

ALCHEMY OF BUILDING A SHOPPING CENTER: CRITICAL POINTS OF VIEW TO FORMULATING A PARADISE FOR CONSUMING.

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Outlining

1. Pounding a Mall
2. How architecture creates thinking as a structure for society. Ideology and model behind mass consumption
3. Architect as a fascist or is it **him** to blame?
4. I call them space invaders.

An article trying to define and understand, look at to the core of the mental landscape we now possess and own as familiar and acceptable. Modelling the body of profit architecture, what kind of purposes and meanings lie behind creating our consuming based social structures, architecture we inhabit and dwell in, which has overwhelmingly conquered the planet and the style to construct is total and fast. Trying to understand power there is in use and how this type of architecture is used to control us, our behavior and thinking. Also, my concern is what kind of public spaces within the frame of consuming are offered for us. How we are in and outside, how these spaces exist and what they do, what is the function there and the lasting effect. Issue of time is essential as buildings stay put a period of time, are made in factory style and manufactured in similar fashion all over.

1.Pounding a Mall

I was told that behind us was a supermarket being built. This was in Pori where there are old factory buildings of which some are restored others aren't. That we were inside what is left of a cotton factory, which dates back a hundred years or so. I was also told that in this little town called Pori, there are three shopping centers within one Kilometer radius (not to mention supermarkets). So, thinking to myself and continuing, how is it possible to imagine infinite growth and consumption, that there are people who can afford and are willing to spend their money and time at malls and thinking building malls is progress as is continuous consumption. How is it possible for one to have customers for all of them all the time? Other puzzling issue is how is it possible to get a permission to tear apart old historical factories for this kind of use. Since it has been done, the demolishing of our heritage in Finland, since the 60's and seventies at least, it has been part of bringing down our visible history to make profit and call it progress.

As a small country, as people, wouldn't it be crucially important to preserve our cultural memory which is visible, a sight and kept in use? Yes, I could see it a vital issue for many reasons. To see the construction site and feel the pounding of concrete pillars getting hit in to the ground felt physical and alien. Such heavy-duty raises questions. Walls of our classroom were trembling. One hammering pound per second. I looked up at the clock on the wall, it was like a heartbeat. Sweet metaphor for grey concrete stumps to hold it all together, engineered. Isn't it, heartbeat that synchronizes, resonates, comes to bring us enjoyment in music, like music

of building up a house. A simple monotonic beat made robotic as we are in a hurry and made look effortless in a way in its massiveness. But when you listen to your own heart, the squeaking and bumping makes you feel nausea. This pounding irritated everybody and the thought of a new market was a sickening idea. Wondering this happening everywhere we got a new perspective, when Yik Chum someone from Hong Kong told us that, she had worked in an office and listened to the same kind of sound every day for three years, a nonstop pounding. Also, that in Hong Kong this kind of sound is constant. She lived upstairs to a mall and it is very common in HK to build such high buildings, which contain every possible service one can possibly need in order to live there. Well, we were stunned. How small Finland seemed and how small it is. It looked like Hong Kong lives in different time that is science fiction here in Pori Finland. To adopt this kind of progress probably is inevitable, one cannot live hating it can one? Well one can question the inevitability of it. One thing being what does questioning on one's own do and being irritated by this progress. We are the ones they are for, these malls, right? Question mark is that I'm not sure. Users, the customers, passerby, owners of the premises, owners of the land, what is it to use a building?

To build is a practical practice, daily sight in a city. Cities are being reconstructed, modelled for our purposes in a democratic or undemocratic way to sustain and restructure our lives. At least in Finland attempt is to be as democratic as possible and process is public. Though it puzzled me to hear an architect say that the system is too democratic, making the decision- making avoid any experimental or bold solutions and in the end everybody mostly follows the same safe patterns fearing something

different would not make the wanted profit. In Finland it is clear to see this since the old has been gladly removed and cubical architecture has invaded our land. It is difficult to find which democratic ways are in use when it comes to constructing when it all looks the same. I have my doubts. One approach to view this dilemma is to see who is building and what are the main reasons to construct. Quick look tells me behind my back a supermarket is getting started and another one and another one. Is there a demand for it? Who investigates the demand, who designs these shopping places? It must be calculated and the system manipulated. Calculated so that it emerges as ultimately what people need. Profit architecture which has a purpose and which does good for all.

