LEARN TO SWIM OR BUILD A BOAT — ON ARCHITECTURE AND FREEDOM

AALTO UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ARTS, DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
MASTER’S THESIS
KRISTIAN ÄIJÖ
SPRING 2017
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PROLOGUE

A friend asks him to give a talk at an event they’re organizing, knowing he’s an expert in his field. Flattered by the suggestion and slightly intoxicated, he agrees.

The next day, about to start working, he sits in an armchair at home and looks around. The place looks more like the office of some neurotic conspiracy-theorist than a living-room, with the walls and tables filled with notes, books, print-outs, diagrams, drawings, tapes, and papers. “There’s a lot of ideas here”, he thinks, “they can’t all be bad.”

Then comes doubt. Fear creeps in, takes hold and darkness settles. “No, no, no, no!” His craft is to doubt and question, to identify and articulate negativity, to point out what needs to be reconsidered. For construction, destruction is vital. To his discontent, his criticism has developed a reflexive nature, leading to relentless self-questioning. This unstable self-esteem prohibits both happiness and productivity. Before, flaws equaled potential, but now it all appears miserable.

Times seize. Days go by but the season doesn’t change, nothing changes. He goes for a walk to get some fresh air. Almost immediately, he runs into his friend. Desperately looking to find an excuse for not attending the event, he is interrupted.
— Look, you can present whatever you want.
— I don’t know what I want, he replies.
— Nobody does.
Sharing a melancholic smile, a grey rain starts. They agree to go back inside for some coffee. As the caffeine kicks in, both become very talkative. Reluctantly, he presents some of his sketches. His friend gets very excited and somehow, their mutual enthusiasm prevents him for shooting down his own ideas. For validating his work, he trusts his friend more than his own judgement.
— Enough with this isolation.
Looking at his armchair, he decides he needs a sofa.
individual is solely responsible of composing ones life. This can be a treacherous condition, because gained freedom does not equal gained ability. Without the means to act according to ones will individual freedom is meaningless.

This absence of constraints, or negative liberty, is spatially embodied in the open plan, a category that is discussed in this thesis through Typical Plan, the loft and early Fordist factories. Spaces of unconstrained conditions are further elaborated through abandoned industrial ruins. The presence positive freedom implies is dealt with through the project of Absalon, Stop City and “Exodus, voluntary prisoners of architecture”.

The analysis proposes two roles for the architect. The former relies on a laissez-faire optimism, considering architects as neutral facilitators. The latter acknowledges that defining space is an intervention, and thus contradictory to the absence of interference “negative” implies. The presence of spatial boundaries is examined through the concept of positive liberty.

In an increasingly individualized society we are less constrained by traditional structures such as class, family ties or nationality. This is a two-edged sword: on the one hand, the individual is free from predetermined ways of conduct – on the other, one suffers from a lack of continuity and the difficulty of positioning oneself in the world. The emancipated

Keywords: freedom, liberty, structure, spatial organization, architectural theory
Tämä diplomityö käsittelee tilaa vapauden käsitteen kautta.

Vapaus, ymmärrettynä kahdella toisistaan eriävällä tavalla, tarjoaa sanaston ja näkökulman arkkitehtuurin käsittelemiseen sisällään pitämänsä elämän mahdollistajana ja ohjaajana. Negatiivinen vapaus viittaa ulkoisten tekijöiden poissaoloon, ja väitän tämän poissaolon olevan ristiriidassa arkkitehtuurin läsnäoloon. Käsittelen arkkitehtuuria positiivisen vapauden näkökulmasta, tilaa ja toimintaa sekä mahdollistavana että rajanaena eleen.

Kasvava yksilöityminen nyky-yhteiskunnassa merkitsee perinteisten rakenteiden merkityksen vähenemistä, rakenteiden kuten luokka, perhe tai kansalaisuus. Tämä on kaksiteräinen miekka – toisaalta, yksilö on vapaa ennalta määrytyistä toimintatavoista, mutta kärsii jatkuvuuden puutteesta ja vaikeudesta itsensä paikantamisesta. Lisätty vapaus ei tosin välttämättä lisää toimintakykyä, ja ilman keinoja toteutta-

maan tahtoaan muodollinen vapaus on merkityksetön.

Ulkoisten rajojen puute on ilmenee tilallisesti vapaassa plaanissa. Tätä kategorioa käsitellään avokonttorin, loft-asunnnon ja Fordistisen tehtaan myötä. Vapaiden olosuhteiden tiloja käsitellään laajemmin hylättyjen teollisten raunioiden myötä. Positiivisen vapauden tilallisia vastikkeita käsitellään tarkastelemalla arkkitehtuuriprojekteja Absalon, Stop City ja ”Exodus – Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture”.


On syytä tarkastella kriittisesti niitä arvoja, joiden mukaan järjestämme toimintamme niin yksilöinä kun suunnittelejoina. Koska kaikenlaiset vapaudet eivät yksinomaan ole riittäviä.

Avainsanat: vapaus, rakene, tilallinen järjestys, arkkitehtuurin teoria
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In addition, the concept is at the very heart of a recurring theme of mine as a student of architecture – the idea of adapting to an unforeseeable future. “Times are changing”, and since nobody has access to a reliable crystal ball, the consensus seems to be that all we can do is to prepare for change itself – just be prepared to adapt. Seduced by the promise of an architecture that can withstand flux, I was quite interested in the discourse around flexibility – that is, when architects design evolving, unfixed, modifiable solutions. Experimenting with its possibilities throughout my studies, I drew housing that expands and contracts according to needs, and domestic and commercial space that blend together uninterrupted. However, in time I realized that in a radical form, these ideals come with major problems. Suspicions towards flexibility as a strategy rose further as my awareness of the problems capitalism imposes grew. In my latest design, I started to question the open plan, and started to work on an argument against it. I ended up preparing a sale-speech for an open-ended architecture, in parallel to a critique of it. The critique seemed promising, but was based on intuition. I needed to look closer at the ideas and suspicions raised. Step one was to ask: what is freedom?

My personal interest in dealing with the topic of freedom is rooted in a need to clarify the essentials of how to live a good life. To me, it never seemed evident at all. There is the “norm”, a guideline that is supposed to breed a safe and ordinary life, but my perception of the citizen-consumer in contemporary society is just not a very convincing model. But how to conceive of an alternative way of being? There is a heavy absence in the political imaginary, as so many contemporary thinkers have proclaimed. Viable substitutes for organizing society and/or individual life seem impossible to envision. An abundance of “lifestyles” are presented as alternatives, but their spectre is stupefyingly narrow.

The initial impetus for my choice of topic was not based on longing for emancipation, but my recognition of “excessive” freedom. Since some time, I have noted the burden of constant decision-making, and how many completely trivial decisions need to be made constantly, like what to eat, wear, or buy. These are freedoms that mainly distract me. For me freedom is more of a psychological issue than a political one, or at least was at the outset of this work.

In addition, the concept is at the very heart of a recurring theme of mine as a student of architecture – the idea of adapting to an unforeseeable future. “Times are changing”, and since nobody has access to a reliable crystal ball, the consensus seems to be that all we can do is to prepare for change itself – just be prepared to adapt. Seduced by the promise of an architecture that can withstand flux, I was quite interested in the discourse around flexibility – that is, when architects design evolving, unfixed, modifiable solutions. Experimenting with its possibilities throughout my studies, I drew housing that expands and contracts according to needs, and domestic and commercial space that blend together uninterrupted. However, in time I realized that in a radical form, these ideals come with major problems. Suspicions towards flexibility as a strategy rose further as my awareness of the problems capitalism imposes grew. In my latest design, I started to question the open plan, and started to work on an argument against it. I ended up preparing a sale-speech for an open-ended architecture, in parallel to a critique of it. The critique seemed promising, but was based on intuition. I needed to look closer at the ideas and suspicions raised. Step one was to ask: what is freedom?
Freedom is an evasive concept to which no single description has been able to do justice. The plurality of definitions poses problems both philosophically and politically.

Firstly, the usage of freedom and liberty varies according to discourse. The commonly agreed upon distinction is that freedom refers to an individual’s ability to act according to one’s own will, regardless of outside forces. Liberty refers to this aforementioned ability as something that an outside force, like the state, has made possible for the individual. In political philosophy they are used interchangeably, as will be done in this work.

Secondly, the academic discourse has been for the last half a century predominantly divided into two main variants that are incompatible, even contradictory to one another. Dating back to all the way to Immanuel Kant, and encountered in the work of Jeremy Bentham and Erich Fromm, it was popularised by philosopher and political theorist, Sir Isaiah Berlin in his inaugural lecture at Oxford University in 1958, titled “Two Concepts of Liberty”.¹

The two concepts are called liberty in the positive and in the negative sense. Positive and negative do not imply “better” and “worse”, but refer to presence and respectively absence. Negative freedom implies absence of constraints (freedom from), while positive freedom implies presence of constraints, like control, and take into account the capability to achieve what is desired (freedom to).

This simple example demonstrates this difference well: Imagine yourself on your way to a meeting you consider important. You feel the urge to take a detour to buy cigarettes, but that would make you late from the meeting. Following the logic of negative freedom, that is the absence of obstacle or constraint, you are free because nothing stops you from doing the detour. Positive freedom, that is presence of control, would consider you free only if you have sufficient self-mastery to go directly to the meeting, recognizing it to be the aim of your “higher-self”.

Negative freedom is more easily determined, whereas positive freedom takes more factors into account. One challenge in considering a relationship through the concept of positive freedom lies in the multitude of ways to interpret what is here outlined as “control”.

Another challenge is how to determine which options are analogous to buying cigarettes and respectively to the important meeting.

Freedom cannot be considered as a single asset. One is not simply free, unfree, or something in between. Any person can have various amounts of structure in parallel spheres of life – think of a lifetime-employed public servant who has a very structured working life, but might live a wildly liberal romantic life. Or a prisoner, trapped in a cell but free from expectations regarding his writing. Freedom is, in other words, a highly contextual description, and its terminological diversity makes it prone to confusion and misuse.

2 Carter Ian, Positive and Negative Liberty (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016)
1.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The origins of the modern ideas of liberty are rooted in the early democratic societies of ancient Greece. The “free men” were citizens actively engaged in discussing and running their society. Following the rediscovery of ancient Greece in the 16th century, the ideals of freedom were of great influence in the founding of modern era Western nations. Freedom and equality became the building bricks of the founding of the United States of America in 1776, and the battle cry of the French revolution in 1789 – both events embracing democracy in pursuit for a more free society. The early modern project was fundamentally about eradicating the oppressive medieval order, and by the 20th century, the emancipation of the individual had become one of the central tasks of modernization.3

Modernization is as such a destructive force, tearing apart the established ways. Originally, modernity combined destruction with the will to reconstruct – there was a vision of a future, and the will to build a new order. However, the profound cultural and technological shifts that took place after the World Wars radically changed the nature of development of modernity. One way of describing these changes is through the theory of “meta-change”. It suggests that modernity is being modernized – the processes of renewal inherent to modernization are now directed towards itself, that is, its own institutions like the nation state, the political parties and the nuclear family. When before, the subject of renewal and questioning was old traditions, it now included the new traditions as well.5 When the destructive ambitions of modernity, meant to make way for a new system, turn toward its reconstructive ones, they become paralyzed. Without its productive agenda, the current phase of (post-) modernity6 lacks a direction.

