특성은 이제 사회학, 건축, 인류학, 도시탐험, 인테리어 디자인, 도시 그리고 환경 디자인 등 다양한 분야에서 뜨거운 논쟁의 주제로 떠오르게 된 것이다. 이제 도시에 관한 연구는 더 이상 외부에서 내부로 진행되는 것이 아니고, 내부에서부터 출발되는 것이다. 극도로 밀집된 아시아의 대도시들은 이렇게 혼잡한 도시환경의 모든 요인들을 더 잘 이해할 수 있도록 다양하고 흥미로운 상황들을 제공해 주고 있다. 상업적 목적으로 건물 전체를 사용하는 수직적 전략이나 다양한 문화적 행태들은 도시 환경의 '혼잡성'을 그냥 참을만한 것이 아니라 오히려 그 도시만의 매력적 요소로 부각시켜 주는 것이다. 본 논문은 인테리어스케이프를 중심으로 진행되고 있는 다양한 이론적 논쟁들의 분석에 그 기초를 두고 있다. '장소성의 부재'의 개념, 혼잡의 문화, 공공공간의 사유화, 절절 도시, 한계의 개념들을 분석하여 아시아 대도시들이 어떻게 이러한 쟁점들을 그들 자신만의 고유한 해결책으로 발전시키는지를 고찰하고자 한다.

본 논문의 목적은 서울을 사례분석 중 하나로 사용하여 인테리어 디자인 분야의 경계를 대도시로 확장하는 동시에 새로운 적용 영역의 가능성을 탐구하는데 있다 하겠다.

Keyword : Interiorscape, No-Place, Congestion, Density, Bang

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The Airport Limousine takes about 55 minutes to cover the 60km dividing Incheon Airport from the City Air Terminal, in the center of Seoul. Once they get there, visitors have two opportunities: walking out of the terminal, grab one of the many taxis parked in front of the main entrance and reach their final destination driving through the city traffic:

or staying inside the terminal, taking the escalator down to the basement and penetrate directly in the heart of COEX. They will move through a thick network of covered streets, alleys and escalators suddenly opening up towards crowded plazas and suspended gardens: from there they can easily reach the subway station and then surface near their final destination or dive again in a new protected environment, few stations away, crawling with people and activities. Welcome to Seoul Metropolitan Interior, the seducing interior landscape of an eleven millions people city: COEX is one of the main base-camps to begin its exploration. The entire complex is a main urban node, strategically located on the

* 정회원, 건국대학교 건축전문대학원 실내건축설계학과 전임강사

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edge of Gangnam area, the new financial and administrative center that, starting from the 70's, has begun to substitute the old and congested downtown, north of the Han River.

But Its superficial position on the urban grid is not important at the moment: what is relevant at this article purposes, is its crucial function as a node of a wide interior space network that represent one of the most surprising features of Seoul urban scene. In the past decades the strategy used by most of the fast growing contemporary metropolises throughout the world to build public space has radically changed: open air public areas have been replaced by large interior spaces, often connected by underground transportation system. This has turned inwards the concept of public space: since most of the main functions are now performed inside, the term "city landscape" doesn't seem to be anymore appropriate to describe these new urban features. New terms such as Metropolitan Interiors or Interiorscape, both acknowledging cities' internal explosion, are now used to define this new phenomenon. This represents the background of this article.

1.2. Purpose of Study

Traditionally Interior Design is dedicated to investigate inside spaces with very precise borders. Not very often Interior Design is addressing urban issues, which are still a privilege of architecture, urban or, in a very broad meaning, environmental design. Indeed, the extreme contemporary metropolis densification, has created a huge amount of transition interior spaces easily connecting the main underground transportation network to commercial, entertainment and office facilities, and, in some cases, to residential units. The main purpose of this study is to explore these new territories both physically and theoretically in order to define new application fields for the Interior Design Discipline.

