Far from passive containers or neutral fields where particular objects are to be desired, bought, and sold, department stores constitute spaces formative for both shopping behaviors and culture. In the constantly changing environment, in an interplay between retail strategies and responses to consumer behaviors, a negotiation is going on of what and who is of importance, who is to be given exposure, and what needs to be hidden. As such, department stores from intimate examples of how shopping spaces are sites of negotiation of public culture, and of reproducing or creating new cultural identity.

Inspired by the work of Baudrillard and Butler, Wigley, and Williamson, this book investigates how department stores work as situating structures, in which we not only find what we want, but what we should want, who we are, who we should be, and how society is arranged, and can take as an exploration that challenges our understanding of architecture and planning as well as society in general.

Daniel Koch is a researcher and teacher at the School of Architecture, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm. Structuring Fashion is his doctoral dissertation that develops and improves the theories of his former work on spatial systems as producers of meaning, focusing the same inquiry onto department stores.
Structuring Fashion
Department Stores as Situating Spatial Practice
Illustrations appearing on the inner sleeve:

Colourplate I, III, and IV: Fashion Photography. Giving different importance to showing the clothing itself, fashion photography (and magazines) express different disposition to fashion, which is a strong way in which they position themselves relative to one another. Compare to Figures 4:IX, 12:IV, and 13:I (Photography: [I – Front Sleeve] Mattias Ohlsson for Swedish Cosmopolitan; [II – Back Sleeve] Andreas Kock for Plaza; [III – Back Sleeve, Inside] Peter Gehrke for Littke).

Colourplate II: (also refered to as Figure 6:IX) Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, Diana Bathing with her Nymphs, with Stories of Acteon and Calisto: The people in the painting are given clear contours or, in Wölfflin’s terms, linear borders. Compare to Figure 6:X, showing painterly borders (Courtesy of Museum Wasserburg-Anholt).

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CONTENTS

Preface v

Part I: Setting the Stage 1
1. Introduction 3
2. Consumption, Identity, and Shopping 16
3. On Space 43
4. Material and Methods 59

Part II: A System of Objects 97
5. An Order of Things 99
6. Spatialising Categories 115
7. Training the Aesthetics 161
8. The Complexity of Classes 216

Part III: A System in Action 239
9. A Practice of Situation 241
10. Some Things We Do Together, Some We Don’t 265
11. A Stage for Others to See 294
12. The Public Femininity and the Discerned Mind 323

Part IV: A Structuring Process 361
14. Shopping Culture: Identity and Social Positioning 380
15. The Department Store: A Structuring of Situations 398
16. Architecture: Situating Spatial Structures 421

Appendix 449
Bibliography 451
List of Illustrations 464
Acknowledgements 467
PREFACE

It is still early in the evening; my feet are taking me strolling along Drottninggatan. While early in the autumn—the first leaf falling from the trees demanded attention just yesterday by landing soundly on the asphalt next to the outdoor table we were sitting at—it has started to grow dark, and the still open stores along the streets have begun to stand out with their warm light illuminating the streets and shop-windows. Slowly making my way along the street, I pass by two department stores on my way to the meeting-point, which is decided to be “Åhlens”. Everyone knows where that means—it is just outside the main entrance, where the escalators come up from the subway.

With a few minutes to spare, I quickly pass into the department store, not really to buy anything but to have a look at what is available—the new fall fashion has, after all, just arrived. Three escalator rides later, my eyes and hands browse through departments filled with new clothing, gathering the impressions of the new, trying to compare to what I already own. The warmth of the department store feels good, and my skin tingles and stings a bit as the coldness gives way to a more healthy warmth. A button or two gets unbuttoned on my coat to adjust. Gloves come off and are put in the bag (this coat I won’t ruin by stuffing the pockets all the time). The department store has grown much more open, I notice. There are fewer blocking walls here—and there is a dramatic change to the ground floor. Never the less, I remain for a while, getting caught up in fabrics, sweaters, shirts and—actually—shoes. Even more than earlier, they have gathered men’s fashion and accessories on one floor, which means that, as long as I don’t move up or down, I can drift around as whims take me without ending up “wrong”.

Making my way down—past the home floor (and a brief look at coffee cups), women’s fashion and cosmetics—I finally reach the office supplies, which are now gathered with books, CDs, and DVDs into a kind of multimedia floor. Having bought a notebook I hurry outside and take the escalators up to the meeting point. How much time did I spend? I hurriedly take forth my cellular phone to have a look.

Late.

***

Debenhams, George’s Coffee, second floor. Sunday morning. The coffeeshop is still fairly empty, but the smell of warm caffe latte and cake is lingering in the air around the few people sitting here, having made their way past the cosmetics and jewels of the entrance floor, up the escalators and then past the shirts, suits, and ties on the route to the brief pause in shopping. The dark haired, in a leisure suit and wearing no tie, is having an espresso only. The other, opting for tie but not suit, is having a latte and a muffin, not having had breakfast yet. On his way here, he passed through the lingerie section directly inside the secondary entrance, making his way through women’s fashion before...
passing the jewels and a fragment of the cosmetics before reaching the escalator—as he had been in the central train station to book a train ticket for the coming weekend and thus came another way when his friend had called. There were some really nice shirts for sale here, his friend had said, and he should come see them. Perhaps they could have a coffee, then, since he was so close by? George’s coffee is, after all, just by the shirts. One of them ends up buying a pair of pants as well. The other, on the way out, finds a nice set of espresso cups that he definitely needs—since he is going to buy an espresso machine soon—and a glass cup for small candles—which is for his fiancé who likes the cozy atmosphere they create (or that is how he tells it to his friend). Overall, they are left to shop mostly alone, the most people they meet being employees, or the decent amount of people having already gathered in George’s Coffee—which none of them, curiously enough, can notice mean anyone is actually leaving or heading to the waiting rest of the chairs and tables unoccupied.

***

Åhlens, Saturday afternoon. Making their way through the ladies’ fashion are steady flows of customers, both passing and browsing. Most of them are women, shopping alone or with a friends, a few together with boyfriends (or are they just friends?), and on rare occasion a lone man saunters through the department. Music is playing loudly, the pace is fairly high, and bodies dance around one another in order to not collide, to reach unknown more or less planned destinations. A hand takes in the feel of a fabric. Brown eyes study seams or cuts. Judgements are made. Tastes are enacted. Would these go with her or with the jacket? Looking around at the surroundings suggest that for the former, no, but for the latter, yes. But at the same time the feeling that grows after this brief scan of the surrounding makes it all feel not like her, and the tops are laid back down; browsing continues as high heels continue their walk towards other departments. Somewhere along the way, a department that feels like “her” is reached, a selection is made—after having tried a few different models and sizes behind the curtains of a fitting booth, closely inspecting how they fit, and a short internal debate of whether it would actually be appropriate for Friday evening. Purchase is made, and movement resumes, down the escalators to the more crowded departments of the cosmetics, constantly shifting direction or stance to avoid bumping into others, or being bumped into. Down here, even more than up in the fashion floor, she can vaguely sense how the crowd watches her—or at least that is how it feels—as she lets eyes run over the different eye shadows for sale, and then the pleasant voice of an assistant calls for her attention, and focus shifts from the bustling crowd to the smiling woman in front of her.

These short narratives could have been descriptions of someone shopping; it could have been me or someone else, known or unknown, trying to navigate the department stores of Stockholm City, and they could be true or false. They are all the same fiction, in part, based on findings of the coming work, and, in part, on common ideas of how shopping is performed and by whom—at least common in popular thought, magazines, and daily press. They also present different spaces and situations that can be found within the department stores, and attempt to capture different possible narratives that could take place within them. As such, they will in part be questioned in the coming discussions, but they should also be seen as a means to begin this work by focusing right there, on the objects, the spaces, the habits, and the situations that are to be analysed.

With this said, the work to come, the result of around four years of research, has sprung from a deep-rooted interest in architecture and its role in society as a situating practice. Throughout the research process, the key questions from my point of view have been relations between spatial organisation, social structures, and cultural norms and ideas—that is, it is as an examination of how space organises a range of situations and values. This is not done by space alone, nor in a direct manner, but as a negotiation between space, people, and things, constituting a kind of material form of communication and thinking.

That is, architecture (as organising space) does so both based on what it is to contain and on ideas of ideal organisations in general and for specific programmes. This is then inhabited by people and things in ways that the spatial organisation promotes, suggests, or allows; sometimes even contrary to it. It is common that such inhabiting leads to changes in the spatial organisation—be it by placing of furniture, opening of doors, or full rebuilding. Such continuous change could still be thought of as dependant on spatial form and principles, which are traceable in the buildings themselves and in how situations are guided and produced by space, even if the direct concern may seem to be of other, more local, or more practical matters.

All the same, the processes and conditions of these changes could conceptually be understood as questions of space, of things, and of people, or of how space is organised “by itself”, how space helps organising things, and how space helps organise events. Such a tripartite question can then be described as distribution of space (how space is organised), distribution in space (how functions and things are organised in space), and distribution through space (the way movements and events are distributed by space as emergent patterns of movement and being). This is a conceptual analytic framework that works well to understand strategies of organising, positioning, and situating that were developed in the previous licentiate (Koch 2004).

Such general questions of architecture, space, things, and people are far too wide for a work of the scope of a thesis, but they do form the point of departure for the queries made here and also what will be attempted to find answers to as the work draws to its closure. To investigate this in a concrete and empirical study, however, the attention has been turned to buildings where such interplay strongly serves as the very basis for the programme; buildings where the organisation of space, the positioning of
things, and situating of activities and people are the things that keep the programme running and where the constant interaction between the three is the very point.

Having studied libraries and how they in these ways present ideas of knowledge, knowledge production, and knowledge sharing in the previous work (Koch 2004), the choice for the current work fell on department stores—which are both similar and quite different to the libraries. The similarities should not be overestimated, but they are still interesting: department stores, public libraries, and museums are all children of 19th century modernity. They all propose collections that represent the whole (fashion, commodity system, literature, knowledge, art), and they all have somewhat similar morphological tendencies as well as spatial strategies for situating and positioning of people, functions, and things serving to control, educate, and help visitors. They also all have survived and mutated over the years and made the transition into postmodernity, even if it could be argued that this is not yet complete. Of these, at the surface, department stores are the most apparent continuously changing institution—at least in the later stages of consumer society when change and novelty have become a means of competition. Tentatively, department stores would be the ones most proposing to follow society, whereas perhaps museums would be the ones most proposing to challenge or supersede it. This is not to say that this is what is done, but it says something of the idea of programme and form that they hold: department stores work under the premise of responding to how society “is” and what customers “want”; that is, they are responding to the current state of society.

The choice of topic for the current work fell on shopping for two important reasons: the role of consumption and shopping as identity makers and leisure activities and to focus on something more directly concerned with everyday life. As much as libraries are far from dead, they are still less constant parts of everyday activity than is shopping. If the underlying question is about social structuring qua space, then the role of consumption and shopping as identity makers and leisure activities and the need for consuming and shopping as identity makers and leisure activities and the need for consuming

spread and use the same strategy internationally. It is thus easier to say that Tiger and Filippa K, for instance (as Swedish fashion brands), are trendy brands in the Swedish context and within a certain range of the fashion system, which may be different in the international context and excludes haute couture.

This situatedness further comes to the department stores and their location in Stockholm City, where it speculatively could be said that they answer to demands of a specific type of shopping that could be tentatively called fashion shopping as different from shopping for clothing; if one were to shop for “clothing”, one could go just about anywhere, but when one travels to City, it is to shop fashion, which also puts demands both on what is offered and on how it is presented. The presentation responds to otherwise perceived social position of the brand, the type, the wearer, or the store. While this requires further research to say for sure, it seems to me department stores established elsewhere around Stockholm have a weaker tendency to express the same kind of social values: they are not meant for the same kind of shopping. Most dramatically, this could be seen in differences between Åhlnens’s regular and “City” department stores, which is not so much about location or size as of range of goods. That is, “City” Åhlnens focuses on fashion and brands while the regular Åhlnens stores focus more on Åhlnens own products.

It is further of note that all three of the free daily morning newspapers (Metro, Stockholm City, and .SE) often ask people to describe their “style”, constantly reminding everyone that they need to be prepared to give an account of choice of clothing, hairstyle, accessories, and so forth. In addition, there has been a boom of lifestyle and fashion magazines in just about every kiosk in Stockholm. Fashion and fashion consciousness has thus increased in importance lately, in part, fuelled by retail and advertising even if this is likely not the whole explanation. All the same, the success of Swedish fashion is debated—proponents use examples such as H&M:s international success to claim it the new Swedish Wonder (following that of pop music), while others argue for its weakness and lack of success as it is close to non-existent on the haute-couture scene.

Although this study looks at the “here and now” of the department stores, they seem to manage to continuously mutate into forms that work well in their time and place. While some people claimed department stores dead in the late eighties and early nineties, both chains of department stores and individual department stores in Stockholm seem to have been revitalised and even grow (which curiously seems to coincide with a boom of library and museum building). This mutability, arguably, depends on their complexity as spaces; the department stores allow for a wide range of changes and retail practices to inhabit them due to allowing a range of different spatial strategies in ways that single shops (too small) or malls (too linear in their concept) do not. Indeed, it is of worth to notice that much of the current development strategies I have encountered...
regarding malls or gallerias during the current project (which will herein remain un-named) have revolved around making them more department store-like at the expense of simulating city streets; that is, instead of imitating rows of shops along streets, they allow a much more complex set of routes with stores being reached through one another, with several entrances and exits between them. Curiously, some department stores have at the same time moved the other way—towards single-files of brand stores.

All the same, in as far as the investigation regards how values and norms are mapped out and negotiated in space, the more complex spatial systems of the department stores allow for a finer and wider such negotiation to take place, and thus tentatively work better as objects to study such a process, which in the end is the question at hand. The issue is thus neither the department stores in particular nor the specific sets of values they present (because they constantly change over time), but the spatial principles used in this process. These principles, as noted above, involve the organisation of space, the ordering of things, and how these systems are made use of. This, however, has implications regarding shopping and consumer culture; the view of space appropriated in the current work demands that a serious investigation into the practice of shopping is performed.

If we allow ourselves to see society as a result of continuous negotiations between structure and individual, then the current work is primarily concerned with the former—whereas much retail and shopping theory is focused on the latter. This is an important point, since it means that the current work is to be read together with these, sometimes in opposition, and sometimes as an analysis of the other side of such a negotiation. It is further important since the suggestions and conclusions of the coming analysis are set against these theories and do not pertain to (as some works focusing on system) deterministic relations from structure to individual or to subscribe to an idea of “slavery under the system.” Total reconciliation between analysis of structure and individuals might, as Jameson (1998) states, not be possible, but they both need to be employed to provide full understanding. Hence I have attempted to continuously conduct a discussion of this relation, which is not complete but at least points toward some of the problems that need to be addressed. Shopping literature, retail theory, and especially consumer ideology, tend to focus on individuals, with individual wants, needs, desires, and wishes; therefore, what is to come should be read with these in mind.

The current work, thus, is an attempt to analyse shopping, shopping space and fashion culture in interaction and to identify structural properties of space used to organise and establish collective concepts and values in society. In such a wider project, it forms but a small step.
PART I
SETTING THE STAGE
1. INTRODUCTION

In a somewhat pointed argument in the *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping*, Sze Tsung Leong claims that by now the only way we experience public life is through shopping (Leong 2001, 134). If this is right, the negotiation of public culture, social structures, and acceptable behaviours and identities that are performed in public space are worked out in shopping space. While a dramatic statement, I believe it is safe to say that, at least in the western world, we see a development where consumption is steadily increasing, shopping is taking up more time and energy, and public spaces are steadily turned into spaces of consumption—small parks are made into outdoors cafés, subway stations into underground gallerias, public services move into malls to be close to other services, and so forth.

Without going as far as Leong, it seems the role of spaces of consumption (and their particular instances as shopping spaces) as sites for negotiation of public culture has increased because of two interrelated changes: the change of public space into commercial space and the transition of society from industrial into consumer society. All this would mean that understanding shopping space is important—something that has been acknowledged by an increasing amount of material produced on the subject, and which I will come back to shortly. However, at this point it is possible to raise one of the questions that have served to produce this thesis, namely: what shopping space need be understood, and how? Often, shopping space is treated as a homogeneous phenomenon, as is the activity of shopping or consumption itself. And, if treated differentially, the units of mall or shop are given the same treatment as homogeneous entities where analysis of internal differences fall into discussions of individual consumer choices. When this is not the case, analyses tend to succumb to particular

1. In *The Cultures of Cities*, Sharon Zukin argues that public spaces are sites where such negotiation of public culture takes place, where public culture stands for the ideals and norms that are worked out as agreements on how society is to be ordered and what behaviours and ideas are to be accepted (Zukin 1995, 1-11, 24-38).
2. *Consumer society* is a term developed by (amongst others) Fredric Jameson (1998, 1-20) and Jean Baudrillard (1998). Although there others involved in establishing the term, these are the main sources used in this thesis.
3. It may be important to point out that this is a broad summary of the situation, which is not meant to deny the existence of exceptions to this pattern nor degrade their validity. Indeed, some of these exceptions will be used later on in this thesis as the analysis reaches deeper into the questions.
concerns and the uniqueness of the situation. The outset here, is that there is much to learn by understanding shopping space and shopping activity as a range of diverse spaces and activities with some properties common and some properties differentiated—shared and differentiated not necessarily between shops or malls or between shopping for one thing or the other, but as situated practice; within a range of shops there may be a number of similarities and dissimilarities, which are not homogeneous shop-to-shop, but space-to-space or perhaps situation-to-situation. That is, when looking closer, parts of each individual shopping unit or activity may show to be equal across stores, but differ within the same store. These similarities will, I claim, depend on similarities of the spatial contexts in which they appear.

If this is so, then there must be a kind of logic to these spaces and practices. Something that produces patterns of similarities and dissimilarities and which allows these to be both recognized and used. As long as we are dealing with shopping and consumption as a spatial activity, that is, as experienced and performed in material social space—or lived space in the terms developed by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre 1991, 53-59), a good portion of this logic ought to be spatial. Such a logic, however, neither requires that it is acknowledged nor directly readable in space or shopping practice, but form a set of generative principles producing structures and behaviour on a more easily perceived level such as the apparent structure of classes (see Bourdieu 1984, 99-168). It is under this basic assumption and with the intent to understand space as structuring principles that this thesis is written.

Understanding spaces of consumption—how they participate in producing social and cultural norms and structures—is important from a societal point of view. This understanding needs, I claim, to include the production of these spaces themselves, not necessarily meant as the material building but as a conception. A conception that responds to established ideas and formative of the same. The possible ways to conceive of consumption space works to produce ideas of consumption, of consumers, and of what is to be consumed. Thus the aim of the current work is to understand shopping space and shopping activity as a range of diverse and time without all too much attention being turned to the cultural and social structuring it performs. The outset is that shopping, as a complex social activity, is an important part in the formation and formulation of identity and social structures in consumer society and that in shopping spaces values, ideals, and structures in society are not only expressed or revealed, but are performed and produced. This situation is more commonly described as a transformation into consumer society, where shopping forms only part of a greater societal change—a change that affects more levels than economic or political and includes everyday life as well as the spaces through which we live it. That it is a part of a greater change, however, does not necessarily mean it is merely a result of it:

Without ignoring other significant influences beyond the scope of this discussion, those specifically economic and political, it is possible to see the effects of shopping as more than an indicator of the larger forces of society; to see shopping itself as the source of change in society, at least as far as understanding what it means to envision the city of the twentieth century. (McMorrough 2001, 195)

This, I argue, is not limited to a city or regional scale, but reaches from the global to the very local: the shops, department stores, and malls. To fully understand shopping, however, it must also be said that this change is made possible through changes in mode of production and political and ideological landscapes. The apparent disconnection between production and consumption is part of what enables the process of (even on particular shopping spaces) has implications for the role of space in society in general. So, let us briefly set the question into the context of consumer society, shopping, and shopping architecture before again returning to the formulation of the question.

**Consumer Identity and Shopping Architecture**

To reiterate: why is shopping interesting? First, it is a part of everyday life in different forms and it participates in forming consumer society. Second, it takes up so much space and time without all too much attention being turned to the cultural and social structuring it performs. The outset of is that shopping, as a complex social activity, is an important part in the formation and formulation of identity and social structures in consumer society and that in shopping spaces values, ideals, and structures in society are not only expressed or revealed, but are performed and produced. This situation is more commonly described as a transformation into consumer society, where shopping forms only part of a greater societal change—a change that affects more levels than economic or political and includes everyday life as well as the spaces through which we live it. That it is a part of a greater change, however, does not necessarily mean it is merely a result of it:

4. On this subject, Jameson notes that “[t]o say that my two terms, the **cultural** and the **economic**, thereby collapse back into one another and say the same thing, in an eclipse of the distinction between base and superstructure that has itself often struck people as significantly characteristic of post-modernism in the first place, is also to suggest that the base, in the third stage of capitalism, generates its superstructures with a new kind of dynamic. And this may also be what (rightly) worries the unconverted about the term; it seems to obligate you in advance to talk about cultural phenomena at least in business terms if not in those of political economy” (1991, xxi).
consumption to serve as a key factor in the formation of identity both on a personal level and on a group or societal level. With the transformation of culture into consumer culture, an increased focus on individuality, subject, and personalisation followed—a result of the increase in range and availability of commodities, but only in part explained by this, and not necessarily a result. As in so many of the discussions to come, I believe it is more fruitful to see both developments as part of an intricate interplay, one leading to the other without one being cause and one being effect—or rather, both are both cause and effect.

Still, despite such a significant role and despite its decided influence on what is built or planned, recent “high architecture” shows precious little shopping (Herman 2001, 391-401). The same situation can be found in architecture theory and research, where buildings and institutions such as museums, theatres, public (non-commercial) squares, and places have had much attention, whereas research into shopping is either relegated to other disciplines or focused on the more spectacular establishments or “avant-garde” spaces of commerce. This is not to say no literature on it exists; the point is that research into shopping architecture tends to be performed by researchers of other disciplines. There are likely a number of reasons for this:

Architecture’s antagonism toward shopping is due in part to its historical preoccupation with form and composition. By imagining space in terms of bounded, stable and unchanging entities, architecture has been largely unable to accept the excessive and formless nature of shopping. (McMorrough 2001, 201)

This, however, is both wrong and right. The increased interest in change, flexibility, and “formlessness” over the later stages of the 20th century is not responded to by as significant an increase in interest in shopping spaces. At the same time, the flexibility, change, and formlessness of shopping space is exaggerated, in part, because the myth of constant revolutionary change in fashion persists (the very heart of consumerism), an illusion that comes as much from lack of research and theory as from a true situation (see Kawamura 2005, 19-38). Annual or seasonal change is evident on the surface, but this change serves to consolidate the underlying system of fashion, remaining relatively stable compared to popular ideas, tending to follow ten-year cycles or longer (Lewenhaupt 2003, 7-9).

Aside from the mentioned formlessness and instability, there is little to explain this except from the general situation that shopping is not regarded as a cultural activity—at least not as a part of high culture—whereas architecture is and not the least aspires to by strategies of distinction through differentiation and distanciation (Bourdieu 1984, 18-63). This relation between the evolution of fashion and architecture is overall disregarded in the general architectural discourse, all while it is possible to argue for architecture as fashion and as in many ways similar to clothing—following a similar system as Haute Couture fashion. In addition, there is a constant and vigilant dissociation to the fashion world by so-called high architecture (Wigley 1995, 127-154). The connection between shopping and fashion, thus, may serve to explain part of the reason why it is seldom approached: “[…] fashion is the result of a great deal of influence which collectively determines the social structure of society” (Kawamura 2005, 13). One can also wonder whether it has to do with the fact that shopping has been more often associated with women:

In the two centuries of becoming a culturally engrossing subject of social commentary and investigation, shopping has been more closely affiliated with women, both statistically, in that more women are reported to shop more than men, and abstractly, through the notion that shopping is somehow an innate feminine activity. (Chung 2001, 505)

Further connections between shopping, fashion, surface, and irrationality have made it less viable for attention than more structural or material questions. The connection between views of shopping activity, fashion, and the conceptions of the feminine is striking, as is their exclusion from theories of modern society (Nava 1996, 38-76). Be that as it may, shopping—as different from consumption—has had little attention in architecture discourse. Instead, the analyses of shopping space come from retail or economic research, cultural geography, anthropology, and ethnography.

I will go further into this later, but without a mode of production that conceals the work effort involved in producing commodities, an economic system where exchange value is differentiated from use value, and without ideologies of the Self through commodified expression, consumer culture would likely look radically different (Lefebvre 1991, 328-329; Baudrillard 1996, 135-162).

Ironically enough, the Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping (Chung, et al. 2001) manages to do both of these. While criticizing architects and architecture research for focusing too much on high architecture, and in this excluding any shopping establishments, they answer by addressing the most spectacular and new instances of shopping space, conforming to other parts of the same ideal.

When it has been researched, it has mostly been as investigations of shopping preferences and shopping habits through statistical or qualitative inquiries, while studies of
into consumption, the focus has rather been put on other questions than the practice of shopping (Miller, et al. 1998, 6).

Of note here is that even in these disciplines, as has been said in most theorisations around shopping emerging in the late 1990s and early 2000s, shopping has often been trivialized or mentioned in passing in favour of other investigations. The studies of the formation of identity and ideals in consumer society have instead focused on questions of advertising and retail strategies, how such images contribute to form ideals and desires, or into so-called consumer research aimed at primarily statistical investigation on “consumer demand” as pre-existing to shopping or advertising. The intent here is not to denounce such research, but rather to point out the problems of such one-sided approaches, not the least because

[s]tudies have shown, however, that advertising’s pervasive power is not as great as had been supposed. A saturation point is in fact soon reached: competing messages tend to cancel each other out, and many claims fail to convince on account of their sheer excessiveness.

(Baudrillard 1996, 165)

This is further supported by more recent studies of shopping that describe how more and more shopping choices are made in the store itself (Miller, et al. 1998, 14-30; Underhill 2000, 161-182). I argue that such a change in the process of choice puts more emphasis on shopping space as defining and presenting commodities and how they relate to each other and to people. The formation of meaning and identity of commodities is done in the store itself. This is why the question of how this is performed, not only as a general shopping space, but in its particularities and local strategies is important.

The point for now, however, is not to discuss or criticise this development into consumer society in itself, even though that must be done to some degree and inevitably comes from analysing it. The point is that this means that understanding what these new “public” spaces do in and to our society is important: how they organise space, people, and artefacts in space affect the ideas and relations through which society is structured is vital to understanding contemporary culture. Naturally, this includes other means of communication. What is remarkable is how few critical investigations exist that examine the social effects of the “purely” spatial relations and positions of the spaces of shopping and how these strategies spawn ideas and influence the way people make use of space and find what they believe they are looking for. As will be seen, spaces “in themselves” contribute to setting values and ideals—by organising privacy, intimacy, crowding, difference, interaction, movement, being, and so forth—informing us further on what kind of object we find and for what kind of social situations they both are fitting to buy, and indirectly, to use.

Spatial Queries

Thus, on one level, this thesis is about shopping: one of the crucial activities of modern life—to some, the activity that defines the post-modern society of consumption. On another level, it is an analysis of how society-in-space is built up, and how people, artefacts, and space—in as far as such a division is relevant—interact to construct reality. The central question, however, asks how space structures social activities and values. More or less explicitly, all investigations to come are aimed at understanding this underlying process of structuring produced by how (material) space makes, suggests, promotes, hinders, or prohibits possibilities.

Part of the current work depends on the conviction that spatial categorisations are not only expressions, an order of things, but are a performative act of structuring that forms identity and idea of society by making sense of structures of commodities. This performative structuring, if it exists, can still be analysed through its results. What I am attempting is analysing what can be seen in the department stores on the one hand, how it is accessed on the other, further leading to in what situations the commodities are presented to us, and how this, as a performative system, continuously responds and changes in an interplay with society—both forming and being formed by it. Analysing department stores in their material form, as they perform today, is a way to avoid assuming or presuming too much on how they function in the social milieu, just as “[a]nalysing ads in their material form helps avoid endowing them with false materiality and letting the ‘ad world’ distort the real world around the screen and page” (Williamson 1995, 11). Or, as Zukin says:

Historically, power over space (or over a body or social group) determines the ability to impose a vision of that space. Many of Foucault’s historical speculations reverse that relation—and it is that standpoint that I have

behaviour in the store itself are few—which is why Paco Underhill can claim to “invent” the “science of shopping” as late as in his work Why We Buy (2000, 11-35).

8. Ideas of “purely” spatial relations are, as will be seen, all but simple assumptions. Without elaborating on it more here, it must be noted that this formulation does not intend to speak of “pure” space.
adopted here. Often the power to impose a coherent vision of space enables a group to claim that space. This is a framing process. (1995, 279)

To investigate this question, the four main department stores in Stockholm City have been studied—Åhlens City, Debenhams, Nordiska Kompaniet (NK), and P.U.B., where the former two have been studied in depth and the latter two serve to provide possible confirmations of what is found in the two former. The former two are also closer to department stores as they were originally formed, and the latter two, while remaining such in name, are functionally more like malls or gallerias gathered into one or two department store-like buildings. It has proven that there are remarkable similarities and dissimilarities to be found in the department stores, where one important finding is that what at first seems like dissimilarities on the surface are similarities in the structuring logics and how they make use of the space available.

Why study department stores? I will return to this question more in depth later, but the choice is primarily made on an assessment of spatial complexity, as the core issue at hand, notwithstanding the inevitable discussions on shopping, identity, consumer society, and consumer behaviour, is space as situating structures:

The formal diagrams of the space of shopping are generically reducible to an explication of shopping’s formal manipulations and hybrids of point, line, and plane—were the shop (or boutique) represents the basic unit of shopping, or point; the mall (and its antecedents, the arcade or stoa) represents the linear accumulation of shopping points; and the department store or big box retailing, for example, represents the extrusion of the shop/point in all directions into a field, or a plane, of consumption. (McMorrough 2001, 198-199)

As such, they are more complex structures of space and provide both more distinctive and more nuanced spatial categorisations of commodities and activities than a point (boutique, shop) or linear aggregation (mall, galleria), even if, on many levels, similar logics can be found in them all. The means of spatially enacting taste through internal categorisations, however, are much more limited and/or crude in the latter two.

Seen from such a perspective, the family resemblance (both morphological and historical) of the department stores and public libraries become apparent, which will be developed further throughout and can be used to broaden the discussion and analysis. Both libraries and department stores serve to organise a wide range of artefacts (media, primarily books, in one case and commercial products, mainly fashion, in the other) into comprehensible structures through which a visitor, shopper, stroller, loaner, or buyer can navigate—and through which the same also can produce a structure of relative positions and belongings from which to deduce an understanding of the material he or she is browsing. In an earlier stage of the work, which resulted in a licentiate thesis—Spatial Systems as Producers of Meaning: the idea of knowledge in three public libraries (Koch 2004)—this was studied in how public libraries work to produce ideas of knowledge through controlling interfaces between people and media by use of space. This material will be reused and built upon, not the least in the methodology.

At this point, the question would be something like: how we make use of buildings? This is in itself an interesting question, and by necessity, it is included in the analysis to come. However, the aim of the thesis is to try and reach one step further by asking: how do we make use of space as material with which to produce social and cultural categories and structures—under the assumption that these are structured by spatial organisation? This question implies that space is structured with such orders in mind and even produces such orders. When Wigley refers to Semper, saying that the wall produces the idea of the family, the point is that the possibilities to erect spatial boundaries result in a conception of something to be separated by these boundaries:

For Semper, building originated with the use of woven fabrics to define social space, specifically, the space of domesticity. But the textiles were not simply placed within space to define a certain interiority. They were not simply arranged on the landscape to divide off a small space that could be occupied by a particular family. Rather, they are the production of space itself, launching the very idea of occupation. (Wigley 1995, 11)

Architectural design thus produces orders and structures, and these orders and structures are conceivable only in as far as they are conceivable as spaces, which means that ideas of space actually decide what problems are to be solved, what needs to be given room for, what is to be allowed, what kind of cultural, material, or social objects and categories are to be considered in the process. When designing a building, a city, a store, or a mall, the range of possible content guides the design, and the preconditions and solutions of the design generate ideas of possible content and possible ways of conceiving of content.

9. I do not mean to say that libraries and department stores are equitable or that shopping and library visits are. The point is how similar spatial strategies are and how some similarities make it possible to discuss them simultaneously.
This means that the preconditions of architectural design are structuring for buildings, cities, and space in general: the ways in which it is possible to conceive of space and spatial structuring serves to formulate the field of possible solutions. These underlying conceptions may not be perceivable directly in the final solution—it is even possible that they are only indirectly perceivable, or at times so obvious that they are forgotten. If society is divided into classes, giving a class structure, as Bourdieu points out, this is not because there is a set structure to begin with, like a bookcase, in which groups and classes can find their place, but because there are underlying principles generating such a structure (Bourdieu 1984). The aim of the thesis is to discern and understand some of these underlying principles of architecture: factors that structure the range of possible designs, providing there is a general idea of what is sought to achieve, and to understand how they work to form conceptions in and of design rather than as vehicles for solutions of given problems. The claim, which will be returned to, is that not only does the bookcase organise collections of books, but in the bookcase there are keys to how the idea of ordering books is conceived, keys that are spatial in their nature.

Because these structures are not apparent or directly present in spatial structures more than in the resulting designs, analysis must go through the process of understanding the apparent structures to infer an understanding of the structuring principles. Therefore, this analysis needs to be thorough, detailed, and precise. As such, the analysis must be performed in an indirect manner. Hence I have resorted to the use of a series of what can be called conceptual laboratories that each serve to further the understanding of the spatial systems at hand and can be used to understand the principles forming the system itself.