4 “Modernity here is used in reference to a condition of living imposed upon individuals by the socio-economic process of modernisation. The experience of modernity involves a rupture with tradition and has a profound impact on ways of life and daily habits. The effects of this rupture are manifold.” Heynen Hilde, *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique* (Boston: MIT Press, 1999), 3
5 Beck, *The Theory of Reflexive Modernization*, 13
6 Concerning the question whether the contemporary era is beyond modernity, i.e. post-modern, or a radical state of it is a technicality of minor significance for this argument. Both views are compatible with the shift to a more individualized society. Continuities of modernity include labels like “Reflexive modernization”, “Second modernity”, “Late modernity”, and “Liquid modernity”. Bauman Zygmunt, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 10
The dismantling of the mechanisms that assign people social roles has an emancipatory, but also destabilizing effect. This condition is succinctly described by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman as “liquid modernity”. Drawing on the metaphor of fluids, he portrays a phase of modernity where established procedures have melted away. Liquefaction is the dissolving of “solids”, that is everything expected to endure, i.e. the material and mental structures we lean upon. “All that is solid will melt into air”, as was famously declared in the Communist Manifesto already in the first half of the 19th century, suggests that “melting the solids” has all along been a process distinct to modernity. Bauman explains that before, in the time of a heavy, less mobile version of modernity, the intention was to replace them with new, lasting solids. Bauman’s description of contemporary society can be summarized as a state of living in pure process. What follows, is an era characterized by a lack of structure.

“The individual became more alone, isolated, became an instrument in the hands of overwhelmingly strong forces outside of himself; he became an ‘individual’, but a bewildered and insecure individual”
— Erich Fromm

7 Beck, *The Theory of Reflexive Modernization*, 15
8 Bauman Zygmunt, *Liquid Modernity*, 9
9 Ibid., 3
10 Sennett Richard, *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 41
1.3 CONTEMPORARY CONDITIONS

Freedom enjoys a very positive connotation. It is so fundamentally embedded in western culture that questioning its value seems completely unreasonable. The most familiar dystopian scenarios include oppression, dictatorship or some hostile “system” colonizing into the private sphere. However, the only opposite of freedom is not simply oppression. Sigmund Freud, the founder of psycho-analysis, thought of civilized life as a trade-off between freedom and security, a compromise where gains are mixed with sacrifice. When we see a shift towards increasing freedoms, we lose security. One cannot prosper in a state without security, or in a state without freedom.

Consider a juxtaposition between freedom and structure. In the “free”-end, there is the life of a polar bear – the Wild West, competitive nature, neo-liberalism. Moving away from the far end, we encounter the Flexible Man, the kinetic elite and liberal values. Next we find average-Joes and mediocrity, and further, the more structured life in a monastery or the military. In the “structure”-end of the spectrum, stability reigns. Here are rigorous orders, like that of Huxley’s Brave New World. Each point on the line has its advantages and disadvantages.

14 The term structure will be used quite broadly, as “the quality of being organized”. Structures are both tangible and abstract – social structures (habits, traditions, group mentality), power structures (authority) etc. Structures are defined. In their solidness, they provide stability. Stability comes with predictability, and predictability is a form of security. Structures are footholds, mental and material anchors. Structures are heavy, they endure. Freedom on the other hand, lacks the stiffness of pre-defined ways of conduct. It also comes with the absence of stability, predictability and security.

15 The Flexible Man, coined by sociologist Richard Sennett, lives a dynamic life. Not tied to a certain location or craft he is less vulnerable to economic fluctuations, and chooses rootlessness despite the immediate disadvantages like a lack of community or skill. Think of a traveling, single, atheist consultant, who feels at home at airports and gas stations

16 Aldous Huxley portrayed a society based on stability and individual happiness, an order that came at the cost of freedom of expression.

12 Freud Sigmund, Civilization and Its Discontents (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1930), 33
What characterises the contemporary condition is increasing individualization – a shift towards the “free” end. It means that there are less pre-determined structures conducting individual life, and thus more freedom. This increased freedom is better described as freedom in the negative sense – liberal economics free us from state intervention, and the post-modern condition frees us from the bonds of tradition. But it also means freedom from continuity, from a sense of belonging, even freedom from meaning.

“Contemporary freedom is not primarily the enjoyment of civil liberties, as the traditional liberal view has it, but rather like the freedom of free fall, experienced by many who are thrown into an uncertain and unpredictable future.”

— Hito Steyerl
What is often portrayed as flexibility and freedom can equally well be called rootlessness.\(^1\) Precarity\(^2\), the so often encountered word describing the conditions of the contemporary worker, depicts the freedoms of today very well. For functioning effectively in an ever-optimized line of production, the worker is expected to re-invent oneself, intertwining work and life.\(^3\) These are consequences of capitalist development. Sosiologists Boltanski and Chiapello point out: “from the middle of the 1970’s onwards, capitalism abandoned the hierarchical Fordist work structure and developed a new network-based form of organization that was founded on employee initiative and autonomy in the workplace – a ‘freedom’ that came at the cost of material and psychological security.”\(^4\)

Freedom today has become a neoliberal freedom, reduced to individual freedoms from the state and for consumption.\(^5\) The individual is unprecedentedly free, but within a limited sphere were life is unpredictable. This lack of predictability leads to a reduced sense of security. When tomorrow can be anything, continuum is lost, which in turn can be overwhelming. Richard Sennett, researching the character of work, write: “To imagine a life of momentary impulses, of short-term action, devoid of sustainable routines, a life without habits, is to imagine indeed a mindless existence.”\(^6\)

An organizing principle based on negative liberty is \textit{laissez-faire}, the ideal of letting things take their own course, a term often used as the economic ideal of free market neo-liberalism. To be “free from structure” can seem appealing, but such a condition is arguably non-existent. Rather, the absence of formal structure is colonized by informal ones, allowing the instalment of invisible hegemony. This applies in many scales. In unstructured groups without hierarchies the strong generally dominate the weak, just as laissez-faire policy prevents only governments from controlling the economy, but not the economically powerful.\(^7\)

\(^1\) Žižek Slavoj, “Utopia and its discontents – Slawomir Sierakowski interviews Slavoj Žižek”
\(^2\) “Precarious” is defined as 1. no securely held in position and 2. dependent on chance; uncertain
\(^3\) Fisher Mark, \textit{Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative} (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009), 33
\(^5\) Srnicek Nick and Williams Alex, \textit{Inventing the Future:}
\(^6\) Sennett Richard, \textit{The Corrosion of Character} (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1999), 44
\(^7\) Freeman Jo, \textit{The Tyranny of Structurelessness} (The Second Wave Vol. 2, No. 1, 1972)

Many struggle with the ambiguity of unstructured life and wish to escape. Psychologist and philosopher Erich Fromm, associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory, outlined the two main escape routes as “submission to authority” and “compulsive conforming”. Both of these structures – having someone (authority) or something (norms) tell you how to act – make life easier, but also come at the price of suppressing individuality. Fromm recognized negative freedom to be an overwhelming state in itself, but also a condition with enormous potential. For Fromm, negative freedom is the precondition for positive freedom, as it allows full realization of the individual self. All that is required is the ability to do so. Positive freedom, for him, consists of independent thought – the ability to set ones own boundaries. To draw on the earlier metaphor on fluids, Fromm envisioned a liquid world where everyone knew how to swim.

However, the ability to do so does not only consist of sheer will. There are inevitably differences in the individuals’ physical, mental and material capabilities to act. The right to act according to ones will is worthless without the means to do so. “Real freedom”, coined by economist Philippe Van Parijs, considers the absence of outer interference (negative liberty) as the first out of two conditions that are to be met. The other is to have the means to carry out ones will in reality. “Under a democracy, for example, we are all formally free to run for political leadership. But without the financial and social resources to run a campaign, this is a meaningless freedom. Equally, we are all formally free to not take a job, but most of us are nevertheless practically forced into accepting whatever is on offer.” “Synthetic freedom” is based on this idea, a concept proclaiming that freedoms that include the mental and material means to act are not a natural condition, but something that needs to be artificially constructed. Political measures such as basic income and public health-care construe this more substantial kind of freedom.

28 Srnicek Nick and Williams Alex, Inventing the Future, 79
29 Ibid., 79

26 Fromm Erich, Escape from Freedom, 133
PART II: ARCHITECTURE

“Since it is now clear that a certain amount of stability is necessary for cultural vibrancy, the question to be asked is: how can this stability be provided, and by what agencies?”
— Mark Fisher

2.1 INTRODUCTION
Architecture accommodates most of human activity. Understood as a means to order and define space, it is as such an act of structuring, forming the life it contains. In Part 2 of this Thesis, questions of liberty and structure are translated into space through the analysis and discussion of various architectural projects. The selected projects follow Berlin’s division of liberty into two main categories: spaces of negative liberty, defined by the absence of outer constraints, and spaces of positive liberty, characterized by their clearly defined spatial boundaries.

30 Fisher Mark, Capitalist Realism, 77
In Alejandro Jodorowsky’s 1973 film “Holy Mountain”, we encounter an architect, wanting to “make millions”. Selling the idea of a shelter to house factory workers, his spectacular pitch culminates in the slogan: “Be a free man – without a family, without a house”. His proposal, titled “City of Freedom”, is a minimum housing project, were each apartment is the size and shape of a coffin. They are stacked in racks for maximum efficiency. Inside, the inhabitant has room enough to stand, and can sleep by turning the coffin into a horizontal position. One “will be conditioned to eat at the factory”. On the ground level, communal latrine trucks circulate.

The design is based on an idea that everything that limits the individual is to be considered a burden. In his proposal the individual is both freed from community, but also from himself. In its uniform austerity the architecture of the housing solution dismisses the idea of a unique individual by renouncing self-expression. In limited space, there is no room for possessions, followed by a limited interest in pay. With no time-consuming social ties, one can commit to work totally. Obviously, the true intentions of the architect selling this kind of freedom are dubious, for what the worker is actually freed to do, is to become the ultimate rootless employee.
2.2.2 Industrial Ruins

“Orderly space is rule-governed space /…/ the rule is a rule in as far as it forbids and excludes.”  
– Zygmunt Bauman

While the space of the city is in general heavily encoded and regulated, it holds within it less governed territories. In the case of abandoned buildings the rules designating appropriate uses do not apply. They are non-normative spaces, presenting the possibility of those activities and people that ordinary, rule-governed space exclude. Temporary events, non-human life, arts, as well as the homeless and those unprotected by law are free to coexist.

Tim Edensor considers abandoned industrial sites ruins, arguing for their potential. Ruins are heterotopias: in state of disorder, existing classifications merge and fuse, forcing experience outside of established categories. “Unpolished spaces” have the potential to blur “the distinctions between practices deemed transgressive and rational.” In his view, the renouncement of rules leads to an environment that is more tolerant and inviting for that which is considered “the other”.