Profit architecture is to get value out of us during and after having built the site, it is us who are abused, but do we feel abused? We are supposed to like it as it is convenient, easy and part of way of life. Reasons for such houses to exist, to exploit, to have ground to stand on. It could be called fascism wrapped in a package with a smile and sold to us or forced on us and we go where things are cheapest. Just as fascism it lures a crowd with cheapness and slogans with looks, something we think we can afford and must have. So in this line of thought, it is not for us, it is for those who profit. Not just talking about the supermarket behind me, but of the genre of malls, supermarkets and shopping centers are brainwash. There is plenty of reason for harsh critique, but does it sink in there where critique is aimed at? For some it's a kind of progress that cannot be stopped and should not be stopped. People like malls, they go there to spend time and have fun. That we like and live in capitalism emphasis is on enjoyment and be able not care for the consequences is part of the enjoyment. To live we

have to consume products, we need products as we do not have time or energy or capabilities to make all by ourselves, malls and shopping centers easily provide us cheaply what we need and beyond in a pounding-like way.

How malls are brought to us is one way to tell there is nothing ordinary citizens can do, somehow. Companies building their empires are enormous forces. What comes to capacity in funds, employees, connections, planning, they are getting their voice heard in ads and via lobbying via ideology of consuming is the only way modern people must live etc. The whole idea of a mall is to be an ad and a container. Malls, as I see them, are shaped for storage, to have simple routine-like maneuvers practiced, for people to move with trolleys, for the shopkeeper to bring in huge amounts of goods, to cash out, rip off as many people as is possible in rows like in a factory. Interesting article on the issue on www.thefunambulist.net # **Weaponized architecture///Architecture for profits Optimization: The Supermarkets' layout (2012)**. Which remarks 'the evil' from above gazing, an architect laughing at us when we think we are free, but are carefully put in use, used like puppets and under control as our behaviour and thinking is studied, how we need and how we want to be seen. Thought of an evil individual behind architecture may be a bit coloured but there is clearly a group of people who profit a huge deal and there is cynicism and pure exploitation that should not go without critique. How architects/constructors/politicians can and make an impact on the culture of building and consuming is an interesting one. Do architects have to be heroic master minds who stick out via competitions until they can make a difference and are listened to? Do architects have opinions about profit

architecture or do they just fulfil needs of constructors who pay architects to not make architecture but constructions for money? Template buildings need obviously very little creativity as it is repetitious, new or old architectural ideas get simplified as concrete elements and other building materials are factory goods and time is money.

2. How architecture creates thinking. Ideology and model behind mass consumption.

To enjoy a shopping center there is entertainment, cinemas, cafés, restaurants, floors, elevators, stairways, carousels, fountains, trees, glass ceilings, lighting, ads, lots of ads and lights. Interior design posing pretty or what happens to be in style, kind of cheap but glittering, mostly depending on what is sold in the particular place and for whom. We can spend time there looking, sitting, walking, buying, dreaming, seeing people, spending money and time. The main issue bothering me has been how this architecture influences us, our behavior, mental state and health, thinking, imagining and understanding what is good and valuable. How such places engage us, harass, puzzle, disturb, change our attitudes that we are not harassed by being harassed or the way we see the world and ourselves. Or on contrary malls make us feel good about ourselves giving inspiration, peace of mind, maybe healing and protection. I'm asking because pounding up structures like malls next to each other is a very impressive and aggressive act, even humiliating. Secondly to lure thousands of people to consume is another gigantic happening, which like chain reaction has started movement like no other which is monotonic and similar. I examine

the phenomenon as a pedestrian, biker, careful consumer, artist and a Finn. Also, because I'm concerned as it is a global phenomenon, a consuming and living disaster.