Three kinds of answers will follow from this type of analysis: it will give answers to how the activity of shopping works as spatially situated practice, it will give answers to how structuring of shopping space serves to guide, support, and produce values, and it will produce an understanding of the structuring principles of space. While all of these are of interest and will be examined, the aim of the thesis is the last of these issues. To begin this analysis, however, there is need to understand the general cultural context, theoretical basis, and methodological approach a bit better. This will take the form of three chapters: one on consumer society and identity, one on the approach to space taken, and one on the material and methods used. But first, let us have a look at how the thesis itself is structured.

The Shape of the Argument: A Thesis Overview

The thesis has a main structure of four sections that are each divided into four chapters. The general organisation of the sections and the chapters is the same: providing, roughly, first a base for the discussion to come, two analytical discussions, and a fourth concluding chapter (or section) that draws on the three preceding. Following such a general structure, the sections are organised into an introduction, an analysis of the department stores as systems of objects, an investigation of the department stores as structuring of situations, and finally the concluding part, in which spatial structuring will be explicitly addressed and summarised. Thus the overall structure of the work forms one overarching argument, which can be outlined in the form of its component parts.

The First Part, Setting the Stage, introduces the overall question and provides more specific formulations of how it is approached in the current work. In addition, it presents the objects of the empirical studies and a general theoretical and cultural background. It should not be mistaken for giving the full theoretical or methodological base, as that will be interwoven in the discussion throughout; however, it does give an overview of the arguments and positions forming the point of departure. Hence it will, in the form of four chapters, introduce the subject and give an overview of the thesis: the ideas of consumer society, identity, and shopping forming one theoretical base of the thesis; the approach to space underlying the work forming another; and finally a discussion of the material and methods used—the empirical material of the department stores and the libraries, the textual and theoretical material, and the methods with which these are to be investigated.

The Second Part, A System of Objects, examines how the department stores as spatial structures are formulating, defining, and characterising the commodities for sale. Chapter five provides a kind of theoretical stage by discussing the way identities of commodities and categories are formed. This theoretical elaboration is performed primarily using Baudrillard’s The System of Objects (1996) and Foucault’s The Order of Things (2003b) to explore how commodity and systems relate to one another and how series of differential operations provide identity to the object and produce a (semiotic) system of objects. As an example of importance for the argument as a whole, fashion is used to drive the discussion onwards.

Chapter six addresses the formation of categories of commodities by looking at how spatial contexts are formed to suggest belonging and differentiation. At first, this discussion examines the interplay between commodity and context, producing one another’s identity, and moves to how conceptual categories, such as cosmetics or brands, are given form in space, and finally examines what other kinds of categories space suggest by context formations based on intervisibility, overlaps, and differentiation. Finally, the attention is turned to the form of the differentiation itself; the realisation of boundaries and how they work to describe both the relation between categories and to define the categories themselves.
Chapter seven takes this discussion further by examining how context formations relate to one another in the department stores to form systems of values, which provides further information on how they distinguish themselves from one another and what structures of belonging and difference are expressed in department store space. The analysis compares spatial relations on several scales: how distance, separation, and closeness form a system of exposure indicating symbolic importance, and a system of availability indicating who is concerned with ownership or in direct contact with them. These two systems, which work together with the more commonly approached strategies of spaciousness and self-consciousness in store design, further complemented by sequences and narratives, play with one another to describe values, such as trendy, aristocratic, private, and public and positions of clothing in the fashion system.

Chapter eight revisits the discussions held thus far with a focus on the department stores as forming what can be understood as complex systems growing in a situated practice. This analysis is embedded in a discussion on emergence and top-down management and a discussion on how prioritisations of fairly small numbers of categorising operations provide understanding of the systems presented by the department stores as wholes, providing a more involved and powerful analytic approach than one based on apparent categories such as brand. Finally, the attention will then be turned to some ambiguities and inconsistencies in the department stores to further the understanding of how they form ongoing processes of continuous change, where the positions and identities of both commodities and whole categories are constantly under negotiation.

The Third Part, A System in Action, addresses the department stores as structuring social situations: how the organisation of space and commodities interplays with movement, browsing, presences, and gazes to both further define identities of commodities (and those browsing them) and to provide one of the bases upon which the organisation of commodities is performed. For this discussion, Chapter nine provides an overall discussion on situation and presents the empirical basis of relations between space and movement patterns, which includes a discussion on how the emergent, stable patterns relate to individual movements and agency.

In Chapter ten, these patterns are further investigated in the more basic situations emerging—co-presence, seclusion, and social centrality—by placing commodities where there are many or few shoppers, commodities and categories are described as of public or private concern. To do this, the question of public space and public situations is scrutinised, further developed into social centrality as producer of publicity. This leads into an understanding of sharing of space and how sharing of space is related to sharing of purpose by position in the spatial texture.

The question of public and private is then further investigated in Chapter eleven, where the focus is put on publicity as a question of exposure to the Other and where the questions of who is exposed to whom and the degree of mutual exposure become important. This provides further understanding of strategies such as staging, hiding, seclusion, and how crowding and movement is used to further describe social positions by means of such strategies, strategies that include radical exposure, guiding the crowd to survey itself, and invoking subjectivity and self-consciousness. By analysis of how department stores are situating shoppers relative to one another, issues such as exclusivity, expertise, control of conduct, production of taste, and self-awareness are actualised.

Part III is concluded by an analysis of how these strategies serve to [re]produce gender by producing categories and contexts organised according to gender and the different situations that describe the categories and contexts. The analysis here points to how men and women are described as radically different by how commodities for sale are organised in space—including degree of superficiality, impulsiveness, rationality, subjectivity—and how this relates to men and women being mind and subject or body and object.

The fourth part, A Structuring Process, extracts the spatial discussions from the above to reach an understanding of the underlying spatial logic. To summarise the argument, the discussion begins by a theoretical re-approach of society as structure and individual in Chapter thirteen, forming a conceptual base against which to understand the following conclusions.

Chapter fourteen then serves to present an understanding of shopping as an activity that first and foremost is about orientation in the system of objects—acculturation, in Baudrillard’s terms. That is, how shopping needs to be seen as a navigation in the values, positions, and identities available in a semiotic system of objects, and how shopping space supports such a navigation. Window shopping and shopping is understood as the same process, whereas the act of purchase is seen as more or less irrelevant.

Chapter fifteen, summing up the discussion on the department stores investigated, develops how the department stores work as a kind of architectural fashion magazine: the organisation of commodities, categories, contexts, situations, presences, and gazes work to both describe this semiotic system and to support its reproduction.

Chapter sixteen, finally, provides a conclusion to the work, summarising the overall argument as well as specific findings with a focus on spatial organisation. The discussion points to further questions that as of yet remain unanswered: how the systems of exposure and availability can conceptually reach beyond the way they are used in the current work in analysis of both architecture, urbanity, and virtual spaces; and how architecture, providing that the overall discussion of the thesis is valid, can be seen as something through which society negotiates concepts and ideals by spatial distribution.
2. CONSUMPTION, IDENTITY, AND SHOPPING

Just so long as it is freed once and for all from its current meaning, that of a mechanism for satisfying needs, consumption may indeed be deemed a defining mode of our industrial civilization. For consumption surely is not that passive process of absorption and appropriation which is contrasted to the supposedly active mode of production, thus counterposing two oversimplified patterns of behaviour (and alienation). It must be made clear from the outset that consumption is an active form of relationship (not only to objects, but also to society and the world), a mode of systematic activity and global response which founds our entire cultural system. (Baudrillard 1996, 199)

For an analysis of spaces of consumption to be performed, although it will be discussed and developed throughout, there is some need to outline the concepts of consumption, shopping, identity, and social relations as concerns the current work with more clarity. This is partly due to the diverse number of theories and views of the subject(s). The intention is not to give some sort of final stance on the concepts, but rather to present a platform from which the analysis can move on, with its point of departure in the complex interdependency of consumption, shopping, and identity in [post]modern society (Jameson 1998, 1-21).

In as far as shopping is to be understood as part of constructing identity and social relations and part as an enactment of the same, it must be understood as an activity having a role in a larger context of a consumer society and as an activity that has as much to do with social distinction and relations as with individual preferences and internal desire. It must further be distinguished as an interpretation rather than as a simple act of acquisition and set in relation to identity: not only how identity is expressed through commodities, but also how identity is constructed through consumption. Consumer society is a society where identity and Self are framed by an ideology requiring this Self to constantly represent itself through consumption and where this Self is original, unique, and existing internally in the subject only to find itself through the commodities of mass production.

It is such an identity production much of the shopping discourse has dealt with (D. Miller 1998), which has lead to problems both with the understanding of shopping, of consumption, and of identity. Since these three are interrelated, they need be scrutinised further before the analysis of the department stores can be performed.

A Consumer Society

What constitutes consumer society, or a society of consumption, is thus that social structure and social relations, and hereby the Self, is at least superficially defined by consumption, both as activity (consuming) and as social signs (what is consumed)—a stage of capitalism, to use Jameson’s terms, which for the earlier industrial societies at least has been reached over the last century (Jameson 1998). Compared to industrial societies, the formation of identities, social structures, and status moves from what we produce to what we consume, as well as more and more phases of life are filled up with consumption, where consumption means consuming that which someone else has produced. In this way, reading a book can very well be consumption, while it is not per se an economic activity nor shopping nor even a result of shopping as such (Jameson 1991, 200-209; Baudrillard 1998, 49-86).

In such a society, life to a higher and higher degree is consumption and shopping—a life lived in commercial spaces or defined largely by artefacts bought in said commercial spaces and used primarily by being consumed. Through consumption and the use of symbols, such as clothes, furniture, and other cultural or mundane items, we define ourselves, our identities, and our positions in society. At the same time, public spaces have to a high degree been shut down, closed, or transformed into commercial spaces. Even public squares, streets, and centres have been subject to more or less drastic transformations from open space to indoor malls, gallerias, or shopping centres under the rhetoric of making them more available and comfortable. While this rhetoric may be true, the patterns and possibilities of control for the municipal administration are changing and often are outsourced to a private entrepreneur (Zukin 1995, 24-38). Life is, in a way, lived both through a logic of consumption and in spaces of consumption.

This evolution entails a change of the role of commodities as producers or bearers of social relations: that which is consumed is by and large consumed due to its qualities as symbols of a social class.
tities as distinctive signs, an evolution that is made possible by a change in the mode of production and the proliferation of items producing a situation where the importance of what Baudrillard calls primary qualities. The use of objects has been superseded by the secondary qualities, which in short is the aesthetics or symbolic value of the objects. At a certain point of saturation, the “functional” or “use” differences of commodities are marginal, and choice is then based on their symbolic value. This symbolic value is not connected to production or a value derived from inherent qualities in the object but from their position in the system of objects:

Traditional symbolic objects (tools, furniture, the house itself) were the mediators of a real relationship or a directly experienced situation, and their substance and form bore the clear imprint of the conscious or unconscious dynamic of that relationship. [...] Such objects are not consumed. To become an object of consumption, an object must first become a sign. That is to say: it must become external, in a sense, to a relationship that it now merely signifies. (Baudrillard 1996, 200)

It is such a process, where the commodity no longer has value based on its production, where the contexts of its production are even rendered invisible by the mode of production itself, that leads Lefebvre to speak of the evolution of abstract space (1991). Commodities are turned into consumption objects as they are converted from utility to sign, in which their inherent qualities (in as far as such exist) give way to the relationships of which they are signs defined by their role in consumption rather than in production. Furthermore, the value and identity of commodities as signs adds to such an abstraction, because they derive their meaning from a system of signs structured on difference, making their meanings unstable. This does not mean that we consciously perceive it as such. Although most people may perceive these qualities and identities as being in the products, there may be another way to view the relationship:

The idea of signs as representational, of meanings pre-existing and accessible to us, is essential to the ideology in which we seem to be free agents, able to understand a world which has order and meaning: which in turn obscures the fact that this ‘order’ and ‘meaning’ are, of course, determined by ideology, and are not ‘actually’ and ‘already’ in the world. (Williamson 1995, 74)

What makes the differential system of signs so potential and pervasive would be its structural similarity to social and cultural systems, which by and large also function as structures of differentiation. This transformation of society, public space, and the modes of social relations, production, and consumption means that one of the primary tasks to understand how space affects people and society today ought to be understanding the commercial space of consumption, since, as a result, public and private life has changed. Perhaps the primary form of such spaces of consumption is shopping space, which makes the question of consumption as shopping important to scrutinise more closely.

**Consumption as Shopping**

For such a discussion, it is important to distinguish between consumption and shopping because it is often blurred to the point of a reduction that equalises consumption and shopping. Although consumption temporally, socially, and spatially exceeds shopping, shopping tentatively could be termed a specific activity of consumption. Shopping is not merely the stage of consumption that could be labelled “buying” or “acquisition”, as that is again another thing. Shields:

The ambivalence of the shopper role is telling. Being a shopper is usually assumed to be synonymous with being a purchaser. Yet, often, shopping does not involve purchase, which is merely one event which may or may not culminate the shopping process. (Shields 1992a, 102)

Thus shopping analysis focusing on purchase or sales figures risks not seeing the complexity of shopping as activity, and the centeredness on one small part (if the above is correct then it is not even vital to the activity) risks skewing the analysis. This is the case in much retail theory and is further often accompanied by an overemphasis on shopping as individual, missing the role of shopping as a social and cultural activity. Studies often start analyzing pre-existing consumer values or choices extrinsic to the activity of shopping itself.

12. The transformations of meanings through system similarity is perhaps best argued by Williamson in *Decoding Advertisements* (1995, 17-19), and the social structure as a system of distinction is perhaps most effectively argued by Bourdieu in *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste* (1984).

13. There is, for instance, in *Lifestyle Shopping* (Shields 1992b) in many texts a direct equalization between shopping activity and consumption, which is possible only as far as shopping is considered an instance of consumption. The same could be said for much other literature of shopping (such as Underhill 2000), which causes problems in how they relate shopping and identity and how they treat its relation to desire, needs, and purchase.

14. This is to some extent true for rather influential literature on shopping, such as Daniel...
As stated by Baudrillard (above), shopping should be seen as an activity that includes a degree of choice and intention, of individuality, and not as pure market manipulation where consumers are slaves of marketing and fashion. This includes a claim that shopping is contextual, a dynamic and complex activity, where desires evolve, change, and disappear, and can turn into purchase or not based on several factors, many of which are *intrinsic* to the activity and context and not derived from choices or values external to it or inserted into it from the outside. Shopping, I claim, is as much an activity of construction as it is an expression of pre-constructed needs or desires and as much a construction of a system of objects as a choice made in a pre-defined system derived from advertising or magazines. At any rate, as stated in the previous chapter, the importance of shopping and consumption has grown with the transition into what is often called consumer society and a specific action of consumption:

Most of the items of everyday life, perhaps beginning and ending with designer toilet seats, are infused with symbolic values of desire as a new aesthetic; they are advertised with considerable hype and sold in malls. Everyday life has been transformed into an extension of consumer capitalism and the person rendered a consumer or spectator in whom the commodified meanings, the symbolic and affective values embedded in the sign system, have been interiorized as representations of reality. (Langman 1992, 47)

The shift of the commodities themselves from individual objects with identities “in themselves” to mass-produced and defined by relations as signs has an impact on shopping as an activity, all the while the ideology of consumer society manages to imbue these mass production items as if they were bearers of individuality and identity. One could even argue that shopping as activity, at least in the modern sense, arises first when such a transformation has taken place. This development, however, has gone hand in hand with an emphasis of analysis on the object, to some extent at the expense of analysis of space. As Mattson shows, the artefact and the development of aesthetics are affected by how the view of the artefact is changed over the course of the 20th century, a development that partly makes the everyday objects or the “designed commercial products” detach themselves from architecture, both theoretically and in practice (Mattson 2004, 215-249). This same evolution can be seen in and contribute to explain the development of space and architecture in, as studied in the licentiate thesis, public libraries, and how the relation between artefacts (books, magazines, other media) and space (the library) have changed rather drastically (Koch 2004, 133-135, 152-154). It is also in many ways similar (and simultaneous) to the evolution of the public museum (Bennet 1995, 25-33).

Although changing their identity and role several times throughout their lifetime (Gregson, Brooks, and Crewe 2000; Miller, et al. 1998), the commodities of consumption are not taken out of nowhere. They are rather acquired through shopping as a socio-spatial activity, placed in our homes, on our bodies, or in our lockers: they exist in space, in relation to each other and to people, and they are here defined as we meet them as we go about shopping—be it in a department store or a shopping mall. As Baudrillard puts it: “[a]lmost all the shops selling clothing or household appliances offer a range of differentiated objects, evoking, echoing and offsetting one another” (1998, 26). Several sets of jeans or jackets exist, but by being placed in different contexts they are linked to certain behaviours, activities, styles, identities, images, sexes, genders, or interests. The arrangement of artefacts in this way is what gives them their social identity. The arrangement tells us in what contexts they are fitting or to express what kind of identity. Baudrillard continues:

Few objects today are offered *alone*, without a context of objects which ‘speaks’ them. And this changes the consumer’s relation to the object: he no longer relates to a particular object in its specific utility but to a set of objects in its total signification. […] The shop window, the advertisement, the manufacturer and the *brand name*, which here plays a crucial role, impose a coherent, collective vision, as though they were an almost indissociable totality, a series. This is then no longer a sequence of mere objects, but a chain of *signifiers*, in so far as all of these signify one another reciprocally as part of a more complex super-object, drawing the consumer into a series of more complex motivations. (1998, 27)

*Miller’s A Theory on Shopping* (1998) and *Paco Underhill’s Why We Buy* (2000), both having merits and contributing to the understanding of shopping, but in large built upon shopping as an individual choice of purchase. The same is the case for the latest major paper of shopping in space syntax theory by Alan Penn (2005).

The relation to and influence of external value systems such as advertising or lifestyle magazines is not to be denied, but the identity of the available goods or trends are not decided by them as much as may at times be claimed. My argument is that much of the identity of a particular set of goods is constructed in the shopping activity itself, where the stores work as kinds of expert judgements in relation to which the shopper makes her or his choice, an argument that will be developed throughout and summarised in Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen.
Curiously enough, although Baudrillard at other places emphasises the role of spatial relations in creating what he calls atmosphere, and thereby object identity, here he leaves out the store itself, although in the same paragraph cited above he refers to the store. By use of this atmosphere, the relations between and identities and roles of objects is worked out in space: as they are situated relative to one another, both objects and activities are described as a result of the objects’ relative positions to one another rather than by internal qualities in the objects themselves, a discussion that lies close to theory on the contextuality of art (Kwon 2002, Buskirk 2005). With such an understanding, there is no denying of the store as a spatial and social context for both item and purchase. The degree to which it has an impact on the objects as signs is of course debatable, but there are both in Baudrillard’s own work and in recent retail and shopping studies indications pointing towards a rather significant and a growing role as more and more of shopping decisions are made on the site of shopping (Underhill 2000). Acting as such contexts, there are other factors than purely the objects and shopping spaces themselves to consider as well, such as the presence or absence of people and the undeniable social character of shopping (Shields 1992c, 6-7).

Shopping, then, as far as it is an activity in space and as stated above, is not performed in a neutral site of selection of pre-defined pre-desired items, but an activity which in itself constructs the selection and desires available and the system of objects-as-signs to satisfy said desires or needs. Before developing the discussion of shopping further, however, identity and social relations and the place of commodities therein needs to be addressed, because, as will become clear, many of the differences in the theories of shopping derive from differences in view of what constitutes identity, identity construction, and the production of social relations.

Identity, Subject and the Other

What can be meant by “identity,” then, and what grounds the presumptions that identities are self-identical, persisting through time as the same, unified and internally coherent? […] Sociological discussions have conventionally sought to understand the notion of the person in terms of an agency that claims ontological priority to the various roles and functions through which it assumes social visibility and meaning. Within philosophical discourse itself, the notion of “the person” has received analytic elaboration on the assumption that whatever social context the person is “in” remains somehow externally related to the definitional structure of personhood, be that consciousness, the capacity for language or moral deliberation. (Butler 1999, 22).

A discussion on identity risks taking over whichever text in which it is introduced completely, since it is a complex and far reaching subject—but it still needs to be addressed, since it lies at the base of most every theory of consumption, shopping or even retail, even if this is not always explicitly recognised.16 I will try to limit myself to a few discussions that serve to define how it is treated in the current work, and position it in relation to other shopping research. The field of identity theories, however, is all but clearly defined, and I have taken the liberty of extracting and presenting what could perhaps be called “schools” of identity formation and represented them by persons and citations.17

Even if a historical overview is not what is aimed at, it might be of worth to note that explicit shopping or retail theory emerge in large from psychology and as analysis for marketing or retail development, and owe much to the Freudian theories of the subconscious and desire as important parts in the formation of identity (Ferguson 1992, 26-31), and over time have had an emphasis on the hedonistic aspects or basis of shopping (D. Miller 1998, 65-72). From such notions of identity, deeply rooted in early 20th century psychology, theories of consumption were constructed on the idea of a pre-existing self which had needs, wants, and desires that hedonistic consumption was then to fulfil. Ferguson:

The classical psychology of the bourgeois era is concerned almost exclusively with desire, that is with the restless energy of the ‘ego’ seeking to express itself in the world of practical activities. The notion of desire is founded upon a mythology of the isolated ego moving in the ‘ideal space’ of society. The person is a privileged ‘object’ in a world of objects, constituted simply by the possession of a consciousness of its own activating mechanism; it ‘feels’ its tendency towards self-actualisation, and has privileged access to the stable realm of desire from which it manufactures ‘local motion’ of ‘rational’ action. Thus, even for

16. It will later on be shown how superficial difference in views of shopping motivations are to a high degree rather differences in the view of the subject and the constitution of identity, although the arguments presented take form as if the difference lay in the former.

17. Note that these “schools” are not necessarily established theoretical schools in the a proper academic sense, but used here as a method to construct the argument. The point is that they represent different views of identity formation that are more or less widespread within consumption theory, as will be apparent later on.
the most stringent utilitarian tradition, the person is held to be activated by an invisible inner force, which, dimly felt, was only partially revealed to others. (Ferguson 1992, 26)

Ferguson presents this as temporal stages in a kind of evolution of shopping theory. This may be right to some extent, but both the idea of identity and self in such a view of shopping as hedonistic pleasure or expression of an inner self and desire as primary force in the shopping process, are still important in the formulation of shopping and retail theory and analysis today (D. Miller 1998, 70-71).18 These assumptions of the “ego” and “desire” are, however, often rather implicit in the analysis than explicit and are assumed by critics of said theories even when they are not explicitly stated. Be that as it may, there has, parallel to the Freudian self and in some cases with roots before, evolved other theories of identity, both in what could be called sociology and philosophy, which put into question the pre-existing ego or even the existence of an ego as such.

One important debate of post-modern theory has been the death (or non-death) of the subject (Jameson 1991, 1-16). Partly a post-modern development, identity was constructed as more contextual and changing and to some extent as a result of external factors only. The question of identity as social is then connected to identity as perception of identity. It is provisional and depends on contexts of class, subculture, and general environment of the particular group memberships where selfhood is recognized and confirmed and lacks substantiality altogether. As of late, however, this is often further developed by adding factors that contribute to constructing this perceived self, such as body, parental socialization values, and practices (Langman 1992, 55).

What this suggests is identity and selfhood as (a) relational, (b) based on the perception of its own existence and (c) evolving and changing. Depending on how it is read, it can still suggest a genetic self, that is, an “ego” or “I” that is inherent at birth. This is not, however, necessarily so, but more to suggest that in as far as identity is body, there are biological and physical boundaries for the creation of identity.19

Such appropriated identity, however, still clings to the existence of an inner self, an ego, which has been put into focus and question, such as a construction of language. This points to the idea of identity as a construct, which will also focus the discussion around the idea of identity of the current work, formulated around primarily the works of Judith Butler, Manuel Castells, and Anthony Giddens.

Subject, Object, and the Other

The constitution of the ‘I’ comes about only via the ‘discourse of the Other’—that is, through the acquisition of language—but the ‘I’ has to be related to the body as the sphere of action. The term ‘I’ is in linguistic terms a ‘shifter’: the contextuality of social ‘positioning’ determines who is an ‘I’ in any situation of talk. (Giddens 1984, 43)

Giddens’s statement suggests that the construction of an ego or identity, which is not the same but in part related, can only be performed if there is a conception of an Other in relation to which this ego can be constructed. That is, without the realisation of other egos as potentially of the same kind as the own, there is no way for a particular ego to conceive itself as unique and different from others. That this should be constructed through language is not necessarily true, albeit language, as differing “I” from “you” or “them” or any other pronoun reasonably makes a contribution. Still, if we assume that the ego is a construction based on relations to the Other, then identity becomes relational as well, even if it at times is perceived as internal. Taken further, the implications of the construction of identity as agent or the acting “I” make it possible to question the existence of the “I” in itself. Butler cites Haar:

The deconstruction of logic by means of its genealogy brings with it as well the ruin of the psychological categories founded upon this logic. As psychological categories (the ego, the individual, the person) derive from the illusion of substantial identity. But this illusion goes back basically to a superstition that deceives not only common sense but also philosophers—namely the belief in language and, more precisely, in the truth of grammatical categories. It was grammar (the structure of subject and predicate) that inspired Descartes’ certainty that “I” is the subject of “think,” whereas it is rather the thoughts that come to “me”: at bottom, faith in grammar simply conveys the will to be the “cause” of one’s thoughts. The subject, the self, the individual, are just so many false concepts, since they transform into substances fictitious unities having at the start only a linguistic reality. (Butler 1999, 28)

Parallel to this, and in opposition to it, a theory of the “rational” shopper has flourished, not the least in consumer movements and retail strategies (see Bergman 2003, Ferguson 1992, or Langman 1992 for a discussion of the different consumer representations in the development of retail theory in the 20th century), but this will be addressed later, as it touches very little on shopping as part in the production of identity.

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19. How to draw these boundaries and what to consider as biological and physical is, however, far from easy. Not the least when it comes to discerning “essence” of identity or what biological factors should be considered, which is an idea that will be developed below (Butler 1999, 22-33; Grosz 1995, 47-49).
As I see it, however, claiming the existence of an ego does not inherently suggest it to be pre-existent to its construction, nor that it is the origin of desire or ideals or that it would exist in a non-cultural context. Neither does identity as constructed through relations to the Other and by signification deny the existence of an ego. In fact, identity or ego as construction does not per se deny that such a construction is a "natural" part of human beings (albeit as existing in a social context). Neither does identity as constructed imply it being false: if identity is inherently constructed through social relations, it is the only way it can emerge. Therefore, identity will emerge in society. An underlying true and natural identity as different from a false and constructed one can thus be seriously questioned without saying that identity is a false construction or illusion.

Butler herself deviates from the quotation of Haar she uses; she uses it more in order to put any stability or essence of the self as natural into question. Her stance is thus more questioning of the existence of a natural or single identifiable identity that then comes into expression in favour of identity as constructed and internalised as a cultural process. Thus she, like Castells, sees identity as a cultural construction and as pluralistic (Castells 2004, 6).

As I read Butler, she still sees the emergence of self-consciousness, and thereby some kind of selfhood, as more or less inevitable, and the constitution and defining traits of this self as, although in part restricted by the body, arbitrary. That is, that a self grows as a result of people as social beings does not mean such a selfhood has any pre-defined essence or "true", internal qualities inherent in the individual as such, but come about as a social process.20 Truthfully, she questions the dichotomy of nature and culture as a substantial division, as well as the existence of a universal identity concept, convincingly arguing for the dependency of any notion of identity on the existence of culture. That is, she believes the culture and nature distinction is a false division that only serves to underpin and consolidate cultural and social constructions of power by virtue of presenting them as results of "natural development." A reading she shares with Grosz (1995, 45).

In large, I concur with Butler’s argument as interpreted here, and I lean towards identity as a construction but not as construction as opposed to a previous natural state of "true" identity that can be gleaned in Baudrillard’s writings, which points back to Rousseau and the dream of natural man (and, for Rousseau, a man it is). As does Butler, I claim that a dialectical setup between a true, natural self and a constructed, cultural self is false, and further argue that such a discourse participates in creating the sense of modern alienation. In suggesting there to be a previous true, identity from which the modern world has detracted, the lack is in fact constructed as temporal and cultural. Baudrillard makes the same argument when describing the strategies of advertising (Baudrillard 1998, 49-68).

The Subject as the Other

In as far as culture is still a useable term, I would argue that culture and identity emerge simultaneously with the development of a consciousness of the Other, and the Other as different-but-similar to the self, which is a line of reasoning Butler follows. The idea of a self can only be understood at the basis of the idea of other selves that are similar to one’s "own" self, but detached from it. That is, I can only see myself as "I" if I can see the "I" that is in everyone else. Identity, understood in this way, cannot really be discussed or formed without positioning it to the Other. Castells cites Calhoun:

We know of no people without names, no languages or cultures in which some manner of distinctions between self and other, we and they, are not made... Self-knowledge—always a construction no matter how much it feels like a discovery—is never altogether separable from claims to be known in specific ways by others. (Castells 2004, 6)

The discussion above still has a somewhat Cartesian base; it assigns the origin of the self in an active agent that constructs it in the perception of the Other. Inversely, and embedded in Calhoun’s argument, it can be argued that the sense of subject emerges as a result of it being acknowledge by other subjects, or as Langman puts it, “[...] the very existence of the self can not be thought of apart from recognition from the Other” (Langman 1992, 56). In Giving an Account of Oneself, Butler goes a step further, claiming that the production of the Self is in large a result of the need to present such a self for the Other (Butler 2005, 9-21). This is something that will be scrutinized further in chapters nine, eleven, and twelve. However, to what degree this would satisfy Haar’s objections to the idea of an agent is unclear, as whether the Other can recognise the Self arguably depends on the Other being a self. Searching for cause and effect here, however, risks ending up in a kind of chicken-and-egg situation that is not really constructive and may even be false. What this suggests is the basis of identity as being in

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20. Butler does question the term individual as well, and the usage here is not meant in opposition or to skew her intentions but more for practical purposes. The idea of “subject” as “individual” (that is, as a consistent coherent whole) is according to Butler no more inherent in self-awareness or self-consciousness than any trait or defining quality (Butler 1999, 33, 171-180).
its own recognition, and in its recognition of and from others: I am not you, her, him, or it. Identity as such, is relational, changing, and constructed, but thereby not false per se. What may be false are ideas of seeking the inner self as possible to understand apart from any relations to the Other, and thus as the driving force in shopping or the source of desire.

Identity as Performed
There are still a few important points to be made about identity in which I will again refer to Butler, ideas that were also presented by Goffman, Foucault, and Giddens. This is the reliance of identity, or construction of identity, on what could be called regulatory practices—that is, how the self is constructed in being acted out or in routines and practices that the one constructing the self performs. Such regulatory practices, be they imposed by society or produced in social relations and habits, serve to construct a pattern or set of values that serve as one source of identification for the Self—such as the enactment of womanhood (Butler 1999, 171-180), the routines of social interaction (Giddens 1984, 41-45), or the performance of taste (Bourdieu 1984, 99-168). Thus in the enactment of the Self, or the practices which are connected to the Self, the Self itself is constructed. This also contributes to the wish or idea of a Self, an identity, which is coherent and whole:

According to the understanding of identification as an enacted fantasy or incorporation, however, it is clear that coherence is desired, wished for, idealized, and that this idealization is an effect of a corporeal signification. In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. (Butler 1999, 172)

This would mean, that the concept of identity lies in the making of identity: it does not exist prior to or outside of being constructed and is constructed in that it is acted. This makes more or less every activity of everyday life a part of identity making, even though some may play more significant or conscious roles in it. In addition, both processes intended to construct or express identity, and those not explicitly intended as such serve as part in its construction. That is, it is not only consumption and shopping intended to express an identity that participates in its construction, but all consumption and all shopping, even if shopping that more or less explicitly has such intent may have higher immediate impact.

This may seem to go deeper than what is needed for an analysis of department stores, but I argue it is crucial to the discussion to come, which will be evident once we return to the activity of shopping. This understanding of identity is needed when addressing shopping practice as culturally and socially constructive, an understanding that will be examined further in chapters eleven and twelve. Currently, however, this discussion needs to be recontextualised as how it pertains to shopping.

Shopping Identity
When it comes to shopping and identity, there are a number of ways that such connections can be made, and I will try to address them one at a time. Already, however, it can be concluded that shopping for identity is a more complex question than any direct relation between a “personal” identity of the subject and an “inherent” identity of a commodity. Shopping constructs identity both as a regulatory practice in itself and through what is consumed as either expression or confirmation of the ideas and practices that formulate identity or relations to others and positions in social structures. The discussion to come will clarify how different ideas of shopping behaviour and choices to a large degree are based on different ideas of identity rather than a difference in the idea of shopping as such.

Shopping, or shopping theory, by no means signifies a single and unified field, even though, as Miller claims, there are clear tendencies for the general (journalistic) discourse on shopping to form such (D. Miller 1998, 165-172). So, when it comes to the activity of shopping, there are a series of social practices that can be read into the term, which likely to some degree form contradicting practices, especially when the grounds for formulating them are not clear. For this discussion, the works of Daniel Miller, especially his A Theory of Shopping (1998), and Judith Williamson, Consuming Passions (1985) and Decoding Advertisements (1995), will provide further anthropological (D. Miller) and semiotic (structuralist) or feminist (Williamson) perspectives. In different ways, their works point out flaws in the approach of shopping as a hedonistic, self-indulgent activity and as centred around the Self as well as questions of fashion as identity production.
The commodified self

In effect the triumphant development of modern fashion opened up an important new space for the liberating presentation of the private self. The acquisition, wearing, and display of clothing as means of signifying a unique social identity arguably wielded more radical cultural influence than the adjacent circumstances of its material and economic production in the industrial or professional context of factory, boardroom or studio. (Breward 2003, 161)

The idea that clothing worked as some kind of symbol or mark of some kind of identity or belonging was not new with the coming of the modern era. The use of clothing to signify one’s position in society has been used in many times and places, not the least by the nobles, priests, and other classes of power to mark themselves from the commoners, or lower classes, by use of exclusive clothing. Mass-production, mass-fashion, and prêt-a-porter, diffused into seemingly innumerable but in reality a limited amount of choices, brought with it the idea of personal style, a way to express oneself. Clothing as symbols could now be used to express an individual person instead of a social position or class membership (at times even regulated by law). In these respects, fashion forms a particular instance of the system of objects as analysed by Baudrillard following a similar evolution (1998, 87-94). The connection between “authentic self” and how the Self became presented through commodities such as apparel is in part a logical result of the mass production of slightly diversified goods—at least in as far as society in general is concerned with the individual and the Self. Most authentic of these, then, were (and are) assumed to be the bohemian—the one going outside of general fashion to mark his difference from others, a difference that signifies true individuality. For some, the bohemians served to produce the modern idea of connection between outer representation through clothing and inner Self.