An often-encountered example of the potential of unprogrammed space can be found in the famous MIT Building 20. It was made to serve the Massachusetts Institute of Technology radar research institute that needed a wartime extension in 1942. Meant only as temporary, it was designed in an afternoon, built from the simplest possible wooden structure and made from the cheapest available materials. It had thin walls, a leaking roof and inadequate ventilation. It did not even

fig. 5 MIT Building 20

33 Heterotopia, coined by Michael Foucault, is a literal combination of ”other, or different” (hetero) and ”place” (topia).
34 Edensor Tim, Industrial Ruins, 63
35 Ibid., 33
meet the fire regulations. The building was not disassembled after the war due to an urgent shortage of space, and by 1946 it was included in the campus plan to be used for “educational and research experiments”.36

Regardless of the practical difficulties, it soon became very popular. Researchers from new and unusual fields would run into each other in the long corridors. They would also be able to tear down walls without asking for permissions, and set research equipment on the roof. Even floors were demolished – when developing the first atomic clock, physicists removed two slabs to fit their apparatus.

Despite its flaws the building acquired recognition of mythical proportions earning the nickname “the magic incubator”.37 Free from the permanence and dignity traditionally associated with architecture, MIT Building 20 provided unrestricted creative use by simply being worthless.38

### 2.2.3 Typical Plan

Consisting of a slab and column structure, Typical Plan39 refers to a stacked floor plan without any interior walls, i.e. an anonymous, flatly lit and tempered space. Typical Plan is the spatial archetype of negative freedom. As a project, its only objective is to reduce constraints: no walls, no defined usage, minimum pillars, and minimum service core. The user is unobstructed by any fixed arrangement of space.

In its genericness and homogeneity, “the plan without qualities” promises endless possibilities. The uninterrupted space assures it will accommodate any user, permitting effortless programmatic shape-shifts. Koolhaas observes, perhaps ironically, the “monstrosity” of how every decision made in design reduces possible outcomes.40 Typical Plan refuses to do such a thing. Rather, the emphasis is on possibilities, on leaving things open and undecided. As such, it is a radical approach – without planned program, it is the architectural equivalent of *laissez-faire*, where the work of the architect is reduced into merely defining the perimeter.

36 MIT Institute Archives & Special Collections.  
39 The term was introduced by architect Rem Koolhaas in 1993 in an essay titled “Typical Plan”, two years later published in S, M, L, XL.  
The open office

The most familiar application of the concept is the open office. This generic space naturally accommodates immaterial work, not requiring much more of its habitat than an Internet connection. Instead of established hierarchies, Business aspires to the virtue of flexibility. In the 1970's, the power in corporations started shifting from the managers to the shareholders, turning the focus from long-term to more profitable short-term strategies. The emphasis was no longer on stability – trying to endure external fluctuations – but rather on flexibility. Sociologist Richard Sennett explains: “Stability seemed a sign of weakness, suggesting to the market that the firm could not innovate or find new opportunities or otherwise manage change”.41 The genericness of Typical Plan allows the companies to expand and contract, and to dynamically alter their scheme according to market needs.

41 Sennett Richard, The Culture of The New Capitalism, 41
The loft

The loft is the domestic Typical Plan – a spatial non-configuration. Spatially, it embodies the idea of the vast open plan. The loft is a large open space, often a renovated attic or a remnant of former industrial uses, that has been turned into domestic space. The origins of the type date to New York in the 50’s and 60’s, when artists took advantage of large affordable spaces.

The most famous one was Andy Warhol’s Silver Factory, a rough industrial space he occupied between 1963 and 1968. It served as his home, his studio, and a meeting place for the bohemian counter-culture scene of the era. It was a typical large industrial space, unobstructed by interior walls. The only fixed spatial elements were four equally distributed columns. This allowed him to freely shift the program between the three aforementioned functions. The original lofts were places for exceeding the boundaries of established practices. The loft and its aesthetic have since been appropriated by the upper middle-class.

Open plan and Typical Plan are terms that refer to indoor space without partitions. It is not to be confused with Free plan, the direct translation of Le Corbusier’s “Plan Libre”, which refers to building techniques that allow the load-bearing structure to be separated from the partitioning of space. This freedom is for the designer. They could in many cases be considered a synonym, but open plan refers to a broader variety of spaces, whereas Typical Plan in more of a concept in itself and has acquired a steady position within the discourse. It is here understood as a project, an agenda, a mentality.

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42 Dogma, Living/Working (L’esprit De L’escalier, 2014)
43 Brooker Nathan, New York’s long love affair with loft living (Financial Times, 2011)
The Fordist factory

The origins of Typical Plan are to be found in the Fordist factory, attributed to Detroit architect Albert Kahn. In his doctoral thesis, architect Francesco Marullo traces its formal evolution to the “convergence between modern industrial revolution, scientific management of labor and financial imperialism [that] occurred during the first three decades of the 20th century.”  

Marullo analyses the typology as a necessary means of capitalist progression. He proposes the genericness of Typical Plan as a “device for emancipation”, with the potential to develop new “modes of organization and resistance”. In the Fordist factory, the space provided a freedom for the workers to organize and protest. The open floor at the factory served as a suitable site for rebellion: when the workers were on strike within the factory, it both protected them from the employer and the police, while simultaneously preventing any strikebreaker from working.

45 Ibid., 156  
46 Ibid., 144
2.3 STRUCTURE
SPACES OF POSITIVE LIBERTY

2.3.1 Exodus – Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture

In his final project at the Architectural Association in London, Rem Koolhaas, together with Madelon Vreisendorp, Elia Zenghelis, and Zoe Zenghelis, re-imagined the presence of a Wall - an architectural element historically regarded as an act of division, complicit in turning architecture into “the guilty instrument of despair”\(^{47}\) – as a uniting and wholesome force.

The project is set in the London, inhabited by dissatisfied masses of people suffering from the ever-deteriorating conditions of life in the city. Imagining an architectural response to their plight, Koolhaas erects the Wall, a place of order that runs through the chaos of the historical centre in a gesture both sweeping and monumental. Seduced by the promise of a “new architecture” and its “hedonic science of designing collective facilities that fully accommodate individual desires”\(^{48}\), the people of London flock to inhabit Koolhaas’ Wall in an event he calls the “Exodus”. The future inhabitants of the Wall agree to become its oxymoronic “Voluntary Prisoners, ecstatic in the freedom of their architectural confines”\(^{49}\).

\(^{47}\) Koolhaas et.al. S, M, L, XL, 5
\(^{48}\) Ibid., 7
\(^{49}\) Ibid., 7
In a complete reversal of its nature, the prison has become the sanctuary. Koolhaas and his team go on to imagine a variety of reformatory and creative spaces contained within the order of the Wall. There is the Reception area, that through its architecture inspires in the newcomers a “state of political inventiveness”\textsuperscript{50}, the Tip of the Strip that “is the frontline of the architectural warfare on the old London”\textsuperscript{51}, the Baths, “a social condenser” where the people come together “to invent, test, and possibly introduce new forms of behavior”\textsuperscript{52}, and finally the Allotments, where each inhabitant gets access to complete privacy, in order to recover “from the demands of intense collectivism”.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 9
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 11
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 13
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 19
2.3.2 Stop City

“Practicing the limit through the production of an architectural project acquires two levels of meaning: it first refers to the physical space of the limit, namely establishing constraints and processes of stoppage to the endless growth of the city; and, secondly, in more conceptual terms, it refers to the idea that architecture should turn its back to the drama of newness and define with conceptual clarity and formal exemplarity the prototypical forms of density: living and working spaces that would counter the life-style of individualism and laissez-faire propelled by neo-liberal urban policies.”
— Dogma

In various forms in his work, the co-founder of the architectural practice Dogma, architect Pier Vittorio Aureli has been investigating the concept of limit. This is perhaps most clearly formulated in Dogma’s project titled “Stop City” (2007-08).

“Stop City” is a critical appropriation of the famous non-figurative project “No-Stop City” (1969-72) by Archizoom Associati. In “No-Stop City”, Archizoom imagined an architecture without qualities: an endless interior, a generic space equipped with only the necessary infrastructure – “a city without architecture”. The project is meant as a dystopian exaggeration of homogenous urbanization driven by modernist urban theories. For Aureli, “No-Stop City” is “a hypothesis that attempted to bring to radical terms the very

54 Aureli Pier Vittorio and Tattara Martino, Stop City (2017)
55 Archizoom is often grouped together with the other concurrent Florentine group Superstudio as the Italian Radicals, and further with British Archigram (who were actually techno-utopians). “No Stop City” is briefly explained here only as an introduction to “Stop City”.
premises of modernity: the project for a generic city in which living is reduced to biopolitical mechanisms of production and reproduction.” 57 Half a century later, it is widely regarded as analogous to the reality of the contemporary city.

57 Aureli Pier Vittorio and Tattara Martino, Stop City.
For Absalon (Meir Eshel, 1964-93), an artist born in Israel and based in Paris, architecture would become a way to organize his daily behaviour. To escape the norms of society, he constructed individual vessels to fight the expected, standard recipe for life and enable his own alternative way.

Absalon did not write much, a recording of his 1993 lecture at École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-arts in Paris sheds some light on his motives. His last project, “Cellules”, consists of six tiny housing units designed by him for him. The cells, each located in a city he would frequently visit, are modest 4 m² houses that provide him with minimal living conditions. Clearly separate from the popular phenomena of minimal living that aestheticizes austerity, the sizes of the cells have nothing to do with economy, scarcity or density. Instead, they are instruments of resistance. They manifest the inescapable struggle of being part of society while remaining outside of it that every dissident faces.

Absalon was a dissident. Even his name, referring to the biblical figure Abshalom who defied his father,
implies rebellion. Unhappy with the state of things the self-proclaimed iconoclast built war machines, to choke the unwanted mediocrity from his personal life.\textsuperscript{62} He was aware of the necessity of order, and could not imagine a life without structure.\textsuperscript{63} In order to break the shackles of expectation, he needed to forge his own alternative. He invented rules and constraints, and gave them physical form. The cells are spatial acts of protest and erasure, of limits and permits.

Firstly, his architecture helped him become \textit{free from} norms he did not accept. This happened through a very direct mechanism of restriction. He questioned the norms of partnership and family and designed the cells to prohibit him from sharing his domestic space. Another example is his bookshelf that had room for only 15 books. The design prevented him from buying superfluous amounts of books and overly ruminating on old ideas, and liberated him from the burden of ownership.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{62} Vergne Philippe, \textit{Absalon: The Man Without A Home Is a Potential Criminal} (Philadelphia: Galleries at Moore, 1999)
\textsuperscript{63} Pfeffer Susanne ed., \textit{Absalon}, 260
\textsuperscript{64} Garrutti Francesco, \textit{Absalon} (Inventario #03: Everything is a Project, edited by Beppe Finessi. Mantua: Corraini, 2011.), 136-149
Secondly, his architecture helped him to become free to live his alternative way of life. This is subtler. Intensity is a word he returns to often while describing his aims, “making life more intense”. Visitors to his cells would have experienced this. The narrow space allowed only one guest to visit at a time and during the visit, the two persons would be only 40 cm from each other. Another habit he chose was to take care of the cells. Abandoning pragmatism, he intentionally chose to make them fragile. By committing himself to a ritual of maintaining the condition of his cells, Absalon used them as instruments for adding structure and continuum to his life.