1.3. Scope of Study

Fast developing Metropolitan Interior Scenarios can be found in several cases all around Asia and for this reason they deserve special attention. Compared to European cities, constantly involved in preserving their identity through a careful restoration of their urban image, deeply affected by historical presences; or to North American cities where, due

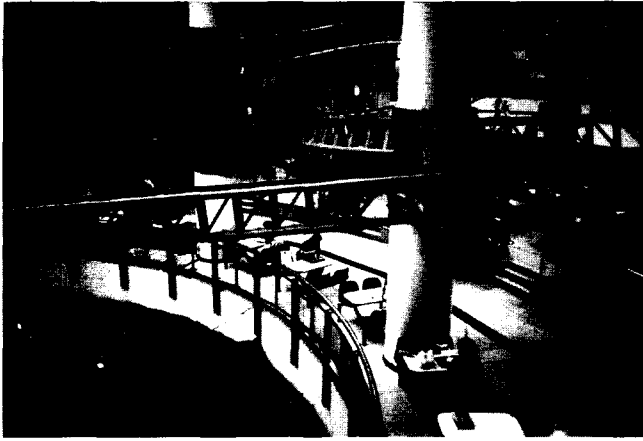
to an almost unlimited land availability, in most of the cases human settlements are widely spread on the territory, with few concentrated symbolic buildings; contemporary Asian cities are witnessing a urban development process "throughout interiors". This constitutes a very interesting hybrid field study, continuously shifting from interior to environmental design. Again COEX example is quite meaningful.¹⁾ The new center occupies an entire city block, hosting a wide mix of functions, all connected by a commercial platform as large as the entire area, and located at the first basement level. Inside you can find a luxury department store, a five stars hotel, the world trade center, the stock market, a congress hall, an exhibition center, the City Air Terminal, a shopping center with a large food court, a family Aquarius, a 16 theater cinema and, of course, a parking area. A subway station is conveniently located at the southeast edge of the lot. From there you can easily reach all the other main nodes of the interior system, all different by size and importance, but widely spread on the entire metropolitan area: all the nodes are characterized by large interior space areas, crossed everyday by the lives of thousands of people. The result of this "interiorization" process is a wide underground transportation network, directly connected to large variety of buildings with different functions, that allows to spend most of your everyday life into closed or covered spaces: it is the contemporary cities new interior landscape, a sort of single air conditioned big city room, widely diffused and easily extendable, that can be defined using the term Metropolitan Interiors. This term was selected in order to extend the concept of Interiorscape,²⁾ formulated by the Hong Kong based architect Gary Chang, to an even broader dimension. Nevertheless, this situation is not a Seoul unique feature, but it can be found in several other Asian cases where the urban density is particularly high: what makes it specific is the strategy that each local culture has developed in order to adapt to it.

1)COEX is part of any recommended Seoul sightseeing tour. There are many web sites giving information about its touristic appeal. Among the others: www.lifeinkorea.com

2)The term Interiorscape is the title of an essay by Gary Chang, principal of Edge LTD, an Hong Kong based firm. The essay describes Hong Kong urban features from an Interior point of view. Gary Chang also presented at the 2000 Venice Biennale a very significative installation based on the Cageman phenomenon: a single interior project that was able to describe the complexity of the whole city.

1.4. Methodology

Cities "interiorization" is a complex phenomenon. In order to grasp all its different sides, this study is addressing four main issues: anthropological, physical, social and psychological. Using Seoul as a comparative case.



<그림 1> Subhash Mukerjee Martina Tab - HK shopping mall with rollercoaster

2. ANTHROPOLOGICAL ISSUES : FROM NO-PLACE TO BANG

2.1. MarcAuge' No-Place Concept

These new interior urban scenes, also very common in Europe and North America, have been recently investigated by scholars from many different cultural fields: most of the time with a strong judgmental attitude, based on the alienation effects caused by these kind of spaces. One of the most interesting theory regarding this matter is the concept of No Place, developed by the French anthropologist Marc Auge', and widely debated by the international cultural establishment: his ideas will give us some clues to better understand the Metropolitan Interior phenomena.³⁾