We are not concerned as much with history of fashion, however, as a commodified Self as concept, which has implications for the Self and its relation to commodity in general and must be seen as a cultural rather than temporal development. Here, the idea of “your” style and the way to express “yourself” through different commodities—all from clothing and music to kitchen utensils and interior decoration of the home—produces a situation where all shopping choices are seen as expressions of identity, which makes every choice an enactment of taste. One is not only allowed to express personal preferences by choice of cutlery and wall decoration, one is expected to do it, and, it is consequently read as such:

When I rummage through my wardrobe in the morning I am not merely faced with a choice what to wear. I am faced with a choice of images: the difference between a smart suit and a pair of overalls, a leather skirt and a cotton dress, is not just one of fabric and style, but one of identity. You know perfectly well that you will be seen differently for the whole day, depending on what you put on; you will appear as a particular kind of woman with one particular identity which excludes others. The black leather skirt rather rules out girlish innocence, oily overalls tend to exclude sophistication, ditto smart suit and radical feminism. (Williamson 1985, 91)

The choice of “style” turns into a choice of representation of identity. Interestingly, Williamson here also shows that which we more or less already know in everyday life: how the same person (she herself) can choose between several identities, and own several—often clashing—sets of symbols of the self. And she continues by stating the important but often overseen fact that “[…] also, see, I can be all of them” (Williamson 1985, 91). This is used in fashion photography, where the same model is allowed to represent a range of different identities as in Figure 2.1—somewhat contradictory to the idea of expression of unique, internal identity otherwise promoted. Similarly, one of the most important clues for the solution of the murder in Qui Xiaolong’s The Death of a Red Heroine is when Chief Inspector Chen looks inside the victim’s wardrobe more carefully and finds surprising sets of (ravish) clothes, which makes them think of her in different ways, or rather they start thinking of her in two ways, more or less as two different people (Xiaolong 2000, 81). This means that a connection between “a” self and an “authentic expression of the self through fashion” is problematic as far as one stable internal identity is concerned. Furthermore, the use of these objects work to situate the person by referring to group memberships rather than personal traits. This diffusion into sets of identities and their dependence on group recognition in itself speaks against singular identities, even if somehow used to argue for it, which, as Shields notes, simultaneously supports and contradicts the idea of individualism in identity construction (1992c, 16).

Does this mean that there is no valid connection between self and expression of the self? As noted above, this is not the point of this discussion. The point here is the discrepancy between identity making and conceptions of identity and self, a discrepancy that to some extent hides part of the shopping process because it makes as-

22. It may be of interest to note that the rise of fashion and clothing as representing identity coincides not only with mass-production but also with psychoanalytic theories of Self and liberal and liberating movements rising against a strict class society. It could be argued that without ideas of self being prevalent, mass production in itself would not lead to the thinking of commodities as expressions of individual Self.
Figure 21. The same person can present different identities by clothing, make up, hair colouring and other aesthetic operations.

(Photography: Andreas Kick for Stureplan)
spressions about needs and wants that are problematic. The question for this study is as follows: how is identity a “continuous reflexive project”, or as regulatory practice, actually how is identity connected to the commodities once the commodities start to function as a system of signs? Even if objects are not inherently part of an identity, the use of objects as identity markers makes them function as identity builders. This does not, as seen above, imply the construction of one stable identity.

The role of the commodity in identity building can thus be strong even if there is no stable, single identity to be expressed. Williamson argues that, when buying things that differentiate us, we become identified with what we buy in what could be likened to totemic manner, and further that in the instable roles of signifiers/signifieds that constitute commodities and people soon begin to create us rather than merely reflect us. Once we let ourselves be signified as high-fashion people or street smart, this also begins to construct us into the same (Williamson 1995, 46-47). This, actually, follows logically from identity as process and construction of social relations, which will be addressed more in depth later on. There are other “logics” of consumption producing a connection between commodity and self, but the one that concerns us now is the one that points to another facet of the commodified self—namely how the self is constructed as a commodity and surface. There are several processes behind such a construction: the commodification of labour force, the commodification of the body, and a connection between body, self, and commodity that runs through much advertising, just to name three. This could be argued as following from an argument of the subject as construct, and the conception of identity as construction risk running close to a conception of the identity itself as a commodity, which over time would indicate it being consumable:

[…]In this case that identification of the self and private property which fitfully offers an alternate reading […] of a book about which we can affirm with some confidence that it is not the correct reading and by no means corresponds to the author’s intention. That alternate reading according to which the self is constituted like private property, or even on the model of private property resonates across some very different zones of modern thought, above all in those areas where the ego or personal identity has been the most strongly experienced as an unstable construction. (Jameson 1991, 199)

Another way of stating it, is that “all consumption became conceivable as desire, for, as well as the desire of, the self” (Ferguson 1992, 26). That is, by producing an idea of self that exceeds what is “casually” constructed, which then can be advertised as possible to gain by consumption, a powerful and indirect production of desire for a Self that can be used to fuel desires for commodities. The Self as commodity, however, is not reliant on it as construction, but rather on other processes: a general public discourse concerned with selfhood, subjectivity, and identity, especially as an internal and authentic demand for selfhood arise. This process grows especially powerful if such a pre-existing self does not exist. As Williamson concludes, the idea of signs representing something pre-existing lies within the ideology of the free subject, and is, as Baudrillard would state, part of the capitalist system’s means of survival (Williamson 1995, 71-75; Baudrillard 1998, 87-98). By describing the individual as possessing free will, and consumption as expression, and materialisation of this pre-existing or unrestricted free will, a logic is constructed where consumption of mass-produced items in fact is nothing but acting out one’s own Self. In such a view, the Self itself falls into a category of private property; it is “your” self that “you” give expression to. What the “you” in this is, however, remains unclear. Since this can be claimed to be found in the commodities for sale, as representations of a Self that are already there, all consuming purports to mean the expression, or even the finding, of one’s Self. That is, you buy yourself:

What the advertisement clearly does is thus to signify, to represent to us, the object of desire. Since that object is the self, this means that, while ensnaring/creating the subject through his or her exchange of signs, the advertisement is actually feeding of that subject’s own desire for coherence and meaning in him or her self. (Williamson 1995, 60)

Thus the argument of expressing one’s Self or identity is rather a means of constructing a cultural system and ideology. It serves not only to construct the Self as commodified, but as shopper—as one who becomes a Self through shopping. In as far as identity is constructed, investigating shopping as enactments of wants or needs that arise from the self prior or externally to the shopping in itself thus risk leading to false assumptions and conclusions. The effects of the consumption for identity then becomes as much stabilising the society of consumption as a system as it is a liberating force for the individual. Baudrillard:

This is to confuse everything. It has to be recognized that consumption is not ordered around an individual with personal needs, which are then subsequently indexed, according to demands of prestige or conformity, to a group context. There is, first, a structural logic of differentiation, which produces individuals as personalized, that is to say, as different one from another, but in terms of general models and a code, to which, in the very act of particularizing themselves, they conform. (1998, 92)
Is this arguing for a Self as result of shopping and as set of appropriated attributes? It may look like that thus far, but that is not the intention; neither is it reasonably the “truth” of things. The problem of such ideas of identity as appropriation, as Langman points out, is quite clearly demonstrated by a film such as Invasion of the Body snatchers: had identity been only appropriation of habits and routines, the invaded subjects would have remained the same even after the invasion (Langman 1992, 62).

The commodity as materialised relations

My premises, unlike that of most studies of consumption, whether they arise from economists, business studies or cultural studies, is that for most households in this street the act of shopping was hardly ever directed towards the person who was doing the shopping. Shopping is not therefore best understood as an individualistic or individualizing act related to the subjectivity of the shopper. (D. Miller 1998, 12)

Shopping and the use of commodities serve more purposes and different roles than a pure expression of or searching for a supposed inner Self. Such a discussion on shopping and commodity as expressing the subject depends on the general discourse of shopping as hedonistic act of self expression (D. Miller 1998, 65-72), whereas much shopping taking place is done with regard to others, either for others as such or in direct relation to an imagined or existing Other (Chua 1992, 114-135), and in much more mundane situations. This leads to the question to what degree commodities and shopping serve to form or express social relations more directly than expressing a Self as something relative to the Other.

The first, shopping as forming relations to others, and based on what Miller terms love rather than search for identity or self-indulgent, is based on the idea of relationships that are not about identity and not about power, but rather the kind of relationships that Thomas Markus presents as bonds (1993, 10-11).23 Bond relations, as different from power relations, are relations that have the “[…] strange property that instead of being about distributing finite resources—cake-slicing—the stronger the identity of the self, or the relationship between two people or within a group, the more there is to share” (Markus 1993, 25). Furthermore, bond relations would be based on individual choice rather than social structures. As I have argued earlier (Koch 2004, 41-44), this idea of relationship serves to point out that relationships are not inherently oppressive, whereas any relationship to some extent includes relations of power, and more optionally, bond relations. Miller’s argument is that shopping as a way to form social bonds of different kinds is perhaps as usual or more usual than shopping directly intended for the customer herself:

The ethnographic evidence has been used to redirect attention from shopping as an expression of individual subjectivity and identity to an expression of kinship and other relationships (D. Miller 1998, 35).

As argued earlier, however, the formation of such bonds would still be part of constructing identities of groups, individuals, couples, and whoever and whatever is included in the relation not because this is the explicit purpose of the shopping, but because the relation the commodity is used to describe or represent is part of the social relations forming individual and group identities that are relational in their “nature”. This is traceable in advertising, as it focuses more on social relations and activities or identities than it does on objects or products as such (Baudrillard 1996, 165).

A view of the object as representing, or an expression of, social relations, however, has its own problems that lie in the very idea of representation. A representation is always a representation of something else; that is, there must be something already existing and external to the sign or representation to which the representation can refer (Williamson 1985, 76). Furthermore, representation indicates an idea of stable relations negotiated in other means than through the objects themselves. Miller addresses this problem later in his discussion:

If shopping is an expression of relationships then it should now form part of such an explicit series of negotiations. In practice, however, most shopping is highly routinized and often relates to relationships as a vicarious rather than expressive medium. It is likely that being able to subly shift and monitor the nature of kinship and friendship through buying clothes or household goods in many cases substitutes for rather than stimulates explicit dialogue about the relationships themselves. (D. Miller 1998, 120)

Later, he even points out how such ideas commodify relations in themselves and shows that an understanding of the commodity as representing a relationship in fact obscures the very complex nature of relationships themselves. If the commodities were pure ex-

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23. To be clear, Markus refers the coining of the term “bonds” to Gorz (1989). The use herein is, however, solely based on Markus presentation and use of the term, as it serves to point out the complex nature of social relations as about more than power, a discussion that often risks leading to an approach of social relations as inherently oppressive, which is problematic (Giddens 1984, 257).
pressions of relationships, then these relationships need a form that is discernible with some kind of boundaries. Miller here argues that relationships are not such “things” that can be stood for, but rather a continuous process where shopping forms a means through which these are continuously negotiated and nuanced (D. Miller 1998, 141).

He argues that the commodities can be used in themselves to form, constitute, and negotiate social relationships as much as used to represent them, giving the objects a more active role than purely expressive. This means that rather than serving as pure representations, commodities are used as metaphors, metonyms, materialisations, and suggestions for the formation or reformation of the constitution of social bonds. This, as far as I can see, goes a long way to explain the complex roles of shopping, consumption, and commodity in consumer culture, rather than simplifying it down to expression, which tends to indirectly or implicitly relate to commodity or object as social relationships as a form of falsehood, again suggesting there is a “real” relationship “obscured” by the object:

It should also be evident that the dynamic relationship of subjects and objects is not one of representation. The argument is not that goods symbolize persons or identity. Shopping is an active praxis which intervenes and constitutes as well as referring back to relationships. Shopping may, for example, become a vicarious expression of relationships that prevents those involved from being more explicit about what is happening. (D. Miller 1998, 47)

As constructed by social relations then, it is entirely possible to give or even to form such relations via material expressions, commodities owned by one subject and not the other, or shared by subjects as a kind of mark or definition of their relation. The object, in a way, becomes metonymic for the relation itself. In other cases, the object is used to form or negotiate relationships and form one link in a chain of actions that over time defines and to some extent is the relationship. As such, it is not inherently a bad thing, an alienation or a misrepresentation, even if it can have such consequences as they can replace explicit dialogue on the nature or future of ongoing relationships. This is not to deny Lefebvre’s argument that things (as any language) can hide the social relations of their own production (Lefebvre 1991, 81); it is rather arguing that the social relations formed by commodities in their consumption is not based on the relations that are the base for their production. Even if commodities can no longer reveal the context of their production, they do not necessarily lie if they are not assumed to do so.

The weak link, however, in Miller’s discussion of shopping, which will be even more clear in the coming discussions, is the assumption that objects-as-relations (or expressions thereof) would not form identity. In short, Miller’s point that large amounts of everyday shopping are done not for oneself but for others is translated into shopping not being done as production of identity. That is, the only shopping that produces identity is shopping done for the direct sake of the Self. This denies identity as a complex social phenomenon, where the very act of shopping for others (be it out of love or not) participates in producing an identity (both of a larger unit than the individual and of the individual as a caring subject) even if this is not some “egoistic” or “hedonistic” intention. I argue that the construction of group identity, such as a family identity, out of love still builds an identity of the Self as a part of this social unit.

The point here is that shopping that produces identity does not have to be the self-indulgent kind of shopping or even for oneself. There is still a choice going on, and the choice helps produce an idea of the Self (even if it is larger “selves” such as the family) based on what other choices available were not made. Furthermore, as it is a choice within a range, the available choices are contextual and produced in the situation. This would help explain why one set of jeans sells well in one store but not another despite being the same model and maybe even being given the same display features.

The Complexity of Shopping: a Tentative Conclusion

Concluding the discussion of consumption, shopping and identity as relating to the coming analysis, it is time to briefly sketch the idea of shopping as practice used in the thesis. This means, further, that there is need to address the question indicated several times above of what is the driving force behind shopping and consumption, as this is both inherent in and a result of ideas of the formation of identity and social relations, and hereby the most common discussions of these tend to relate to shoppers as either rational, thinking customers or as seduced victims of retail, both problematic in their simplification, as Ferguson states it:

Taken together, these traditions represent certain possibilities within the framework of bourgeois psychology. Consumption could be viewed variously as a simple want for things whose inherent attractiveness was a property of nature (utility), as a want for things whose attractiveness depended on the assumption that they were wanted, or already possessed, by others (envy), or as a want for things whose attractiveness was the reflex image of the self (desire). (Ferguson 1992, 28)
This is followed by a claim that the understanding of contemporary shopping must be based on entirely different psychological assumptions. Part of the problem lies in all three: the assumption of the rise of “want” as external to the shopping act or as the cause of identity. It is based on the pre-existing internal ego that acts out either its rationality or its hedonistic self-indulgent, which again obscures shopping as a cultural act, and one of forming or suggesting social relations. With the discussion of identity and shopping conducted above in mind, such assumptions prove to be highly problematic.

As Baudrillard argues, the Freudian desire, which comes from the Ego and seeks a response in the “real” world of products, is connected to a theory in which we need something first, then go and buy it. Compared to this, Baudrillard’s system of objects—where desire more or less emerges from lack created by supply—sets up another model, which can seem like envy but is rather a result emerging from the system of objects “itself.” In creating an object, the possibility of a lack of the object arises, producing a desire for it. Thus a driving force in consumer culture is the production of lack, and desire is created as much as inherent. This is further based on objects as signs, and their identity as formed by difference:

This can only be explained if we radically abandon the individual logic of satisfaction and accord the social logic of differentiation the decisive importance it deserves. And if we distinguish that logic of difference from mere conscious determinations of prestige, since these latter are still satisfactions, the consumption of positive differences, whereas the sign or mark of distinction is always both a positive and a negative difference—this is why it refers on indefinitely to other signs and impels the consumer to a definitive dissatisfaction. (Baudrillard 1998, 63)

Baudrillard’s argument is a bit dystrophic and is based on a general idea of consumer culture as superficial and inherently bad. As with many other consumption theories, it can be argued that he works, as Miller puts it, “[t]o use consumption as a convenient symbol for condemning ourselves as some kind of postmodern superficiality devoted to mindless materiality” (D. Miller 1998, 112). This is to draw the objection a bit far, but it does point out a general problem with much consumption literature, which either elevates consumption and the market to be some kind of consumer democracy through independent enactment of choice or to mindless buying of that which commercials and ads inform us to. The argument here is that both of those approaches obscure rather than reveal and are constructed on primarily ideological and political grounds.

Furthermore, many theories of seduction are based on assumptions of an active desire or want for a new, better identity, which is then linked to shopping as a hedonistic act, where we go out to consciously define ourselves as individuals through shopping. Although likely not uncommon in certain forms of shopping, there are other workings behind choice of commodity that pertain to formation and expression of identity that works on a more subtle level. What is chosen is not merely “what should be”, but what feels right according to the personality we are assumed to have and thus assert in shopping. (Williamson: )

Advertisement, thus, does not work as much to create desire for a new identity as it does to suggest what belongs to “your” already existing identity (Williamson, 1995). An argument that suggests that advertisement or promotion will only with great difficulty sell an Armani Suit for Distinguished Gentlemen to an urban style Street Rapper unless it is made into a logical choice of already being appropriate. As we will see, this step is not as far off as it may seem. Thus the question is not necessarily an active search for identity, but a much more intricate performative operation. Or, rather, it is a continuing process of negotiations that in its performance serves to reproduce, alter, or construct identity whether this is intended or not. Following the discussion of identity above, shopping becomes a performative, structuring act both in society and the subject. Because commodities shift from being defined by utility to being differentiated through aesthetics, this shift in itself carries a role of the commodity in construction of identity or belonging. This impulse is not necessarily because we have an inner drive to symbolise or represent ourselves to the Other, but because every purchase inherently becomes an enactment of taste (Bourdieu 1984).

The point is, and I regard it as crucial for the coming discussion, that the motives and ideas behind actions such as shopping is much less determined and singular than is sometimes assumed, but rather a collection of “sketched projects”, which are continually revised and specified in the durée of day-to-day life (Giddens 1984, 7). This replaces simplified ideas of cause-and-effect

25. This is not to suggest that I would be writing a completely neutral or objective thesis, but rather that these descriptions of consumers and consumptions are first an idea for or against market economy and second a way to present it that either purports to consolidate it or argue against it and not as much critical or analytical as it is argumentative.
and goal-oriented behaviour with a more flexible and open-ended view where actions and behaviour are continuously negotiated in response to context, intentions, feelings, and relations. This suggests that most shopping is a process where the goal is continually revised and where the context of the shopping act has great impact on what is shopped for.

In such a situation-context, the range of choice defines the object as much as the object itself (or more), which by and large makes it a semiotic system of differences forming the base for the choice. Such a system can be analysed on its own terms as a system itself. Thus the system of objects can be read and understood not as a text forming sentences and meanings in that way, but as a texture, where every part is defined by its relative position to other parts (Lefebvre 1991, 142-147). This is not to deny the commodities are imbued with meaning from other sources: the argument is that such meanings are incorporated in the structure since it follows the same kind of differential rules and just as ads can draw on, but at the same time change, enhance, or add meaning, so can (department) stores. In the discussion to come, it is the structural process of this I am concerned with.

Clearly, shopping is a complex activity with a series of (conflicting) goals and processes involved, where even individual consumer objects shift their position and meaning over time and space. The formation of identities suggests taxonomies, categories, and activities. Shopping presents a range of objects sorted into categories, which are approached by a continuously socially constructed ego in a negotiation of how they fit to express or construct Self, relations to others, or relations to the Other. These are then further defined in space by several other factors, suggesting what goes together and not, what is trendy, what is street-smart, what is high fashion, and what category is connected to what identity or social position. Following, as to any suggested or expected identity, the subject can respond and relate in different ways, and in the end we may decide that none of them are feeling “right”, which then can lead to a situation where no purchase is made, even if it was intended from the beginning. As such, I argue it can be understood only if analysed in its cultural and spatial complexity and not by analysis of individual acts or limited instances such as buying, an approach that risk, as Lefebvre rather pointedly points out, obscures the actual problem (1991, 123). One could almost go so far as to suggest that shopping is everything but the buying situation: once one changes from choosing to buying, one is transformed from shopper to buyer.

3. ON SPACE

No sooner had they entered than they were greeted with a surprise, a marvel, which enchanted them all. It had been Mourret’s idea. He had recently been the first to buy in the Levant, on extremely favourable terms, a collection of antique and modern carpets, rare carpets of the sort that until then had only been sold by antique dealers at very high prices; and he was going to flood the market with them; he was letting them go almost at cost price, simply using them as splendid setting which would attract art connoisseurs to his shop. From the middle of the Place Gaillon passers-by could catch a glimpse of this oriental hall, composed entirely of carpets and door curtains, which the porters had hung up under his directions. First of all, the ceiling was covered with carpets from Smyrna, their complicated designs standing out on red backgrounds. Then, on all four sides, were hung door-curtains: door-curtains from Kerman and Syria, striped with green, yellow, and vermilion; door-curtains from Dinarbekir, of a commoner type, rough to the touch, like shepherds’ cloaks; and still more carpets which could be used as hangings, long carpets from Ispahan, Teeran, and Kermanshah, broader carpets from Schoumaka and Madras, a strange blossoming of peonies and palms, imagination running riot in a dream garden. On the floor there were still more carpets; thick fleeces were strewn there, and in the centre was a carpet from Agra, an extraordinary specimen with white background and a broad border of soft blue, through which ran purplish embellishments of exquisite design. There were other marvels displayed everywhere, carpets from Mecca with a velvet reflection, prayer rugs from Daghestan with a symbolic pointed design, carpets from Kurdistan covered with flowers in full bloom; finally, in a corner, there was a large pile of cheap rugs, from Guerdis, Kula, and Kirghelhir, priced from fifteen franes upwards. (Zola 1995, 88)

A returning theme in Zola’s *Au Bonheur des Dames*, on the fictive first department store in Paris, is series of descriptions of the extravagant space of the department store, aimed at seducing the women to enter and buy since “[…] they had awoken new desires in her weak flesh; they were an immense temptation to which she inevitably yielded, succumbing in the first place to purchases for the house, then seduced by coquetry, finally consumed by desire” (Zola 1995, 76). A description of department stores and shopping that saturates much literature, but has its own problematic em-
bedded in itself—not the least because it limits the department store temporally and conceptually to a retail strategy that has come and passed several times over the years and has varied over space (see Bergman 2003, 53-65; Lancaster 1995, 159-170, 195-206) and a spatial experience and expression from which most department stores today have deviated in one way or the other.26 Still, this is not the point for now. The intention now is to introduce the idea of space. The stress here is on introduce, since the question of space runs through the entire thesis.

The citation above contains perhaps more keys to understanding space than is readily apparent, which will become clear as the discussion moves on. At the current stage, however, suffice it to say that there is actually no mention of the building itself whatsoever, and yet, it is unlikely that at least an interior is not thought at the reading of the paragraph, if not a building as well. Based on a few clues, a whole is built up, and if queried for, it is likely anyone could make assumptions of where to find what based on a perceived underlying logic, as Paul Ricoeur would put it (Ricoeur 1981, 176-181).27

Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that the carpets serve both to form this space and to be that which is for sale in it, yet there are material boundaries set by the building for how this can and cannot be done, in which lies part of the problem of the current work. This is not to say that Zola thought in the way that it will be analysed or that he had knowledge of space exceeding other writers: Zola will rather be used as a “descriptive” of the questions or approaches to space to be discussed. Zola did, however, extensively study department stores—and especially the Bon Marché—before writing his novel (M. Miller 1991).

Throughout Zola’s work he described space by means of people—that is, how what people do, who does it, how many they are, in what constellations they are, what relations are played out, and so forth serve to define the space in which the event takes place. There is a dramatic difference between the space of splendour described when the Bonheur des Dames is empty, but just about to open and when it is filled with people.28

26. Of course, it is a simplification to imply or suggest that department store space was a homogenous phenomenon historically; the point I am making is that the department store Zola describes is of a kind that is less common today, both as organisation and as spatial practice and that even if diverse, it is has often been treated as homogeneous.

27. While less prominent in the current work, the hermeneutics of Ricoeur were vital for the licentiate and form part of the methodology. The strength of Ricoeur’s work for the current discussion is his theories on how the whole is continuously constructed, based on what is known, and always greater than the known facts (see Koch 2004, 9-14).

28. It can be argued that urbanity and commercial spaces of abundance are commonplace today, whereas during the 19th and early 20th century it was something new, different, and overwhelming, as it was so dramatically different. Something, which is rather a cultural situation than a historical one, even if it evolved historically.
What we are dealing with are not “events” as such, or spectacularity, but the department stores in their daily routine, forming spatial practices and performances that have impact on many levels of society and identity. As cultural and social phenomena, they participate in shaping consumer society, as “I also see public culture as socially constructed on the micro-level. It is produced by the many social encounters that make up daily life in the streets, shops, and parks—the spaces in which we experience public life in cities” (Zukin 1995, 11).

In order to address these questions in regard to the current work, the above serves more as a discussion as to why space, in the above at times equated with buildings or architecture that naturally is a simplification, is important, and not so much on its “nature” or “workings”. In a sense, I will be primarily working with what could be called social space, although such a definition has its problems; it is often used as more of a description of social topology (Bourdieu 1984, 99-168) or as descriptions of spaces constituted solely by social actions such as a group of people standing in a circle and talking. The use of the term in this work is derived from Lefebvre’s The Production of Space (1991), in which social space is discussed and presented as integrating people, social practices, and things. An important part of Lefebvre’s argument, which is often overlooked, is that social space is “[…] inseparable from mental space (as defined by the philosophers and mathematicians) on the one hand, and physical space (as defined by practico-sensory activity and the perception of ‘nature’) on the other” (Lefebvre 1991, 27). This is to say that an important part of social space, also in its abstract or contradictory instantiations, is the materiality of lived space.29 Lefebvre connects scientific and social space to concrete material space, even if his work neither is intended to nor reaches an in-depth analysis of the concrete materiality (Markus 1993, 12-13). This work will, in part, try to focus more on space in its material form as it is found in buildings, such as department stores and libraries, and is founded on Lefebvre’s analysis.

Furthermore, the intention is to put the emphasis on use and experience over intent or expression, or in Lefebvre’s terms, “I am attempting to address primarily space as lived, rather than perceived or conceived” (1991, 53) even though he carefully points out that they are not so easily separable. The latter pair of concepts may be understood as “mental” spaces as Massey terms intuitive and conceptualised perceptions of space (Massey 2005, 31). A simpler way of saying it is that I am more interested in the effects or inputs from space in its daily use than of the intentions of the architects or managers, and my position is that these do not necessarily coincide. To some extent, this also deals with space as spatial practice, representations of space and representational space (Lefebvre 1991, 33), which as another triad serves to describe somewhat the same phenomenon: the difference between how space is experienced and lived in daily life on the one hand, and how it is perceived and conceived on the other.

These “trialectics”, however, are not the same, even if many times they have been presented as such: for instance, Soja and Harvey discusses the trialectics of Lefebvre as if they were the same (Soja 1996, 53-82; Harvey 1989, 261-265). The point I am making here, is what I find to be problems with either simplification or oversystematisation of Lefebvre’s work, coupled with an often forgotten discussion of Lefebvre’s pointing to a much more dynamic or even dynamicising conception of space. These trialectics are then different not because they differ so much in definition, but because they follow different trajectories. Space as lived, perceived, and conceived form a set of terms for the experiencing or analysing subject, while representations of space, representational space, and spatial practice are concepts based on the acting subject, which has important ramifications for what they actually are, and how they relate to each other.30 This does not make one into more part of daily life than the other; it is more to say that while we experience our daily life in lived space, we act through spatial practice. The way in which we present ourselves through cultural codes (such as fashion) is an act in representational space.31 I

29. One of the reasons for pointing this out is the sometimes misunderstood notion of abstract space, which Lefebvre uses not to speak of space as disconnected from practico-sensory activity, but how its production and the relations between labour and commodity are abstracted and the “real” social relations of power over production is obscured in the mass produced commodities and spaces. In this, Lefebvre’s argument is much like Baudrillard’s.

30. The impact of trajectories for the differentiation of otherwise similar classes has been extensively discussed and shown by Bourdieu (1984, 114-168). The problem of equalising the concepts, and thus ignoring the trajectories, lies in part in the simplification itself, but also it is implicitly or explicitly based on an assumption of an all too direct relation between message, or intent, and interpretation, which leads to further problems in consecutive discussions based on this simplification. That something is a representation in space simply does not per se make it part of either perceived or lived space. Such direct a relation between intent-message-reception-interpretation is a model that confuses communication and interpretation for a simple matter of delivering from A to B what A thinks.

31. Here we encounter another problem with many readings: an overstabilisation of Lefebvre’s argument, which makes it less powerful than it has potential for. Such a simplification into two triads exchangeable for each other is in many ways a modernisation of a post-modern critique. I would argue that Lefebvre uses his
will, however, not expand on this for now, as the intention now is to introduce space for the sake of the coming analysis. Instead, in order to move on, I will shift the focus to how space in its “concrete materiality” is to be approached.

Heterogeneous Space

As a tentative summary of the approach to space taken in this thesis, which will be further explained below, can be seen in light of Foucault’s work:

The (immense) work of Bachelard and the descriptions of the phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogenous and empty space, but in a space that is saturated with qualities, and that may even be pervaded by a spectral aura. […] But it is about external space that I would like to speak now. The space in which we live, from which we are drawn out of ourselves, just where the erosion of our lives, our time, our history takes place, this space that wears us down and consumes us, is in itself heterogeneous. In other words, we do not live in a sort of vacuum, within which individuals and things can be located, or that may take on so many different fleeting colours, but in a set of relationships that define positions which cannot be equated or in any way superimposed. (Foucault 1997a, 351)

So what does this mean? First, I would point to the statement that space, as such, is heterogeneous. This is, as will be clear as the analysis progresses, an important point because much literature on shopping malls and department stores—and on place in general—has a tendency to depict them as singular spaces, or at the very least homogenous (Miller, et al. 1996; Nava 1996). This, I argue, generates problems for both the analysis of the places in themselves as for the understanding of space. Furthermore, in as far as heterogeneity is considered, it is often interpreted as social heterogeneity, while it can be claimed “[…] it is somewhat arbitrary to try to dissociate the effective practice of freedom by people, the practice of social relations, and the spatial distributions in which they find themselves. If they are separated, they become impossible to understand. Each can only be understood through the other” (Foucault 2000, 435). The heterogeneity is understood as heterogeneity of perceptions or social actors in space, where space can be equated to entities of scales, such as an entire suburb, a mall, or a department store. While important, I argue that Foucault’s point is also that heterogeneity and differentiation is built into space on more levels than on the heterogeneity of the actors in it, a view that on this level corresponds to Hillier’s view (1995, 21).

This all suggests that that space “in itself” is heterogeneous and has a differentiating effect by how it produces situations and relations: heterogeneous space is a space that is relational in its character and as such also hierarchical. This is not to say that there are inherently better or worse spaces, or parts of spaces, but to say that the relations produced by space form a system where distances and proximities are created containing structures of distribution that are not equal in character. Here, Hillier offers theory and means for how to analyse the earlier discussed concrete materiality as relational formations. But, let us first return to the citation from Zola to note two things: there is a sequence of carpets, beginning with that which are most eye-catching, and “in the centre was a carpet from Agra”, which had a quite privileged position as well as description, framed as it were by other carpets, and thus has its character described contextually by its relation to other carpets. The point becomes clear at the end of the citation, stating that “finally, in a corner, there was a large pile of cheap rugs”. The hierarchical creation of sequence and status here is spatial and is furthermore likely made so by a spatial practice observed by Zola rather than vivid imagination, which is part of the overall argument of the ongoing analysis. There need not be a conception of space as hierarchical or assigning status for there to be a perception of how space does so. By ordering things in space, status is created, which can only be done if there is a spatial hierarchy to work with.

For a simpler example, one can turn to the idea of space as tabula rasa, a blank sheet of paper, onto which events and intents are inscribed, which is not to say that it is a representation of space as such. Drawing the metaphor to its extreme, the paper itself is not a neutral surface; it forms a space of its own. Suppose, for example, a point is to be placed on a sheet of paper: Is it possible to find a “neutral” spot on which to draw it? The point will end up either closer to one edge or the other, or central, or just by the edge, and so forth—positions all of which are different. The same phenomenon, but more complex, would emerge if we then place another point on the paper, a third one, and so forth. Any deformation of the paper, such as tearing a piece, changes the range of possible relations and trajectories made on its surface. Thus the form of the paper limits the possibilities of relations between points that can be
made, and even seen as single surface, space is neither neutral nor homogeneous. Such heterogeneity of apparently neutral, homogeneous, and symmetrical spaces has been extensively explored by Hillier (1996, 275-299). Furthermore, space in concrete, social materiality, is always already inscribed as a texture, filled with relations and actions that serve to define and produce it (Lefebvre 1991, 57).