Due to his untimely death, the project never got finished. Only one cell was built in its final version, but was never inhabited. His most quoted statement “… they are a means of resistance to a society that keeps me from becoming what I must become” does not reveal exactly what it is he must become, but indicate his will to an alternative being.

fig. 19 The forms have an obvious connection to the Bauhaus-influenced style of architecture abundant in Israel since the 1930’s. All white and perpendicular, the shapes are familiar, yet their small size and unpolished, sketchy appearance makes them foreign objects. Looking at the study models of Cellules, it is impossible to deny the resemblance with machine parts – “an echo of modernity”, like architect and professor Francesco Garutti puts it. They are however, seemingly incompatible with anything, like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle in the wrong box, unfit for assembling. They are individual cells denying any connection to the surrounding city. It is still comforting to think that they could be compatible. It is not a hostile shape; it just doesn’t want to comply with whatever.

65 Aureli Pier Vittorio, Less is Enough: On Architecture and Asceticism (Moscow: Strelka Press, 2014)
66 Vergne Philippe, Absalon: The Man Without A Home Is a Potential Criminal
Part II of this thesis has been concerned with the analysis of space from the point of view of liberty established in Part I. The aim has been to find out how spatial arrangement limits and permits human activity. In Part III the issues and questions raised in the analysis part are further discussed and elaborated on.

No Structure
A direct translation of negative liberty into space would give a desolate plane, like that of a frozen lake, or even more precisely, the empty void of outer space. The open plan typology serves as the architectural equivalent. Its perimeter – the only fragment of architecture present – is a physical, predetermined limit unwilling to negotiate. Architecture is in this sense incompatible with an absolute negative liberty. This condition is defined by the absence of outer interference – and this absence is contradictory to the presence of architecture.

However, within its exterior walls Typical Plan provides unobstructed freedom. Its limits accommodate limitlessness. The dangers of this condition lie in its excess. The disposing of structure can take the form of laissez-faire, the complete refusal of intervention. As such, a laissez-faire approach is the true antithesis of making architecture.
The promise of endless possibility in unstructured space is questionable. The ungoverned industrial ruins discussed in Part II are plagued by the problem that simply by allowing something to happen, doesn’t mean anything will. There is no guarantee that unrestricted conditions would lead to fantastic vibrancy, acceptance of transgressions and inventions of otherness. In fact, the reverse might hold true – rather than giving way for “the other”, structurelessness might strengthen the status quo. In ungoverned conditions, the establishment or the privileged are likely to hold on to the current state of affairs, and choke any attempts at renewal – and with it, any idea of progress.

Obviously, its opposite – an absolute fixed order held together by unyielding structures – would also contradict the idea of progress. Without this condition – and the space that allows it – life would be trapped in eternal immobility. That is why we need places that allow actions that are normally ruled out. Environments undominated by rules are essential for housing “the other”, that which is not possible to define or imagine, or is otherwise problematic to include in the semi-ordered space of the city.

The challenge then, is to structure space enough to avoid the pointless chaos of structurelessness, but leave sufficient room for uses not yet imaginable. Time and again, it seems worth returning to the juxtaposition between freedom and security Freud proposed. It should not be considered a line where some kind of optimal point could be found, but rather a full spectrum is to be represented.

Spaces that in various ways are “free” all seem to have specific, intrinsic users. What unites them are various reasons to appreciate exceptional liberty and the ability to utilize it. Finance, with an emphasis on smooth motion and flexibility enjoys the open office – paired metaphorically with capital, shunning regulations that hinder its growth. Artists, a group specialized in navigating uncharted territory, inhabited the original loft. The researchers at MIT, imaginably ambitious, saw opportunity in the worthlessness of their building. It was energizing, not passivizing. Instead of seeing ambiguity in free, unordered conditions, these people see opportunity. Additionally, there are those that do not fit the mould and seek this condition out of necessity, and those who disregard the norm and seek to oppose it.

To be able to function as a precondition to positive freedom, free space needs to be maintained. This ambition is how I understand “Stop City”. The limits proposed are not structures intended to suggest a specific aim, but to protect from powerful outer forces by excluding the logic of capital.
Structure
Arguably, many would experience Building 20 as nothing more than a low-quality shed. Erich Fromm understood the anxieties caused by individualization – a phenomenon much strengthened since the time of his writing – an isolated individual experience in a lack of structure.

Fromm saw submission to authority and conforming as merely ways to withdraw from the isolation independence comes with. Nevertheless, they can also be considered viable strategies, mechanisms to be utilized for composing ones life. “Exodus – Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture” predicts a mass submission to order. Exhausted by the constant competition, struggle and flux, the crowds are happy to choose a life with form, in form. By renouncing the sanctity of the self, they get something else in return, perhaps something holier?

Today, it is not unreasonable to say we live in a vacuum of ideals, with no authority to submit to. Instead, we conform. Our conception of what is “normal” is a very pervasive involuntary structure. In a secular, democratic society the norm is arguably one of our main guidelines. At best, it creates social cohesion – at worst, leads to social coercion.

The perception of what is normal provides the individual with a baseline, and by staying close enough to it, one does not need to independently evaluate every single decision they make. The norm is an informal structure, making it hard to change. Major variations from this baseline are perceived as wrong, discriminating anyone who does not fit the norm. The norm is set by the majority and those in power and can never be fully inclusive. A structure that for some provides a safety net, can for others be merely a set of rules that they do not want to, or simply are not able to, follow.

This idea of a normal life permeates the field of architecture. A majority of apartments are designed for an imaginary average user, resulting inevitably in domestic spaces that impose expectations on their inhabitants. A kitchen expects you to cook, a tiny balcony expects you to smoke, and so on. The arrangement of a normal apartment is often made to serve a nuclear family, an institution of diminishing relevance today. When a project is made for the market, averages and norms dictate.

Fromm saw negative liberty as a necessary precondition for positive freedom – the state where an individual is unrestricted by outer forces, free to realize the full potential of the self. Fromm considered independent thought to be the key for simultaneously being content and free. When all other constraints would suppress the self, only self-imposed ones could provide the guiding principles of positive freedom. However, this presents
us with two major difficulties: complexity and free will. How does one singlehandedly address every single rule one lives by? How does one distinguish between desire and temptation driven by advertising and our environment, and free will? Relying on only your own thinking would require considering everything yourself, which is obviously challenging in the midst of the complexities of modern life.

In the commonly used example described in the introduction, one can easily identify the truer goal (an important meeting) from temptation (buying cigarettes). The problem is, that faced by the complexities of reality, it becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate between what could be labelled “whimsical individualism” and “free will”. What we truly want, what is truly good for us, merge with desires dictated by advertisement, while the sheer possibility of free will even existing is philosophically debatable.

Absalon had a vision of how to live differently. He understood that relying only on self-control would make daily life unbearable for him. So he tried to embody his personal principles in his immediate environment. What is intriguing about Absalon’s project is the promise of a type of architecture, something rigid, a physical structure that empowers its user to live by his own values. The project is tailored only for him – he stresses the necessity to be the only subject in order to be total, but not totalitarian. This way, he is a kind of individual modernist – denying tradition and pursuing a new order, but with the crucial difference that his answers are not meant to include everyone. Experimenting with one’s own life is a valid project, but how to avoid self-indulgence? How does Absalon differ from a home-decorator on reality-tv, expressing the hypothetical self with pointless materialism? Were his intentions or values somehow “enlightened”? Consider the stacked coffins from “Holy Mountain”. What makes the proposal so explicitly ironic is that the subjects themselves do not choose the liberty it advocates. But its material form is not very different from the cells of Absalon. Maybe Flexible Man would not find it oppressive, but an opportunity that enables a nomadic lifestyle. As an option among others, it could be regarded as an extension of individual liberties, rather than the dystopian austerity we now perceive it as, sold by exploiting the positive image “freedom” immediately evokes.

One must be very careful about imposing asceticism on others. In fact, to be able to call a spatial boundary a mechanism for positive freedom, it must be self-implemented.

67 Pfeffer Susanne ed., Absalon, 260
Ending
The two ways of understanding liberty can be translated into two ways of approaching architecture. The difference is in the relationship towards neutrality.

The first position is based on value plurality, recognizing that there are differing motives and aims. In this view, a designer should refrain from making decisions or expressing one's own ideals in order to leave maximum room for various uses. This strategy is useful when the “aim” is unknown. Open-endedness makes sense for creative practices, for experimentation, for those able to utilize it.

The latter position is concerned with creating order. It denounces laissez-faire and considers prioritizing to be at the root of making architecture. This architect both imagines alternative lives and suggests them to others, and, understanding the user, knows how to translate independently conceived values into physical form. Structured space preconditions an aim, an answer to the question “free to what” – and then makes that freedom possible. Compromises may be required – to be or do something, one cannot be or do everything else as well.

As architects we impose our vision of life on the ones inhabiting the physical world we define. Although the power of the architect is obviously limited by regulations, clients, and capital interest, the architect is nonetheless in a position of authority where it is impossible to sit aside and watch. We all understand the problem of totalitarianism, but its opposite is hardly better. As Fisher put it, “disavowing authority is failing everybody”.

My position is in the latter category. It is not that I consider myself a visionary, but I believe envisioning being what we architects ought to do. I am keen on developing an architectural language that scripts the life it contains, that embodies ideals and strives for something. I believe that, though challenging, it is possible to clarify aims by observing them, by placing our assumptions under scrutiny. This work has been concerned with the question of liberty. It would be worth, in a similar manner, to address topics such as equality, reason, and truth in order to outline a valid agency for a forthcoming architect.

— Make yourself at home.
— What happened here?
— I’ve made some arrangements. Here, let me get that.
— Thanks. Your place looks bigger?
— The layout is different. I got rid of the bedroom. There’s hardly anything as bourgeoisie as private comfort. I sleep over here.
— Haha, sure, that’s reasonable. Cozy. I can see you still work here.
— I do, but hardly ever alone anymore. Most of the time, someone’s here. Exposure has done good for my thinking. My personal filters were quite simply too tight, remember? All that stuff that just couldn’t hatch.
— You’ve let your work colonize your entire private sphere.
— Well, it’s not like I didn’t work all the time before. At least like this, it’s explicit. Besides, at night-time it’s very different.
— So it’s a factory and a party-crib?
— I’d prefer to consider it a Salon, but sure, we have parties here. It’s nice to have to have friends around. That’s what I wanted to do, reach out to others. I mean, the shape of a room hardly dictates what is being discussed, right?
— True. That explains the marble?
— It’s fake.
— OK, that makes sense. I like your obsession with symmetry, and all the colors.
— Yeah, it my temple. Have some cake.
— Oh, thank you. You’re not having any?
— Nah, diabetes.
— You’re really into this hospitality thing, aren’t you? Where do you cook?
— Nothing makes me as happy as making others happy. I don’t really. There’s only this tiny corner, optimized for making large quantities of soup. It doesn’t have to be fancy be appreciated.
— You know, I read some of your pieces while gone. They are very sharp and critical, really biting. I must say, your serenity surprises me.
— Yeah, well, I’m focused now. And those are matters that matter, unlike when I struggled with myself.
— It’s quite an effort, to keep this up.
— Yes, it is, but a small cost for being whole.
Kiitos
Tuomas, Leonard, Jenni ja Anni
7,5, Antti, Pauliina, Eeki, 100%
koko perhe ja kaikki ystävät
ja tietysti Bee, loputtomasta tuesta.
-primary_sources:

-PUBLICATIONS


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Garrutti, Francesco. “Absalon”. In Inventario #03: Everything is a Project, edited by Beppe Finessi, 136-149. Mantua: Corraini, 2011.