According to Auge', contemporary culture has determined a massive proliferation of No Places, setting against the concept of Place as it was defined by previous societies. A Place has, indeed, three characteristics: identity, because it gives special features to the people living into it: relationship, because it defines inhabitants' behaviors: history, because it talks to the people about their roots. No Places

3) Marc Auge' is an anthropologist, with a formation in african studies. From 1985 he is the President of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris where he is currently teaching Symbolic Logic and Ideology. His book about No-Place(Non-Lieu) was widely debated especially among architects and urban designer in the past decade.

are exactly the opposite: they don't give you any sort of identity, they have no history to share and they don't help to establish relationship. They are determined by three typical excesses of our contemporary age: excess of information, images and individualism. If we compare the two terms we can also make some practical examples. The house conceived as a dwelling is opposed to the concept of transit: the main square at the intersection of two streets to the highway junction, the historical monument as an aggregative sign, to the commercial center: the traveler to the tourist. A no Place is a space that you cross but where you don't live: the people passing through it don't learn anything about their identity, their relationship or their history. In Auge's vision big entertainment park, like Eurodisney, shopping malls, airports, gas stations, highway intersections, large apartment blocks in suburban area are considered as No Place. A No-Place is therefore defined by a glance "lost in between a past without any trace and a future without any shape." Auge's vision is quite apocalyptic but is certainly suitable to describe Seoul's urban scenario: it can also be applied to a large number of Asian cities, which have dramatically increased their population in the past decades. Indeed there are some specific features in the local culture that are able to provide a sort of "Asian way out", and they are mostly related to the cultural and morphological background used as a base for the implant of all the new structures responsible of the No Place culture (transportation network, shopping malls, large urban superstructure). We have to consider that most of all these structures (and often the technologized to build them) have been directly imported as an already well-tested model from outside the country; all the initial phase of design and experimentation has been completely skipped: once they were installed on a virgin territory they caused a real "evolutionary shock".⁴⁾ To the violent strike has followed an extremely fast adaptation period that on one end, eased the assimilation process, on the other, help to defined a specific local identity(similar to the strategy McDonald used in Korea with the Bulgogi Burger). Some of the main cultural features all these new structural elements had to deal with

4) Daniel Dennett is an american philosopher, director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tuff University. In his book *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life* he describes evolution from a cultural point of view.

are: a remarkable ability to manage, both in public and private situations, extremely dense living conditions; a broad acknowledgement of homologation as a form of social identity; a natural inclination to alienation, intended as a private way out from an open public scenario towards a private community, perceived, both in terms of space and society, as an intimate refuge.

2.2. Bang as a Public Interior

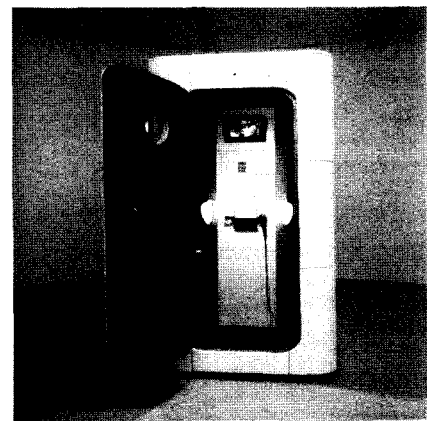
All these features have supported, in a scenario already built “throughout interiors”, the development of an Interiorscape quite rich in terms of identity, that has little to do with the No Place situation described before. In a very homogeneous environment, where the Place itself, in terms of uniqueness, hardly exists, the No Place encounters the same kind of resistance. The Italian Piazza, the public space model that has seduced entire generations of architects and urban designers with its identity-making qualities, has never existed here; and it is still a model very difficult to import.