Relational space
To refine the discussion of how space produces such relations by its form (or physical formations), I will turn back to the example of Au Bonheur des Dames. Zola continues, a bit further ahead, with the following description:

Mouret, standing alone, planted himself beside the hall balustrade. From there he dominated the whole shop, for he had the mezzanine departments around him, and could look down into the ground-floor departments. Upstairs, the emptiness seemed heart-breaking to him: in the lace department an old lady was having all the boxes ransacked without buying anything; while in the lingerie department three good-for-nothing girls were sifting slowly through some ninety-centime collars. Downstairs, under the covered arcades, in the shafts of light coming from the street, he noticed that the customers were becoming more numerous. It was a slow, broken procession, a stroll past the counters; women in jackets were crowding into the haberdashery and hosiery departments; but there were hardly anyone in the household linen or woollen goods department. (1995, 94-95)

The very possibility of Mouret to assume this surveying position, and in turn not be seen by many people, is a result of spatial form and how it defines relations in space. In part, this can be expressed as that space “[…] is defined by relationships of neighborhood between points and elements, which can be described formally as series, trees and networks” (Foucault 1997a, 350). Space, in its physical form, has relations that form hierarchies, configurations of distances, proximities, control, and distributedness. Such patterns of accessibility and visibility influence how space is used and how it is experienced both on the way in which space can be used and on the way space is likely to be used, even though it does not directly determine:

[...] the texture of space affords opportunities not only to social acts with no particular place in it and no particular link with it, but also to a spatial practice that it does indeed determine, namely its collective and individual use: a sequence of acts which embody a signifying practice even if they cannot be reduced to such a practice. (Lefebvre 1991, 57)

To be sure, I am not speaking of a topology as such, but rather a “topology” that is in part defined by its form, which has topological character, which again has properties produced by the form that creates them. It is quite possible to alter space rather dramatically without altering its topological structure—but it is also highly possible to alter the entire topology by quite, materially, small means, such as the creation or building up of a door opening between two rooms which are otherwise only connected via the entrance hall to the complex.

Clearly, hierarchical positions are already spatially found in Zola’s department store, which are at the same time social and cultural hierarchies. The “cheap rugs” are in a pile in the corner, but the departments of prêt-a-porter clothing (in which Denise then worked) and other departments of either low status (a proper lady sewed her own dresses, or had servants to do it) or of somehow private character (such as the lingerie department) inhabit topologically “deep” spaces to the side, behind, in the back, or otherwise peripheral. A pattern both expressing and forming cultural and social ideas.

Furthermore, correlations between spatial forms of topological character and people’s behaviour have been proven several times, and thus topology participates in the constitution of social relations and culture. This, however, is not to say that there is first space and then behaviour:

Space is more than a neutral framework for social and cultural forms. It is built into those very forms. Human behaviour does not simply happen in space. It has its own spatial forms. Encountering, congregating, avoiding, interacting, dwelling, teaching, eating, conferring are not just activities that happen in space. In themselves, they constitute spatial patterns. (Hillier 1996, 29)

32. From whatever position in space, space produces hierarchies: everything is not as close as everything else. In this, it is important to point towards implications of Lefebvre’s and Hillier’s writings—namely that such hierarchies are not metric by nature. Although metrics are have influence, the chains of relations and connectivities and the modes of these connections are more influential.

33. This example works especially well since it obviously is a loose but decided connection between form and content and a formative but not deterministic effect. The store can suggest the status and appropriateness of commodities, but the customers can override it.
Thus while an important part of their theories and research consists of finding empirical correlations between patterns of behaviour and spatial form, Hillier and Hanson refines this relation: “It seems as naïve to believe that spatial organisation through architectural form can have a determinative effect on social relations as to believe that any such relation is entirely absent” (Hillier and Hanson 1984:ix). The relation between space and human behaviour is thus more one of significant relations than cause-and-effect. Sets, or textures, in and of space offer possibilities and opportunities and restraints and prohibitions that participates in the range of actions possible or plausibl, while those activities serve to define space in return by both materially forming it by positions or flows of bodies and by in an intricate interplay or ballet interacting in the formation of relational positions and situations that emerge. However, the emergent situations and the situating practice of space—including patterns of spatial use—need to be further understood.

**Heterogeneity by Activity**

Having only taken the discussion part way, we have yet to handle a rather obvious part of space and the situation-contexts in which the durée of daily life takes place, which has to do with the interplay between space and how people use space. To approach this question, I will expand on a passage from Zola from which I only used a small part earlier:

Now that the mezzanine departments were coming to life, he had to stand back to make way for the women as they went upstairs in little groups to the lingerie and dresses; while behind him, in the lace and shawl departments, he could hear large sums being bandied about. But he was reassured above all by the sight of the ground-floor galleries.

There was a crush of people in the haberdashery department; even the household linen and wool departments were overrun; the procession of shoppers was becoming denser, and almost all of them were wearing hats now—there were only a few bonnets of housewives who had arrived late. In the silk hall, under the pale light, ladies had taken off their gloves to feel pieces of Paris-Paradise, while talking in low voices. And he could no longer have any doubt about the sounds arriving from outside, the rattle of cabs, the hanging of doors, the growing babble of the crowd. (Zola 1995, 98-99)

The coming argument based on this description evolves around how much space is described by the presence and activity of people, how the situation transforms an empty and scarce space into a bustling, active, and social space. It can further be read how this bustling activity is gradually increasing and heterogenic in its distribution. There are more people in the central hall than in the far-off lingerie department. A constant stream of people come through the front doors, which disperses as the series, trees, and networks of space distribute their movement and attention through the department stores.

Such distribution, while appearing chaotic at times, is not entirely unpredictable, and is much a result of the spatial formation of relations of proximity, connection, and visibility that informs the choices of routes made by visitors, leading to some spaces being more central and others more peripheral in a hierarchy of configurations, where it is more likely that the most connected spaces are used by most people over time (Hillier 1996, 161-178; Koch 2004, 87-90). The relation between form and activity, however, while very important for the argument to come not the point now (it will be explored in depth in chapter nine through twelve). What concerns us now is rather how the different situations are characterised by the presence and activity of people and the effect on experience of the situated subject or object.

Remember Kulenshov’s experiment where the same shot of the actor’s impassive face is introduced into a variety of situations, and the audience reads different expressions into each successive juxtaposition. The same occurs in architecture: the event is altered by each new space. (Tschumi 1996, 130)

While Tschumi argues around the change of “event” based on context, he also presents another argument, though less explicitly: how the individual and the interpretation is defined by the situation in which it is found. The same is relevant for people as well as objects, space, and activity. As part of such perception lies the social character of the situation both through architecture and objects involved and their interrelations with people and activities. For instance, the person in Figure 3.1, from a fashion magazine, appears to express completely different emotions (albeit in the same pose and with the same facial expres-
sion) depending on how she is situated (Figure 3:II). Space and what can be found in it or occurs in it is differentiated as social and cultural situations, which causes space to acquire different meanings and to support the formation of different kinds of social relations, different degrees of publicity, and different degrees of urbanity, surveillance, control, flows, encounters—in short, different social characters and different rhythms (Lefebvre 1996, 228-240).

If we understand one role that space has as positioning, we can see that space is also socially situating. These two concepts help form the different conceptual approaches of parts two and three: analysing how positioning of commodities, brands, and categories work in Part Two and how these are appropriated in social situations in Part Three.

Form and Content – and the Content of Form
This leaves some questions unanswered regarding how space “in itself” is approached in the thesis. Now, as Lefebvre points out, analysis of space must be reduced in one way or the other to be possible—something that usually is made by separating “form” from “content” and “function”. This is a problematic division, not the least because

...like that of exchange, the form of social space has an affinity with logical forms: it calls for a content and cannot be conceived of as having no content; but, thanks to abstraction, it is in fact conceived of, precisely, as independent of any specific content. Similarly, the form of material exchange does not determine what is exchanged: it merely stipulated that something, which has a use, is also an object of exchange. So too with the form of non-material communication, which does not determine what sign is to be communicated, but simply that there must be a stock of distinct signs, a message, a channel and a code. Nor, finally, does a logical form decide what is consistent, or what is thought, although it does prescribe the necessity if thought is to exist, for formal consistency. (Lefebvre 1991, 101)

Analysing space as existent without content is thus, according to Lefebvre, problematic simply because space to some extent is its content or irreducible or inseparable from its content. Although he does make a valid point, there are also problems with such a position, as it is contrary to what could at first be thought risk obscuring certain aspects of space important for its constitution. In reducing form from its content—which I claim has repeatedly been a problem of both Urban and Architectural theories—form is seen as a result of content, an aggregation thereof, or secondary to it. Form in its non-abstracted sense may not be possible without content, but neither is it really the other way around. In addition, the form that the content takes or presents itself within is part of its meaning. Seen as communication, the form of communication or of the communicating objects or the formal strategy communication uses in its expression in a way is part of its content.

That a ‘content’ of ‘form’ should be such a paradoxical idea draws attention to the assumptions inherent in the use of these words. ‘Form’ is invisible: a set of relations, a scaffolding to be filled out by ‘content’, which is seen as substantial, with a solidity of meaning. […] Although the word ‘form’ and the word ‘content’ may usefully be used singly, as a pair they constitute a conceptual attitude which I find unhelpful in any attempt to engage with meaning as a process, rather than as the end-result of a process. (Williamson 1995, 17)

Although Williamson does not necessarily refer to the same kind of form as I will in the coming discussions, we are both working with form as a set of relations, a structure, by which the process of producing meaning is partly governed. Such a process can remain structurally intact even if the signs themselves change, and the signs gain their meaning through their position in the form. As Ricoeur describes it, “[…] the word is always the bearer of the ‘emergent meaning’ which specific contexts confer upon it” (1981, 166).

I believe the system of fashion and the system of objects present in department stores are the result of the same kind of semiotic structuring done by difference, and this is a result of them being of the same kind (formations of differential relations) of cultural and social systems, and it is because of this similarity of kind it is possible for the transformations between the three to take place. As they are following the same structuring forms, they become intricately interchangeable: it is possible to find similar positions in all three systems, and this similarity of position is transformed into sameness because of their formal similarity much in the same way as is used in ads. These positions are then described as situation-contexts in space, which are formed by space, objects, and social situating of people. Paraphrasing Williamson, department stores rather provide a structure that is capable of transforming the language of objects to that of people and vice versa rather than providing a set of images that we choose to appropriate or not (Williamson 1995, 12). This structure, in the case of the department stores, is spatial.

Formations of Exposure and Availability
How is this form then to be understood? It has thus far been argued to be of relational and social character, which answers some but not all questions of how it is to be treated. Further answers to such a question are spread throughout the discussion above as two factors of spatial form that are important—those creating or preventing exposure (visibil-
ity) and those creating or preventing availability (accessibility). These factors, as argued before (Koch, 2004, 121-124), are vital for the formation of categories and relations between people, activities, and commodities. They form complex spatial systems where what is visible and what is accessible can be linked or not through several steps or few, producing situations of control, surveillance, integration, and intervisibility and strongly affecting what is perceived, what is reached, and the effort included to detract from suggested or promoted patterns or places. In effect, they will serve as base for the spatial analysis to be performed, using several methods including but not limited to VGA analyses as developed primarily in the Bartlett, UCL, which provides information of accessibility and intervisibility that to some extent are formative for customer behaviour. 35

As concepts, analysis of exposure and availability further provide understanding of the nature of limits or boundaries as well as possibilities and plausibilities of co-presence, co-awareness, and potentials for interaction and exchange, as well as privacy and publicity of sorts. Something I'd like to point out, however, which is of vital importance for the key question of the thesis, is how this is not only a product of space or produced by space, but to some degree could be likened to the material with which space produces. Lefebvre describes the materiality of space as follows:

Here we see the polyvalence of social space, its ‘reality’ at once formal and material. Though a product to be used, to be consumed, it is also a means of production; networks of exchange and flows of raw materials and energy fashion space and are fashioned by it. (Lefebvre 1991, 85)

Without running too much ahead, this point will grow increasingly important as the discussion evolves and is one that most readers of Lefebvre tend to miss. As for the use of the aforementioned analyses, they are useful as much—or more—in their making explicit spatial relations of power, control, and surveillance as their function as predictive tools for customer behaviour, and the “result” must, as any reduction, be recontextualised into the complexity from which they were reduced to provide a viable result. As a broader approach, I believe it will be shown that the structures of exposure and availability serve as structuring forces for the formation of commodities, categories, contexts, situations, and behaviours, and their suggested cultural and social significance in more ways than that: they are a vital part of the structuring principles of space. This actualises the question of method: how this is to be investigated and understood, including what material is to be used for this investigation.

35. For a concentrated presentation of the “Space Syntax” methods, which thus are part of the analysis performed in the thesis, see Koch (2004, 45-51) and Hillier (1993).
4. MATERIAL AND METHODS

If we have now presented the question of the current work, contextualised it in a cultural situation, and discussed the overall understanding of space that serves as foundation for the coming analysis, the question must then be how the investigation into spatial structuring is to be performed. As a means to do this, the analysis will use a range of different material, which in a simplified manner could be described as empirical material of two department stores, complemented by studies of two other department stores and the three public libraries of the licentiate and theoretical material consisting of theoretical work from a range of different sources. Somewhere in-between lies material such as fashion and lifestyle magazines and fiction novels—which for the sake of the coming discussion have been grouped by their form as media; that is, the material and the role it has in the thesis will be presented as the empirical material of the buildings investigated, and the theoretical material is considered as written texts and images.

Thus it is time to put some focus on the department stores, which are to be examined in their context before the more detailed and thorough analysis begins. While this introduction, as the work as a whole, focuses on the department stores (at the time of the observations in the fall of 2005 with notations of changes close before and after), such a context is also historical. This introduction of the department stores, including an introduction of the libraries studied earlier (Koch 2004), will be followed by a short overview of textual material, leading on to the question of method—how the analysis is to be performed. Together, they form the framework for the analysis to come.

The Department Stores: Libraries of Goods

While taking on different forms—both organisational and spatial—through history, the general type of the department store can be described as a shopping building that in itself contains a wide range of commodities, conceptually both put under one management as “a store” and exceeding what others have to offer. In one sense, they lay claims to replace the need to visit other stores altogether.36 In practice, the difference between department stores and malls or big supermarkets tend to be morphological or spatial form and the range of goods offered and the extent to which the commodities are ordered into separate stores or not. NK and P.U.B. in Stockholm are known as (and make themselves out to be) department stores, whereas functionally a collection of

stores run individually put into one (or two) building given identity and character as a coherent whole, while Åhlens and Debenhams work more like Mouret’s old department store, with departments organized under one management even if also the latter pair have a small amount of third-party stores that rent spaces.

These four department stores are the only ones of their kind (in size and type) in Stockholm and can tentatively be said to map out a range of the type both in status claims and strategies, although they do not cover the whole of such a range. Three of the four (Åhlens City, Debenhams, P.U.B.) are found with main entrances on Drottninggatan, one of the most populated shopping streets in Stockholm, and the last (NK) is on Hamngatan, which is generally, as is the department store itself, regarded somewhat higher in the social status hierarchy. The selection of objects for study is thus highly centred on Stockholm City (See the map of Figure 4:1), which is positive and problematic. On the most problematic side lies the locality of the selection, which raises questions as to how generally applicable the findings are. To some extent, this has been handled by study of other research as well as more popular sources including novels, websites, and information brochures of other department stores.37 On the positive side, lies the possibility this has created to visit the department stores again and again during the research process, which has given a lot of input (as far as understanding the processes of change, which is continuously ongoing. Although the study is performed in a specific period, one can say that all of the department stores have been continually changing (and some to a rather large extent including expansion or rebuilding) and these changes have, in the majority of cases, been supportive of the conclusions made in this work.

However, while the current work is focused on department stores as contemporary phenomena (an approach that is rare when it comes to department stores), a brief understanding of their history is important for the coming discussion, not the least to understand them as a type. For a broader and more thorough historical account, I refer to primarily Michael B. Miller’s The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1860-1920 (1981) for the history of the Parisian department stores, and Lancaster’s The Department Store: A Social History (1995) for the evolution of department stores in Britain and the United States. These are important studies of department store history that do not fully coincide.38 A shorter introduction to each of the department stores may also be in order, so the more detailed approach to come does not begin in a vacuum, but in a contextual framework.

A Short History of the Type

Appearing rather simultaneously, in many ways following similar spatial and functional strategies and to some extent as result of the same societal changes, public museums, public libraries, and department stores emerged in Europe and the United States in the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Lancaster 1995, Bennet 1995), all in different ways pertaining to include (and, which is of importance, to represent) “all” of something—history, art, literature, ladies’ fashion—presenting how it was structured and the conduct in which it was to be experienced or appropriated. As building types they served as kinds of all-inclusive and educational institutions as well as new public, and more generally accessible, spaces in which “everyone” could take part of culture—perhaps especially uneducated people (Bennet 1995, 25-33).

This is, I argue, an important point when considering the history of the department stores and their emergence in space and time. The focus is, however, often put on department stores as evolutions of and important interventions in retail and store development and shopping practice. Understood as such, the origins of the department stores can be located in different places and as evolutions of different basic models such as the arcades in Paris, bazaars, markets, or even from stores that simply grew. Thus Bergman finds their origin in the early arcades grown into a single-management collection of departments with roots in primarily Paris but also, albeit less importantly, Britain and the United States (Bergman 2003, 59). Breward traces its history not only to bazaars and arcades but also as retail strategies to early luxury shops (Breward 2003, 143-149), Michael B. Miller (1981)—while acknowledging other origins—focuses on the Bon Marché and its “sisters” in Paris, while Lancaster (1995) puts more focus on the American and British evolution.

It must also be said that for the type, Zola’s Au Bonheur Des Dames has had great importance, and in some ways today it serves as the conceptual root: the idea in Zola’s work still often functions as a model even if outdated in practice. However, the question now is to outline what new or different kinds of space the early department stores introduced, and what social and cultural implications this had. Although this study is not meant to form a thorough analysis of department store history, this will be sum-


38. The history of the Swedish department stores have been inferred both from their own accounts on homepages; and from newspaper articles, primarily read through Fredrikson (1997), Bergman (2003), Husz (2004), and Åmossa (2004).
The new stores modernised retailing not only by offering a wide range of cheaper, mass produced fashionable clothes or other commodities, but also by rationalising the use of space, making economies of scale, introducing clear pricing systems and displaying goods in a safe and pleasant environment so that customers could look and compare without obligation to buy. (Nava 1996, 47)

A “democratisation” of shopping (to use Bergman’s description) took a step further when the department stores were among the first to allow self-service when shopping for fashion, a development that in many British department stores primarily took place in the mid-1950s (Lancaster 1995, 195-206). This also occurred in Sweden in the same period (Bergman 2003, 79-87), while earlier in the Parisian counterparts. Up to this point and in Zola’s Bonheur des Dames, the actual freedom of browsing was severely limited, and much of the actual purchases took the form of orders and delivery to the home: the early department stores not seldom worked as showrooms or even as mail order catalogues or web sites.

These components, the browsing, clear pricing, a wide range of goods, and re-occurring realisations gathered under one roof and management are today vital for much of the department store identity (even if part of most shopping). They also serve to differentiate commodities within the department stores. Some commodities can be shopped through self-service; some can be sold at realisations; and some, for various reasons, cannot. At any rate, the possibility to browse the commodities first-hand significantly changed the way it was possible to buy things and the degree to which the shopper could make up her or his own mind before speaking to the sales personnel. This freedom should not be overestimated, however. It presupposes that the act of buying is an act of selecting between already existing goods and supports and produces shopping as such a process. It can be argued that over-desk sales or other modes of exchange more easily would support the consumer as constructing the commodity itself, such as when discussing the form or fit with a tailor.

This means, I argue, that part of such a democratisation process shifts the role of the consumer towards a role of a subject making a choice between pre-produced goods. Almost ironically, a freer selection process disguises a shift towards selection being the only power allowed. For such a process, the department stores were (and to some extent are) highly purposeful in allowing the browsing to cover a wide range of goods in a comparatively small space and within the same building. The spatial morphology that has generally followed from this tends to take on open space solutions. The question could be asked which one (morphology of space or shopping) produced the other? It is likely that they produced one another.

Department stores furthermore provided, together with public museums and libraries, new kinds of public space. Not the least, the department stores in significant ways formed the first modern public space for women, who were otherwise usually confined to be in public only with their family or men (Nava 1996; Glennie and Thrift 1996; Blomley 1996). This can be somewhat questioned, since closer scrutiny shows that women must have frequented the public spaces of streets and squares more than has often been acknowledged (Nava 1996, 43), but the point remains that public museums, libraries, squares, streets, cafés, and restaurants, and so forth were spaces dominated by men. As noted by both Nava and Sparke (1995, 89), this, in both the case of the streets and the department stores, mainly concerned bourgeois women.

It can be of worth to point out the connection between the department store and the emergent idea of shopping (and fashion) as frivolous and irrational, and as more decidedly feminine (or for women) both as space and activity. For Zola, seduction of women and women’s irrationality were important parts of department store strategies as the department stores also provided spaces where women could move freely without the fear of unwanted attention or of being molested (Bergman 2003, 62). Simultaneously, women shoppers were perceived as weak, in the grasp of the male salesman who seduces and controls them, or as wrestling free of control in one way or the other through shopping. Discourse on department stores present an idea where “[o]n the one hand, they seem to suggest the fear that innocent women will be seduced and ravished. On the other, that the stores will release an unbridled sexuality, an ominous transgressiveness” (Nava 1996, 59).39

This idea is not new to the contemporary discourse, but was a vital part of the critique of these new establishments early on, which lead to a constant struggle of the

39. For Sparke, the neglected part of this general discourse is the way in which the department stores not only provided one of the few feminine public spaces of modernity but how they allowed women’s taste to not only be expressed but constructed and cultivated (Sparke 1995, 93).
department stores to ensure their reputeability. It even lead to a row of various accusations of unseemly behaviour both taking place in and even being promoted by the department stores, and a number of accounts of this were being published even though they held little basis in facts (Lancaster 1995, 171-194). In short, one can say that this new “free” public space for women and where women could work and even live on their own was heavily attacked by conservative forces. However, this freedom can be at least somewhat questioned: the spatial morphology and the way it governs bodies in space produces a kind of control:

[...] in addition it provided a spectacular environment in which to stroll aimlessly, to be a flâneuse, to observe people, to admire and parade new fashions. This was a context which legitimised the desire of women to look as well as be looked at—it enabled them to be both subject and object of the gaze, to appropriate at one go the pleasure/power of both the voyeur and the narcissist. (Nava 1996, 53)

This practice is similar to that of museums even if department stores have a slightly more focus on the narcissistic part. That is, as the museums worked to train the middle class in both disposition towards and the structure and values of art, it can be argued that the department stores in large provided the same kind of training regarding women, fashion, and shopping. Bennet says that “[b]oth were formally open spaces allowing entry to the general public, and both were intended to function as spaces of emulation, places for mimetic practices whereby improving tastes, values and norms of conduct were to be more broadly diffused through society” (Bennet 1995, 20). This includes a spatial morphology in which the crowd is surveying and training itself in the established cultural norms (Bennet 1995, 59-88), a practice that through spatial morphology and through mediating relations between people and between people and things was to be more broadly diffused through society (Bennet 1995, 20). This includes a spatial morphology in which the crowd is surveying and training itself in the established cultural norms (Bennet 1995, 59-88), a practice that through spatial morphology and through mediating relations between people and between people and things was common to the development of department stores, public libraries, and museums.

As Bourdieu and Darbel have shown, this is a process that is still ongoing in the museums (Bourdieu and Darbel 1991, 14-69). It is further traceable in how public libraries still present (and train) people in the structure of knowledge and literature (Koch 2004, 152-158), and it is, I argue, also still ongoing in department stores. How this process is at work today is one of the questions of the current work—in which the department stores can be seen as an intricate example of shopping space in general. The main point now, however, is that not only do the department stores as a type offer a wide range of commodities for customers to browse they also present a structure of these commodities and through this those who browse and buy them. This is a part of their typology.

With this brief overview of the type department store, which is indirectly scrutinised in this work through specific instances of it, the attention can be turned to these instances to give a short and introductory overview of them so as to orient the reader before the empirical analysis begins: an analysis which will, for methodological and narrative reasons, begin on a very detailed level.

Åhlens City
Forming a part of the northern foundation of Sergels Torg (the central square of Stockholm), Åhlens City is located at the very heart of Stockholm. With entrances from the subway station, Drottninggatan, Klarabergsgatan, and Mäster Samuelsgatan, the department store has a highly strategic retail location, and is, it could be argued, directly or indirectly part of most any visit to the city centre (either by going to or by being seen). As formal composition, the department store consists of a box of (more or less) solid walls on top of a glazed street-level, under which increasingly amoeboid subway and cellar floors are found, which, after the empirical material was gathered, have been glazed to the subway station and the lower level of Sergels Torg (Figure 4:H).

First built in 1964 as the flagship of the Åhlens department stores, it was one of the steps of shifting the mail-order company Åhlén & Holm into the department store chain of today. Åhlén merged with the retail shop chains Tempo and Epa in 1983 and was remade into Åhlens department stores. Within this chain, the City Department Stores form a special subgroup providing a wider range of commodities, especially when it comes to brands: the other Åhlens stores focuses more on the chain’s own brands and goods.

40. The theme of eroticism and illicit behaviour in department stores is common also within fiction (Bergman 2003)—not only Zola but for instance Kendrick (2005) and Siwertz (1971) write such scenes, where for instance the latter begins with a poor couple being locked in a department store as it closes for the night and end up in one of the beds together.

41. From such a perspective one can claim that men were trained to relate to science, literature, and art as objects and theory, while women were trained to relate to fashion, and their own looks and body, which suggests that a comparison between department stores, museums, and libraries to be even more urgent, since this would enhance understanding of how spaces of modernity formed identities and social structures from a gender perspective.

42. Åhlén & Holm was founded in 1899 by Johan Petter Åhlén and Erik Holm in Insjön in Dalarna, Sweden. The restructuring of the mail order business into a department store chain took place over the coming sixty-seven years in part as inspired by the travels of JP Åhlén to the United States (1930s). The ownership of the chain was in 1988 taken over by Axel Johnsson AB (Åhlens website 2006).
The internal distribution of Åhlens City in general follows the four main retail areas of Åhlens—Fashion, Beauty, Home, and Media—even if this is more to be seen as a rule of thumb than a decisive division, as we shall see. The building consists of seven floors, at the time of the investigations ordered (from the bottom up), into a cellar floor with multimedia (computer and office utilities), games and toys, a subway floor with music, film, CDs and DVDs, body care and designer’s or trendy office supplies (as represented by the third-party Ordning & Reda and Bookbinder’s Design), a main entrance floor with cosmetics, fragrances, women’s accessories, bags and shoes, travelling bags and books, the first floor with women’s fashion, the second floor with the home department, the third floor with men’s fashion, and the top floor (the attic) with children’s clothes. In the cellar are Hemköp (a food supermarket) and FotoQuick (photography), and there is a day spa in the attic. Restaurants and cafés are found on the subway floor, the home floor, and the attic. The area around the subway station, a recessed corner of the façade of the main entrance (street) floor, has for a long time served as one of the more important (or at least more frequently used) places where people in the city (or wandering around in) have decided to meet, and the building has thus been incorporated into daily life not only as a department store or shopping milieu, but as an important landmark in everyday life (Andersson 2005).

Thus forming a large box on a glazed street floor, with two sets of escalators running up through it, the volume of Åhlens speaks of simplicity and could imply an open, “neutral” space for browsing, which in itself makes it interesting to study as the relation between “neutral” forms and produced hierarchies.

**Debenhams**

Debenhams opened up its entrances at Drottninggatan 53 and Mäster Samuelsgatan in Stockholm City the 1st October 2002 as the 107th department store of a worldwide chain. The aspirations were to provide something new on the retail map of the city as represented by the third-party Ordning & Reda and Bookbinder’s Design, a main entrance floor with cosmetics, fragrances, women’s accessories, bags and shoes, travelling bags and books, the first floor with women’s fashion, the second floor with the home department, the third floor with men’s fashion, and the top floor (the attic) with children’s clothes. In the cellar are Hemköp (a food supermarket) and FotoQuick (photography), and there is a day spa in the attic. Restaurants and cafés are found on the subway floor, the home floor, and the attic.

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**Complementary Material: NK, P.U.B. and the Three Public Libraries**

NK, Nordiska Kompaniet in Stockholm, with its main entrance on Hamngatan, consists of one huge building finished in 1916 on the initiative of Joseph Sachs (Figure 4:IV). It was the first department store in Sweden and follows the generally established formal composition of department stores in Europe with a central atrium surrounded by galleries and forms the largest department store in Stockholm (Bergman 2003, 61-62).

Internally, NK is ordered as a mall structure with a somewhat less easily described distribution. On the lower floor (cellar floor, with an entrance to Sergelgången) the following products and stores are available: kitchen equipment, cutlery, office material, flowers, a market-hall, a bakery, and a coffee shop, most of it loosely connected to a kitchen. On the main entrance floor can be found cosmetics and body care, accessories (both men and women),

zigzag their way up as half floor elevations around a central set of escalators and stairs. As different from the other department stores, Debenhams does not constitute a building of its own, but fills up a part of a city block. At the same time, it is a “true” department store as different from the more mall-like establishments of current NK and P.U.B.

The main entrance towards Drottninggatan takes the form of a two-storey glazed façade, with a wide and brightly lit entrance into the cosmetics department (Figure 4:III), while the less signalled secondary entrance of Mäster Samuelsgatan (opposite the smallest entrance to Åhlens City) leads into the lingerie department. Internally, Debenhams is the most open of the department stores in Stockholm, where, to use the words of the president of the department store, Åke Hellqvist, magnificent pillars frame the open-space set off by escalators in what is reminiscent of ancient Greek temples (Wahlberg 2002).

Internally, the department store follows a distribution of (from bottom up) women’s fashion and occasion accessories on the lower ground floor, cosmetics, fragrances, body care, and women’s accessories on the upper ground floor, youth fashion (Top Shop, Top Man and Denim) on the first floor (half a stair up), and men’s fashion, children’s clothing, toys, and a home department on the second floor. There is also a café on the top floor, located against the glazed façade with a view over Drottninggatan. Internal communication is centred on one set of escalators and stairs and the first floor is only reachable by stairs. This makes the possibilities of circulation significantly different than in Åhlens.

Debenhams can thus be seen as a series of branches reaching out from the central communication system, making their way to the façade where possible and filling out the spaces available in a somewhat amoeboid form.

**Debenhams**

Debenhams opened up its entrances at Drottninggatan 53 and Mäster Samuelsgatan in Stockholm City the 1st October 2002 as the 107th department store of a worldwide chain. The aspirations were to provide something new on the retail map of the city both in a decidedly more polished, glazed, and modern exterior than the existing department stores and by introducing brands that were hardly possible to find elsewhere in the city at that time. At opening, the department store advertised itself as something wholly new and different in the cityscape of Stockholm.

At first consisting of close to ten thousand square meters of retail area and five floors, it has since then left the cellar floor to Stadium and now operates on four floors, which
fragrances, and a small store of men’s fashion to provide more easy access for “quick buys” of shirts, ties, socks, and so forth. One floor up is (as is customary) women’s fashion, followed by men’s fashion, a home department, and a media department on the following floors. The home floor also contains a bookstore, and there are cafeterias on all floors except the fashion floors.

P.U.B., the department store of Paul U. Bergström, today consists of two buildings—the original stone building between Hötorget and Drottninggatan (1923-1925, Figure 4: V) and the new glazed building (called “the glass house”) on the other side of the same street— interconnected by the cellar floor. The two almost cubic buildings are organized into one fashion building, the original, one building containing the other departments, the glass house, which are connected by various low-prestige stores in the cellar floor (tourist shop, children’s clothing, toys, sports). The original building, as NK, follows the type of the early department stores with a central atrium surrounded by a gallery and with a magnificent set of stairs (today free-hanging escalators) in the centre, whereas the glass house has the communication set along the glass façade towards Drottninggatan.

The internal distribution consists of the earlier mentioned cellar floor, and for the original building a vertical distribution consists of cosmetics, fragrances, and accessories on the entrance floor (and during the project first a shirt shop, later replaced by a bike store), women’s fashion on the second floor, and men’s fashion on the top floor. In the glasshouse the distribution consists of a bookstore and interior decoration, followed by two floors of home (the first centred on interior design, the second on electronics and kitchen utensils), and on top a media floor (CDs, DVDs and electronics). This distribution has been significantly changed with the rebuilding, aiming to enhance its status by focusing on high-fashion and status brands, and is now less discernible as floor divisions between gendered fashion and more following lifestyles or status claims. In this, P.U.B. is remarkably different from the other department stores.

The *City Library of Stockholm*, by Erik Gunnar Asplund, follows the internationally established way to build prestigious public libraries at the time of its construction in the 1920s with book halls forming a square composed around a central round hall (Figure 4:VI). It is, as Hans Asplund has stated in his motivation for the rebuild—interconnected by the cellars, the two almost cubic buildings are organized around daylight and consists of three volumes placed perpendicular to each other. The library, after a long process finished in 1928, is a masterpiece of its time with one foot firmly in the classical tradition and the other in the modernist movement. The western wing, completing the square, was added in 1968. As a project, it signifies Asplund’s own advance into modernism. The simplicity of the façade and interior was not intended in the original proposition, but emerged as the project was completed (Trachtenberg and Hyman 1986, 550).

44. The library, after a long process finished in 1928, is a masterpiece of its time with one foot firmly in the classical tradition and the other in the modernist movement. The western wing, completing the square, was added in 1968. As a project, it signifies Asplund’s own advance into modernism. The simplicity of the façade and interior was not intended in the original proposition, but emerged as the project was completed (Trachtenberg and Hyman 1986, 550).