**FILM**


**IMAGE SOURCES**


Fig. 7. King Vidor, John W. A. Weaver, screenshot from the movie The Crowd. Directed by King Vidor. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1928.


Unnumbered images drawn by author.
Learn to Swim or Build a Boat
– On Architecture and Freedom
A friend asks him to give a talk at an event they’re organizing, knowing he’s an expert in his field. Flattered by the suggestion and slightly intoxicated, he agrees.

The next day, about to start working, he sits in an armchair at home and looks around. The place looks more like the office of some neurotic conspiracy-theorist than a living-room, with the walls and tables filled with notes, books, print-outs, diagrams, drawings, tapes, and papers. “There’s a lot of ideas here”, he thinks, “they can’t all be bad.”

Then comes doubt. Fear creeps in, takes hold and darkness settles. “No, no, no, no!” His craft is to doubt and question, to identify and articulate negativity, to point out what needs to be reconsidered. For construction, destruction is vital. To his discontent, his criticism has developed a reflexive nature, leading to relentless self-questioning. This unstable self-esteem prohibits both happiness and productivity. Before, flaws equaled potential, but now it all appears miserable.

Times seizes. Days go by but the season doesn’t change, nothing changes. He goes for a walk to get some fresh air. Almost immediately, he runs into his friend. Desperately looking to find an excuse for not attending the event, he is interrupted.
— Look, you can present whatever you want.
— I don’t know what I want, he replies.
— Nobody does.
Sharing a melacholic smile, a grey rain starts. They agree to go back inside for some coffee. As the caffeine kicks in, both become very talkative. Reluctantly, he presents some of his sketches. His friend gets very excited and somehow, their mutual enthusiasm prevents him for shooting down his own ideas. For validating his work, he trusts his friend more than his own judgement.
— Enough with this isolation.
Looking at his armchair, he decides he needs a sofa.
individual is solely responsible of composing ones life. This can be a treacherous condition, because gained freedom does not equal gained ability. Without the means to act according to ones will individual freedom is meaningless.

This absence of constraints, or negative liberty, is spatially embodied in the open plan, a category that is discussed in this thesis through Typical Plan, the loft and early Fordist factories. Spaces of unconstrained conditions are further elaborated through abandoned industrial ruins. The presence positive freedom implies is dealt with through the project of Absalon, Stop City and “Exodus, voluntary prisoners of architecture”.

The analysis proposes two roles for the architect. The former relies on a laissez-faire optimism, considering architects as neutral facilitators. The latter acknowledges that defining space is an intervention, and thus contradictory to the absence of interference “negative” implies. The presence of spatial boundaries is examined through the concept of positive liberty.

In an increasingly individualized society we are less constrained by traditional structures such as class, family ties or nationality. This is a two-edged sword: on the one hand, the individual is free from predetermined ways of conduct – on the other, one suffers from a lack of continuity and the difficulty of positioning oneself in the world. The emancipated individual is a reminder that the values that guide us as individuals and architects need to be critically addressed. Because “freedom”, in itself, is not.

Keywords: freedom, liberty, structure, spatial organization, architectural theory
Tämä diplomityö käsittelee tilaa vapauden kautta.

Vapaus, ymmärrettynä kahdella toisistaan eriävällä tavalla,
tarjoaa sanoston ja näkökulman arkkitehtuurin käsittelemi-
seen sisällään pitämänsä elämän mahdollistajana ja ohjaajana.
Negatiivinen vapaus viittaa ulkoisten tekijöiden poissaoloon,
jäätämään yksilö, mutta kärsiä myös jatkuvuuden puutteesta ja
vaikeudesta itsensä paikantamisesta. Lisätty vapaus ei tosin
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Ulkoisten rajojen puute on ilmenee tilallisesti vapaassa
planissa. Tätä kategoriaa käsitellään avokonttorin, loft-asun-
on ja Fordistisen tehtaan tehtaan myötä. Vapaiden olosuhteiden
tiloja käsitellään laajemmin hylättynyten teollisten raunioiden
myötä. Positiivisen vapauden tilallisissa vastikkeista käsitellään
tarkastelemalla arkkitehtuuriprojekteja Absalon, Stop City ja
"Exodus – Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture".

Kasvava yksilöityminen nyky-yhteiskunnassa merkitsee
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Avainsanat: vapaus, rakente, tilallinen järjestys,
arkkitehtuurin teoria

6
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My personal interest in dealing with the topic of freedom is rooted in a need to clarify the essentials of how to live a good life. To me, it never seemed evident at all. There is the “norm”, a guideline that is supposed to breed a safe and ordinary life, but my perception of the citizen-consumer in contemporary society is just not a very convincing model. But how to conceive of an alternative way of being? There is a heavy absence in the political imaginary, as so many contemporary thinkers have proclaimed. Viable substitutes for organizing society and/or individual life seem impossible to envision. An abundance of “lifestyles” are presented as alternatives, but their spectre is stupefyingly narrow.

The initial impetus for my choice of topic was not based on longing for emancipation, but my recognition of “excessive” freedom. Since some time, I have noted the burden of constant decision-making, and how many completely trivial decisions need to be made constantly, like what to eat, wear, or buy. These are freedoms that mainly distract me. For me freedom is more of a psychological issue than a political one, or at least was at the outset of this work.

In addition, the concept is at the very heart of a recurring theme of mine as a student of architecture – the idea of adapting to an unforeseeable future. “Times are changing”, and since nobody has access to a reliable crystal ball, the consensus seems to be that all we can do is to prepare for change itself – just be prepared to adapt. Seduced by the promise of an architecture that can withstand flux, I was quite interested in the discourse around flexibility – that is, when architects design evolving, unfixed, modifiable solutions. Experimenting with its possibilities throughout my studies, I drew housing that expands and contracts according to needs, and domestic and commercial space that blend together uninterrupted. However, in time I realized that in a radical form, these ideals come with major problems. Suspicions towards flexibility as a strategy rose further as my awareness of the problems capitalism imposes grew. In my latest design, I started to question the open plan, and started to work on an argument against it. I ended up preparing a sale-speech for an open-ended architecture, in parallel to a critique of it. The critique seemed promising, but was based on intuition. I needed to look closer at the ideas and suspicions raised. Step one was to ask: what is freedom?
Freedom is an evasive concept to which no single description has been able to do justice. The plurality of definitions poses problems both philosophically and politically.

Firstly, the usage of freedom and liberty varies according to discourse. The commonly agreed upon distinction is that freedom refers to an individual’s ability to act according to ones own will, regardless of outside forces. Liberty refers to this aforementioned ability as something that an outside force, like the state, has made possible for the individual. In political philosophy they are used interchangeably, as will be done in this work.

Secondly, the academic discourse has been for the last half a century predominantly divided into two main variants that are incompatible, even contradictory to one another. Dating back to all the way to Immanuel Kant, and encountered in the work of Jeremy Bentham and Erich Fromm, it was popularised by philosopher and political theorist, Sir Isaiah Berlin in his inaugural lecture at Oxford University in 1958, titled “Two Concepts of Liberty”. ¹

¹ Berlin Isaiah, Two Concepts of Liberty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958)
The two concepts are called liberty in the positive and in the negative sense. Positive and negative do not imply “better” and “worse”, but refer to presence and respectively absence. Negative freedom implies absence of constraints (freedom from), while positive freedom implies presence of constraints, like control, and take into account the capability to achieve what is desired (freedom to).

This simple example demonstrates this difference well: Imagine yourself on your way to a meeting you consider important. You feel the urge to take a detour to buy cigarettes, but that would make you late from the meeting. Following the logic of negative freedom, that is the absence of obstacle or constraint, you are free because nothing stops you from doing the detour. Positive freedom, that is presence of control, would consider you free only if you have sufficient self-mastery to go directly to the meeting, recognizing it to be the aim of your “higher-self”.

Negative freedom is more easily determined, whereas positive freedom takes more factors into account. One challenge in considering a relationship through the concept of positive freedom lies in the multitude of ways to interpret what is here outlined as “control”. Another challenge is how to determine which options are analogous to buying cigarettes and respectively to the important meeting.

Freedom cannot be considered as a single asset. One is not simply free, unfree, or something in between. Any person can have various amounts of structure in parallel spheres of life – think of a lifetime-employed public servant who has a very structured working life, but might live a wildly liberal romantic life. Or a prisoner, trapped in a cell but free from expectations regarding his writing. Freedom is, in other words, a highly contextual description, and its terminological diversity makes it prone to confusion and misuse.

The origins of the modern ideas of liberty are rooted in the early democratic societies of ancient Greece. The “free men” were citizens actively engaged in discussing and running their society. Following the rediscovery of ancient Greece in the 16th century, the ideals of freedom were of great influence in the founding of modern era Western nations. Freedom and equality became the building bricks of the founding of the United States of America in 1776, and the battle cry of the French revolution in 1789 – both events embracing democracy in pursuit for a more free society. The early modern project was fundamentally about eradicating the oppressive medieval order, and by the 20th century, the emancipation of the individual had become one of the central tasks of modernization.

Modernization is as such a destructive force, tearing apart the established ways. Originally, modernity combined destruction with the will to reconstruct – there was a vision of a future, and the will to build a new order. However, the profound cultural and technological shifts that took place after the World Wars radically changed the nature of development of modernity. One way of describing these changes is through the theory of “meta-change”. It suggests that modernity is being modernized – the processes of renewal inherent to modernization are now directed towards itself, that is, its own institutions like the nation state, the political parties and the nuclear family. When before, the subject of renewal and questioning was old traditions, it now included the new traditions as well. When the destructive ambitions of modernity, meant to make way for a new system, turn toward its reconstructive ones, they become paralyzed. Without its productive agenda, the current phase of (post-) modernity lacks a direction.

4 “Modernity here is used in reference to a condition of living imposed upon individuals by the socio-economic process of modernisation. The experience of modernity involves a rupture with tradition and has a profound impact on ways of life and daily habits. The effects of this rupture are manifold.” Heynen Hilde, *Architecture and Modernity : A Critique* (Boston: MIT Press, 1999), 3
5 Beck, *The Theory of Reflexive Modernization*, 13
6 Concerning the question whether the contemporary era is beyond modernity, i.e. post-modern, or a radical state of it is a technicality of minor significance for this argument. Both views are compatible with the shift to a more individualized society. Continuities of modernity include labels like "Reflexive modernization", “Second modernity”, “Late modernity”, and “Liquid modernity”. Bauman Zygmunt, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 10
The dismantling of the mechanisms that assign people social roles has an emancipatory, but also destabilizing effect. This condition is succinctly described by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman as “liquid modernity”. Drawing on the metaphor of fluids, he portrays a phase of modernity where established procedures have melted away. Liquefaction is the dissolving of “solids”, that is everything expected to endure, i.e. the material and mental structures we lean upon. “All that is solid will melt into air”, as was famously declared in the Communist Manifesto already in the first half of the 19th century, suggests that “melting the solids” has all along been a process distinct to modernity. Bauman explains that before, in the time of a heavy, less mobile version of modernity, the intention was to replace them with new, lasting solids. Bauman’s description of contemporary society can be summarized as a state of living in pure process. What follows, is an era characterized by a lack of structure.