The construction of urban identity takes different paths: a big embracing urban gesture hardly succeeds here. Urban identity passes through the continuous fragmentation and densification of public space to the point where the whole space is divided into minimal units, used by small groups of customers, in search of their own temporary privacy. We can call it the Bang culture. Bang(rooms) are public venues where everybody can rent his own private space and use it alone or share it with some friends.⁵⁾ In a Bang you can watch a DVD with your girlfriend, sing along with your colleagues, take care of your body, use a PC to work, play on-line video game or chat with a faraway friend, whose probably answering from another bang. They are the extension of your home privacy and they represent the link in between two disciplines apparently so apart one from the other like urban and interior design. A dramatic change of scale without anything in the middle: directly jumping from the intimate private to the intimate public. These explain also the huge success of all the American brand selling Italian style coffee like Starbucks or The Coffee Bean: at the price of a meal in a traditional restaurant, customers can

5)To the eye of a western person Bang(Rooms) are a very interesting social phenomena. Especially for young people, they embody the public extension of the private environment: in a bang you can watch movie(video bang), dvd(dvd bang), use computer(pc bang), call(junhwa bang), sing(nore-bang) or relax in a sauna(jimjil bang)

sip a cappuccino in a comfortable and cozy environment where they can relax, meet some friends or study with no time limitations. In one of her most significant work, the Korean artist Lee Bull gave a keen interpretation of the concept of Bang, deeply rooted into Korean contemporary society.⁶⁾ During her solo exhibition at the Rodin Gallery in Seoul, in a large white room, she placed a white booth, apparently similar to a large disposable toilet: visitors were tidily lining in front of it, quietly waiting for their turn to enter the door one at the time. Once inside, locked the door, they found themselves in a soft soundproof environment with a karaoke machine in front of them. A very familiar view for a Korean visitor: but a quite unfamiliar individual experience since norebang(karaoke) are usually shared by small groups of friends. While the “artist” was singing completely unheard, the words of the song were displayed in another room of the same exhibition along with some other videos. In this case, the alienation from the public becomes the art piece itself, and for this reason, it is displayed.

In the end, if the No Place culture has flourished in a society more and more in transit, a society “already” in transit (between the house and its semi public appendix) has inside all the necessary antibodies to metabolize and keep alive delicate urban situations, otherwise lacking of any sort of identity. This is the fertile ground on which proliferates, in Seoul and in many other Asian cities(Hong Kong, Singapore, Osaka), the public metropolitan culture of Interiors.



<그림 2> Lee Bull - Norebang

6)Lee Bull, is a Korean artist. Her solo exhibition at the Rodin Gallery in the spring of 2002 she explored the relationship between the art piece and the public. Beside the individual norebang, she also presented a gigantic inflatable sculpture that was both killed and kept alive by the interactive actions of the visitors.

3. PHYSICAL ISSUES : NODAL CITY, THE INTERIOSCAPE STRUCTURE

3.1. Kok-Meng Tang Nodal Cities' Definition

The idea of Nodal City⁷⁾ is the starting point to understand and explore Seoul Metropolitan Interior. It also establishes the link between the urban dimension, with eleven millions inhabitants, and all its bangs, used by limited groups of people. The Nodal City is an "accidental" result of contemporary urban design and is characterized by the following features:

- A massive Transportation Node close to a large empty lot: a fertile condition for the sudden appearance of a Nodal City
- Implantation of big building stretching up to the sky and digging down towards the ground; to the point they reach a very dense urban situation. The functions are usually mixed up: commerce, business, entertainment, restaurants, some housing and parking
- Vertical Stratification of all the functions in order to maximize the lot density
- Interior Spaces simulating parts of cities, sometimes very far away. The lobby can often be considered as a Big City Room
- Maximum Exploitation of all the surfaces. Vertical surfaces are used for commercial advertisement or communication, both in an offset or digital way; while horizontal surfaces, like terraces or roofs, are often turned into reconfigured ground with open-air facilities.
- Horizontal Extension: all the areas not directly connected to other nodes that can be reached using the public transportation system, mostly under the level of the ground
- The surrounding areas are often pursuing the opposite strategy, trying to preserve some kind of public space recalling the original urban qualities. "There are no structural principles in the Nodal City, no "master form". The absence of structure makes it highly dynamic. Only non-fixed strategies and operations propel it ever optimistically forward." The whole Nodes scattered on the territory create an organic body, virtually without boundaries and continuously extending that represent the main structure

of a new urban scenario mostly built "throughout interiors". Though, the tendency to turn the city inward, congesting the public space dates back to way before the construction of infrastructures and nodes. The main characteristics of the Nodal City can be already found in several examples.