The City Library of Växjö—the first open-plan library in Sweden—has been added in a “[…] high-level geometry game, one worthy of a scholarly library, yet not out of place in its present more popular function” (Lewan 2003, 31). In the entrance, the open space of Ulrots spreads in all directions, and the movement leads forward into the new building, up a flight of stairs crossing the circular atrium, up into the circular, glazed main library room in the addition. The proposed main movement inside, through the

45. Translated by the Author; the original Swedish text says: “[u]r arkitektonisk synpunkt anses det vara nyklassicismens främsta verk i Sverige och präglas av ett karakteristiskt yttre, sköna inre rumsbildningar och en överskådlig enkelhet i planlösningen.”
entrance floor in the old library up to the upper floor in the new building, is also evident in the exterior expression, the glazed parts describing this sequence (Figure 4:VIII).

Providing you accept the notion of the circle as being an inversion of the square, the concept of the new library can be studied as a series of inversions. The old has its main public spaces in the entrance floor, with private spaces for the personnel on the upper floor, answered to by the expression in facade materials, while this is inverted in the new library—placing the main body of literature on the upper floor—a distribution of emphasis followed by the exterior glass motif. Utuot's composition, a set of squares within a square, complemented by a few circular shapes, is inverted to a set of circles within a circle, complemented by a few squares. The atrium returns in both buildings although in different forms.

A common theme of all the libraries is their clear exterior geometry—most often responded to on the inside. Each is composed using the same basic components but arranging them in its own way. Stockholm is a cylinder in a cube, in concept and in form. Växjö is a cylinder following half a cube. Malmö is two cubes with a cylinder in-between.

Textual Explorations

The theoretical material has, by and large, been introduced in the chapters up until now, even though the emphasis will shift as the analysis moves on. As of yet, the work has been situated in an understanding of society as consumer society, which is further developed through theories of shopping, identity, and space, with some specific focus on fashion and objects understood as semiotic systems. These, together with a general understanding of society, form the basic themes of theory that have informed the current work where the emphasis gradually will shift via the semiotic reading of space and objects through analysis of situations towards an understanding of space.

For the understanding of society, as structure and as a collection of individuals, I have primarily worked with Bourdieu, Butler, Jameson, and de Certeau, who together roughly map out a range between structuralist and individualist understandings. This is not to say they cover the whole range or that there is an equal focus: the current work is primarily a work on structure, complementing much of the shopping literature encountered in the project.

This structural—or even structuralist—approach is mainly informed by Baudrillard's and Williamson's work on semiotics and how differential operations produce a "whole", as understood by Foucault. As the analysis progresses, their theories, where especially Baudrillard tends to subscribe the individual completely to a system, are put into perspective by Butler, de Certeau, Massey, and Lefebvre. It is further set in relation to fashion theory, in the form of Entwistle and Kawamura, and to shopping and retail theory where most of the literature encountered tends to have a more anthropological and subject-centred view, such as in the works of Daniel Miller, Miller et alii, Shields (ed), and Underhill. It is further compared to emergent systems, which semiotic systems in certain ways could be understood as. Questions of identity formation are aside from the input from Butler et alii at least regarding objects further developed by use of art theory such as that of Kwon and Buskirk.

The understanding of space, finally, is primarily based on three theories that can seem oppositional at first glance: the works of Hillier, Lefebvre, and Baudrillard, which have been complemented by works of Massey, Zukin, and Foucault. These do work from different ontologies to some extent, but on the basis of the licentiate, the overlaps and connections between the different theories (which are many) can be used to let the different positions propel the discussion and analysis forward. They also tend to work with different aspects of space, which complement one another, providing allowances are made for certain contradictions of view.

This forms a rather wide-spanning set of theories and sources, which to a certain degree have been dealt with in a somewhat eclectic manner. I have taken the liberty to choose what parts of works to adapt into the ongoing analysis and disregarded certain discrepancies that make total reconciliation between the theories impossible. This is not to disregard this fact, but to allow theories coming from different angles to work together in order to refine the analysis. I would even go so far as to argue that it is by doing this that the question is refined.

Thus, as Butler says, I have appropriated “French Theory” in a highly Anglo-Saxon (or even North American) manner in that I have allowed myself to make use of it in the ways it has been appropriated in the English speaking world (Butler 1999, x-xi). It must be acknowledged that this at times homogeneously perceived body of theory is far from consistent and that some of the theorists who have here been used either had less communication with one another than it might seem, agreed on less, or at times even were in direct opposition (Baudrillard’s work Forget Foucault (1987)).

This describes the general approach to theory as it has been used in this thesis: I have allowed myself to make use of arguments that develop the understanding and push the analysis forward from sources that considered as wholes would be more contradictory. This is not to say that I have taken arguments out of contexts, but to say that the particular lines of reasoning that I have made use of follow similar strands of thoughts in the works that have been used. I do not, thus, claim that Baudrillard’s and Foucault’s works are reconcilable in their whole: what I do claim is that there are parts of their works that I have used to push the analysis forward which do serve to both support and refine one another.
As for the choice of theoretical material, it has been based on what literature is used in recent research on shopping, space, and architecture, with deliberate choices made to find material that may contradict each other, testing one against the other, as relating to the material. Furthermore, to work more constructively with the questions at hand, literature connected to the questions but not related to shopping theory have been continuously added to the analysis, such as art and gender theory.

**Fashion and Lifestyle Magazines**

In the analysis to come, most of the claims made of what is trendy, high profile, private, or intimate have when possible been grounded in extensive studies of fashion and lifestyle magazines. This ground is less quantitative, considered as number of appearances or pricing, and more consisting of an analysis based on Williamson (1995) together with Bourdieu (1984) and Kawamura (2005). That is, the magazines are primarily understood as appealing to target groups via expression of disposition; as information on fashion as clothing and current trends, as concerned with the topic of fashion as theoretical or at least cultural subject, which in some cases lead to fashion as art. Such disposition is generally expressed in two ways.

The first is the degree of self-consciousness in magazine format: the more intellectual or high-profile magazines, and especially the more progressive ones, all use their own or at least different formats, such as *Littles* being of close to A3 size, *SPOON* with its quadratic form and *W* and *Icon* also being generally bigger than the standard formats, whereas many of the more “mass-fashion” magazines—ranging from *Elle*, to *Cosmopolitan*, *GQ*, *Café*, *FHM*, *Pause*, *Femina*, *Dameñas*—tend to follow one of two to three standard magazine formats.

Second, the language of the photographs included range from one centred on utility in the “mass fashion” types, where it is important to see the clothes as worn by someone, to more art like, where it is the aesthetic quality of the image that is in question and where motif has little impact. Here, one finds both references to utility, to different kinds of utility, to degree of trend aspirations, and to cultural disposition such as how much the magazine treats fashion as an art form. Coupled to this is often, but not always, a degree of art reportages and galleries without direct fashion and clothing references as a kind of art inlays. This serves to inform the reader whom the magazine is for (Williamson 1995; Bourdieu 1984) and has little to do with “actual quality” of the images or texts and more to do with expressed disposition, which again is quite strongly linked to fashion as utility or topic (art). These dispositions, although also readable in the distributed fashion photographs, can be clearly seen in Figure 4:IX.

In such a general understanding both the general expression of brands in their advertising, as well as their frequency, exposure and placing in the magazines have been taken in consideration, so that, as Kawamura (2005) states it, the most status-filled brands are given priority of exposure, sequence, sizes, position relative articles, and favourable positions in sequences. The input from magazines, newspapers, and other media, having little direct presence in the discussion, have finally been given room as the separate quotations running through the current work, there to give a kind of overview of the general fashion, identity, and consumption discourse conducted in them. However, the images and citations should not be considered as expressing the values or ideals of the photographer or author because this would need a much more thorough analysis: they are picked as examples of the topic, but not as either critique or presentation of individual positions. These images and citations further attempts to cover and to some extent reflect the range of fashion magazines available, which can be described as in Figure 4:X showing the available magazines from Interpress (the primary distributor of fashion- and lifestyle magazines in Sweden) in January 2006 following their categorisation. The choice, however, is centered more on those that discuss fashion as a topic, as this is more in line with what is attempted to be understood in the current work.

**Novels**

The novels, finally, have been used as a way to understand how space and topics, such as fashion or identity, are lived or perceived from a more involved angle than theory. As not taking the form of theorised descriptions but rather as trying to formulate experience as lived or possibly perceived, these provide valuable accounts for the more day-to-day experience of situations, ideals, identities, and dispositions. They serve not only to illustrate the points to be made, but to ground them in a more tacit and directly experienced world than can theoretical texts, mediating between theory, empirical observations, and everyday life. Thus they help to propel the discussion as well as illustrate and flesh out the analytic discussion conducted by providing descriptions and examples that are perhaps more easy to directly relate to. In a way, they provide a form of indirect theory of perception of space, situations, values, and behaviour.

Thus while Zola’s (1995) novel provides a kind of conceptual type for the department store in general, whereas works such as Xiaolong’s (2000), Martin’s (2001), and Kendrick’s (2005) have larger or smaller parts of their plot taking place in department stores, the choice of literature also serves to work with identity, fashion, situations, shopping, and materialised relations and is based in part in trying to cover novels for a range of different target readers in length, overall plot, and style.
Method

The description of method has, for the most part, been interwoven with the analysis, as method, material, and analysis are closely linked and a thorough understanding of the method used, as I see it, can only grow as the analysis is understood. The intention is, and has been from the start, to build the analysis from the ground up, introducing theories and methods as the material demands rather than the other way around. This, of course, is a method, and I am aware that however much this might be the intention, there is both a theoretical and a methodological stance taken already before the material is gathered and as it is gathered. This chapter is thus intended more to introduce the methodological framework and stance taken in the thesis and to give an initial account for the technique with which material has been gathered.

The analysis performed in the current work, then, works both with qualitative and quantitative analytic methods with the focus of chapters five through eight on the former and nine through twelve on the latter, while they have been allowed to saturate one another. This poses a problem, not the least of conflicting research traditions, which needs to be acknowledged. However, just as the relation between agency and system, the intent is not to try to unify the traditions, but to let them influence and provide input for one another, developing insights that otherwise might have been missed. Thus it should not be read as an attempt to find quantitative methods for qualitative questions or the other way around, but to let the two traditions fuel the discussion by providing a wider range of material to work with. This includes a process constantly shifting back and forth between the two, both in how the work has been conducted and how it is presented. The point of this can be found in Hillier’s following statement:

[…] in configurational analysis, as much theoretical attention has been given to the representation of the spatial or formal system that is to be analysed as to the method of quantification. As we will see, this quite normally gives rise to a whole family of representations of the same spatial system, each one relevant to some aspect of its functioning. It is also normal to combine representations, literally by laying one representation on top of the other and treating the resulting connections as real connections in the system. Through this, we find that pairs or even triples of representations taken together yield formally or functionally informative results. In terms of research strategy, this means trying to represent space in terms of the type of function in which we are interested. For example, simple line structures drawn through spaces, temporarily discounting other properties, have proved sufficient (as we will see in the next chapter) to account for many aspects of movement within buildings and urban areas. (Hillier 1996, 95)

That is, in working with quantitative measures, models, and analyses, the models and measures must be based on the question that is to be answered. Simultaneously, what is learned once such a model is deployed poses questions of interpretation that might otherwise not have arisen, which can then require further quantitative analyses to be performed. This will, if not before, become obvious in chapters ten and eleven, where questions of qualitative and interpretive character directly lead to scrutiny of the quantitative material. If Hillier speaks of type of function for which analysis is to provide answers, the questions can be formulated from a much wider range of positions, including questions of meaning.

The first thing to be stressed, however, is that the work has primarily been based on observations. As such, it is the case that some of the findings herein are things that coincide with what the department store managers think or know, a necessity and also a support for the method use: if the claim is that decisions and priorities made are possible to infer from their spatial materialisation, then it must be found to some degree to coincide with intent or conceived strategies even if not completely. All the same, the understanding of the material has been put under scrutiny from two major perspectives.

The first, the reading of the department stores as semiotic systems of objects, is based on the idea that they are formed as structures of differentiating processes where the encountered order is a result of ideas of difference and belonging. This model is based primarily on Baudrillard’s idea of a system of objects (1996), even if the understanding of local systems within department stores is an appropriation of this idea, Baudrillard did not himself make this claim. It is further informed by Foucault’s idea of differentiating operations as a process of giving priority to differentiating or equating factors; that is, every order is a result of an underlying idea of which characteristics are prioritised (colour, size, genre, form, type, and so forth) (Foucault 2003b). This will be further developed in chapters five through eight.

The second is an investigation of typical sets of relations between people, and between people and things, understood as situations, which emerge in the department stores as statistical probabilities. That is, while it has been investigated that the situations analysed actually do appear regularly as they are presented, this is also supported by statistical correlations of both how people make use of the department stores and how this correlates to configurative spatial models. The focus of these chapters, methodologically, lies on rhythm analysis and statistical correlations. This will be further developed in chapters nine through twelve.

The analysis herein is further based on the general idea that space and spatial structures—as producing values, ideas, and meanings on a conceptual
level—work as a text in specific ways. That is, in the everyday appropriation of these structural values and ideas, this does not go through conscious and deliberate interpretations, but through an ordering and construction of the system through the clues of particularities. The theoretical model for the idea of interpretations has been based on Ricoeur’s hermeneutics (Ricoeur 1981), complemented primarily by the works of Williamson (1995), Baudrillard (1998), and Foucault (2003a), especially the parts regarding how the World in front of the Work is developed by a constant interplay between part and whole, and where interpretation of parts is important for the understanding of the whole while recognising that, as Lefebvre says, space works not as text but as textures (1991). That is, if one would start by first “describing” the whole and then making attempts to interpret it, much information would be lost compared to the involved interpretation on-site. Such partial interpretations, further, make suggestions that need be modified by the whole and by other partial interpretations, but which are formed as such:

We can now summarise the corresponding features which underlie the analogy between the explanation of metaphorical statements and that of a literary work as a whole. In both cases, the construction rests upon ‘clues’ contained in the text itself. A clue serves as a guide for a specific construction, in that it contains at once a permission and a prohibition; it excludes unsuitable constructions and allows those which give more meaning to the same words. Second, in both cases, one construction can be said to be more probable than another, but not more truthful. The more probable is that which, on the one hand, takes account of the greatest number of facts furnished by the text, including its potential connotations, and on the other hand, offers a qualitative better convergence between the features which it takes into account. (Ricoeur 1981, 175-176)

Although it is dangerous to draw too direct analogies or make too direct translations between text and space, or text, signs, and objects, the argument Ricoeur presents for understanding how interpretation is produced is persuasive and useful for other contexts than a text, an approach that will be developed in chapter five. Thus, while recognising that, as Lefebvre says, space works not as text but as textures (1991), that is, if one would start by first “describing” the whole and then making attempts to interpret it, much information would be lost compared to the involved interpretation on-site. Such partial interpretations, further, make suggestions that need be modified by the whole and by other partial interpretations, but which are formed as such:

Another danger in attempts to first describe the whole and then interpret it, which lies close to presumptions of system over subject, is that partial interpretations are always included in the construction of the whole to begin with and that too direct and deterministic chains of interpretation risk being set up. This whole leads to these interpretations. By moving through series of analyses and interpretations, the answers come out in a form that rather makes claims that these parts suggest these meanings, and together they then suggest these interpretations, while leaving room for more parts to be added to negotiation of the whole.

This is not to say that I have followed Ricoeur rigorously, but to explain the approach to the mediation between qualitative and quantitative studies and why this is performed as a continuous shift between the two: quantitative data (or, that which they represent) participates by providing clues to the overall interpretation. I believe, that in as far as the two traditions can work together, this is how it needs to be done: they both need to continuously inform one another, fueling and developing both questions and answers in each other. This provides a difficult balance between letting them work together, and conflating them and confusing results from one for coming from the other, or question for answer, and so forth—a balance I have strived to maintain, and which forces the process to still work with moving between the two, hack and forth, while as far as possible remaining in each tradition at any point in time. Furthermore, as another possible approach, if one is assumed to dominate the other, problems would arise in the handling of the questions that the dominated is supposed to help answer. Finally, I believe that these two traditions can and should be worked with together, since this will let us learn what we otherwise would not, and the current, ongoing project forms steps in an underlying investigation of such methodological development, a development that is far from finished.

46. In Jameson’s argument, this is presented as society as structure and as individual actions. Of importance to note, here, is that Jameson does not claim this to produce a final uncontestable model, but that the two analyses based on either agency or system by necessity will chafe against one another. These arguments by Lefebvre and Jameson have inspired the use of such “chafing”; that is, the process of introducing questions of individual and agency to strain and refine the structural model is something I believe will come to be proven quite valuable.

47. Thus the suggestion is not one of making use of a superior method in some way replacing others, but one that makes valuable theoretical and methodological contributions that would be difficult to make using other methods, such as more traditional quantitative or
As far as more specific methods go, the qualitative methods can be understood as a reading of the department stores as semiotic systems through a kind “archaeology” (Koch 2004, 118-120, 162-163; Foucault 2003a, 174-182), while the quantitative methods are based on so-called space syntax methodology as developed by Hillier et alii (Koch 2004, 54-51, 57-65; Hillier 1996).

Working with the Material: Vision, Visibility and Subject
Above I have been speaking of visual connections between objects that serve to form contexts, together with boundaries, such as walls and floors, with facings, with communication routes, and by use of exposure and displays. This focus on “visuality” might be in need of some elaboration, since otherwise it might be mistaken for a focus on the seeing subject. The analysis does rely heavily on vision, which to some extent limits it, even if, as Lefebvre says, vision has become the most promoted sense in capitalist society (Lefebvre 1991). However, when discussing such visual connection, more specificity is needed in the analysis and discussion. This includes directedness and temporalities and concepts that allow for moving subjects without directly including the same. It further needs to separate the visual relations from the seeing subject. One presupposition for this is to let go of the perspective view formed by someone standing in a place, looking in a direction, the so-called “cone of vision”:

I believe that the metaphor of the “cone of vision,” predominant in theories of representation since the mid-1970s, is itself responsible for a reductive and simplistic equation of looking with objectification. In so far as this metaphor is drawn from physiological optics, it is inappropriate to the description of psychological functions. In so far as it is drawn from Euclidian geometry, it is inadequate to describe the changed apprehension of space which is an attribute of so-called “post-modern” culture. (Burgin 1996, 40)

While the cone of vision might be interesting in situations where people are, for one reason or the other, directed in their looking (theatre, certain museums, film) I argue that an analysis allowing for moving, active subjects can only be part of a wider understanding of intervisibilities, which is difficult by use of cones of vision. It is also important to understand other issues than vision as such or a seeing person. The intervisibilities I am concerned with primarily in the current work are formed in space considered qualitative studies. On the contrary, the suggestion is that both of these need to be further performed on contemporary department stores to complement the current work.

The attraction of the cone of vision model for a critical theory of visual representations is the explicit place it allocates to the subject as inherent part of the system of representation. The major disadvantage of the model is that it maintains the object as external to the subject, existing in an untroubled relation of “outside” to the subjects “inside.” As I observed, the predominance of the optical model has encouraged the confusion of real space with psychical space, the confusion of the psychoanalytic object with the real object. (Burgin 1996, 67)

The point is to work with relations that are best described as visual relations without treating them as subjects seeing each other. One step of shifting focus, from the ontological distinction between an experiencing subject and the objects experienced, I argue, which also serves to introduce an analytic concept used for the analysis, goes via the concept of isovists (Benedikt 1979), which is an analytic representation that can be used to propel the theoretical discussion forward. An Isovist, having its origins in analysis of sightlines, is an attempt to represent what can be seen from one position or area in space considered as a 180-degree orientation, represented by a two-dimensional “slice” of visibility. 48

As a representation of certain spatial properties, the isovist has often been argued for from the side of vision and of visual fields from a certain position; that is, it has been described as what one can see from a certain point in space. This simplification has certain dangers in it that are not directly traceable to the two-dimensionality of the representation only. It is rather the problem of the way it is treated when it is

48. Just as cones of vision, however, isovists should not be mistaken for direct representations of what can be seen from a specific point, since there are several operations performed reducing space and artefact into a two-dimensional slice, which is then used to understand a three-dimensional situation. This does not make them unusable, but is significant to keep in mind when using them for spatial analysis. Their strength, as individual representations, lies in the way they make clear certain spatial situations of visibility that are of importance for how the department stores operate as representational space.
turned into visual fields from certain points; the isovist is internalized into the seeing subject, as a phenomenological or human geometry. This is also the usual way it is argued for and how it is explained; it is how I have presented it myself in the licentiate.

What is then the problem with such an understanding? This was briefly sketched above: the translation from isovist to visual field is a process of internalizing the isovist into a seeing subject, which in itself contains problems since no one can ever simultaneously see what an isovist covers. However, the problem I am addressing is this internalization, the subjectification, which is closely linked to an overall ontology that posits the subject as origin of everything and society as a sum of subjects. The point is this: Is it possible to *inverse* the interpretation so the isovist (or “visual field”) is externalised from the subject into a point in space? Although this has its own problems, it also has distinctive positive qualities: it differs “what is seen” from context as a construction of what is interconnected (through the point in space which serves as basis for the construction of an isovist). As far as such an element represents visibility, everything included in such an isovist, and *everything that demarcates it*, is *co-present* with the point of origin. This is an isovist externalized where the central point is not subject but object and where position is replaced by situation. The active subject as centre is no longer required or presupposed or the question of analysis.\(^{49}\) This allows the isovist to not only represent a series of points of view of the moving subjects, but a series of contexts or positions that are situated in relation to those who can see it. In fact, vision or the act of seeing is less conceptually important.

This, I argue, is an operation that can be performed not only on isovists, but is a theoretical operation on the concept of visual relations. What we are dealing with early on is the difference between Lefebvre’s two triads, on the one hand, the *lived, perceived, and conceived*, the isovist as visual field, and on the other hand, *representational space, representations of space and spaces of representation*, the subject as its relation to other people (1991, 38-39). It is also one of the central questions in Foucault’s *Panopticism*—the difference between seeing and being seen (Foucault 1997b). That is, if the isovist, convex space and axial lines of space syntax can be thought of as a kind of phenomenological analytic concepts originating from the *subject*, they can also be inversed in their interpretation and instead be thought of as analysis of elements that may or may not be actually seeing. As representation of approaches to spatial analysis, these are ontologically different stances, which serve to complement one another. If we have a problem today, it is that the latter is neglected in favour of the former.

Visual relations are *one way* to analyse such systems of relations between categories (brands, lifestyles, contexts, commodities), and one way to describe a certain form of relation that is not necessarily one of seeing participants—one that provides a lot of information of more local properties of systemic relations if handled properly and thus an informative and constructive model. This does not exclude other models (or representations that constitute such models), but I would like to stress the importance of how the model of choice here responds to and gives understanding of social and cultural practices. It must further be said that while there is much discussion of *visual relations* and *seeing*, much of the coming analysis is also based on *accessibility*: how bodies are able to move through space and most of the important findings emerge from the comparison between the two. The fact remains, however, that the coming analysis relies heavily on the kinds of relations that can be described as *those of vision* and *those of access*. Other forms of relations, other forms of connections, and other forms of exposure or availabilities are questions for another work.

The Framework of Analysis: The Three Distributions

All the same, the current work is performed based on a methodological concept developed in the previous licentiate thesis, which has been used both to structure the analysis and the work as well as to inform the individual analyses. This methodology has been appropriated in a way that focuses on the department stores as spatial value systems, which provides a number of clues for understanding the structuring operations in and of space.\(^{50}\)

This methodological framework consists of analysis through the concepts of distributions *in*, *through*, and *of* space. The distinction between these, in short, con-

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49. The externalization of the isovist, further, allows it to be used for a wider range of posited questions, including such questions as the situating of a *commodity*, or a work of art, or, for that matter, a printer in an office. This is more than a simple change of ‘subject’ of the isovist, but rather, if taken to the extreme, represents two different ontologies.

50. As the methodology is formulated, it requires such a question with which to work in the analysis—which in the licentiate somewhat simplified could be described as ‘how do the libraries express an idea of knowledge?’ The idea of the current work is that by posing the question of how the department stores structures value systems by how they organize commodities and interfaces, understanding will grow of how space serves as a structuring structure both formed by and informing how this emergent system of values.
sists of what is placed, what appears, and how space is distributed by material boundaries. These are, as was found in the licentiate, invariably intertwined and saturate one another (Figure 4:XI); the point is a shifting focus scrutinizes different modalities of space. As an indirect result, focus ends up on choices made on different levels and often by different people, ultimately requiring different levels of power (Koch 2004, 29-32). In both the libraries and the department stores, the distribution in space is the managed system of functions, personnel, and commodities, while the distribution through space is how the system is made use of by the customers or visitors. The distribution of space is primarily a question of architecture or urban design. The approach proved quite fruitful for the libraries, and, set against the backdrop of the need to infer structures from material can be further understood by Hillier’s observation that relations have the curious property of while being quite material and undeniable, they are still impossible to point to; they always exist in-between something and something else (Hillier 1996, 23). Structural analysis to begin with thus needs to be indirectly performed through analytic operations.

To enable such structural models, the current work has taken the form of a series of strategically chosen investigations that all pertain to give further material to the construction of such an understanding. This has been done through what could most closely be likened to a series of conceptual laboratories where each analyses the spatial structuring from a different perspective and on different scales. Each of these has then been allowed to take somewhat disparate forms as suits them best.

Rather than following a perhaps more standard approach of writing from a theoretical angle on different cases, the method is more focused on revisiting the material from different theoretical angles: that is, new theoretical standings are introduced throughout, layered over each other, or juxtaposed to one another. The analysis does not move from theory to case or from general to specific, but tries to stay in the specific and the case as much as possible, pushing onwards by introduction of new ways of seeing, new ways of asking, and new ways of understanding the material, moving towards general discussions and conclusions as the material allows. The result of this is a constantly increasing complexity of theories and observations where it is not a question of analysing one after the other as much as analysing one over or added to the other. Of course, as focus shifts, so do what remains in the discussion.

With this framework, the laborations themselves have then drawn on both theoretical and empirical material as well as sources such as novels and fashion magazines, which could be said to form a curious in-between that they are not explicit theories, yet have a layer of interpretation in them which expresses both a theory and a model for understanding people and values; that is, while conceived works, they give expression to perceived values and ideas, which perhaps are based on lived experience. These are thus not to be seen as “fleshing out” the text, but rather as a means to understand the ways things are perceived and lived complementary to the theoretical, empirical, or analytical sources.

From this structural analysis is then, in the final part, inferred the underlying spatial operations, as the view of the analysed structure shifts from a set of relations to a set of relational operations that all pertain to and are performed in space. The question remains, however, how the empirical data has been gathered.
Gathering Material: Observing the Flow

Looking at the scene from the window above
You become somebody else’s scene.
The moon decorating your window,
You decorate someone’s dream.
(Bian Zilin, from Xiaolong 2000, 171)

The observations roughly can be divided into four parts: observation of movement flows, observations of activity, observation of commodity distribution, and rhythm observations. Of these, the first three are the most scientifically stringent. With plans in hand, I spend time at the department stores following procedures of notation decided beforehand. The first, by standing close by selected “gates”, measuring how many people pass by for a certain period of time, which is performed repeatedly throughout the department stores for all observed gates. This, it comes to show, rather quickly builds up a stability in the relative flows or rhythms of customers (Koch 2004, 60-61, 87-90, below in chapter nine). The second follows a different procedure. As I walked through the department stores I noted the building plans, positions, general activities, and categories of people, the latter two consisting of first walking, standing, sitting, browsing, viewing, and interacting and the last of customers and personnel. Keeping in mind that such observations are rarely possible without somehow affecting the situation, this is the attempt that has been made. Here, one could argue that the observation is an act of perceiving, as different from conceiving or living (Lefebvre 1991, 53). The procedures are inferred from space syntax methodology and have proven to provide remarkably much information compared to what might be first thought, something that grew apparent in the work with the licentiate thesis and will be seen later (see chapters nine through twelve).

The observations of commodity distributions has been done as well with plans and pen in hand, moving through the department stores and noting as much detail as reasonable, such as how commodities are to be found, at what times they reach individual commodities, but mostly consisting of groups defined by “least common denominator” as found in space. Thus there is already in the material a degree of analysis involved as to how groups are formed. In general, however, the notations in the observations are on a much more detailed level than that of the succeeding analysis. Marking down what can be found on what shelves, what hangers, and in what displays, the entirety of the department stores have been mapped out with precision in order for the analysis to be possible and to avoid making general assumptions first, and then observing and to make sure that impressions and ideas appearing as I move through the stores are not taken for granted. These observations include an effort to make correct notations of positions and heights and forms of shelves, hangers, and displays. These mappings have then been returned to at later dates, by choice studies of certain areas, to see how the department stores change over time in an attempt to give some acknowledgement of the constantly changing situations and distributions found. However, it has become quite clear that there is quite a bit of stability to be found both in sorting principles and in the temporal instances of distribution.

These observations have been completed by what above was called rhythm observations. Things such as impressions, characters, notable (surprising, focused, deviant, overheard) activities, flows, presences, and the like have been both noted on the observation plans and focused on in several visits to several department stores and shopping spaces to compare the results of the analysis to what can be found in other places. This is the primary role of P.U.B. and NK in the thesis, but Åhlens and Debenhams as well as a series of other shopping spaces have been approached in this manner. My analysis suggests this: if I go there or to a similar place, does it appear to be correct? The line of thought behind this lies in Lefebvre’s “rhythm analysis”:

To understand and analyse these rhythms, one has to let go, through illness or technique, but not completely. There is a certain externality which allows the analytical intellect to function. Yet, to capture a rhythm one needs to have been captured by it. One has to let go, give and abandon oneself to its duration. Just as in music or when learning a language, one only really understands meanings and sequences by producing them, that is, by producing spoken rhythms. (Lefebvre 1996, 219)

This should not be taken for a claim to have actually performed a rhythm analysis in Lefebvre’s sense, but to say that repeated visits both as shopper and analyst to the department stores was a way to gather information: how people work, how people behave in the stores, and how this relates to the otherwise observed material. Different routes taken, different narratives followed, and different stances adopted were also considered. Such visits primarily serve to support the analysis of the more stringently collected data, but also gives rise to observations that would otherwise have been missed or possibly even misinterpreted.
Figure 4.1: Åhléns City, one of the two main department stores studied in the current work.

Figure 4.2: Debenhams, the other of the two main department stores studied in the current work.
Figure 4: the city library of Stockholm by Gunnar Asplund. (Photography: Olle Norberg)

Figure 4: the city library of Vastra by Henrik Larsson. (Photography: Merja Vazquez Diaz)

Figure 4: the city library of Malmo by Henning Larsen. (Photography: Merja Vazquez Diaz)

Figure 4: the city library of Stockholm by Erik Lidbo and Schmidt. (Photography: Hans Runesson)

Figure 4: the city library of Vastra by Erik Lidbo and Schmidt. (Photography: Hans Runesson)
Figure 4: Fashion magazines can be understood via their formal expression. Here, we see a range from the clothing as worn (Cosmopolitan and Nord) via an artistic representation of the clothing itself (bon), to a vague reference of disposition or personality (Litikes). (Photography: Marcus Rinsson, Cosmopolitan (SE); Mattias Edwall, King (SE); Jimmy Olander for bon; and Peter Gerike for Litikes.)
PART II
A SYSTEM OF OBJECTS
5. AN ORDER OF THINGS

Mirabelle has a knack for discussing the mundane, at length. In this sense, she is Jeremy’s blood brother. She can talk about glove storage non-stop. How her own ideas of storage are much better than the current system at Neiman’s, and how her supervisor had become upset when he discovered that she had resorted them by size rather than colour. (Martin 2001, 32)

The topic of the second part of this thesis is the study of the organisation of commodities in department stores, forming textures of categories that are coherent and broken up, consistent and contradictory, and reoccurring and unique in all of the studied department stores. The general argument is that categorisations, structures, and characters of objects and categories are formed and expressed in space and an analysis of the formations of commodity groupings as appearing in space will help understand both ideas and values behind the organisation, as well as understand the sorting in itself and its contribution to ideas, values, and identities of the commodities, classes, and categories produced. Strategy and ideas inferred from encountered material reality—that is, a form of archaeology (Foucault 2003a, 174-182). ¹

While this may sound simple at first or even obvious, I believe it will show that it is all but simple or obvious and that the formation of categories and identities present is both logical and illogical. In addition, as a whole it does not follow a simple, pre-defined taxonomy (Foucault 2003b). ² Once the “obvious” ordering is explicitly stated and described, it tends to appear far less natural than it would seem to be at first. This is true partly because space and commodities are in many ways less precise

1. Archaeology here borrows from Foucault: “[…] nothing more than a rewriting: that is, in the preserved form of exteriority, a regulated transformation of what is already written” (Foucault 2003a, 156). As demonstrated both in Foucault’s works and in previous research (See Koch 2004), such a rewriting brings up logics and orders that are, while prior to the reading perceived as simple and well structured, multifaceted, contradictory, and consisting of layers of different sets of values. Categories such as “factual books” can co-exist with factual books sorted as “shallow reading”, or “about the local area or produced by people from it” (Koch 2004, 124).