An interesting case began when in the 1950s scientist Jonas Salk was working on polio in the basement of a Pittsburgh laboratory. Work was not proceeding. He left to Italy to rest in a monastery. After the breakthrough, which led to the vaccine for polio he felt that the monastery had deeply affected him as a place and as a building. He invited architect Louis Kahn to design The Salk institute in La Jolla in California hoping other scientists would benefit the serene surroundings. Since then in Salk there has been research on how our surroundings affect feelings and behaviour. *"In the current issue of Scientific American Mind, Emily Anthes describes how ceiling height, colors and other design factors influence attention and creativity. Scientists are just beginning to address these questions, in part by studying changes in brain activity as subjects make their way through virtual reality rooms."* *"Mose Bar, a neuroscientist, speculates that our brains are hard-wired to avoid sharp angles because we read them as dangerous."*
<https://www.fastcompany.com/1278814/your-brain-architecture>

What does research give to building new if it is not taken into consideration in no other way than how to make the most of us as consumers and psychological beings? What comes to being efficient at the place of consuming, work, living is to be a machine and in use for profit purposes, being useful. How workers enjoy working in a place has a lot of value for employers and of course for workers themselves. Same goes with where you live and spend time at. What we see and how we react to

structures around us is interesting. Does monotonous dull city architecture depress us or make us violent, for example.

The thing I wonder is do we create new points of views at all or do we build the obvious taken for granted state for the monetary value is the primary value and an interest for small group of people who have too much power? Do we live in science fiction already where efficiency and amount is what has number one value? To go back to something that we are losing is impossible, something is lost entirely in terms of architecture. Possibly all that which we value as beautiful and worth having around and go see abroad, the history which has brought value cannot be made again.

3. Architect as fascist or is it **him** to blame?

In Finland we have small-scale and a short history of profit architecture in comparison to for instance the United States. In the US there are already generations who go and see malls of their childhood which may be abandoned and empty with parking lots, to remember what it was like then, how it was maybe better. Would you be nostalgic for a mall? For example website www.deadmalls.com is filled with pictures of abandoned malls. Companies owning these not-in-use buildings don't want this kind of publicity, but the site still exists and it is quite interesting and has a fun side to it. Documentaries like Malls R us from year 2008 by a Canadian Helene Klodawsky <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAIDAzTtoCA> gives a good picture of impact of malls to people's lives, picture of people who have spent a lot of their leisure time at malls and around them. The

idea of a mall has become to statue something else as well. Has bad profit architecture and bad architecture eventually come up to equal the same as bad television? People love both, but feel guilty for using and liking them. As I see youngsters in Finland using mall parking spaces to meet friends, skateboard, bike, spray graffiti, have fun etc., I wonder is it so because they don't have any or many other places to go to do these things. Conclusion to this is that options are given scarcely and one has to make the best out of places that are there. How to imagine something else can be a difficult task. To find and create alternatives is hard work. What makes malls problematic as public spaces is that they are privately owned, monitored and similar. What one owns one also controls. *"By designing this space as an interior area accessible by definite entrances and supervised by dozens of video cameras and sensors, corporations were able to minimize the number of undesirables that were allowed in "their public space". "The design is also oriented in order to compose a whole interior fantasy world that is supposed to be perceived as better than the outside reality. This world is safe, clean, warm, entertaining and attractive. It is a disappointment to leave it says a consumer who forgot/denied reality. The main characteristic of capitalist design is to leave nothing at chance. Indeed, chance provokes uncertainty and uncertainty provides an illegibility that can be unproductive for Capitalism."* <https://thefunambulist.net/architectural-projects/politics-capitalisms-architecture> The mental landscape hyper-controlled public spaces create is oppressive, paranoid and delusional. Other mental emotional image given is the feeling that consumer is in charge, choosing and being cared for, nurtured and given the best chances, opportunities and goods available. The customer can feel enjoyment, pleasure of