3.2. High Density Interiorscape: Kowloon Walled City

The Kowloon Walled City(KWC) in Hong Kong it is the extreme case.⁸⁾ The whole district was built and destroyed several times but its final form dates back to the end of the Second World War: an entire city block was filled with ten to fourteen stories high building. Its ambiguous status (Chinese land in Hong Kong jurisdiction) turned it into a perfect destination for all the Mao Cultural Revolution refugees. The more new people were coming, the more the pressure from the inside of the buildings started to rise. Each building began to grow from the inside to the point that all the 30 original roads disappeared, completely transformed into small paths as wide as the interior corridors. Once inside, all the geographical references were lost: the only way to see the sky was to climb up to the roof. The terrace was the only way to easily move from one floor to the other. There you could find all sort of people: families having lunch, kids playing ball, students preparing their homework, women doing laundry. In 1980 the population reached 35.000 units with a 13.000 people per hectare density, the highest in the world. KWC gathered in its bowels all the China's darkest sides: opium, gambling, mafia, prostitution, rats. To an extreme density of space corresponded an even more dramatic density of functions in time: with 1.3 persons per square meter it was impossible to use the same space in a single way. Shifts were a must in order to get the maximum of the flexibility in the minimum possible space. Christopher Patten, the last Hong Kong Governor, approved its demolition on January 1987: the demolition was completed in April 1994. Only when the machines were cutting the building like a big cake, exposing its section in a full-scale drawing, it was possible to understand more about the its complex structure, developed without any plan but perfectly working. Still now, ten years after its demolition and the

7)The Nodal City definition comes from an article by Kok-Meng Tan, a Singapore based architect. He is also the author of another essay regarding urban interior space: Big City Rooms, Singapore Architects 202, 1999.

8)There are many studies and publication regarding KWC. Among the others, with very different characteristic, I recommend: Laurance Liauw, "Kowloon Walled City, Hyperdensity and Urban Form", AA Diploma Thesis, 1996/ The Kowloon Walled City Illustration.

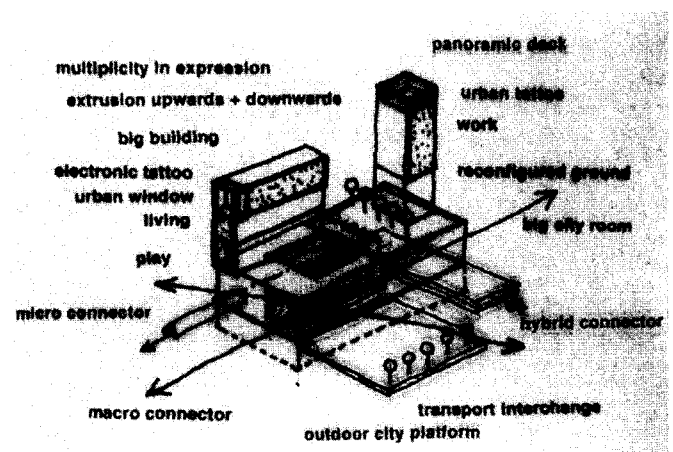
construction of the Kowloon Walled City Park, KWC attracts the attention of different groups of people. Urban designers using it as the extreme example of an irrational, although functional, culture of congestion: old residents regretting it, showing how density is not only tolerable but also desirable: visionaries whom, after exploring it like they would do for a tropical forest or a cavern, nourish its myth and propose its reconstruction.⁹⁾ In front of the eyes of all these people are still passing the images of a big city, almost exclusively made of interior spaces.