2. In the sense that a taxonomy would present a map of a continuous space, where every class or object has its proper place, predestined by the table that is the taxonomy as in the classical mode of knowledge (Foucault 2003b, 73-84).
in their "language" than the more formally explicit ones of (written) language, and partly because what is dealt with is an organising practice rather than an ordered totality. Furthermore, there is neither "a" way to read space, one narrative to follow, nor "one" meaning or idea that is expressed, but the result of a series of negotiations, compromises and prioritisations. It is, as Joan Entwistle says, about fashion: "[t]here are social codes of dress, but these are very context bound, and there is no equivalent to a sentence in dress and no way that dress can give as precise a message as a spoken sentence" (Entwistle 2000, 67). When using a term such as a "reading" of space or of commodity structure therein, it is therefore necessary to use caution in translating or understanding the performed activity of "reading":

Does it make sense to speak of a 'reading' of space? Yes and no. Yes, inasmuch as it is possible to envisage a 'reader' who deciphers or decodes and a 'speaker' who expresses himself by translating his progression into a discourse. But no, in that social space can in no way be compared to a blank page upon which a specific message has been inscribed (by whom?). Both natural and urban spaces are, if anything, 'over inscribed': everything therein resembles a rough draft, jumbled and self-contradictory. Rather than signs, what one encounters here are directions—multi-farious and overlapping instructions. (Lefebvre 1991, 142)

While it can be claimed that Lefebvre at times has a somewhat narrow view of text and sign, the point here is important: Space and objects as systems of signs do not create a range of particularities or singularities with singular meanings or simple and one-to-one connections between spatial positions and meaning of either space or objects. A reading of space will be complex and contain both contradictions and insecurities, where emerging meanings are of more open character. Social space is neither easily readable as signs nor works as such. Rather, as Lefebvre continues, "[i]f there is indeed text, inscription or writing to be found here, it is in a context of conventions and order (in the sense of social order versus social disorder). That space signifies is incontestable. But what it signifies is dos and don'ts—and this brings us back to power" (Lefebvre 1991, 142). Space orders practices and structures actions and decisions. This is part of why analysis must constantly move between empirical studies and interpretation.

3. This not to say that texts are not multilayered; it is to claim that text, as developed more explicitly upon signs and for the purpose of communication, has more developed to express more precise statements, and consequently demands more precise statements (Lefebvre 1991, 130-147).

For this juxtaposition and amalgamation to take place, there is a need for something that is to be ordered—whether it is something concrete such as commodities or more abstract entities such as societies or institutions—as well as a (real or imagined, physical or virtual) space in which it is to be organised. The task of structuring the department stores does not start from a blank situation, but is informed by both the history of the particular department stores in question by the history of the department store as a "type" as well as the cultural conditions otherwise informing the sorting. This is not to deny the powers of strategic decisions on layout or to ascribe it all to tradition: it is to say that it would be an error to discard that there are perceived and conceived categories at work in the sorting that precedes or exceeds it. Hence while the sorting of commodities in the department stores may seem to be a simple question of economic or retail priority and of lumping together pre-existing categories, I claim—and intend to show—that this is not the process at work.

To analyse this, it is important to realise that what we are dealing with is not so much a representation as it is a practice, which includes a representation formative for said practice. This practice is superficially formed around a direct relation between customer and commodity, but in reality it is much more complex and based on arbitrary priorities and decisions. Such arbitrariness, however, is not completely free; non-rationality does not inherently mean irrationality (Shields 1992a, 110). Rather, it must be seen as a situated practice, which is arbitrary within an interplay with the (material) conditions that it negotiates:

While avoiding notions of total arbitrariness, pure conventionalism and utter relativity, it is necessary to recognize the conventional, partially arbitrary construction of a culture. These conventions encounter testing and limiting empirical conditions which we may hypothesize as the sources of problems and thus as the impetus for change of our conventions. (Anderson 1998, 492)

We can see that the arbitrariness in ordering and the conventions’ collisions with empirical conditions are formative for the conventions themselves because previous prioritisations are questioned or that new prioritisations are forced to be made. When sorting books in a bookcase, cultural conventions such as genre encounter the empirical conditions of the material structure of the bookcase and the size and form of the books at hand. The emerging system is produced by the order it produces: as they are
relative systems, a change in a part means a change of the whole, and hence, as the whole is reconstructed by the change, new problems may arise as a result of the solution of another. When DVDs become popular enough to be moved into a more exposed position there is need for other groups of commodities to give way, and a chain of new prioritisations are set in motion of which the outcome is likely not known beforehand (although not an irrational process by far). From the resulting chain of events, a new whole emerges by the changes brought about at first to accommodate what would appear to be a confined and rather local or particular change of values. In this process, one of the empirical conditions to be studied in the current work is material space.

This is important for the coming analysis, since it will show that such orders as those found in the department stores are subject to change and rather form overall or particular strategies than fixed taxonomies and inherently contain problems that become apparent when the sorting of commodities are studied in detail. Problems that, in part, are forced into the open by the constraints produced by space. Any commodity can fit into several categories simultaneously, even if the categories themselves are mutually exclusive much in the same way as the range of clothing or identity choices for the coming context is both coherent and contradictory (Williamson 1983, 91-92). Or, as Barthes says, to understand and analyse commodity systems such as fashion, “[w]e must first agree to make the notion of system more flexible, that is to think of structures in terms of tendencies rather than perhaps in terms of a rigid equilibrium” (Barthes 2006, 11).

The system can thus only be seen and understood if allowed to be complex and contradictory. Simple categorisations as “brand” are bound to fail: although an important category, it is simply not enough to account for every category encountered and is not necessarily the main categorising operation at work. Neither does it answer, at all, the way in which brands are ordered, in the situations where the order is based on brands. This does not mean that there is no systematic or logic to the sorting; it merely implies that there are several and at times conflicting roles and options available for each artefact or class. It further shows how each artefact is subject to taking several connotations as opposed to being comnotating in itself; even within the same department store, the same commodity can be distributed in several categories.

The point is that while the concrete study is of the system in its synchronous state, I am rather concerned with the underlying principles of the spatial practice, which has produced the order encountered. In as much as retail follows a general trial and error application—where “who buys” translates into “who will buy” and “what sells” is translated into “what will sell”—this suggests that the system is produced in a dialectic between design, customer choice, and retail ideas. In short, the department stores form complex adaptive systems or emergent systems (Johnson 2002, 17-23).

As it is a practice, however, it will become clear how difficult the separation between analyses of the commodity system found in the department stores and the use of the department store by its customers is, and it will show how the encountered sorting is dependant on the use. In this, analogous to the systems of consumption and production, at the times alleged direct relation between what is wanted and what is made available does not serve much purpose but obscures the ordering process and is only applicable to a fairly small extent.

Instead, it needs to be seen as a system of desires and a system of availability, which are formative of each other without direct translations. This is argumentative, but will become apparent as the analysis proceeds.

The analysis will, as a general approach, move from the local to the global, from the particular to the general, and from object to space. This is not to confuse it with a cause-and-effect process, but to resist the temptations to all too soon accept the top-down strategies as cause and the local sorting as effect. It is also an attempt to build the discussion on the basis of observation, although it must be acknowledged that an idea of the argument is present in the performance of the observations. Before delving into the hands-on analysis of the empirical material, however, a general outline of the argument of the objects as signs and a few other key questions need to be presented.

A system of Objects

I went to Toronto for a weekend to watch the filming of a friend’s movie. When I checked into the hotel, I noticed an alarming number of people dressed in head-to-toe black—all of them with gelled hair, highlights in colors like blue and fuchsia, thick, emphatic eyeliner, and blood-red lips. This was not normal. At breakfast, in the elevator, on the clean, mild streets of Toronto, these goth creatures seemed to be multiplying. I finally stopped one group and asked them where they were from. “M.A.C.!” said a woman with false eyelashes and genuine pride. “It’s our global sales meeting!”

The M.A.C. people told me they loved their edgy black clothes and elaborate makeup. “We look different, like rock and rollers,” said one guy with curled lashes. Yet when I stuck my head in the hotel’s ballroom and saw hundreds of them all together, their quirks seemed to blend and become indistinguishable. (Wells 2005, 76)
The system of objects, once transformed into objects as primarily defined by secondary qualities, is a system of definition by difference (Baudrillard 1996, 137-144). This much has been claimed earlier. What we are dealing with is a system of commodities defined by differentiation rather than a collection of individual artefacts of inherent identities. Further, as argued above, such systems of signification-by-difference are in large arbitrary—that is, what meaning is attached to what artefact (or sign) is developed independently of inherent values in the artefact itself.

This, naturally, is not the whole truth.

First, a certain regularity and logic between physical reality and system of representations was acknowledged already by Saussure, and as much as arbitrariness is argued by Baudrillard, there is also a logic between commodity and position in the semiotic system in his analysis. There is, in language, a logic to signs emerging that connote streams of running water, although the signifiers and the way differentiations between different streams is present in different languages as well as the amount of different signs and concepts are arbitrary (Culler 1977, 15-16). Similarly, there is a logic to kitchen utensils being grouped together that does not exclusively relate to a differentiating system of signs. As objects are put to use, the use serves to give the product its character and translate it into a sign (Eco 1997). All the same, the arbitrary character of most of these categorisations is represented within the department stores themselves. Kitchen utensils are found sorted after use and after brand and after situation in which they are likely to be present aside from direct use. The same models of Tiger Jeans are present in three places in the women’s fashion department, sorted after what could be called—in a simplified argument—brand, lifestyle, and status context.

Second, the sorting is multilayered, and categories emerge at several layers where after it is possible for whole categories to work as signs in the differentiating system. That which serves as differential means in one category may not be of importance for others or be of importance in one level of categorisation, but not for the sub-categories within. Should one attempt to seamlessly wander between scales and read positions of objects in the system as solely a process of individual differentiation, everything becomes unreadable and presents itself as an infinite range of individual and unique objects. This, as noted by Baudrillard, is a rhetoric used by the system of mass-production to hide its own character and present it as a fact that the individual choice is irrelevant. If, like Linnaeus, one selects as the characteristic elements ‘all the different parts related to fructification’, the difference of leaf or stem or root or petiole must be systematically ignored. Similarly, any identity not occurring in one of these selected elements will have no value in the definition of character. (Foucault 2003b, 152)

Categories unfold as a result of the categorising elements of choice, which may or may not form a coherent set of elements across the range of commodities to be organised. These elements, the categorising operations given precedence over others, are the result of choices and prioritisations, of values. The choice to sort fashion first after gender and then after style is arbitrary. To order accessories after gender, then together, yet apart from clothing, is the result of arbitrary choice of categorising operations. To understand the order of commodities in the department stores, it is of importance to understand these categorising operations rather than stop at the level of identification of categories. The same is true.
for the understanding of the role of space in this process: space works as a series of
categorising operations rather than presenting a series of categories.

One way to understand such an order, and this is perhaps the major operation of
de Saussure, goes via a shift from diachrony to synchrony: from historical perspective
to “slices of time”, to see the system of differences of signs as they are “now”. This
raises a problem: a system cannot be the result of differentiation unless it is inherently
diachronic, and whereas potentials and probabilities of change can be read from the
synchronic state, trajectories of change have impact that may not be readable in the
synchronic situation (Bourdieu 1984, 114-168). At the same time, analysing the very
differentiating process in the system as a whole may be difficult or impossible to do
without the study of synchronous states.

Another danger in treating space in this way is that, as Doreen Massey objects,
“[…] these are not the relations of a coherent, closed system within which, as they
say, everything is already linked to everywhere else. Space can never be that com-
pleted simultaneity in which all interconnections have already been established, and
in which everywhere is already linked to everywhere else” (Massey 2005, 12-13).
Massey thus questions both space as a total system and as simultaneity. While rec-
ognizing this objection, it can be of worth to also elaborate some on it. First, in Saus-
sure’s version, language is not a synchronous system that in itself carries the change
to the next synchronous state—changes, for Saussure, takes place not in la langue,
but in parole, in practice (Callier 1976, 36). In Callier’s interpretation of Saussure, one
can even argue that the context of la langue is given too little a role in the changes that
takes place in parole. Second, it is a misconception that a study of the whole semiotic
system would require an assumption that it is known to those who make use of it or
those who construct it (which are often but not always the same). It is not required
that anyone in daily practice have a grasp of the total system of signification in play
in society for it to exist. This would not mean there is no total system or that it is used
only on an individual level:

The consumer experiences his distinctive behaviours as freedom, as as-
piration, as choice. To differentiate oneself is always, by the same token,
to bring into play the total order of differences, which is, from the first,
the product of the total society and inevitably exceeds the scope of the
individual. In the very act of scoring his points in the order of differences,
each individual maintains that order, and therefore condemns himself
only ever to occupy a relative position within it. (Baudrillard 1998, 61)

I would argue, that Massey’s attack on semiotic understanding of space—knowingly
or not—rather is an attack on how this analysis is performed more than with a semi-
otic reading as such, and that it is at times the only analysis performed. It is indeed
possible to criticise much architecture theory for slipping into a too simple transfer of
semiotic thinking from language to space, and for overestimating the possibility and
power of synchronic analysis. It is, however, just as possible to criticise other parts of
the architectural discourse to be too concerned with history and what in linguistic
terms could be called etymology, or be too concerned with authorship and intent.

With these reservations to Massey’s arguments, it is still important to bear her
point in mind. While what is to come is in part an analysis of the department stores as
“synchronous and total semiotic systems”, this analysis will be both interwoven with
more particular discussions of parts of the totality (or subsystems) and with discus-
sions on recent or ongoing changes that have been noted. Thus, the semiotic reading
to come does not make claims to be the full analysis, yet still is an important part of
the analysis as a whole. This study of synchronous states of the system can only with
care be translated to a process (and vice versa).

6. A word on fashion
This leaves us with some unanswered questions, which still concern the formation of
categories and their relation to practice and context, questions that can be ap-
proached by the means of a (introductory) discussion of fashion. A subject of impor-
tance for the thesis, fashion is a subject that is surrounded by myths both internal to
the fashion system and external, from those who criticise fashion (Kawamura 2005,
43-45), and as noted before, is a subject avoided in much of academic literature,
even directly slighted in many discourses—not the least those on Architecture (Wig-
ley 1995, 128-153). Still, fashion, as one of the major consumption commodities fill-
ing up large parts of the department stores, can be used as a key to the understanding
of the system of objects, how it works contextually, and how its stability is masked by
an aura of constant change.

6. This may appear to have trailed somewhat off topic, but the point is that while there are
dangers in a synchronic reading, in any assumption that the total order of things would be
perceived by anyone, or be a series of static conditions instead of continuous change, the
understanding of the ongoing process of systemic change can be hard to read without bring-
ing into play the total order of differences involved.
As argued before of identity and identity making by consumption, fashion consumption is not a question of seeking the expression of an inherent, pre-existing self by use of a stable, pre-defined code or language, where a choice of clothing can be reduced to its meaning in the system of fashion, but rather a negotiation between fashion system and situated practice of dressing (Entwistle 2000). Furthermore, it is not only based on the will to differentiate, but on a will to belonging. The character of the individual expressions within fashion categories and/or groups is dependant on their position within the category, and is by no means confined to subcultures or resistance identities but a general phenomenon in the system of fashion. Wells continues in the same editorial:

[...] the same could be said about beauty and fashion editors. As much as we believe in individual style, we end up looking remarkably alike. Our clothes are usually black, our heels are usually high, our hair is layered, and our makeup covers the full spectrum of brown to brownish pink. It’s a formula that makes sense in a job that values effortless chic and requires its adherents to look as thin as possible and ready at all times for a cocktail party. (Wells 2005, 76)

The characteristics of “brown to brownish pink”, “black”, “high heels” and “layered hair” as “chic”, however, just as the possibility of the difference to appear as either homogeneity or differentiation, lies in the context in which it is present, as for any object. But, this is true for fashion and style as well (even if most magazines try to connect a style with a brand or a jacket). Again, Wells says:

Out of our natural habitat, we could be mistaken for a particularly well-dressed cult. This is why, whenever I leave New York for Los Angeles or the Midwest, I stand in front of my closet staring at all the clothes and say without irony, “I have nothing to wear.” Because nothing I own makes sense in cities with low buildings, lots of sunshine and cheerful inhabitants. When one of Allure’s editors was called to appear on a Valentine’s Day edition of QVC, she showed up in her best New York armor: black pants, black top, black jacket, black mascara, nude lip gloss. Standing next to the pink host on the pink set, our editor looked as if she were mourning her cat rather than celebrating romance. (Wells 2005, 76)

What is fashionable and right in one context attains a different expression in another. The context does not only change the category belonging of the object, but changes the very character of the object itself. This has been argued before—yet perhaps not so explicitly presented. It is far too easy, however, to consider these contexts either too locally or too globally. For instance, the general societal context makes the appearance of said editor different than would the appearance of another black clad person following another style. Still, as the finishing argument of Well’s editorial, she concludes the following:

Fashion may seem to be an expression of style, but more often, it functions as a declaration of membership to a larger group—whether it’s magazine editors or exotic makeup artists. When it’s worn by hundreds of people in a hotel conference room or a fashion-show tent, even the most eccentric getup looks fairly conventional. (Wells 2005, 76)

Thus far, then, fashion is established as a relative system of signs comparable to the general system of objects as discussed by Baudrillard. It can be seen how it follows both logics of belonging (conformation to group ideals) and of expression of difference (although in ways that conform to the group’s range of differences). It is further clear how any choice of clothing, as transformation from fashion system to context and identity, is dependant on context—that is, as much as the fashion system is a “global” system, its transference to daily use is through situated bodily practice (Entwistle 2000, 40-53). Through this process, fashion establishes categories of clothing, identities and ideals, as a form of formative representation (that is, representation that in itself serves to form what it represents). This process of forces of differentiation creating both heterogeneity and homogeneity would be much what is argued for by Baudrillard when he states the following:

[...] this level, differences are no longer exclusive: not only do they logically imply one another in the combinatory of fashion (in the same way as there is ‘play’ between different colours), but, in sociological terms, it is the exchange of differences which clinches group integration. Differ-
The idea of fashion/dress as situated bodily practice acknowledges a very basic sociological tension between structure and agency: structures such as the fashion system impose parameters around dress; however, within these constraints, individuals can be creative in their interpretation of fashion and their practices of dress. (Entwistle 2000, 40)

The coming analysis will show how the department store (and shopping space in general, although not necessarily by using the same set of operations as the department store) participates in setting such constraints for the creative individual—constraints that also provide guidance and freedom for those concerned but less versed in the system of fashion and their role in it. However, even when dealing with systems of objects as presented by any part or in any space or magazine and which is of importance to the argument of the thesis—as can also be read into the editorial of Allure:

Thus, while at times used to express only “that which is in fashion”, fashion has a wider scope—or as Entwistle puts it, “[f]ashion therefore refers not just to the production of some styles as popular or elite, but also the production of aesthetic ideas which serve to structure the reception and consumption of styles” (Entwistle 2000, 48). That is to say, that speaking of “a fashion”, or fashion as “a style” that is in fashion, is inadequate, and fashion must be understood as a means of social positioning where the fashion system (and its subsets of fashions) should be seen as the framework or general process that forms the system in society. This is where one objection to a mere seduction theory of fashion arise, or a trickle down theory: there is not, in the daily life, a system of fashion, nor is there a trend, but a series of fashions and trends belonging in different (sub)cultures and groups, and where even the relation to fashion itself vary between them. It is pointless to argue that everyone wishes that which is presented as a trend. Neither is a conformism in what is desired needed in order to establish a general set of values or fashions and a range of statuses and groups on the system level. There are people who wish to follow trends (of certain groups) and those who do not. There are those who wish to be “in fashion” as positioned in the general system of fashion and those who do not. This does not contradict that there is a general system—it is merely recognising agency and habitus.

Thus, what is presented as generally of high status from a societal point of view can be outright deplored by parts of it without it really affecting the system itself (it rather strengthens it) (e.g. Bourdieu 1984, 471). Fashion, when translated into dress, is a material form of cultural and social negotiation and expression. Furthermore, fashion serves as a prime example to the complex relation between change and stability, where stability on the surface can remain in systems of change and where surface change obscure structural stability (Langman 1992, 47). Even the speed and dramatic character of this ever-changing and frivolous phenomenon is exaggerated and used as a means of delegating it to the superfluous and inconsequential (Kawamura 2005, 6-13). This follows, if we believe Bourdieu, a general structural pattern in society:

 [...] by an apparent paradox, the maintenance of order, that is, of the whole set of gaps, differences, ‘differentials’, ranks, precedences, priorities, exclusions, distinctions, ordinal properties and thus of the relations of order which give a social formation its structure, is provided by an unceasing change in substantial (i.e., non-relational) properties. (Bourdieu 1984, 163)

The character of fashion could, in this respect, be seen as a specific case of a more general social phenomenon of stability masked by (produced by) change, which makes it interesting to work with as an understanding of societal structures and interesting as to how it is relegated to the domain of the frivolous and inconsequential. It further makes fashion, as a subset of the system of objects in the department stores, a fruitful

3. While seasonal and annual change is undeniable, fashion cycles follow a longer period in more significant changes (that is, not concerned with a change of model within a brand, but rather the rise or fall of whole styles or brands in themselves) closer to ten-year periods (Lewenhaupt 2005).
area in which to explore structuring mechanics at work, since there is both stable and quickly changing relationships involved and because there are a lot of outside references with which to compare the suggestions made by the store, such as the wide range of fashion and lifestyle magazines.

Transferring to Department Stores
This brings us back to the purpose of the current work and how these systems of objects are formed and formulated in the department stores studied. As noted above, however, any translation between a semiotic system and space is dangerous and must be approached with care. There are a number of assumptions contained in many such analyses and a number of direct translations that tend to be made. Not the least, as Massey argues, one needs to keep in mind that whereas the spatial system can be analysed in its “totality”, it is rarely perceived (or lived) in such a way. Furthermore, she argues, it is of importance to keep in mind that the system is not a hermetically closed space, free to form its own set of values and ideas, and first thereafter brought into society, which is another problem for the spatial “reading” to come. Sturcuralistic analysis tend to be both asynchronous and form completely interlocked systems, which makes them totalitarian and excluding (Massey 2005, 36-39).

Massey’s point is of importance for the coming analysis for two reasons. First, it will grow obvious that the understanding of the department stores as spatial distributions becomes as most fruitful when they are treated as systems highly dependant on the exterior on the “concrete” level of spatial analysis (the concrete abstraction of the analyses) and on the understanding of the distributions in space encountered. Second, the formation of classes and categories in the department store is highly informed by, and formative for, values extrinsic to it, such as fashions, concepts, trends, commercials, and tastes. Therefore, the analyses will constantly be interwoven with discussions of fashion, trends, and other identification bases of the commodities at hand.

I have earlier argued (Koch 2004, 121-130) that the sorting of books express an underlying idea of what belongs together and what does not and that this presents an idea of how knowledge and/or literature is structured. While this simple argument is true to some extent, it is also somewhat simplified because the process involved is a more complex one, which is evident in the succeeding analysis of libraries although not given the weight it perhaps should have: the act of sorting as a social and cultural act of construction and communication. Baudrillard:

The organizing of things, even when in the context of technical enterprise it has every appearance of being objective, always remains a powerful springboard for projection and cathexis. (Baudrillard 1996, 29)

There are a number of factors deciding what goes where, which sometimes coincide and sometimes conflict, and where some kind of prioritisation sets in. Several books could fit in several of the emerging categories, and the categories assume properties not only thematically on the content of books, but from such choices as “what should be seen”, “what I need to reach”, concerns of size or kind (paperback, pocket, hardcover), and so forth. Some books do not even fit into the system or end up behind others—not because they are off topic, but because they are not presenting the kind of identity that we seek to express. Even in the private bookcase, it is possible to argue that the ordering of things is an act of communication with others as much as with sorting after one’s own preferences. While this is perhaps more evident—one would think—at home or in a shop, it is applicable to the libraries themselves (see Koch 2004, 121-130).

Furthermore, the importance of the above example of the handling of books in a bookcase is that it implies another process than what sometimes was assumed in the case of the libraries—namely that the local decisions serve to define the overall structure to a high degree. While there is a cataloguing system as the arranging of books start, it also emerges from choices made based on the literature available. This has bearing on the order in the libraries even though the process has more rigid conditions in the categorisation of media as defined by catalogisation principles and tradition. The “homogeneity” of library or department store spaces are at the same time series of distinct objects, local prioritisations and configurations, or as Lefebvre puts it:

The space of the commodity may thus be defined as a homogeneity made up of specificities. This is a paradox new to our present discussion: we are no longer concerned either with the representation of space or with representational space, but rather with a practice. (Lefebvre 1991, 341)

The point is to understand the system of objects encountered in the department stores, how it is formed, what categories, subcategories and values they construct, and how this is done by distribution in and of space. As such, this approach is somewhat deviating from Baudrillard’s, as Baudrillard speaks of a system of objects. The way this is used here, which from certain points of view could be seen as contradictory to his theories, is as a figure or model for how the department stores work—they each create “a system of objects” in which they can construct categories, assign category belonging, differentiate and characterise categories, and produce and express values and ideals. This system of object is, naturally, related to a larger system, and plays within a certain range of possibilities of conformation and deviation relative to it;
however, that the department stores form systems of objects is, I argue, undeniable and that these generally follow the same principles as Baudrillard’s system goes without saying.

It may be useful to consider what Barthes points to when differentiating fashion system and dress and dressing (what Entwistle would term situated bodily practice) as langue and parole (Barthes 2006, 27). It could be argued that what the department stores primarily present is langue, whereas the appropriation and consecutive use of the clothing is parole. Again this is a simplification, but it helps to structure the discussion and to set this part of the thesis into an overall analysis of the department stores.

This will be performed in three steps: the first analyses how commodities and contexts serve to define each other and how situations of co-presence and intervisibility construct categories; the second describes how these categories and their interrelations produce values, taste, and fashions; before the last step makes an effort to both summarise this, to situate it in contexts of management and society to further understand how and why encountered strategies make sense and to address ambiguities and inconsistencies in the chapters preceding it. This will prove the inevitability of taking into consideration how department stores are used and how this influences choices and priorities of spatial planning and management, leading over to Part III.

6. SPATIALISING CATEGORIES

It is no coincidence that, in all the four department stores in Stockholm, cosmetics are placed together and that there is a fragrance department, a makeup department, and a skin and body care department (with hair products either integrated or as yet another category). Neither is it a coincidence that they are spatially grouped together nor that there are departments for men’s fashion and women’s fashion, for shoes, for CDs, for books. Similarly, the books are sorted according to content and the apparel is sorted after brand—or, this is the usual line of argument. Is this really the case? How are these categories formed, internally and externally? What actually is grouped together, forming categories, what is fed from the outside, and is there a consistent taxonomy to be read? Are there decided differences between different department stores? Are they similar? Does the same logic apply throughout and how applicable is it down to detail? How are things grouped together and differentiated? Both Åhlens and Debenhams have the possibility to create more fleeting boundaries and open spaces where categories merge into one another than perhaps do the more mall-like NK and PUB.

The degree to which this openness is allowed to take effect, however, is questionable. Furthermore, it must be asked why this is done and how it affects the commodities involved—remember the discussion in chapter three regarding how context affects perception identity and character.

As a thematic concept for this discussion, I use modulations of Baudrillard’s term atmosphere (Baudrillard 1996, 30-65). In a simplified version, what Baudrillard means by atmosphere is the way space and objects are defined by relational constructs, or, as he says of man the interior designer: “[s]pace is at his disposal like a kind of distributed system, and by controlling this space he holds sway over all possible reciprocal relations between the objects therein, and hence over all the roles they are capable of assuming” (Baudrillard 1996, 26, my italics). The commodity is defined by relations (to other commodities) in space and defines space—relations that define both part and whole.

While Baudrillard’s argument is primarily about “the sociology of the interior design”, the general argument is applicable to any space: he gives similar arguments for how stores offer ranges of commodities as well as how this is done by placing a range of commodities next to each other even if the discussion on interior design is more intricate. It is this view of commodities as given identities by relations in space and defining and defined by space that makes the term appropriate for the coming discussion. This is a qualitative shift in space, stemming from mass-produced furniture and interior decoration. It is not dissolution of space, however, except in a specific interpretation of space that holds it to nostalgic qualities of internal identities
and truth if they even exist.\(^9\) Atmosphere, in the way it has been incorporated in the current work, can then be seen from a few different angles: as formulating the identities of the participating commodities; as constructing categories in how spatial relations between objects define what belongs together and what does not; and how these characterised categories form contexts, which is a term more focused on the space in which these categories are formed, and in which situations and events happen. In the analyses to come, there will be first one that aims at the understanding such relations between commodity and context, a second which deals with how categories are formed in space, and a final study which scrutinises not the categories themselves, but that which delineates them: boundaries and differentiations.

**Atmosphere I: Object Means Context Means Object**

She blinks. A James Bond set, Brosnan rather than Connery. She uses the remote as demonstrated, drapes drawing quietly aside to reveal a remarkably virtual-looking skyline, a floating jumble of electric Lego, studded with odd shapes you somehow wouldn’t see elsewhere, as if you’d need special Tokyo add-ons to build this at home. Logos of corporations she doesn’t even recognize: a strange luxury, and in itself almost worth the trip. She remembers this now from previous visits, and also the way certain labels are mysteriously recontextualized here: Whole seas of Burberry plaid have no effect on her, nor Mont Blank nor even Gucci. Maybe this time it will even have started to work for Prada. (Gibson 2004, 127)

If one were to assign a general character to the commodities encountered on the entrance floors of the analysed department stores, the typical answer would be that they constitute a general category of “impulse buys”. Yet, this clearly does not cover it. The finer jewellery and the more expensive fragrances are not impulse buys. Neither are they directed towards the group statistically buying most on impulse (Fragrance, jewellery, and cosmetics are tied to skin and body care, and are tied further mainly regarding people when situated in established contexts. A problem here is that differences of the participating commodities; as constructing categories in how spatial relations between objects define what belongs together and what does not; and how these characterised categories form contexts, which is a term more focused on the space in which these categories are formed, and in which situations and events happen. In the analyses to come, there will be first one that aims at the understanding such relations between commodity and context, a second which deals with how categories are formed in space, and a final study which scrutinises not the categories themselves, but that which delineates them: boundaries and differentiations.

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Baudrillard’s argument is that the range of objects on offer is more important than the individual object. At the same time, however, its entire point is that it is the objects that delineate them: boundaries and differentiations.

9. In a sense, Baudrillard falls into the same rhetoric he claims the system of consumption uses—that is, he is creating the longing for something by envisioning its existence, and then suggesting it as desirable by presenting it as lacking today. What he does is project backwards to an undecided point in time where there was “truth” and “freedom” without actually approaching what this would be: it is simply something that is now gone.

10. This, again, is a case where the commodities directed to those supposed to be impulsive rather than those who “actually” are, which is not a mere question of utility, but of cultural norms—although one cannot assume any one-to-one relationship between the directedness of the commodity for sale and customer who buy. That most cosmetics and jewellery are directed to women does not inherently mean that it is mostly women who buy them, and it is not the case that only women buy women’s watches or only men buy ties. Further of note is how these categories rather function as “stage setters” partially for historical reasons (Underhill 2004, 54-55).
that make their own contexts (or each others’ contexts). This argument at times tend to inflate into itself, where the context-means-object is pursued at the expense of the objects as producers of the context, which leaves something to say. As a means to approach this question—the relation between object and context—one can turn to art theory, such as Miwon Kwon’s One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity (Kwon 2002) and Martha Buskirk’s The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art (Buskirk 2005), both of which work with the relation between context and objects, if in different ways: Kwon as site-specific art and Buskirk through analysis of art and contextuality in Museums. Derived from their works are three strategies of art which together with atmosphere can serve as basis for an approach to the question in the coming: how objects can serve to confirm or change the context in which it is situated, how objects change identity depending on context, and how the situated work of art derives meaning from similar situations external to the context in question.

For Kwon, the two first of these form two major approaches to public art: art of intervention and art of integration. In one case, art is used to redefine or radically change with its context, meaning that the aim of the artwork is to change the character or identity of its context and its component parts. In the other case, the work of art is seen as coming from the context—supporting, strengthening, or expressing its identity and character (Kwon 2002, 56-99). In a sense, we can express this as forms of authorship: in the latter, it is the context that is to formulate the work of art, whereas in the former it is the artwork that is to formulate the identity of the context. Buskirk, on the other hand, is more focused on the shifting identity of (art) objects as context is shifted or changed—that is, how an object changes based on the relation to the objects constituting its context (Buskirk 2005, 161-210). Curiously, the closer study and discussion of these phenomena have been fairly absent in the consumption, retail, and shopping research encountered. It should also be recognised that

11. This is mostly true for retail theory, but also for the anthropological or ethnographical research encountered. It should also be recognised that essentialist here is allowed to cover a range of different views, where the common denominator is that the commodities are given identities external from the shopping situation, also the identities they are perceived as having in the same.

12. Ricoeur argues that the narrative ability consists of the ability to extract a configuration from a sequence (or the other way around). What this means to say is that the question of whether spaces are experienced in sequence or not, they still are ordered into configurations that make up a whole, where sequence is one property, but where configurative interrelations are the more important (Ricoeur 1981, 277-290).
part of a semiotic system. This simplified view of adjacencies also, as for Underhill, leads to a series of particular considerations of adjacencies (the mouse close to the mouse pads, the coffee-cups close to the coffee, etc.) which in the end forms so many contradictions of what should be close to what that it is not helpful either for orientation amongst or for sorting of the commodities at hand. Whereas they may be used superficially as an excuse for each local decision, it obscures the impact of all the visible adjacencies not used, and the importance of ideas of belonging in such a process—something demonstrated, as Buskirk argues, by the work of Fred Wilson, rearranging the historical exhibition of the Baltimore’s Maryland History Society in 1992 (Buskirk 2005, 162-173). Wilson’s work showed how re-contextualization of the historical objects both redefined the objects themselves and the contexts they were part of and the history of Maryland, which these contexts presented. Adjacencies, thus, are much more than a synergy effect retail strategy—something that is completely lost in the work of Underhill. Furthermore, if the commodities alter their identity with their context, the synergies possible to create are highly dependant on the context created.

To formulate the coming analysis more clearly, it will centre on themes of authorship—that is, how the context defines objects (what Kwon calls integration), how the objects define context (what Kwon calls intervention), and the constant reference to external systems of meaning. The purpose of these investigations is to understand how categories, as produced in space, are not about clustering of pre-existing groups, but a creative act of category construction and definition. This discussion will primarily be performed through examples.