“The individual became more alone, isolated, became an instrument in the hands of overwhelmingly strong forces outside of himself; he became an ‘individual’, but a bewildered and insecure individual”

— Erich Fromm

7 Beck, The Theory of Reflexive Modernization, 15
8 Bauman Zygmunt, Liquid Modernity, 9
9 Ibid., 3
10 Sennett Richard, The Culture of the New Capitalism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 41
1.3 CONTEMPORARY CONDITIONS

Freedom enjoys a very positive connotation. It is so fundamentally embedded in western culture that questioning its value seems completely unreasonable. The most familiar dystopian scenarios include oppression, dictatorship or some hostile “system” colonizing into the private sphere. However, the only opposite of freedom is not simply oppression. Sigmund Freud, the founder of psycho-analysis, thought of civilized life as a trade-off between freedom and security, a compromise where gains are mixed with sacrifice. When we see a shift towards increasing freedoms, we loose security. One cannot prosper in a state without security, or in a state without freedom.

Consider a juxtaposition between freedom and structure. In the “free”-end, there is the life of a polar bear – the Wild West, competitive nature, neo-liberalism. Moving away from the far end, we encounter the Flexible Man, the kinetic elite and liberal values. Next we find average-Joes and mediocrity, and further, the more structured life in a monastery or the military. In the “structure”-end of the spectrum, stability reigns. Here are rigorous orders, like that of Huxley’s Brave New World. Each point on the line has its advantages and disadvantages.

14 The term structure will be used quite broadly, as “the quality of being organized”. Structures are both tangible and abstract – social structures (habits, traditions, group mentality), power structures (authority) etc. Structures are defined. In their solidness, they provide stability. Stability comes with predictability, and predictability is a form of security. Structures are footholds, mental and material anchors. Structures are heavy, they endure. Freedom on the other hand, lacks the stiffness of pre-defined ways of conduct. It also comes with the absence of stability, predictability and security.

15 The Flexible Man, coined by sociologist Richard Sennett, lives a dynamic life. Not tied to a certain location or craft he is less vulnerable to economic fluctuations, and chooses rootlessness despite the immediate disadvantages like a lack of community or skill. Think of a traveling, single, atheist consultant, who feels at home at airports and gas stations.

16 Aldous Huxley portrayed a society based on stability and individual happiness, an order that came at the cost of freedom of expression.

12 Freud Sigmund, Civilization and Its Discontents (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1930), 33
16 Aldous Huxley portrayed a society based on stability and individual happiness, an order that came at the cost of freedom of expression.
What characterises the contemporary condition is increasing individualization – a shift towards the “free” end. It means that there are less pre-determined structures conducting individual life, and thus more freedom. This increased freedom is better described as freedom in the negative sense – liberal economics free us from state intervention, and the post-modern condition frees us from the bonds of tradition. But it also means freedom from continuity, from a sense of belonging, even freedom from meaning.

“Contemporary freedom is not primarily the enjoyment of civil liberties, as the traditional liberal view has it, but rather like the freedom of free fall, experienced by many who are thrown into an uncertain and unpredictable future.”
— Hito Steyerl

17 Bauman Zygmunt, *Liquid Modernity*, 170

What is often portrayed as flexibility and freedom can equally well be called rootlessness.\textsuperscript{19} Precarity\textsuperscript{20}, the so often encountered word describing the conditions of the contemporary worker, depicts the freedoms of today very well. For functioning effectively in an ever-optimized line of production, the worker is expected to re-invent oneself, intertwining work and life.\textsuperscript{21} These are consequences of capitalist development. Sosiologists Boltanski and Chiapello point out: “from the middle of the 1970’s onwards, capitalism abandoned the hierarchical Fordist work structure and developed a new network-based form of organization that was founded on employee initiative and autonomy in the workplace – a ‘freedom’ that came at the cost of material and psychological security.”\textsuperscript{22}

Freedom today has become a neoliberal freedom, reduced to individual freedoms from the state and for consumption.\textsuperscript{23} The individual is unprecedentedly free, but within a limited sphere were life is unpredictable. This lack of predictability leads to a reduced sense of security. When tomorrow can be anything, continuum is lost, which in turn can be overwhelming. Richard Sennett, researching the character of work, write: “To imagine a life of momentary impulses, of short-term action, devoid of sustainable routines, a life without habits, is to imagine indeed a mindless existence.”\textsuperscript{24}

An organizing principle based on negative liberty is \textit{laissez-faire}, the ideal of letting things take their own course, a term often used as the economic ideal of free market neo-liberalism. To be “free from structure” can seem appealing, but such a condition is arguably non-existent. Rather, the absence of formal structure is colonized by informal ones, allowing the instalment of invisible hegemony. This applies in many scales. In unstructured groups without hierarchies the strong generally dominate the weak, just as laissez-faire policy prevents only governments from controlling the economy, but not the economically powerful.\textsuperscript{25}

\textit{The Corrosion of Character} (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1999), 44
\textit{The Tyranny of Structurelessness} (The Second Wave Vol. 2, No. 1, 1972)
Many struggle with the ambiguity of unstructured life and wish to escape. Psychologist and philosopher Erich Fromm, associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory, outlined the two main escape routes as “submission to authority” and “compulsive conforming”.26 Both of these structures – having someone (authority) or something (norms) tell you how to act – make life easier, but also come at the price of suppressing individuality. Fromm recognized negative freedom to be an overwhelming state in itself, but also a condition with enormous potential. For Fromm, negative freedom is the precondition for positive freedom, as it allows full realization of the individual self. All that is required is the ability to do so. Positive freedom, for him, consists of independent thought – the ability to set ones own boundaries. To draw on the earlier metaphor on fluids, Fromm envisioned a liquid world where everyone knew how to swim.

However, the ability to do so does not only consist of sheer will. There are inevitably differences in the individuals’ physical, mental and material capabilities to act. The right to act according to ones will is worthless without the means to do so. “Real freedom”, coined by economist Philippe Van Parijs, considers the absence of outer interference (negative liberty) as the first out of two conditions that are to be met. The other is to have the means to carry out ones will in reality.27 “Under a democracy, for example, we are all formally free to run for political leadership. But without the financial and social resources to run a campaign, this is a meaningless freedom. Equally, we are all formally free to not take a job, but most of us are nevertheless practically forced into accepting whatever is on offer.”28 “Synthetic freedom” is based on this idea, a concept proclaiming that freedoms that include the mental and material means to act are not a natural condition, but something that needs to be artificially constructed. Political measures such as basic income and public health-care construe this more substantial kind of freedom.29

26 Fromm Erich, Escape from Freedom, 133
28 Srnicek Nick and Williams Alex, Inventing the Future, 79
29 Ibid., 79
“Since it is now clear that a certain amount of stability is necessary for cultural vibrancy, the question to be asked is: how can this stability be provided, and by what agencies?”\textsuperscript{30} 
— Mark Fisher

\textbf{2.1 INTRODUCTION}

Architecture accommodates most of human activity. Understood as a means to order and define space, it is as such an act of structuring, forming the life it contains. In Part 2 of this Thesis, questions of liberty and structure are translated into space through the analysis and discussion of various architectural projects. The selected projects follow Berlin’s division of liberty into two main categories: spaces of negative liberty, defined by the absence of outer constraints, and spaces of positive liberty, characterized by their clearly defined spatial boundaries.

\textsuperscript{30} Fisher Mark, \textit{Capitalist Realism}, 77
In Alejandro Jodorowsky’s 1973 film “Holy Mountain”, we encounter an architect, wanting to “make millions”. Selling the idea of a shelter to house factory workers, his spectacular pitch culminates in the slogan: “Be a free man – without a family, without a house”. His proposal, titled “City of Freedom”, is a minimum housing project, where each apartment is the size and shape of a coffin. They are stacked in racks for maximum efficiency. Inside, the inhabitant has room enough to stand, and can sleep by turning the coffin into a horizontal position. One “will be conditioned to eat at the factory”. On the ground level, communal latrine trucks circulate.

The design is based on an idea that everything that limits the individual is to be considered a burden. In his proposal the individual is both freed from community, but also from himself. In its uniform austerity the architecture of the housing solution dismisses the idea of a unique individual by renouncing self-expression. In limited space, there is no room for possessions, followed by a limited interest in pay. With no time-consuming social ties, one can commit to work totally. Obviously, the true intentions of the architect selling this kind of freedom are dubious, for what the worker is actually freed to do, is to become the ultimate rootless employee.
2.2.2 Industrial Ruins

“Orderly space is rule-governed space /…/ the rule is a rule in as far as it forbids and excludes.”31
— Zygmunt Bauman

While the space of the city is in general heavily encoded and regulated, it holds within it less governed territories. In the case of abandoned buildings the rules designating appropriate uses do not apply. They are non-normative spaces, presenting the possibility of those activities and people that ordinary, rule-governed space exclude. Temporary events, non-human life, arts, as well as the homeless and those unprotected by law are free to coexist.

Tim Edensor considers abandoned industrial sites ruins, arguing for their potential.32 Ruins are heterotopias33: in state of disorder, existing classifications merge and fuse, forcing experience outside of established categories.34 “Unpolished spaces” have the potential to blur “the distinctions between practices deemed transgressive and rational.”35 In his view, the renouncement of rules leads to an environment that is more tolerant and inviting for that which is considered “the other”.

An often-encountered example of the potential of unprogrammed space can be found in the famous MIT Building 20. It was made to serve the Massachusetts Institute of Technology radar research institute that needed a wartime extension in 1942. Meant only as temporary, it was designed in an afternoon, built from the simplest possible wooden structure and made from the cheapest available materials. It had thin walls, a leaking roof and inadequate ventilation. It did not even

33 Heterotopia, coined by Michael Foucault, is a literal combination of ”other, or different” (hetero) and ”place” (topia).
34 Edensor Tim, Industrial Ruins, 63

fig. 5 MIT Building 20

35 Ibid., 33
meet the fire regulations. The building was not disassembled after the war due to an urgent shortage of space, and by 1946 it was included in the campus plan to be used for “educational and research experiments”.

Regardless of the practical difficulties, it soon became very popular. Researchers from new and unusual fields would run into each other in the long corridors. They would also be able to tear down walls without asking for permissions, and set research equipment on the roof. Even floors were demolished – when developing the first atomic clock, physicists removed two slabs to fit their apparatus.

Despite its flaws the building acquired recognition of mythical proportions earning the nickname “the magic incubator”. Free from the permanence and dignity traditionally associated with architecture, MIT Building 20 provided unrestricted creative use by simply being worthless.