3.3. Open Air Interiorscape: Seoul Dong-dae Munarea

In Seoul, all the Area stretching from the Namsan 1 tunnel north exit, to Dong Dae Mun Stadium and beyond has already many of the Metropolitan Interiors characteristics but instead of extending them vertically above and below the level of the ground, they are spread horizontally onto an extremely vast area: the reason are related to a certain availability of land and to the absence of the necessary technology to build large structures. In this case the subway provides an easy connection among all the blocks and in some cases it is directly connected to large underground shopping areas doubling the retail surface. Nevertheless the large majority of the activities are concentrated on the ground floor and they use all the surface available, extending as much as possible their business on the public streets. Streets sections are reduced to the minimum size and temporary roofs or canopies offer a comfortable shelter to customers and sellers. Inside the blocks the situation is very similar to the one we can encounter in a modern Shopping Mall: a mix of many different functions within a protected environment. Due to the high of the building, density is mostly confined to the ground floor, but it was still able to turn entire blocks into specialized departments.

The stratification process happened in different phases and it was enhanced by external factors: the suspended highway (now completely demolished as the boulevard below, to leave place to a previously covered stream) doubled the road surface creating a useful transportation hierarchy, while the

Se-Woon Sang Ga was literally flying over the one story houses offering (and it still does) a huge amount of public interior space for commerce, office and housing. Wherever possible, this mostly horizontal distribution has been substituted by a vertical stratification that pushed in multilayered containers all the previous functions: in this way, still without a clear integration with the transportation system, the space has reached some more defined interior quality. It is now well defined by walls, artificially conditioned and connected to others buildings through intensively commercially exploited transition space like tunnels and bridges. This is the case of the eastern side around Dong Dae Mun: the entire area is in constant renovation and all the new buildings (among which Doota, Migliore, aPM) have determined a shift in the trend: from a "open market" situation they moved to a "closed market" situation, allowing the public to enter more and more into the private.



<그림 3> Kok-Meng Tang Nodal City Diagram

4. SOCIAL ISSUES: PUBLIC SPACE, PRIVATE DOMAIN

4.1. Public Space Privatization in North America

The privatization of public space is one of the most interesting aspects connected to the development of Metropolitan Interiors and it is a worldwide phenomena. The main problem that privatization presents is related to the issue of privacy and freedom: few persons can easily control the access and the movements of the large majority of people. They can also influence their tastes, habits and preferences. Some North American cities examples are

9)When KWC was completely evacuated, just before demolition, a Japanese expedition explored the city trying to understand its secrets and map it. The results of this expedition are available on line at www.flex.co.jp/kowloon

presenting a social stratification that directly corresponds to space stratification: users are divided, also in public areas, according to their economical status. These issues are much more explicit in term of interiors than in terms of exteriors. "Streets are as old as civilization, and more than any other human artifact, have come to symbolize public life, with all its human contact, conflict and tolerance. One would not have thought then that they would be so vulnerable. Yet across North America, downtown streets are now subject to attack, a slow, quiet, but nonetheless effective onslaught underground and overhead, by glittering glass walkways above the streets, or tiled tunnels beneath them."¹⁰⁾ Calgary, Montreal, and Minneapolis case study present a very well define scenario: the ground floor, traditionally used to host all public functions without restrictions, has been mostly shifted to a different level. Using a large network of underground and overhead connections, many city blocks have been linked together in order to create a controlled and protected environment. The main reason, openly advertised, is to allow the people working in those building, (the city's business and finance center) to move freely in a comfortable and warm environment, without using the open streets where the temperature is often going below zero for long periods of the year. The other reason, not openly declared, is to allow a careful screening of the people going in and out the buildings, denying the access to all undesirable guests. This, without any doubt, is the main risk related to the construction of a connection system located mainly inside the buildings: and these issues opened up an intense debate about the idea of contemporary public space and the way that it is used. Also Asian metropolis, and in this specific case Seoul, will have to confront themselves on these issues: but also in this case the social structure and some traditional behaviors deeply rooted in the everyday culture, are offering powerful antidotes to set against the ongoing trend.