A. Redefining Objects: The Authorship of Context

Asher managed, with this act of recontextualization alone, to draw attention to the definition of a monument, the impact of categorization by period and author, the process of preservation and conservation, and distinctions between original and copy within the hierarchy of the museum. The relocation of the sculpture from its position outside, standing in front of the museum, to the European art galleries pointed out the different ways this sculpture might be read—as a sculpture of Washington, and therefore connected to United States history, or as a work by Jean-Antoine Houdon, a French sculptor, which, in the context of a history of art written according to artists’ proper names, would be more appropriately contextualized according to the period and national origin of its maker. (Buskirk 2005, 171-172)

Pantyhose and silk stockings are in Åhens sorted as accessories close to the cosmetics and not the least jewellery, and by this relation presented as a means of embellishment or beautification of women’s legs: wearing (and buying) pantyhose is a public communicative act. This is what they are suggested to be if one were to try and make sense of the general context in which they are found. There is no point in arguing that this is not one of the roles of pantyhose, and one of the reasons they are worn (Entwistle 2000, 201-205). Depending on what is worn—say a short or knee-length skirt or dress—they might very well be an important part of the image to be presented either more expressively or in more or less “naturalising” forms.

On the other hand, in Debenhams, they rather form part of lingerie, and have a more intimate or personal role. While still having to do with bodily form and (bodily) surface, the context of lingerie suggests that it has to do more with intimacy, privacy, and comfort than with exposure, communication, and display. Both sorted as part of accessories and as part of lingerie it is possible to understand, construct, or interpret a reasonable role to them that makes them fit into the context. This is a result of both the looseness of such categories to begin with and the different roles possible for the pantyhose to take: there is a relation between accessories, surface, embellishment and body, which allows for the appearance of other commodities, which can assume roles within the same space. However, the two interpretations of the pantyhose cannot, without difficulty, be shifted, and still make sense. Whereas somewhat reasonable to read the same characteristics into the pantyhose/lingerie in Debenhams as to the pantyhose of Åhens, it is less easy to assume intimacy as primary role of something sorted amongst gloves, wallets, pocket books, and jewellery, and on quite much display (there are thirty eight models of women’s legs wearing silk stocking exposed at long distances) close from three of the entrances of the department store.

This is not to say that intimacy is not played upon overall in retail. The use of eroticism, intimacy, and desire has been, and still is strongly present in most any

13. The elaborate ways in which IKEA displaces the customer from the outside world before confronting them with the goods for sale is one of the major points of Penn’s paper, and works well to analyze how this process is formed by spatial means. Penn emphasises the role of staging in the retail strategy of IKEA—he does, however, separate the staging of the expositions, and the synergies of adjacencies (Penn 2005).

14. Notably, there are pantyhose and stockings to be found in the lingerie department in Åhens as well, together with other lingerie and sleepwear that are concerned with either larger bodies or with low prices—separated from the brand lingerie. These are, however, presented in a way more easily interpreted as functional.
retail thinking—not the least in advertising. What is the question here is the degree to which the department stores make use of context to define the commodities, or, perhaps more to the point, in what ways context forms categories in which commodities then find their place, thus constructing the commodities’ identities and belongings in the range on offer in similar ways as do museums for artworks (Buskirk 2005, 163-208; Bennet 1995, 163-173).

Let us turn to another example: Tiger Jeans. For the sake of the discussion, the focus can be put on the denim pants of Tiger Jeans. These were at the time of the inventorying available in three locations—three contexts—on the women’s fashion floor. Why would this be? They are not given comparatively at all too much exposure in any of them. One argument, naturally, would be that the more places they are to be found at, the bigger the chance they are chosen. But, what is at question here is if it can be considered that it really is the same commodity/object being sold in all three locations?

The first instance found in the Tiger department has an aura of trendiness and fashion consciousness about it. It is located directly as you come up the main escalator from the main floor, and it is surrounded by French Connection, Filippa K and designer clothes (Day/Night by Birger & Mikkelsen, Bruns Bazaar, etc.) of which most not coincidentally are the major brands advertised in Litkes—a trendy, yet socially conscious and intellectual fashion magazine with a forward image (e.g., Litkes #2 2006). This context of brands and designers, as well as the “internal” display of the most trendy- and fashion-conscious models from Tiger will influence everything found here: if put on a model here, it would seem as part of such an identity.

Comparatively, the Denim department, the second instance, has a range of goods that are primarily to be defined as denim pants, secondarily as denim, and participating in the larger category that is more or less possible to define as “street fashion” (Kawamura 2005, 100), with a distinct urban street feel to it and a lenience towards younger people. By this context, an expectancy and interpretation of the present commodities (which also serve to form this context) will be heavily put on the commodities found in it. The context is denim, and the style is what is important. This can finally be compared to the Tiger Jeans department, where the brand is important, as is its inclusion in the context of “street” or “urban” fashion of which the first mentioned Tiger department is not a part. The Tiger Jeans department is further put separately from the denim section, making the contradictory or multiple sorting less noticeable. This all makes sense if dressing is viewed as a configurative question just as much as a choice of specific clothing items:

[...] image can be treated as a consumption system which involves complementarity. The nature of consumption patterns as symbol systems underlies the view of fashion as an attempt to communicate one’s image. […] Like any system, fashion involves not only added effects but also interactions among its parts. Thus, one cannot treat fashion as the sum of isolated elements, but instead must consider the interrelations among its component parts. (Kawamura 2005, 94)

The different contexts form such different suggested interrelations of component parts and thus suggest different personalities or group-belongings of those who are interested in the commodities offered within them. Whether they are the same model or not is from this perspective not interesting.

Added to this configuration of commodities are different display methods, such as white and black melded with blingbling and with hip-hop and urban R&B music played loudly in the denim department, and more mainstream yet trendy music such as the new Madonna album together with sober “Scandinavian design” furnishing in the Tiger-Filippa K-French Connection-Designers’ section. Again, all these distributions make sense, but follow different prioritisations: they are arbitrary, yet still “rational” from a retail perspective, distinctly spatially constructed, and the place in which the commodities are found serve to present them as were they different. They are not, however, forming categories emerging from the same categorising operations.

Thus, while it could be argued that what is at work here is a series of different displays seducing different customers to enter them and browse the wares for something fitting, I would argue that it is more than that and rather a question of presenting, in effect, three different commodities, which if they would be placed next to each other would be the same (though some of them would change from what they were in the retail situation). The expectancy of the customer browsing these different departments would generally be directed by the category and character in which they are found, which serves as an important

15. This at times lead to protests, as for instance against the yearly lingerie ads from H&M, and reaching proportions where strip dancers model lingerie in Paris. Or, as the head of the Parisian department store Galeries Lafayette, Paul Delaoutre, says in Dagens Nyheter: “To seduce is important to our customers […] We want to be in frontline of the development.” (Lundegård 2003)

16. It may here also be in place to remind of the discussion in chapter three, and point to Figure 3:1 and 3:2.

17. As comparison, the denim department of Debenhams is located next to Top Shop, a section distinctly directed towards younger customers (and, also here, the two overlap, as for instance Levi’s can be found in both Top Shop and the denim department).
part in how they are identified and what configurations they are thought to be possible to be part of. Worn with a tight, pink, barebelly undershirt, and petit high heels, they would be quite differently seen than if worn with Dr. Marten’s and a black leather jacket or for that matter, together with hiking boots and a Canada Goose jacket.

A second example, where this is thrived upon (though it is done everywhere, be it within a brand, adjacent brands or context of style) would be Top Shop in Debenhams (Figure 6:I). Located separately from the rest of both men’s and women’s fashion, yet still with an internal order primarily based on gender, the third party store forms a section directed more to younger people than the rest of the department store. Top Shop, according to the personnel, sells quite well, which was attributed to the constant remodelling of the department. Every day they moved around and changed the displays, giving display to different wares each day.18

This re-contextualisation, however, was quite local. The Top Shop clothes did not move closer to the entrance. Neither are the overall categories mixed: the boundaries between the accessories, jewellery, the women’s Top Shop, and the men’s Top Man remain intact. The moving around of commodities is thus performed on an area which forms not much more than a hundred square meters, which is quite limited compared to the possibilities of Debenhams as a whole. It is also, it can be argued, too small to really be so full of different commodities that it is impossible to get a good overview of what is available reasonably quick, which would suggest that the impact on the amount of visitors and sells ought not be that remarkable. The point here is that what they are doing is remodelling the situation and context, and thus, indirectly, redefining the commodities for sale themselves. Similar to the ways in which artists such as Wilson, Haacke, and Asher works to re-define artworks—whose works con -

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What is done is actually a redefinition of the commodities offered, and hence, if we allow ourselves to take the argument to the extreme for now, for the customers there is every day a whole range of new goods for sale.20

Similar arguments for the use of context to define commodities or groups thereof can be made for most parts of the department stores, but the question need be put how commodities give character to their contexts rather than the other way around as the ongoing argument is that these processes constantly complement one another.

B. Providing Character: The Authorship of Objects

When you work in the glove department at Neiman’s, you are selling things that nobody buys anymore. These gloves aren’t like the hard-working ones sold by L.L. Bean; these are so fine that a lady wearing them can still pick up a straight pin. The glove department is adjacent to the couture department and is really there for show. So a lot of Mirabelle’s day is spent leaning against the glass case with one leg cocked behind her and her arms splayed outward, resting on her palms against the countertop. On an especially slow day she might lean over the case on her elbows—although this position is definitely not preferred by the management—and stare through the glass at the leather and silk gloves that lie on display like pristine, just-caught fish. The overhead lights reflect in the glass countertop and mingle with the grey and black of the gloves, resulting in a mother-of-pearl swirl that sometimes sends Mirabelle into a shallow, hypnotic dream. (Martin 2000, 1)

If the context to a large degree is the commodities, then there is definitely a complex relation between the commodity and context in defining identities of each other. There is not first context and then object. The place is not really existent before the commodities are put in place that would border on suggesting a perspective that “[…] is predicated on the belief that a particular site/place, with its identity-giving or identifying properties, exists always and already prior to whatever new cultural forms might be introduced to it or emerge from it” (Kwon 2002, 164). The ongoing argument is based on the establishment of character as an intricate interplay between the identity of the object and the context forming each other more or less si-

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18. This was confirmed both by the personnel of Top Shop, other personnel as well as the attempts to note down the organisation of the department: every day I had to make adjustments to the drawings since significant redistributions had taken place.

19. The “expected” amount of customer presence is based on a spatial analysis of accessibility giving a surprisingly high correlation to movement (r-square value of 0.7), and the high sales of the department was claimed by the personnel of Debenhams in informal talks during the observations.

20. I do not intend to claim that the personnel actively perceive it this way, or intentionally work with this as a goal. The question is what happens when commodities are rearranged, not why, or what is aimed at.
multaneously. This means that while it is possible to discuss the changing identity of the commodity as in the section above, it must also be possible to understand the other way around. As being used in this way, the glove department in Steve Martin’s imaginary department store Nieman’s serves basically one purpose: to give status and character to the commodities around it in order to make them sell more, not to sell the gloves themselves. At first, this may seem to be a caricature, and should the department stores be rational constructs for rational buyers comparable situations would not be found. While this may be true to whole departments in relation to one another, the very operation in question is used—perhaps most blatantly—in two cases in the men’s fashion department of Åhlens.

The first case is the street fashion section, where—framed by Edwin Jeans, Armani, Diesel and Lee—there is a huge television set showing MTV-videos, a pair of relaxing chairs to match, and top list CDs and pockets connected to an urban lifestyle (Figure 6:II). While the CDs and books are for sale, the stereo, TV sets and furniture are not. Instead, they are used to fill the area with reference to youth, MTV-culture and urban life. One can wonder if this has been made in response to that, as a result of its location, there are too few customers browsing to by themselves provide a lively “urban” context—the same is not the case in the women’s fashion department, where there is also a lot more activity. Possibly, synergies could be called for as reason, but why is the grand TV-set and the armchairs here?

Second, we find the comfortable armchairs returning although of different and more sober, mature models in the Hugo Boss and the Tommy Hilfiger departments. The arrangement of the furniture here, especially in the Tommy Hilfiger case, is not one of relaxation or rest. The furniture is rather put on display, and whoever would choose to sit there would be amongst the first things seen for anyone coming up the western set of escalators as well as from the suits department. Instead, the most reasonable role played by the furniture is here creating associations to the well-off home or office with sober and tasteful interior and furnishing and with relaxed yet formal atmosphere. Compared to each other, the seating groups of the street fashion section and Tommy Hilfiger department almost caricature the difference between the traditional gentleman and the (well off) urban youth. The arrangement of commodities thus form their own context and produces an idea, even a general narrative, of how society works, similar to the ways libraries describe knowledge and literature (Koch 2004, 152-158), Art Museums describe art (Bourdieu and Darbel 1991, 37-41), and historical museums present history (Bennet 1995, 33-47).

In the cases presented above, commodities of other categories or not for sale or otherwise not belonging in the “rational” shoppers universe were used to share their character to the commodities around themselves. However, this is not the only way that commodities, or collections thereof, can be used to give character and identity to other objects—on the contrary, would-be opposites are used as well in both large and small scale.

In both Debenhams and Åhlens, there is a quite small (only a few square meters in size) section of men’s cosmetics, separated from the cosmetics department as a whole, put somewhat to the side but in rather good a position for getting exposure, in which several brands provide products made for men. This is, one could argue, following the development in society making it more acceptable for men to work makeup and work with their looks on a vain and self-conscious level, and it helps men looking for “their” cosmetics to easily and quickly find it. However, by this very action, another thing is done as well. It clearly, and rather bluntly, suggests that the rest of the cosmetics department is not for men without using a sign saying “women’s cosmetics”.

Here, men form the sex, which is not norm, must be defined and must be described as sex contrary to the general discourse on gender where the man is the norm and woman the sex. This is not quite the same as challenging that idea; it is just to say that the norm as gendered is defined by that which is not norm being explicitly gendered rather than being gendered in itself. This, the need to explicitly state the man, is reoccurring in both fashion magazines and in the department stores, working continuously to form fashion and shopping into something that is feminine. There is shopping and fashion, and there is men’s shopping and men’s fashion, a development that is consistent with how fashion has been regarded throughout the 20th century (Kawamura 2005; Entwistle 2000; Wigley 1995).

The examples given above are extreme uses of one to define the other, of object to define context, but this process should be seen as ongoing continuously all the way down to every single piece of clothing and its relative location to other commodities—albeit the impact differs widely. One of the more important ways this is used is perhaps the use of clothing models, which will be handled in chapter twelve as it is intimately connected to a number of other factors serving to define and differentiate people. Whereas objects are defined by their context, they are simultaneously helping to form the context of other objects (which participated in the production of the original context) in a chain of interrelations.

21. It is not unreasonable that this is done with the major intent to be serviceable to men seeking cosmetics. Overhearing the personnel during the observations, this was the way it was discussed between them. To what degree this was also an intended act of protecting the cosmetics as primarily a feminine/female concern is not clear, and any suggestions would be speculative.
C. Context-Association-Situation: The Home Department, Åhlens

I didn’t intend to sleep with him, truly I didn’t, but we ended up in the bedding department at Bloomingdale’s and who could really be expected to think straight, surrounded by all those intoxicatingly high thread counts.

“You run these through the dryer a few times before you use them, and you’re never going to want to get out of bed again,” I marveled, examining a deep-pocketed fitted sheet. Then I turned over the shrink-wrapped package to glance at the price. “Ouch.”

Connor was studying a display bed made up in gray pillows and darker gray blankets, accented with a pearl gray chenille throw. “Hey, what do you think of this?”

“It’s a little Maoist, don’t you think?”

He stepped over to the next display, a jumble of floral sheets and Pepto Bismol-colored shams. “I suppose you’re going to try to fob this nightmare off on me?”

I flopped down on the puffy down comforter, then tossed a rose-strewn pillow his way. “I think it would be perfect for a single man living alone.”

He sat down next to me. “Tell you what, grab some scissors and you can take your half right now.” […]

And then he shoved aside all the ruffles and chintz and kissed me. Right there in the middle of the department. And good news: the raging nightmare off on me?

Ouch.

The contexts created here—in the parts ordered after apartment space—are thus not directed to produce a style, but rather a sense of social situation or activity. This is most apparent when it comes to the eastern half, which is more or less devoted to

The examples above followed in advance rather expected categorization and characterisation: the category street fashion is constructed around a perceived character of itself (urban, young, rebellious), which is created by the commodities for sale—a character which is then capitalized and enhanced by the booming stereo and big-screen television. For these, thus far, it would seem that the major categorising operations comes down to gender (men’s or women’s), (life)style (such as urban, street, trendy), type (such as apparel, pants, books), subtype (occasion accessories, cheaper jackets) and brand (such as tiger, M.A.C, Calvin Klein). But, however tempting it is to move on using these as the major categorising operations, there is still some need to go further in this analysis of the systems of the department stores. There is, namely, other factors at work in the production of categories and characters—categorisations and characterisation of which the understanding comes not as easy in every case. This becomes perhaps as most apparent if one turns to the home department of Åhlens.

On a more overall level, first, the home floor of Åhlens seems ordered after the regular apartment. There is the bedroom part and the living room part—in-between which one can find carpets, textiles, storage boxes and frames. Linked to both one can find lamps. The bedroom is linked to the bathroom via towels past bathing to grooming. When moving from living room to bathroom, one passes either bedroom or storage boxes. Internally, the bedroom and living room departments follow a basic furnishing tendency—or, rather, after kinds of social activities, as they are sorted somewhat after “sleeping”, “sitting in the sofa”, and so forth. The way the departments are sorted also emphasise this—the cozy atmosphere and emphasis on cushions and textiles in the living room department suggest a relaxed atmosphere, while the clean, almost clinical, feel of the bathroom department suggest cleanliness. The connection between the bathroom, towels and beds gives a private character to the department; or at least as something that is directed to the person.

Aside from this, there is a clustering of electric gear consisting of the lamps, kitchen electrics and bathroom electrics (even shavers and blow-dryers), which is, again, logical but somewhat breaking the earlier found pattern, even if this is covered up somewhat by the electrics being internally ordered to correspond to the neighbouring departments’ characters. There is also the brand-ordered store of Muji, which offers designer goods of all the categories available. There is ambiguity, however, in the ordering after “apartment space”, and it is not the question of a direct link, an ambiguity that, for Baudrillard, is in the very core of the idea of atmosphere (Baudrillard 1996).

The contexts created here—in the parts ordered after apartment space—are thus not directed to produce a style, but rather a sense of social situation or activity. This is most apparent when it comes to the eastern half, which is more or less devoted to
things that are connected to eating, drinking or having coffee and contain a restaurant. At first, this part can seem odd and somewhat jumbled. However, there is clearly an “invitational dinner” category formed by finer glasses, plates, utensils and decorations for the dinner table, which connects to tablecloths. The character and category is constructed by inclusion of “everything” that belongs to such an occasion. In contrast, the other places where one can find plates and kitchen utensils, some of this is missing (such as tablecloths, wine glasses and perhaps most of all drink glasses). This is not made as obviously in IKEA, staging activities or homes obviously in display areas (see Penn, 2005), but rather serve as the categorising operation and, though less obviously, the base for selection and communication of the commodities’ roles in the home. Thus, the division of the home department seem to be more based on some kind of social situating, which again is—if we are to believe Baudrillard—a key component of the development of atmosphere, since

[…] chairs no longer gravitate towards a table; these days seats take on their own meaning, while tables—typically low coffee tables—are subordinate to them. This meaning, moreover, refers not to the posture of the body but to the position of interlocutors relative to each other. The general arrangement of the seating and slight changes in people’s positions in the course of an evening may be said, for example, to constitute a discourse in themselves. Modern seating—pouf or settee, wall-sofa or easy chair—invariably lays the stress on sociability and conversation, promoting a sort of all-purpose position, appropriate for the modern human being, which de-emphasizes everything in the sitting posture that suggests confrontation. No more beds for lying in, no more chairs for sitting at, ‘functional’ seats which treat all positions, and hence all human relationships, as free synthesis. (Baudrillard 1996, 44-45)

Whereas no actual furniture in the form of sofas or beds is for sale in the department stores, there is a general compliance to such an ordering after sociability, or social situation, to which the commodities at hand are associating by their collection into ranges of goods. These social situations are actually detached from the apartment spaces as concrete singularities, rather following the flexible situations that take place within them. The kitchen appliances are sorted into the more modern “social cooking” and the less social “cooking as labour”—roughly—where the activity of having tea or coffee serves as some intermediate, and reoccur in two instances. One more classic connection to baking and one more trendy aspect around the espresso machines and electronics, where the designer espresso cups are to be found. The separation between that which is for the dinner and that, which is for the everyday kitchen labour, is not between different apartment spaces but for different social situations. In this way the traditional home labour is separated from the “social stage” of the kitchen/dinner department in a surprisingly clear yet at first hidden way.

If objects define series of atmospheres and contexts in which commodities are situated, which at the same time construct these contexts, this is an argument that comes full circle (and, in reality, such self-construction is partly the case). At the same time, we have seen how the same commodity can wander around in different categories and how this changes both category and commodity, or at least presents them as different than other groupings would. For the category to be viable, however, which becomes obvious in the home floor of Åhlens, neither similarity of commodities per se nor inherent qualities giving character to a category are enough. By being in a context of that is needed for a finer dinner, this activity and situation—completely external to the department store as such—is what serves as basis for the category as well as to give it its character.

The importance of context and its role in defining the commodities is thus created not only internally in the store, but by the contextuality of shopping in general—that is, the fact that most shopping decisions are made in consideration to situations outside of the shopping situation itself can be traced in the sorting principles of the department stores studied (Chua 1992, 122-132). The contexts in the department store—be it brand, style, status or whichever is used as categorisation—serves to suggest links between these out-of-shopping situations and the inside-shopping contexts, the audience in absentia is given character by the commodities present, and in many cases not by direct reference to material contexts but to activities. The degree to which individual consumers are sensitive to such definition by contextuality, and the degree to which they are able to recontextualise found commodities on their own, likely vary greatly, but is although noteworthy not the topic for now. The question must instead be turned to how, if this is true, contexts are given form in the department store and how this affects the range of goods offered.

Atmosphere II: Constructing Category

Researchers in the field of environment and behavior are beginning to do this and to indicate how an unreflective categorization precludes the recognition of variety, complexity, and change. One eventual consequence of such research should be the spurning of oppositional and hierarchical dualisms and the development of more inclusive, more complex, and more changeable categories. (Franck 2000, 297)
There is a prevailing notion among those who I have talked to during this project to provide a few assumptions on the logic of grouping of objects. There is the idea of the importance of brands, the idea of the provision of ranges of selection, the idea of enabling comparison, and the idea of impulse and synergy effects. They are formed around the views of the rational customer and the impulse-driven seduction by desire, and they are provided as ideas that—to a surprising degree—describe the act of the store as more or less neutral market strategy, responding to customer desires or demands (however illogical a “neutral market strategy” might be to begin with). The same kind of assumptions can be found in much retail literature—especially the ones of brand and of synergy effects—both as retail strategy that ought to be used and as strategies used. There is some need to more critically investigate what these categories are, however, and how they are formed. Not the least because they are often seen as “natural” or as “neutral” results of supply and demand.

This analysis does not intend to investigate the organisational departments per se, neither is its purpose to learn what the management of the department stores claim to be the strategy, nor the public maps, guides or presentations that are available. As Lefebvre argues, the way space is conceived by the architects, planners and managers is not necessarily the way it is lived or perceived (Lefebvre 1991). The management of the department store is, however, often a more involved process in place, where the performance of the department store is continuously monitored, both economically and on-site as the managers go around looking or are informed by the personnel than the more abstract planning or designing of a new building or the mapping and planning of a suburb.

The process at work here, then, must be understood as an act of communication. Not in the same way as a plan, map, or text, but a communication by use of space and commodity, where the department store mediates its content to its customers—by use, as one means, of construction of categories. The categories are formed by someone and mediated by spatial agglomeration and situation to someone, or someone organises the commodities into categories that make sense in the situated process, and these categories then return as a logic of the world in front of the work for the “reader”. This act of communication is not direct, but emerging in everyday practice, where what is stated is formed by practical and ideological factors and is interpreted in the same fashion although whereas the categories emerging in these processes may be alike, they are not necessarily the same (Ricoeur 1981, 274-290).

Thus, the aim is to study encountered material reality and to compare it to categories as presented by management, personnel, and fashion magazines. The general question to be handled here is that of clustering of commodities in space. These categories—both in large and small scale—are studied as created by commodities being situated together in space. The lingerie department is demarcated in space and made into a lingerie department by the commodities present, whereas the category of lingerie is (in the department store) produced by the spatial clustering of lingerie. This process, though, as of yet quite a simplified example, is much like that of classifying books in a bookcase. As the sorting is studied concretely and with less filters of ideas of brand or type as main ordering principle these (extrinsically) preconceived categories will both show to be flawed in some respects and be strengthened in other.

In other words, what concerns us now is how commodities form co-presences, which is a form of spatial situation (Hillier 1996, 186-189; Giddens 1984, 68-73), and further how these co-presences overlap each other or are separated and in what ways they are connected. In this form, atmosphere is concerning structures of reciprocal spatial relations in what in one way or the other is present in “a physical space” in a rather limited sense close to a “room”. This is a presupposition of the analysis, but not taken out of nowhere—it follows a general practice in the sorting of commodities and is included in Baudrillard’s term atmosphere (Baudrillard 1996). It is further of use because it is not only a term for how similarities are spatially clustered, but of how spatial clustering constructs belonging.

Such systems do tend to coincide rather well, even though when presented as a whole they make less sense than would perhaps be thought. In the previous project on libraries this became quite apparent: in all presentations for librarians—especially those whom it concern the most—there have been both surprise and somewhat amused bemused confirmation as the emergent range of categories is presented, such as in Malmö City Library, where the emerging system of knowledge, as represented by the categorisation of books, could be described as consisting of “Society and history”, “nature and technology”, “politics, economy and jurisprudence”, “communication and creative arts”, “fiction”, “older fiction”, “for children”, “for people with for some reason difficulties to read”, “easy or shallow reading”, “music and entertainment”, “news”, “popular” and even “about the local area or produced by people from it” (Koch 2004, 124).

The coming investigation, however, is not about the range of categories as spatially defined in the department stores—such categories are constantly renegotiated and changing. The point is trying to discern spatial categorising operations. That is, what spatial mechanics are used to discern, formulate and describe a category in as far as distribution in and of space is concerned. This will go through investigations of “supposed” categories, scrutinising whether they are actually consistent and formulated as such spatially.

The latter is not to claim that empirical comparative studies have been made with consumer lifestyle and taste within the scope of this work, but rather to say that the in the encountered order can be seen how lifestyle, social contexts and brands are used to produce one another as important grounds for categorisation. A study of a wide range of fashion magazines further serves to support such claims.
A. Preconceived and Constituted Categories: The Main Entrance Floors

A rather simple point of departure would be a quick overview of the main entrance floors of Åhlens (Figure 6:III) and Debenhams (Figure 6:IV) as they have basically the same range of commodities for sale. There are, directly inside the main entrances, cosmetics. The cosmetics department, in both cases, can be said to form a field where there is no other category interfering—save if one should count a manicure bar as interference in the cosmetics category. Close to cosmetics can be found fragrances, jewellery and body care (which in Åhlens is to be found one stair down, and in Debenhams is partially integrated into cosmetics), and a bit further of can be found accessories, which are then related to bags and shoes. The departments are forming fairly easily discernible spaces with high-rise shelves or walls separating them from each other, and especially those, which are of more different character, so that the jewellery-cosmetics-fragrances are more clearly separated from the accessories, which in turn are separated from shoes. In Åhlens, the books on the main entrance floor are clearly separated from all other categories, except from some of the accessories and (notably) the bags—although it is mainly pocket books that can be found close to accessories.

Most of these categories that seem somehow natural can be understood as constituted in space and by space. The shoes department in Åhlens has clear spatial boundaries, and within it, only shoes are available. Basically, this is what makes it the shoes department—but it is also limiting it to a shoe department. The high-rise separation between it and the accessories is firm: on one side, shoes, on the other, accessories. Nonetheless, it is very close. The bags, albeit directly by the books, have a marked separation by a high-rise shelf, forming more or less a wall, after which there is some empty space before the books appear. In the jewellery department there seems to be included other embellishments, such as sunglasses and watches, although there is a differentiation between a space dedicated to jewellery and jewellery alone and that which is occupied by watches, sunglasses, and additional jewellery. Perhaps the jewellery has been allowed to spill over into the other, which only serves to indicate the fairly loose boundary between the categories (what is the difference between a watch and a bracelet?).

Thus far, it would seem that the these categories are not given spatial form fully following the same strategies and that there are some issues as to whether they are actually spatially defined or if they are categories to which it is possible to find spatial boundaries. This is, as of yet, partly the case, and to some extent need be: there is no absolute consistency, and the categories are at times not separated by more than a shift of commodities from one shelf to the next. Such shifts, however, tend to be either within a common, higher-level category, or in the kinds of areas that are not ordered based on sameness of type, but either by other similarities (discounts or Christmas offers) or by being “leftovers”. This is quite similar to the last little pile of “other” books that emerge when ordering the bookcase, or the box of “miscellaneous” that are the inevitable result of the ordering of a cellar storage, or for that matter cleaning up in an apartment. 23

To further scrutinize these categories and their formation in space, we can turn back to the cosmetics departments. In one sense, these are distinctly sorted by brand, and this is a common categorising operation within the category of cosmetics. These brands then are agglomerated into the general category of cosmetics. At least this is the assumption. If that is so, this is not done purely by framing them with walls nor by separating or connecting them by aisles. There is a distinct separation, in both department stores, of two groups of cosmetics, one on each side of the main entrance, and the main communication routes. In Åhlens, the separation is also by a set of escalators, where the cosmetics form a somewhat amoeboid form stretching out in (two) branches. At first glance, one might be tempted to say that the cosmetics department is held together by extrinsic categorisations rather than spatial or internally in the department store, making everything that counts as cosmetics form the boundaries of the department. As far as it is the cosmetics that make it to a cosmetics department to begin with, this is of course true. Is there a connection to spatial form here, aside from the pre-conceived categorisation of cosmetics? The focus can, first, be put on the cosmetics department of Åhlens (Figure 6:V).

Here is, first, a sequential operation at work: both the cosmetics branches are encountered simultaneously when coming from the main entrance. This is a rather weak connection, in part since this is only one narrative of the department store. 24 Further, however, they frame the entrance space—together with the fragrances, for sure, but these are separated from it by an alarm system that is used for the cosmetics. Third, there is an intricate play of facing: Lancôme, Biotherme and Kanebo, in Åhlens, face Makeup Store, the manicure bar and Nouba, parts of LaPraire faces...

23. As a testimony to the primary force of differentiation, every meta-category, and even every category on a rather fine scale, end up with a collection of commodities that has no place in the presented taxonomy, and which are then often lumped together, or placed in spaces that has little relation to the commodity save that it too has as of yet been unused. This is something I will return to in chapter eight; the issue at hand is the construction of the categories themselves.

24. Narrative would here mean the “story” of a visit to the department store, guided primarily by how one moves through it, like one would move through a book or a story, in a sequence of places. It is not a linear phenomenon per se, and not the least, it can begin at one of the several entrances to Åhlens City.
Dior and Elisabeth Arden. A subtle variation on the corner of LaPraire creates this facing, which is, in the department store in question, a rather uncommon and likely deliberate complication of the simple corner which it could end in. Behind LaPraire, Kanebo, Lancôme and Biotherm, this field continues with an aisle framed by Darphin, Clinique and Helena Rubinstein, ending up in the far end with Pythomer, Revlon, Maybelline, DeCleor, Lumene and L’Oreal. The corridor between LaPraire, Sisley, Kanebo and the cosmetics showcase on the one hand, and Guerlain and Chanel on the other, is also given a slight inclination that suggests the belonging to M.A.C. and Sans Soucis. Furthermore, LaPraire, M.A.C., Sisley and Guerlain form a subspace, or sub context, which by M.A.C is furthered to the other side into first La Mer, Sans Soucis and the row of Shisheido to Makeup store. M.A.C. is placed so as to connect LaPraire with Sans Soucis, and so forth. Shisheido, finally, is put demonstratively facing the rest of the makeup rather than facing directly towards the closest entrance.

The same strategy is at work, basically, in Debenhams, where a space intersected by information desks and the beginnings of the escalators are overcome by a system where on the left side from the entrance, Shisheido, Chaude, Yves Saint Laurent, Helena Rubinstein and Estée Lauder are facing first Kanebo, Clinique and Lancôme in the middle, facing both ways, and second men’s cosmetics, Claris, Christian Dior and Biotherm. The bathing and skincare department is then facing another way, before Isadora, Maxfactor, Nivea, Revlon and Maybelline form a cluster that is directed facing L’Oreal, facing several ways to Kanebo and so forth, men’s cosmetics and the cosmetics aisle produced by this situation. This is further connected by the beauty boxes in-between. Of note is that the only part here decidedly facing a different way is also the part that contains skincare—the part that is most deviating from cosmetics as a category. The cosmetics are also ended, as a group, by the wall that is the framing action of Isadora’s facing. The jewellery department is not facing the cosmetics, whereas lying close by, and the fragrances are separated again by an alarm system. In both cases, as well, there are few mutual situations of facing between the fragrances and the cosmetics. Shisheido ends with a subtle outcropping before a sharp turn into fragrances, whereas the same is not the case on the other side.

Thus, cosmetics do not form a clearly defined “room”—they take on an amoeboid form, which is given spatial form by a series of boundaries, facings and connecting aisles and paths that are possible to fit into a form describing cosmetics, but do not necessarily constitute it. Such arguments can be repeated throughout the department stores and will be returned to continuously, but it ought to have become apparent that it is not a question of homogeneous categories with homogeneous sets of relations—either internal or external—and hereby there are several layers of possible meanings and a series of alternative categorisations made.

B. Commodity and Category as Weak and Spatial Constructs

Similarly layered formations of categorisations can be discerned throughout the entrance floor and throughout the entire department store. There is a category formed by books, across parts of the accessories (notably gloves, scarves, hats and wallets) to travelling, computer and working bags. This category is separated from the other books by means of distance as well as an intervening cashier’s desk. At the same time as the book category forms a field by series of nextness. Among accessories, the stockings and pantyhose are separated from this category by being set aside, and being loosely connected to the jewellery, watches and finer cosmetics. The books are clearly separated from watches, jewellery, and cosmetics and from boots and shoes by distinct walls.