2.2.3 Typical Plan

Consisting of a slab and column structure, Typical Plan refers to a stacked floor plan without any interior walls, i.e. an anonymous, flatly lit and tempered space. Typical Plan is the spatial archetype of negative freedom. As a project, its only objective is to reduce constraints: no walls, no defined usage, minimum pillars, and minimum service core. The user is unobstructed by any fixed arrangement of space.

In its genericness and homogeneity, “the plan without qualities” promises endless possibilities. The uninterrupted space assures it will accommodate any user, permitting effortless programmatic shape-shifts. Koolhaas observes, perhaps ironically, the “monstrosity” of how every decision made in design reduces possible outcomes. Typical Plan refuses to do such a thing. Rather, the emphasis is on possibilities, on leaving things open and undecided. As such, it is a radical approach – without planned program, it is the architectural equivalent of *laissez-faire*, where the work of the architect is reduced into merely defining the perimeter.

36 MIT Institute Archives & Special Collections.
39 The term was introduced by architect Rem Koolhaas in 1993 in an essay titled “Typical Plan”, two years later published in S, M, L, XL.
The open office

The most familiar application of the concept is the open office. This generic space naturally accommodates immaterial work, not requiring much more of its habitat than an Internet connection. Instead of established hierarchies, Business aspires to the virtue of flexibility. In the 1970’s, the power in corporations started shifting from the managers to the shareholders, turning the focus from long-term to more profitable short-term strategies. The emphasis was no longer on stability – trying to endure external fluctuations – but rather on flexibility. Sociologist Richard Sennett explains: “Stability seemed a sign of weakness, suggesting to the market that the firm could not innovate or find new opportunities or otherwise manage change”.41 The genericness of Typical Plan allows the companies to expand and contract, and to dynamically alter their scheme according to market needs.

41 Sennett Richard, *The Culture of The New Capitalism*, 41
The loft

The loft is the domestic Typical Plan – a spatial non-configuration. Spatially, it embodies the idea of the vast open plan. The loft is a large open space, often a renovated attic or a remnant of former industrial uses, that has been turned into domestic space. The origins of the type date to New York in the 50’s and 60’s, when artists took advantage of large affordable spaces.

The most famous one was Andy Warhol’s Silver Factory, a rough industrial space he occupied between 1963 and 1968. It served as his home, his studio, and a meeting place for the bohemian counter-culture scene of the era. It was a typical large industrial space, unobstructed by interior walls. The only fixed spatial elements were four equally distributed columns. This allowed him to freely shift the program between the three aforementioned functions. The original lofts were places for exceeding the boundaries of established practices. The loft and its aesthetic have since been appropriated by the upper middle-class.

Open plan and Typical Plan are terms that refer to indoor space without partitions. It is not to be confused with Free plan, the direct translation of Le Corbusier’s “Plan Libre”, which refers to building techniques that allow the load-bearing structure to be separated from the partitioning of space. This freedom is for the designer. They could in many cases be considered a synonym, but open plan refers to a broader variety of spaces, whereas Typical Plan in more of a concept in itself and has acquired a steady position within the discourse. It is here understood as a project, an agenda, a mentality.

42 Dogma, Living/Working (L’esprit De L’escalier, 2014)
43 Brooker Nathan, New York’s long love affair with loft living (Financial Times, 2011)
The Fordist factory

The origins of Typical Plan are to be found in the Fordist factory, attributed to Detroit architect Albert Kahn. In his doctoral thesis, architect Francesco Marullo traces its formal evolution to the “convergence between modern industrial revolution, scientific management of labor and financial imperialism [that] occurred during the first three decades of the 20th century.” 44 Marullo analyses the typology as a necessary means of capitalist progression. He proposes the genericness of Typical Plan as a “device for emancipation”, with the potential to develop new “modes of organization and resistance”. 45 In the Fordist factory, the space provided a freedom for the workers to organize and protest. The open floor at the factory served as a suitable site for rebellion: when the workers were on strike within the factory, it both protected them from the employer and the police, while simultaneously preventing any strikebreaker from working. 46

45 Ibid., 156
46 Ibid., 144
2.3 STRUCTURE
SPACES OF POSITIVE LIBERTY

2.3.1 Exodus – Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture

In his final project at the Architectural Association in London, Rem Koolhaas, together with Madelon Vre- isendorp, Elia Zenghelis, and Zoe Zenghelis, re-im- agined the presence of a Wall - an architectural element historically regarded as an act of division, complicit in turning architecture into “the guilty instrument of despair”⁴⁷ – as a uniting and wholesome force.

The project is set in the London, inhabited by dis- satisfied masses of people suffering from the ever-de-teriorating conditions of life in the city. Imagining an architectural response to their plight, Koolhaas erects the Wall, a place of order that runs through the chaos of the historical centre in a gesture both sweeping and monu- mental. Seduced by the promise of a “new architecture” and its “hedonic science of designing collective facilities that fully accommodate individual desires”⁴⁸, the people of London flock to inhabit Koolhaas’ Wall in an event he calls the “Exodus”. The future inhabitants of the Wall agree to become its oxymoronic “Voluntary Prisoners, ecstatic in the freedom of their architectural confines”⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ Koolhaas et.al. S, M, L, XL, 5
⁴⁸ Ibid., 7
⁴⁹ Ibid., 7
In a complete reversal of its nature, the prison has become the sanctuary. Koolhaas and his team go on to imagine a variety of reformative and creative spaces contained within the order of the Wall. There is the Reception area, that through its architecture inspires in the newcomers a "state of political inventiveness" 50, The Tip of the Strip that "is the frontline of the architectural warfare on the old London" 51, the Baths, "a social condenser" where the people come together "to invent, test, and possibly introduce new forms of behavior" 52, and finally the Allotments, where each inhabitant gets access to complete privacy, in order to recover "from the demands of intense collectivism" 53.

50 Ibid., 9
51 Ibid., 11
52 Ibid., 13
53 Ibid., 19
2.3.2 Stop City

“Practicing the limit through the production of an architectural project acquires two levels of meaning: it first refers to the physical space of the limit, namely establishing constraints and processes of stoppage to the endless growth of the city; and, secondly, in more conceptual terms, it refers to the idea that architecture should turn its back to the drama of newness and define with conceptual clarity and formal exemplarity the prototypical forms of density: living and working spaces that would counter the life-style of individualism and laissez-faire propelled by neo-liberal urban policies.”

— Dogma

In various forms in his work, the co-founder of the architectural practice Dogma, architect Pier Vittorio Aureli has been investigating the concept of limit. This is perhaps most clearly formulated in Dogma’s project titled “Stop City” (2007-08).

“Stop City” is a critical appropriation of the famous non-figurative project “No-Stop City” (1969-72) by Archizoom Associati. In “No-Stop City”, Archizoom imagined an architecture without qualities: an endless interior, a generic space equipped with only the necessary infrastructure — “a city without architecture”. The project is meant as a dystopian exaggeration of homogenous urbanization driven by modernist urban theories. For Aureli, “No-Stop City” is “a hypothesis that attempted to bring to radical terms the very

54 Aureli Pier Vittorio and Tattara Martino, Stop City (2017)
premises of modernity: the project for a generic city in which living is reduced to biopolitical mechanisms of production and reproduction.” 57 Half a century later, it is widely regarded as analogous to the reality of the contemporary city.

57 Aureli Pier Vittorio and Tattara Martino, *Stop City*.

Using the same non-figurative language, but with a reversed urban thesis, “Stop City” critiques the pursuit for an “informal city”. “Stop City” is, in other words, a countermeasure to an unorganized city, and concerned with establishing a principle of order. Dogma work is clearly opposed to the culture of individualism and the economics of urbanism. 58 But, as Douglas Spencer argues, there is a belief at the intellectual foundations of Dogma’s practice that is worth addressing. Aureli’s pursuit for autonomy is based on Carl Schmitt’s conception of “the political”, that heavily relies on a distinction between friend and enemy. Spencer finds Schmitt’s convictions dubious, as they have been used to justify war and conquest, but also Aureli’s appropriation of it, namely to identify ourselves in contrast to the dissimilar. He continues to question inherent exclusion spatial boundaries comes with. “It is seldom noted, for instance, that the political agonism adopted by Aureli is essentially opposed to the possibility of any radical transformation of the social in its totality. The politics of agonism is, by definition, opposed to any form of universalism or internationalism on which any such transformation would depend.” 59

59 Ibid., 126
For Absalon (Meir Eshel, 1964-93), an artist born in Israel and based in Paris, architecture would become a way to organize his daily behaviour. To escape the norms of society, he constructed individual vessels to fight the expected, standard recipe for life and enable his own alternative way.

Absalon did not write much, a recording of his 1993 lecture at École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-arts in Paris sheds some light on his motives. His last project, “Cellules”, consists of six tiny housing units designed by him for him. The cells, each located in a city he would frequently visit, are modest 4 m² houses that provide him with minimal living conditions. Clearly separate from the popular phenomena of minimal living that aestheticizes austerity, the sizes of the cells have nothing to do with economy, scarcity or density. Instead, they are instruments of resistance. They manifest the inescapable struggle of being part of society while remaining outside of it that every dissident faces.

Absalon was a dissident. Even his name, referring to the biblical figure Abshalom who defied his father,
implies rebellion. Unhappy with the state of things the self-proclaimed iconoclast built war machines, to choke the unwanted mediocrity from his personal life.  

He was aware of the necessity of order, and could not imagine a life without structure. In order to break the shackles of expectation, he needed to forge his own alternative. He invented rules and constraints, and gave them physical form. The cells are spatial acts of protest and erasure, of limits and permits.

Firstly, his architecture helped him become free from norms he did not accept. This happened through a very direct mechanism of restriction. He questioned the norms of partnership and family and designed the cells to prohibit him from sharing his domestic space. Another example is his bookshelf that had room for only 15 books. The design prevented him from buying superfluous amounts of books and overly ruminating on old ideas, and liberated him from the burden of ownership.

63 Pfeffer Susanne ed., *Absalon*, 260
64 Garrutti Francesco, *Absalon* (Inventario #03: Everything is a Project, edited by Beppe Finessi. Mantua: Corraini, 2011.), 136-149

fig 16, 17 and 18. Without negative freedom, positive freedom is not possible. Absalon considered himself a prisoner of the norms and society has imposed on him. He developed spaces that would help him unlearn culture.
Secondly, his architecture helped him to become free to live his alternative way of life. This is subtler. Intensity is a word he returns to often while describing his aims, “making life more intense”. Visitors to his cells would have experienced this. The narrow space allowed only one guest to visit at a time and during the visit, the two persons would be only 40 cm from each other. Another habit he chose was to take care of the cells. Abandoning pragmatism, he intentionally chose to make them fragile. By committing himself to a ritual of maintaining the condition of his cells, Absalon used them as instruments for adding structure and continuum to his life.

Due to his untimely death, the project never got finished. Only one cell was built in its final version, but was never inhabited. His most quoted statement “… they are a means of resistance to a society that keeps me from becoming what I must become” does not reveal exactly what it is he must become, but indicate his will to an alternative being.

fig. 19 The forms have an obvious connection to the Bauhaus-influenced style of architecture abundant in Israel since the 1930’s. All white and perpendicular, the shapes are familiar, yet their small size and unpolished, sketchy appearance makes them foreign objects. Looking at the study models of Cellules, it is impossible to deny the resemblance with machine parts – “an echo of modernity”, like architect and professor Francesco Garutti puts it. They are however, seemingly incompatible with anything, like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle in the wrong box, unfit for assembling. They are individual cells denying any connection to the surrounding city. It is still comforting to think that they could be compatible. It is not a hostile shape; it just doesn’t want to comply with whatever.