4.2. Asia: Congestion as a Feature

One of the main reasons has to be found in the culture of congestion.¹¹⁾ As previously explained, the extreme density of

10) Trevor Body Underground and Overhead: building the Analogous City pp.123. Calgary, Minneapolis and Toronto case studies are also part of Body's research. Mike Davis' essay, "Fortress Los Angeles: the Militarization of Urban Space" is dealing with the same issues, but in a very different scenario, the Los Angeles sprawl. The essay is part of the same book, Variations on a Theme Park.

inhabitants, gathered on a limited portion of territory, it is a definitely a necessity but at the same time it is a feature: its strong identity value makes it also desirable. In Europe as in North America, the cities' ground floor, especially streets and squares, represent the main public space area.

Commercial venues are opening their windows towards it, hoping to get pedestrian's attention. It is very rare to find activity at some level different then the ground: it would be not suitable, and also not really profitable. In Korea is exactly the opposite: corridors, stairways, covered passages are the extension towards the inside, of the urban space.

The quite low criminal rate also helps to make this kind of places socially "safe": on the other end they are quite popular because they raise the customer from the ground congestion, offering a higher level of privacy. A flexible interpretation of the safety rules then, allows exploiting the entire vertical building dimension for public purposes. The most common scenario that you can find walking in a commercial street is made of continuous facades completely covered with neon signs: behind the signs, the entire building is filled, at every level, with any sort of apparently successful commercial venues. The public level of the street enters the buildings, naturally extending the public domain to many different levels, sometimes connecting one building to the other. The level difference that in Europe as in North America is perceived as the first step towards cities' social stratification, is here part of the inhabitants DNA: it is more an intriguing opportunity rather than an obstacle impossible to overcome.



<그림 4> Herman Hertzberger Public Space Appropriation

11) Better than any article or book about to understand the idea of "congestion" is the movie In The Mood for Love, by Hong Kong director Wong Kar-Wai. The movie is completely set inside and all the character respectfully move along very tiny interior spaces: a delicate equilibrium in the maximum of congestion.

5. PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES: WHERE IS THE THRESHOLD?

5.1. Dynamic Pedestrians

Defining the physical limits of the Metropolitan Interior, many questions spontaneously keep coming up. If we start to consider the city from the inside, where does the outside begin? Where is the threshold we have to cross to move from one condition to the other? The natural distinction between public as the open space and private as the interior space is still valid?¹²⁾ In 1972 Robert Venturi, Denis Scott Brown and Steven Izenour published the results of their research about Las Vegas: the ambitious goal of the book was to try to redefine the way architecture and urban space was designed and perceived through the analysis of some gambling and commercial venues, until that moment considered by the architecture establishment as kitsch and cheap.¹³⁾

They demonstrated that the Strip, onto which most of the new Casinos were recently built, was a completely new way to read urban space: the buildings were nothing but boxes pushed back from the edge of the street, making space to a huge colorful sign attracting the attention of the drivers. The perceptive limit of architecture had to be moved one step back to understand this new reality. Movement, due to the exclusive use of the car, had become a basic tool to make and understand architecture: exactly like in a movie. But also conceptually architects had to step back and start to consider everyday architecture as a source of inspiration. I think in the case of Interior design we have to readjust the position of our perceptive threshold, using a quite similar process. Technology has increased the possibility for pedestrian to move in interior spaces: such devices as subway system, elevator, escalator, tapis-roulant

have dramatically stretched the boundaries of interior spaces. We have to start to consider, as Venturi did for Las Vegas, the new scenario that we call here Metropolitan interior, in a dynamic way. Its limits inside the cities are implacably extending, but also the way we read them it is continuously moving. The pace is slower than the 50 mph of the cars on the Las Vegas Strip, but it still a movement we don't have to neglect. Apparently the only threshold that still persists is the one represented by the transition from cold to hot, from the "natural environment" to the air-conditioned city. But also this difference will slowly fall apart, especially now that technology allows to economically treat always larger volumes of air. In Science Fiction movies this scenario is already real: large cities entirely covered by artificial devices where all spaces are merged into one, in a single sequence of interiors, just divided according to different privacy levels.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The "interiorization" of contemporary cities, as described in the previous examples, is a worldwide phenomenon: particularly intense where density is high. Nevertheless there are some basic differences in between European and North American cities and the fast growing metropolis of Asia.