consuming and freedom. *“The unreliable, possibly dangerous group of people is kept outside.”* Capitalism’s Architecture tells that: *the contemporary mall is said to have been invented by The Austrian-American Victor Gruen in the 1950’s. It is supposed that it was him who thought of the pure capitalist architecture as an element of urbanism. Firstly, shopping malls were intended for the middle class as the equivalent of old European city centers, a pedestrian place of gathering and activity. Doing it differently the United States placed this new kind of public space within the framework of privatized supervision, security and control.* www.thefunambulist.net # **POLITICS///Capitalism’s Architecture**. This is the insides of a mall in short, the gathering of crowds and almost inhaling the same ideas has some scary visions. How about the shells around, cubes as I call them, shapes built? Still controlled by cameras, even the trashes behind are watched, locked up.

4. I call them space invaders.

There is a field, wasteland or a meadow of some kind, bushes and it’s been there like that for a longer period of time surrounded by small-scale shops and supermarkets. Like in Tampere where I live, there is Lielähti which is one part of the town where many malls are situated and are all offering bit different varieties of goods, but none of them is for spending time, dwelling. Such dwell in malls are in the center of town. Shopping centers are booming in Finland. Is it hysteria or just convenient acceptable progress? Interestingly the biggest malls are not the biggest sellers according to the statistics on shopping centers in Finland in Wikimedia about 20 biggest shopping centers, 2010. The website of the Finnish

Council of Shopping Centers says that a successful shopping center is the pounding heart of a community and gives a definition: shopping center consists of a commercial building in which retail outlets and services open inwards onto a walkway or concourse. The gross loanable area is generally at least 5,000 sq. m. Shopping centers have at least 10 retail outlets. A mall has one or more anchor tenants and a number of key traders as well as other retailers and services. The services may be either commercial or public. A single trader may not exceed 50% of the total commercial space. Shopping centers have joint management and marketing. www.kauppakeskusyhdistys.fi. Though year 2012 yle.fi reported a decline in building shopping centers in Finland in the next few years. Finnish real estate company Citycon is a pro-active owner and long-term developer of its properties. It is a major owner and builder of Shopping centers in Finland, elsewhere in Scandinavia and in the Baltic. They say on their website they take on account of environmental aspects and the well-being of the areas surrounding its retail properties, which provides solid foundations for the company's success and growth in the future. www.citycon.fi. In the light of having seen and visited many shopping centers anywhere in Finland and my skepticism I very much would like to see one of their properties to be what they claim. Very often those interested in constructing shopping centers are multinational companies to whom project investors can invest in. But there are good news too as Rautalampi municipality has taken chance and is looking for funders to build wooden 1000 square meter shopping center, which would focus on locally produced goods such as local food and organic food. <http://www.investinfinland.fi/web/invest-in-finland/search->

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This is a soon hopefully to become a trend, because so far in Finland the repetition of the same models is a major fault and worry. Monotonous landscape of blank straight forms, blank colors, cubes with gigantic ads are rising up to the sky in favor of vast amount of traffic, visibility, exploitative industries for mass consumption. Made consuming look easy, unproblematic and light in weight and problems like abuse of employees' rights seem far away. There are projects that have designed different kinds of malls, for example for a mall to create its own energy and experimenting new kinds of appearances. It is called climate protection supermarket and one is located in Graz Austria. Also, designers have had emphasis on using sustainable materials and environmentally friendly economical construction to reduce the life-cycle cost of buildings. Critics assume such projects to be only local and exist only to polish the surface of the big players in the industry. One way or the other there definitely is a demand and hurry

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to develop new ways of consuming and
constructing.<http://www.archdaily.com/805071/shopping-nord-graz->

behf-corporate-architects

<http://www.archdaily.com/search/projects/categories/shopping-centers>

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