65 Aureli Pier Vittorio, Less is Enough: On Architecture and Asceticism (Moscow: Strelka Press, 2014)
66 Vergne Philippe, Absalon: The Man Without A Home Is a Potential Criminal
PART III:

CONCLUSIONS

Part II of this thesis has been concerned with the analysis of space from the point of view of liberty established in Part I. The aim has been to find out how spatial arrangement limits and permits human activity. In Part III the issues and questions raised in the analysis part are further discussed and elaborated on.

No Structure

A direct translation of negative liberty into space would give a desolate plane, like that of a frozen lake, or even more precisely, the empty void of outer space. The open plan typology serves as the architectural equivalent. Its perimeter – the only fragment of architecture present – is a physical, predetermined limit unwilling to negotiate. Architecture is in this sense incompatible with an absolute negative liberty. This condition is defined by the absence of outer interference – and this absence is contradictory to the presence of architecture.

However, within its exterior walls Typical Plan provides unobstructed freedom. Its limits accommodate limitlessness. The dangers of this condition lie in its excess. The disposing of structure can take the form of laissez-faire, the complete refusal of intervention. As such, a laissez-faire approach is the true antithesis of making architecture.
The promise of endless possibility in unstructured space is questionable. The ungoverned industrial ruins discussed in Part II are plagued by the problem that simply by allowing something to happen, doesn’t mean anything will. There is no guarantee that unrestricted conditions would lead to fantastic vibrancy, acceptance of transgressions and inventions of otherness. In fact, the reverse might hold true – rather than giving way for “the other”, structurelessness might strengthen the status quo. In ungoverned conditions, the establishment or the privileged are likely to hold on to the current state of affairs, and choke any attempts at renewal – and with it, any idea of progress.

Obviously, its opposite – an absolute fixed order held together by unyielding structures – would also contradict the idea of progress. Without this condition – and the space that allows it – life would be trapped in eternal immobility. That is why we need places that allow actions that are normally ruled out. Environments undominated by rules are essential for housing “the other”, that which is not possible to define or imagine, or is otherwise problematic to include in the semi-ordered space of the city.

The challenge then, is to structure space enough to avoid the pointless chaos of structurelessness, but leave sufficient room for uses not yet imaginable. Time and again, it seems worth returning to the juxtaposition between freedom and security Freud proposed. It should not be considered a line where some kind of optimal point could be found, but rather a full spectrum is to be represented.

Spaces that in various ways are “free” all seem to have specific, intrinsic users. What unites them are various reasons to appreciate exceptional liberty and the ability to utilize it. Finance, with an emphasis on smooth motion and flexibility enjoys the open office – paired metaphorically with capital, shunning regulations that hinder its growth. Artists, a group specialized in navigating uncharted territory, inhabited the original loft. The researchers at MIT, imaginably ambitious, saw opportunity in the worthlessness of their building. It was energizing, not passivizing. Instead of seeing ambiguity in free, unordered conditions, these people see opportunity. Additionally, there are those that do not fit the mould and seek this condition out of necessity, and those who disregard the norm and seek to oppose it.

To be able to function as a precondition to positive freedom, free space needs to be maintained. This ambition is how I understand “Stop City”. The limits proposed are not structures intended to suggest a specific aim, but to protect from powerful outer forces by excluding the logic of capital.
Arguably, many would experience Building 20 as nothing more than a low-quality shed. Erich Fromm understood the anxieties caused by individualization – a phenomenon much strengthened since the time of his writing – an isolated individual experience in a lack of structure.

Fromm saw submission to authority and conforming as merely ways to withdraw from the isolation independence comes with. Nevertheless, they can also be considered viable strategies, mechanisms to be utilized for composing ones life. “Exodus – Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture” predicts a mass submission to order. Exhausted by the constant competition, struggle and flux, the crowds are happy to choose a life with form, in form. By renouncing the sanctity of the self, they get something else in return, perhaps something holier?

Today, it is not unreasonable to say we live in a vacuum of ideals, with no authority to submit to. Instead, we conform. Our conception of what is “normal” is a very pervasive involuntary structure. In a secular, democratic society the norm is arguably one of our main guidelines. At best, it creates social cohesion – at worst, leads to social coercion.

The perception of what is normal provides the individual with a baseline, and by staying close enough to it, one does not need to independently evaluate every single decision they make. The norm is an informal structure, making it hard to change. Major variations from this baseline are perceived as wrong, discriminating anyone who does not fit the norm. The norm is set by the majority and those in power and can never be fully inclusive. A structure that for some provides a safety net, can for others be merely a set of rules that they do not want to, or simply are not able to, follow.

This idea of a normal life permeates the field of architecture. A majority of apartments are designed for an imaginary average user, resulting inevitably in domestic spaces that impose expectations on their inhabitants. A kitchen expects you to cook, a tiny balcony expects you to smoke, and so on. The arrangement of a normal apartment is often made to serve a nuclear family, an institution of diminishing relevance today. When a project is made for the market, averages and norms dictate.

Fromm saw negative liberty as a necessary precondition for positive freedom – the state where an individual is unrestricted by outer forces, free to realize the full potential of the self. Fromm considered independent thought to be the key for simultaneously being content and free. When all other constraints would suppress the self, only self-imposed ones could provide the guiding principles of positive freedom. However, this presents
us with two major difficulties: complexity and free will. How does one singlehandedly address every single rule one lives by? How does one distinguish between desire and temptation driven by advertising and our environment, and free will? Relying on only your own thinking would require considering everything yourself, which is obviously challenging in the midst of the complexities of modern life.

In the commonly used example described in the introduction, one can easily identify the truer goal (an important meeting) from temptation (buying cigarettes). The problem is, that faced by the complexities of reality, it becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate between what could be labelled “whimsical individualism” and “free will”. What we truly want, what is truly good for us, merge with desires dictated by advertisement, while the sheer possibility of free will even existing is philosophically debatable.

Absalon had a vision of how to live differently. He understood that relying only on self-control would make daily life unbearable for him. So he tried to embody his personal principles in his immediate environment. What is intriguing about Absalon’s project is the promise of a type of architecture, something rigid, a physical structure that empowers its user to live by his own values. The project is tailored only for him – he stresses the necessity to be the only subject in order to be total, but not totalitarian.67 This way, he is a kind of individual modernist – denying tradition and pursuing a new order, but with the crucial difference that his answers are not meant to include everyone. Experimenting with ones own life is a valid project, but how to avoid self-indulgence? How does Absalon differ from a home-decorator on reality-tv, expressing the hypothetical self with pointless materialism? Were his intentions or values somehow “enlightened”? Consider the stacked coffins from “Holy Mountain”. What makes the proposal so explicitly ironic is that the subjects themselves do not choose the liberty it advocates. But its material form is not very different from the cells of Absalon. Maybe Flexible Man would not find it oppressive, but an opportunity that enables a nomadic lifestyle. As an option among others, it could be regarded as an extension of individual liberties, rather than the dystopian austerity we now perceive it as, sold by exploiting the positive image “freedom” immediately evokes.

One must be very careful about imposing asceticism on others. In fact, to be able to call a spatial boundary a mechanism for positive freedom, it must be self-implemented.

67 Pfeffer Susanne ed., Absalon, 260
Ending
The two ways of understanding liberty can be translated into two ways of approaching architecture. The difference is in the relationship towards neutrality.

The first position is based on value plurality, recognizing that there are differing motives and aims. In this view, a designer should refrain from making decisions or expressing one’s own ideals in order to leave maximum room for various uses. This strategy is useful when the “aim” is unknown. Open-endedness makes sense for creative practices, for experimentation, for those able to utilize it.

The latter position is concerned with creating order. It denounces laissez-faire and considers prioritizing to be at the root of making architecture. This architect both imagines alternative lives and suggests them to others, and, understanding the user, knows how to translate independently conceived values into physical form. Structured space preconditions an aim, an answer to the question “free to what” – and then makes that freedom possible. Compromises may be required – to be or do something, one cannot be or do everything else as well.

As architects we impose our vision of life on the ones inhabiting the physical world we define. Although the power of the architect is obviously limited by regulations, clients, and capital interest, the architect is nonetheless in a position of authority where it is impossible to sit aside and watch. We all understand the problem of totalitarianism, but its opposite is hardly better. As Fisher put it, “disavowing authority is failing everybody”. 68

My position is in the latter category. It is not that I consider myself a visionary, but I believe envisioning being what we architects ought to do. I am keen on developing an architectural language that scripts the life it contains, that embodies ideals and strives for something. I believe that, though challenging, it is possible to clarify aims by observing them, by placing our assumptions under scrutiny. This work has been concerned with the question of liberty. It would be worth, in a similar manner, to address topics such as equality, reason, and truth in order to outline a valid agency for a forthcoming architect.

— Make yourself at home.
— What happened here?
— I’ve made some arrangements. Here, let me get that.
— Thanks. Your place looks bigger?
— The layout is different. I got rid of the bedroom. There’s hardly anything as bourgeoisie as private comfort. I sleep over here.
— Haha, sure, that’s reasonable. Cozy. I can see you still work here.
— I do, but hardly ever alone anymore. Most of the time, someone’s here. Exposure has done good for my thinking. My personal filters were quite simply too tight, remember? All that stuff that just couldn’t hatch.
— You’ve let your work colonize your entire private sphere.
— Well, it’s not like I didn’t work all the time before. At least like this, it’s explicit. Besides, at night-time it’s very different.
— So it’s a factory and a party-crib?
— I’d prefer to consider it a Salon, but sure, we have parties here. It’s nice to have to have friends around. That’s what I wanted to do, reach out to others. I mean, the shape of a room hardly dictates what is being discussed, right?
— True. That explains the marble?
— It’s fake.
— OK, that makes sense. I like your obsession with symmetry, and all the colors.
— Yeah, it my temple. Have some cake.
— Oh, thank you. You’re not having any?
— Nah, diabetes.
— You’re really into this hospitality thing, aren’t you? Where do you cook?
— Nothing makes me as happy as making others happy. I don’t really. There’s only this tiny corner, optimized for making large quantities of soup. It doesn’t have to be fancy be appreciated.
— You know, I read some of your pieces while gone. They are very sharp and critical, really biting. I must say, your serenity surprises me.
— Yeah, well, I’m focused now. And those are matters that matter, unlike when I struggled with myself.
— It’s quite an effort, to keep this up.
— Yes, it is, but a small cost for being whole.
Kiitos
Tuomas, Leonard, Jenni ja Anni
7,5, Antti, Pauliina, Eeki, 100%
koko perhe ja kaikki ystävät
ja tietysti Bee, loputtomasta tuesta.
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Fig. 7. King Vidor, John W. A. Weaver, screenshot from the movie The Crowd. Directed by King Vidor. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1928.


Unnumbered images drawn by author.