Risking a huge simplification, that does not consider all the specific differences, I try to define some possible scenarios.

In the western world, congestion is used as the "extrema ratio"(the last resort) to control the vertiginous growth of the population: in reality it is a model that hasn't accomplished its mission and for these reasons has been abandoned by architects and city planners. Density and congestion are surrounded by a negative reputation: to density is associated the idea of misery and social instability: to superstructures the idea of alienation. In Asia density is definitely a necessity that you cope with, but at the same time is a quality that you look for, because it is recognized as feature that brings character and gives identity. It has to be remembered that, according to the studied presented in 1999 to the Wien congress "The Future of Cities. Learning from Asia", in 2015 eight of the ten largest cities in the world will be Asian: only in ninth position we will find Mexico City and in tenth New York City. In such an intense scenario, where too many things

12)In his essay, Public Space and the Phantom of Agor, Lotus 106 pp.68-75, Georges Teyssot is proposing an interesting "science of thresholds", borrowing his definition by german philosopher Walter Benjamin.

13)When it come out in 1972, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenour book, Learning from Las Vegas sounded like a revolution. "It inverts the idea that many have based their professional lives upon. It threatens those things that we use to distinguish the difference between us, the cultured, and them, the vulgar. It is difficult to accept the idea of the citizens of our "know-nothing culture" knowing more about the world they live in than the trained cultured architect."(from The Ohio Review)

are happening at the same time, the people will live more in a temporal than in a special dimension¹⁴): the optimization of our everyday life will become a necessity to survive.

The Metropolitan Interiors are one of the products of density. But if in Europe they were treated (and I am thinking about all Paris passages that rapidly spread around all over the continent) with the same cares architecture was using to design public spaces, in Asia they are the result of a process that we could define as almost “accidental”. And this is definitely the most interesting quality. Metropolitan Interiors are scenarios mostly built “throughout interiors” and they are widely spread without a rational process. The necessary inputs are coming partially from the outside, from transportation and superstructures planning: but also from the inside, from the everyday situations design, an application field proper of interior design. The way that minimum spaces are combined and the way they temporary use the public space, is the design tool that can be used to affect from the beginning the whole superstructures’ design.

This is the strong link connecting two fields apparently so far apart one from the other, like urban and interior design. To understand and design in the Metropolitan Interiors dense situation, the architect has to forget the idea of making up once again the world and its inhabitants: it is more important to read, without any biases from the existing situation. Because, strange enough, it works. “Architects are out of the habit of looking nonjudgementally at the environment, because orthodox Modern Architecture is progressive, if not revolutionary, utopian, and puristic; it is dissatisfied with existing conditions. Modern architecture has been anything but permissive: Architects have preferred to change the existing environment rather than enhance what is there.¹⁵” There are three main conclusions for this study about Metropolitan Interior affecting Discipline, Market and Space.

1. Discipline. Due to the dramatic extension of its public borders, Interior Design has to consider a much broader scenario: interior designers have replaced architects in the

construction of public space. Therefore schools and professionals have to extend and reshape their application field, both in terms of theory and practice.

2. Market. Due to the fact that in Asia, everyday life takes place mostly in public places, houses are limited to host intimate and private functions. In terms of market Metropolitan Interior spaces represent already a quite large share of the interior goods production: this percentage will increase more and more in the future in order to provide a wider selection for customers and designers.

3. Space. The amount of covered, underground, overhead or carved space in urban city blocks will constantly raise according to the density: it will host an always larger number of functions and people, moving through space but mostly throughout time. This situation represents the main scenario Interior Designer, from now on, will have to investigate in order to build the unique image of future Asian metropolises.

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14)In his book S,M,L,XL Rem Koolhaas describing the Generic City makes a very simple statement that sounds like this: In a multiple scenario environment, where too many things are happening at the same time, the cause-effect process has no effect: things work, that's it.

15)Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenour book, *Learning from Las Vegas* p.3