For the books, they follow the tendency of libraries and bookstores, such as Akademibokhandeln and Hedengrens, which are basically ordered following the sequence, from entrance to deepest inside the store, of magazines, top lists and pockets, offers, fiction and then leading on to different kinds of factual books, where “coffee-table books” such as books on Stockholm, photography, architecture, film, music and arts come before the more “hardcore” factual books of humanities, philosophy, and science, but the magazines are skipped, and the books available in Åhlens end up rather shallow in the range, consisting of pockets, coffee-table books, fiction, and hobby books.

On the floor one stair up, as most would assume, the brand department for Tiger holds Tiger clothes. This is clear, and there is no exception within the Tiger department to be found. However, if one starts by assuming Tiger as brand category to be the singular distinctive force at work or deduce this as a fact from the existence of the Tiger brand store, one risks overseeing the fact that clothes from Tiger are possible to find in at least three locations in Åhlens in the women’s fashion floor alone. This same phenomenon can be repeatedly found for Calvin Kline, for French connection and so forth in the women’s fashion department, as for Armani, Calvin Klein, Dolce & Gabana, Tiger, and so forth in men’s fashion department. Hugo Boss suits are available both in the Hugo Boss store and the NK Man department at NK. In similar fashion, yet less proliferating, books on Malmö and books on Stockholm in several places in the City Library of Malmö and books on Stockholm in several places in the City Library of Stockholm.

25. Akademibokhandeln Måster Samuelsgatan is Sweden’s biggest bookstore, located not too far from Åhlens and Debenhams in Stockholm city, and Hedengrens is a large bookstore with a comparatively wide range of books found on Stureplan or Sturegallerian.

26. In NK, the bookstore is located much deeper inside the department store—and also has a wider range of factual books by comparison. This can, naturally, also have to do with the general customer profile of the two department stores, and should not be taken as evidence on its own.
may be of note that this does not translate to that every brand is spread out on multiple locations: some are more “allowing” than others and some are more of sub-categories than forming categories of their own.

The point of this is more than anecdotal or a lining up of categories and commodities, however. The point is how it demonstrates both the arbitrariness of the categories and the danger of assuming an apparent sorting logic to be the logic used. By expanding the argument regarding cosmetics, two things become clear: the first is the loose and sometimes conflicting relation between the preconceived and the spatially formed categories, and the second is the inconsistency and complexity of the categorisation. As we could see, several brands of cosmetics were included in more than one spatial context. However, if we allow ourselves to consider overlapping of spatial contexts to be important for the construction of category, the number of categories can be drastically reduced: the fact that the convex space of Tiger, Filippa K and French Connection in large is overlapping the one of Åhlens and the row of Designer clothes along the escalators makes it possible to claim they form a “higher level” category by association. However, this also makes it clear that several possible higher-level categories can be constructed, including parts of other categories.

While the above clearly shows how a range of commodities are put into different categories and what would seem to be logical categories in advance reappear in several instances, it must be made clear that this is not to say that there is a haphazard organisation of the goods. The point is the opposite—when browsing the goods, all of the categories and separations make sense, and it is possible to navigate using them as guides. They emphasise different roles of the commodities: if we are to believe Baudrillard, they also define these commodities. A final point can be illustrated by one final example.

Apparently, in Åhlens, silk stockings are something in-between accessories and jewellery, whereas in Debenhams they rather are lingerie or underwear. With some small liberties taken with the concept of convexity, there is a category formed in Åhlens consisting of accessories (as they are traditionally categorised), including handbags, wallets, scarves, gloves, hats and so on, pocket- and top-list books and pantyhose and silk stockings. This is then divided by the main isles into bags and books, occasion accessories and accessories and pantyhose, with a small high-rise marking the difference between accessories and pantyhose. In Debenhams, pantyhose are to be found amongst lingerie, not even clearly forming a discernible spatial category. In Debenhams, accessories are more clearly divided into two groups by a set of stairs, consisting of finer accessories (called “occasion accessories”) together with shoes and other accessories somewhat above. The travelling bags, backpacks, and computer bags are sorted half a stair up in Åhlens, opposite the designer handbags and behind the accessories—yet with an open relation, removing the function of display area that the far wall of the accessories department would otherwise have gotten.

As can be seen, the constructed categories and contexts are local phenomena within specific department stores, which follow similar principles and general concepts, but also lead to different interpretations or prioritisations of what role, identity, or belonging a commodity has. Such an interpretation is forced as the categories are spatialized as commodities are to be sorted in space, at times solved by reoccurrence in many contexts, at times by choice between possible inclusions. If atmosphere, seen as relations of visibility (nextness, intervisiblity and facing), serve as an important way in which category is produced, then there is need to question the preconceived categories such as cosmetics and study the material realisation closer.

C. Relations of Co-Presence and Intervisibility: A Closer Look at Cosmetics

The cosmetics category—in both department stores, as well as in both PUB and NK—form a rather loose spatial form of co-presences and facings. The category is produced in interplay between spatial form and distribution of commodities and guidance of the view of the consuming subject. The category, however, is not homogeneous, as we have seen. In Åhlens, Maybelline, Lumene, L’Oreal, and Nivea are placed deep inside, behind and partly obscured by other brands such as Kanebo, Lancôme and LaPrairie. Shiseido, Yves St Laurent, Elisabeth Arden, Dior, Estée Lauder, Thierry Mugler, and so forth are grouped together on the other side of the store along the display windows to Klarabergsleden. These are differentiated in space, as far as nextness and intervisiblity is concerned. These different categories correspond to different status aspirations. Thus, while the category of cosmetics can be spatially described, other categories are formed in space, that actually are spatially more clearly formulated. If we, while staying within spaces that are somehow including cosmetics, investigate what spatial contexts are possible to find, we will find first a strong heterogeneity within the category of configurations deeper inside the entrance floor than women’s, either set to the side and requiring a near full turnaround to find, or behind high-rise shelves and walls. Further, whereas these reappear deeper in the system in more complete range, the ladies’ accessories tend not to. Interestingly, in PUB and NK there seem to be an actual and rather dramatic division between “impulse buy” accessories and “finer” accessories for men.

27. Men’s accessories—save watches, sunglasses and gloves—are not found here. Ties and men’s shoes are four floors up, a recurring pattern in both Debenhams and Åhlens. To some extent, this is not the case in NK and PUB, where some shirts and ties, somewhat characterisable as accessories, are found on the entrance floor, pending the results of the ongoing rebuilding of the two. This said, in both PUB and NK, men’s accessories are...
cosmetics, and second, that this heterogeneity is fully possible to explain in reference to social regulations of cosmetics brands and target consumers. But, this point is better made through a closer investigation. What is different in the coming analysis from the one above is that it conceptually starts from what is ordered close and what is differentiated from each other; this analysis produces categories rather than starting with applying categories and letting the commodities fall into these.

However, whereas for instance fragrances—in both department stores—tend to form a space, where from any position in it you can see any other position in it, constituting a situation of co-presence in space (convex space), the other commodities tend to be distributed into more disperse spatial formations. The same factors as those constituting the fragrance departments, however, can be used to closer analyse the spatial formation of categories in general: the convex spaces of the fragrance departments are spaces of intervisiblility and differentiation where everything is visibly connected to everything else (convex space: Hillier and Hanson 1984, 97-98). Such spatial formations work to form categories in department stores as well as in libraries.

This investigation will start by a construction of an “overlapping convex space map” covering the cosmetics department of Åhlens and its immediate surroundings.

The major convex space formations of the floor are formed by defining walls; spaces that have a considerable fatness, that are delineated by anything blocking eyesight, and that have convex forms. Such a map becomes quite cluttered and filled with a number of overlapping spaces to a degree of becoming difficult to read (Figure 6:VI).

To try and understand the result, one possible operation is to try and add up the spaces with considerable overlaps—that is, spaces where most of that which is included in one convex space is also included in the others. These could be said to form expanded convex spaces, or perhaps better (as to not confuse the clarity of the convex space definition), they can be called context formations. The argument for doing this is that what we are trying to understand is how the range of commodities forms categories in space, and where this is dependant on context of each commodity—which implies that where the main part of the context remains similar, the category remains the same. Finer subtleties in shifts of character will be scrutinized closer later on. This is, however, still not easily done, as the overlaps are considerable, and choices of what to include are difficult at best when trying to deduce it from the overlapping convexes. However, if we go the other way around and instead mark the parts of the area where there is little to no overlap between convexes, it is possible to find a set of boundaries that more clearly separate that on one side from that on the other. These prove to be rather few and can be seen in Figure 6:VII.

Now we can attempt to construct these context formations using these boundaries, but I will first address one more issue that needs to be handled: the two boundaries A and B in the figure are problematic—they are fairly small in relation to the space they purport to separate (if that is what they do). In the case of A, it is also overcome by commodity distribution as one and the same brand is allowed to be on both sides with the same personnel passing through and servicing both sides of the supposed boundary. These can be included or excluded from such contextual formations, which would have effects, but if they are allowed to separate, then the resulting three contextual formations (in both cases three) would overlap one another to a degree that I judge the division to be of less consequence than the connections—because of the overlap, the way the boundaries are forming but a small part of an open stretch, and they way strategies are used to de-emphasise them as boundaries. While both choices—inclusion or exclusion—are possible, choosing either requires the analysis to consider the other.

These boundaries can be used to construct a map of contextual formations (Figure 6:VIII), which can then be further analysed. First, inside the entrance of Åhlens City, we find a small group of overlapping convex spaces spread along the corridor into the department store, consisting of Biotherme, Lancôme, Kanebo, a showcase, Sisley, and LaPraire on the one side, and Chanel, Guerlain, and M.A.C. on the other (where the inclusion of M.A.C. is rather weak).

In this formation is also included the Manicure Bar. These are separated from a group of cosmetics placed behind the row of LaPraire, Sisley, Kanebo, Lancôme, Biotherme and the showcase. This separation is rather strong—the only places connections are made are in the narrow corridors leading to the back. They are also, albeit less marked by a clear boundary, separated from the row of cosmetics lined up along the façade to Klarabergsgatan by the open space inside the entrance, and by the comparatively narrow passage between the enclosed personnel staircase and the escalators. In this way, these form a distinct set of commodities spatially differentiated from the others.

The cosmetics behind the brands lined up along the entrance corridor or the main aisle through the ground floor of the department store are separated into two or three major areas—again one along the most used corridor in this area, leading to the back-entrance, being the one most clearly defined, encompassing LaPraire, Darphin, Clarins, Murad, Ole Henriksen, Pythomer and to some extent Revlon and Clinique. The spatial formation behind these (containing Maybelline, Declor, Lumene, L’Oreal, Nivea, Isadora, Maxfacor, Imeden, Revlon and Mauva) is thus relegated to being behind both the line-up along the main aisle and the one along the corridor from the back-entrance to the main aisle. These are then separated into two spaces even if the boundary between the two context formations is unclear and fleeting. However, Helena Rubinstein and Clinique form, partly together with Biotherme, a small group that are encountered before the others (seen from the main entrance), and which, until one is
actually there, also hide the ones behind. The clarity of this boundary seems affected both by distance of observation and scale of analysis.

Shiseido, Yves St Laurent, Elisabeth Arden, and Dior, on the other hand, are together with La Mer, Sans Soucis, and Biodroga, facing jewellery (in part transited via M.A.C.), framed on one side by the wall distinguishing books from watches, by the jewellery department, the outer wall and the escalators. By a range of connections, all of these brands are connected to jewellery and watches, and the other way around, which makes it more viable to claim they form some kind of common context, rather than at this stage separating them into different contexts. If one would separate them, however, the main separation would be excluding the free-hanging and less exclusive jewellery, together with half of M.A.C.—which does follow the general character of this particular context formation, but for the current argument it can be considered a question of nuances within a context.

Finally, then, this contextual formation is linked, into a kind of L-shaped context by overlap with another set of convex spaces (two or three, depending on how they are conceived) stretching along Klarabergsleden (mentioned above). The two contextual formations have little overlap with any other part of cosmetics save past rather far distances over the entrance area, as mentioned earlier, or in as far as M.A.C. is considered part of the “entrance corridor” space. Both of these links can be argued to be quite weak. The ones more to the east along Klarabergsleden, however, are clearly separated from the Jewellery.

If this forms roughly five different groups of cosmetics, the question must be raised if this division is accidental, or if there is a logic to what kind of cosmetics is to be found where. In a comparison with lifestyle and fashion magazines and as argued by the personnel, it shows that the different clusters follow a kind of social status range or at least of a division into target groups of customers. The brands of the L-shaped contextual formation, as stated by the personnel of the cosmetics department, are considered part of the “entrance corridor” space. Both of these links can be argued to be quite weak. The ones more to the east along Klarabergsleden, however, are clearly separated from the Jewellery.

These three groups are complemented by the cosmetics in the back, which, also according to the personnel as well as roughly correlating to what can be learned from a survey of fashion and lifestyle magazines, constitute a group of cosmetics that are of lower social status (which is only loosely connected to being of lower price or lower quality). On the slightly finer scale, the same operation is true for the ones in the far back: they are of lower status than the ones along the secondary aisles. That is, five to six groups ranging from luxury to finer brand, trend, secondary trend, and lower status cosmetics.

While these formations do not form one-to-one relations with some kind of “cosmetics taxonomy”, if there even is one, the correspondence is strong enough to claim that these spatial formations are not coincidental and actually constitute at least three different categories, parts of which contain cosmetics and which quite possibly are not used, bought by, or sold to the same people. This is not to say that there is no cosmetics department in Åhlens City; it is to say that between the brand and the pre-conceived category of cosmetics spatial formations serve to produce a much more intricate play of contexts.

The creation of categories by use of atmosphere is thus a complex system of inter-relations overlapping each other and objects and departments facing one another creating overlapping fields of co-presence, constituting a situation where the categories at work are not distinct and singular in character. However, by understanding what “fields” of co-presence are separated, the division into a small set of rather well-defined categories can be made clear, and these categories, context formations, seem to correlate to a general idea of target audience or social category. What becomes apparent is how cosmetics hardly form a category and that more relevant context-categories than cosmetics exist, such as the luxury category. The convex form could be seen as a specific and demonstrative case of this situation in its simplest form created by walls that more or less all face one another.

Thus far, then, the argument has taken the form of first using pre-conceived categories to investigate how spatial formations used to define them, to move on to show how the pre-conceived categories, while applicable in their local situations, are not enough to understand the distribution of commodities if they are not allowed to be contradictory, multiple, and following shifting categorising operations, as discussed above, leading to a questioning of the pre-existing categories that the analysis began with. The deconstruction—or at least questioning—of these categories are of importance to the analysis as a whole, and is, naturally, an act as well, springing from the method of analysis. This is an operation primarily built on observation of the material situation, but it presupposes an underlying idea of co-presences and intervisibilities (one could call it contexts) suggesting sameness or co-belonging of the included commodities into categories. The construction of categories—as a-spatial concepts of how things belong together—is thus simultaneous and interdependent with the construc-
tion of contexts—spatial formations in which the commodities’ presences characterise space. What has become clear is how this calls for a scrutiny of boundaries.

Atmosphere III: Defining Difference

If we have now investigated the construction of contexts and categories and the inter-play of object and context constituting these, how the categories are fleeting and overlapping, heterogeneous and homogeneous from different perspectives, another crucial question has yet to be dealt with in such a structure—namely the perimeters, boundaries or borders that constitute these contexts or spaces. It is obvious from the above that there are different methods used to separate categories, that the boundaries are more or less clear and more or less obvious between different categories, which create a series of overlapping textures of available readings. If the primary role of the boundary, as stated by Hillier and Hanson, is to differentiate that on the one side (inside) from that of the other (the outside) (Hiller and Hanson 1984, 144), then, while the boundary can be a wall or other physical object, it can quite clearly be something else as well. What are these boundaries, what are these strategies or potentials of difference, and what work are they doing?

While not claiming there is a simple or direct answer to the question, there is some obvious techniques used in the department stores, which also are fairly consistent throughout all four although with differences that post some questions and create unique traits in each one—some of which could be said to be a result of the administrative organisation (as “true” department stores or “one-house malls”). To approach this question and to develop an initial understanding and set of terms for the analysis, the discussion will go via a discussion of painting because it more directly approaches the questions of how the formal properties of the boundaries are responding to conceptual perceptions of that which is enclosed within them (in the department stores this means the commodities for sale).

A. The Linear and the Painterly

If we reduce the difference between the art of Dürer and the art of Rembrandt to its most general formulation, we say that Dürer is a draughtsman and Rembrandt a painter. In speaking thus, we are aware of having gone beyond a personal judgement and characterised a difference of epoch. Occidental painting, which was draughtsmanship in the sixteenth century, developed especially on the painterly side in the seventeenth. Even if there is only one Rembrandt, a decisive readjustment of the eye took place everywhere, and whoever has any interest in clearing up his relation to the world of visible forms must first get to grips with these radically different modes of vision. The painterly mode is the later, and cannot be conceived without the earlier, but is not absolutely superior. (Wölfflin 2003, 51)

It is often claimed that modern architecture is about the dissolution of space, giving it a more plastic character and opening up the enclosed and clearly demarcated spaces of the previous epochs—enclosed space was replaced by open, flowing, fluid, extensive space (Forty 2000, 256-275). Early inspirations or institutions that contributed to the development of the department stores are supposedly the Bazaars with their open character of goods for sale, and the department stores early on worked towards open space constructions, a development that can be attributed to much of shopping spaces, allowing the goods to be displayed freely in the same space to enable comparison and browsing (Bergman 2003, 56-66). This transformation of space is at times considered historical, whereas both the “open” space and the “enclosed” space have existed in several interpretations throughout history. Still, as department stores are often realised as more or less open spaces (partly as an inheritance of their modern concept), this posits some questions as to how the borders of the formations of categories and contexts we have spoken of are actually given form. This has been dealt with to some extent already, but, the existence of a difference does not determine its character; or, in other words, the form of the boundary in itself is in need of some investigation (Ardener 2000, 112).

This investigation will—without claiming that it explains or solves the problem—take off in the discussion introduced above on the characters of the painterly and the linear by Heinrich Wölfflin. The approach is chosen since it points to something that can be translated to space and the character of openness and enclosure without too early subscribing to traditional architectural concepts. Wölfflin presents a graspable

28. It is worth to point out that the original text of Heinrich Wölfflin, a Swiss art historian who lived between 1864-1945, was written as early as 1915. Working with almost exclusively renaissance and baroque art, he was interested in general principles for interpreting the visual character of works (Dalle Vacche, 2003). The reference here points to the anthology in which Wölfflin’s texts form one part of the overall discussion.

29. Bergman has a tendency to describe the move towards open space and more direct contact between customer and commodity as a move towards democratic shopping, where open space is considered neutral compared to less open space, and where shopping means browsing and selecting individual goods by comparison. This does not deny his historical description of the evolution of shopping space towards open, but as has been shown, and will be even clearer, direct translations between open space and free or democratic market is highly problematic.
account for the relation between the form of the boundary and the idea of the object described done on a conceptual basis as a discussion of how object and context relate to one another via this boundary:

While the strongly stressed outline fixes the presentment, it lies in the essence of a painterly representation to give it an indeterminate character: form begins to play; lights and shadows become an independent element, they seek and hold each other from height to height, from depth to depth; the whole takes on the semblance of a movement ceaselessly emanating, never ending. Whether the movement be leaping and vehement, or only a gentle quiver and flicker, it remains for the spectator inexhaustible. (Wölfflin 2003, 52)

What Wölfflin is concerned with here is how the relation between border and surface in the painting relates to the nature of the representation and the idea of what it is that is represented. He does this by simplifying the styles of painting that separates artists of the sixteenth and seventeenth century (even if both “styles” do re-emerge in different incarnations thereafter). The point of interest in this discussion is how this way of representing—or using and not using—boundaries affects that which is represented. For, as he continues,

[we] can thus further define the difference between the styles by saying that the linear vision sharply distinguishes form from form, while the painterly eye on the other hand aims at movement which passes over the sum of things. In the one case, uniformly clear lines which separate; in the other, unstressed boundaries which favor combination. (Wölfflin 2003, 52)

The argument here would be that clearly demarcated borders or boundaries of that which is depicted is the result of the focus of the object as plastic entity, whereas the fleeting play of light (without borders save the difference between two surfaces of different light or colour) is a result of the focus on the visual impression of the motive. Such focus is not, according to Wölfflin, a question of right or wrong but a question of view of the motive. One is of unitary objects or entities, where it is each entity that is represented, whereas the other is of the totality of the image, where the identity of each entity is more fleeting and allowed to move and mix into each other. Clear borders would suggest clear and distinct entities, whereas the lack of borders emphasise the possibility to mix, move, and combine the elements of the motive more freely (Figures 6:IX and 6:X).

Is this, then, interesting for the discussion of categories and characters of commodities in the department stores? This has earlier been discussed as situations of co-presence and intervisibilities, where walls, shelves, and floors in general have been used in one way or the other to produce these situations. This, however, did not say much of the character of these boundaries or the difference between, say, the solid wall between books and accessories/cosmetics and the separation of the accessories by the use of an aisle or for that matter by sorting denim brand simply into different shelves in the same wall. Is it possible to claim that there is a use of painterly and linear strategies to create different kinds of differences in the department stores? If so, using these concepts shed some light as to why things are sorted as they are, and why walls and other physical separations emerge where they do.

For instance, the suits and shirts on the men’s fashion floor are somewhat ordered by brand but mostly collected by category—which are close by each other, yet each clearly defined by walls with relatively narrow openings. This allows the category of suits to be distinctly different from the category of shirts, even while being metrically close to each other, whereas the distinctions within these categories take on a more painterly character, allowing the brands to merge with each other. In the same way, the fragrances are demarcated by a linear boundary to the surroundings, whereas internally being separated in a more painterly fashion. That is, different levels of differentiation take on different characters, allowing local categories and differentiations to be gathered into higher-level unities.

This can be traced throughout as one example in how some brands mix together by use of painterly boundaries into lifestyle or type categories delineated by linear boundaries, such as that cosmetics and fragrances are collections of different brands and commodities that blend. To some extent, the cosmetics category analysed above form three major areas delineated by linear boundaries (luxury, trend, low-profile) and further categories separated in more painterly fashion. At some level, most types of categories—such as accessories, fragrances, jewellery, lingerie, training clothes, suits, shirts, jeans, and so forth—are gathered in and separated by “linear” boundaries. Some caution must be taken with this at this level of the discussion since there is once again the risk of reading this as a way to handle the different separations and differences that pre-exist their production in the space of the department store. While, again, this cannot be denied as a factor, it is of interest to point out that the reverse is also going on: the idea of the separation, such as a wall, allows the idea of social separation, such as

For Semper, building originated with the use of woven fabrics to define social space, specifically, the space of domesticity. But the textiles were not simply placed within space to define a certain interiority. They
were not simply arranged on the landscape to divide off a small space that could be occupied by a particular family. Rather, they are the production of space itself, launching the very idea of occupation. (Wigley 1995, 11)

The existence of floors thus allows for the creation of categories as, roughly, corresponding to the number of floors available—which corresponds closely to how Lars Marcus argues around what he calls spatial capacity working to set the range of possible diversity in urban areas (Marcus 2000, 139-163). The possibility to wall off something makes it possible to conceive it as different and to work with these different kinds of differentiation. This would suggest that the range of commodities and its consecutive arrangement into categories is dependant on the architectural spaces available. What then would be a reason to use these different means other than the play of categorisations? Again, Wölfflin offers a suggestion:

Within Rembrandt’s work, there is a distinct development. Thus the early Diana Bathing is still modelled throughout in a (relatively) plastic style with curved lines following the separate form: in the late female nudes, on the other hand, little is used but flat lines. In the first case, the figure stands out; in the later compositions, on the other hand, it is embedded in the totality of the space-creating tones. (Wölfflin 2003, 55)

That is, what the clear boundary does is to let that which is enclosed within it to stand out. This is again of importance for understanding the different differentiations used in the department store. Perhaps these are not general principles for entire department stores; overall all the studied cases use both the linear and the painterly as means representing their commodities. Rather, the point is: what is it that in one way or the other uses linear strategies, and what is allowed to flow freely in more painterly shifts? Again, it is likely no coincidence that certain borders take a linear character, such as between street fashion and accessories (and to some extent trend) in men’s fashion or between suits and shirts. Second, certain high profile brands use linear strategies of different kinds: Filippa K and Tiger constantly use clearly demarcated different floor materials as borders. Hugo Boss employs the same, but also uses walls.

While Wölfflin does suggest his discussion has implications far outside painting itself, such as for architecture (Wölfflin 2003, 55), I would argue that however much the characterisations of boundaries as linear and painterly is of use for the analysis in progress exactly what would form linear or painterly boundaries is yet unclear. Whereas it is tempting to translate the linear into building units such as walls, it must also be remembered that the concept of boundaries and their relative strengths and characters have undergone several transformations through history (Virilio 2000). There is a need to investigate how boundaries of different characters are to be understood as spatial (architectural) forms.

B. Linear and Painterly as Architectural Form

To understand the character of “boundary” in architecture and how it is employed in this thesis, I develop one of the aspects of Wölfflin’s argument—namely that of the linear. I do this to avoid an all too direct and simplistic translation between linear boundary and built wall, which does not have to go hand in hand. To understand this, it is possible to go via an analysis of Mies’s Barcelona Pavilion as performed by José Quetglas.

It is a house without doors. Open or closed? (Quetglas 2000, 385)

The question is posed by Quetglas, and he continues by saying that “[t]he question is not irrelevant. For many years, architectural critics have agreed, nobody really knows why, that an open space, fluid in its interior development and spilling towards its exterior, must be judged superior to a compartmentalized, boxed space” (Quetglas 2000, 385). The question is raised since the Barcelona Pavilion is generally regarded as a prime example of the fluidity of space at work in modern architecture, and the absence of enclosure between interior and exterior is, in many ways, obvious. There is a series of openings, glass walls, and the like that does put the traditional senses of border, exterior, and interior into question. However, not much later in the same article, Quetglas answers himself:

Mies’s Pavilion is a closed space. (Quetglas 2000, 385)

The argument behind this is somewhat complicated but is of importance for the thesis. Quetglas does not deny the way in which vision—once inside the building—can freely spill out of the interior space, nor how the boundaries of the space, as produced by solid walls, are less rigid and less enclosing than traditional architecture. As such, he argues that Mies’s Pavilion indeed is a prime example of modern architecture. Implicitly, the argument suggests that it is so in more ways, which makes the analysis that follows all the more interesting. What follows is, more or less, a discussion of the nature of boundaries, and how they exist as not only material, visual properties but social and somatic (even if he does not state it this way himself). The enclosure, or that which makes the Pavilion an enclosed space, is instead something else:

The space of the pavilion remains “retenu par la géométrie,” accord-
ing to the constant method in all of Mies’s architecture. It deals with the arrangement of one or various horizontal planes, detached from the ground, where the lower plane always designates a strict surface. Think of the coffee tray of a waiter or the surface of a table; there are no “limits” to the virtual space that they construct, but that space becomes perfectly contained, cylindrical in one case and prismatic in the other, despite the absence of material closures that oppose its expansion. (Quetglas 2000, 386)

That which demarcates Mies’s Pavilion is thus not a tangible, solid mass but what could be described as the lack of the same, namely how the floor or ground ends. This much is rather simple, and there is little reason to question whether this constitutes boundaries or not. Neither would it be that much new in such an argument. The argument already was more profound than this—namely, that the Pavilion is enclosed. What then makes the Pavilion an interior instead of a differently elevated exterior? This argument passes by a reasoning of the impact of accessibility for “[…] the plane that separates the ground and contains the space is formed by the rectangular travertine platform, more than a meter in height. It is a base that hides, to whomever approaches the Pavilion from the front, the way to climb up to it: the eight stairs have been hidden behind the piece that serves as a baseboard, at the same level as the platform” (Quetglas 2000, 386). The Pavilion is thus differentiated from the rest of the extension by means of how it is accessed, and to what degree this access is visible to the visitor as he or she moves along the exhibition. This relation, combined with the elevation of the entire Pavilion producing a non-reciprocal relation between those on the platform and those below it then serves, according to Quetglas, to produce the same kind of difference as the wall and thus to produce an interiority of the Pavilion as a whole:

If the platform is enough to define the space of the Pavilion as different, to segregate it as a stage separated from the ground that the public of the Exposition walks on, the plane defined by the two covers, reduced to a sheet, will serve to transform this space, not only into something different but into something enclosed, into an interior. (Quetglas 2000, 386)

Such dependency of architectural boundary on properties of both visibility and accessibility is an important part of what makes the direct translation between linear and painterly into architectural terms problematic. The argument also coincides with Hillier and Hanson’s argument on the boundary as having as primary role to “[…] create a disconnection between an interior space and the global system around, of which it would otherwise be a part” (Hiller and Hanson 1984, 144). Is the relation between Mies’s Pavilion and its surroundings linear or painterly? Does the absence of material, opaque border mean a painterly relation? Following from Quetglas’s argument, I would suggest it has, in effect, more of the linear properties. It serves to clearly differentiate that which is on the platform as a different entity than that which is below it, which generally does the same work as the linear border in Wölfflin’s argument. It is this differentiation, this separation from the public space “outside”, which makes it possible to speak of the whole pavilion as an interior.

This interrelation between accessibility and visibility has been touched on before and plays an important part in forming the social and cultural roles of the spaces connected and present and is part in an ongoing negotiation between cultural norms, architectural form, and spatial distribution: “[the] closet worked, along with other architectural strategies, to advance an extensive reform movement that aimed to invest the American home with signs of moral propriety. Increasingly strict codes of behaviour were given architectural form as, for instance, the stairway to second-floor bedrooms moved out of the entrance hall to a less visible part of the interior” (Urbach 2000, 345).

While tempting to already now move on and develop these implications more in-depth—which is one of the more interesting questions of this thesis—it is of interest to not prematurely abandon the discussion of the perimeter and its effect on categorisation and ordering of commodities and functions.

A question that arises from the discussion above would be the effects on boundaries, and the interplay between boundaries of different levels and of different forms in the categories, sub-categories, meta-categories, and whatever construction of levels, and from whichever scale one begins. As an introduction to this, it is of worth to turn to the previous investigation of libraries (Koch 2004, 152-154). To make a long story short, the three libraries here were architecturally quite different—especially in how they made use of boundaries and accessibilities to produce a structure of space. Whereas the city library of Stockholm constructs a well-defined tree-like structure, the city library of Malmö had characteristics more of a network. This was followed by a different treatment of the boundaries, and the treatment of the books in relation to these architectural boundaries and of the roles and uses of books and shelves in general.

In the architecturally well-defined and rigid system in the Stockholm library, where the building provides a clear structure in which to order the commodities (books, etc.), it shows that the local ordering of the commodities themselves take on a rather “painterly” character. That is, the categories were allowed to spill over into each other’s shelves; the categories could be—within one section—ordered alphabetically rather than thematically, and if one book-
case was not large enough to contain a category, it could be allowed to continue on the next bookcase, even with only a few books.

In Malmö, on the other hand, where the building provided more of a field in which the books and bookcases themselves served to define the structure of knowledge or at least the internal structure of and set of relations of the commodities at hand, the local properties and relations took on a more rigid character. A category was not allowed to spill over, and categories were not allowed to mix on a shelf except as an exception. In many instances, instead, part of a shelf was left empty, and another was overfilled. Furthermore, the bookcases and books were more strictly ordered thematically, producing areas or “blocks” consisting of certain subject categories (Figure 6:XI)—again which were not allowed to spill over into each other.

To some extent this could be seen as logical: a higher-level order allows more local freedom and vice-versa, a higher-level freedom requires more local order. This also suggests a shift in the role of the commodity from being subordinate to a higher-level order into being an agent in the production of the order of which it is a part (Koch 2005, 385). This is not to claim this as a general fact, but to frame a discussion of the department stores as ordering principles. Is this traceable in the department stores as well?

The internal sorting of clearly defined categories such as men’s suits, shirts, lingerie, fragrances, travelling bags and to a certain extent books and CDs follow this pattern, allowing a mix of categories and to some extent a mixing of categories in the same spatial or material elements, whereas the more “open” spaces tend to be more decidedly ordered by brand, type, or other clustering strategies. On a general level, one could say, first, that by ordering the department stores strictly into floors that constitutes general categories (men’s fashion, women’s fashion, home) and where deviating categories are given clear boundaries (books, lingerie, CDs, toys), more freedom is potentially given to a play of categories locally.

This, however, is not to dismiss the distinction between painterly and linear. In order to understand how they are used, one needs to look further into their use in the systems as such and how they are employed to suggest kinds of relations, rather than to directly affect the character of the distributions in space (Figure 6:XII). The interesting question is as much the difference in character between boundaries as the character of any individual boundary as such.

C. Boundary and Category: Distanciation, Differentiation and Complementarity

I will now, as a hypothesis, claim that the major role of the kind of boundary is participating in a somewhat wider system of characterisation of differences and relations, where the kind of boundary—possible to simplify to linear or painterly—serves to provide one significant piece of information.

A linear boundary can be said to be a combination of operations limiting visibility and accessibility. That is, the boundary is visibly represented and it somehow affects the accessibility between that which it separates. A linear boundary without openings is, in this case, the ultimate linear boundary. Such boundaries are, as far as the customers are concerned, only really existent in the department store as walls, which separate the publicly accessible part from the private spaces of offices, storages and technical spaces. The department store is thus never as Hillier and Hanson claim about interior spaces: “[…] a set of discontinuous spaces on the inside of those cells, which does not normally present themselves to experience as a continuous spatial system with a global form, but as a series of events, expressly and explicitly disconnected from the global system” (Hiller and Hanson 1984, 144). Rather, they form what Lefebvre terms an “ambiguous continuity” (Lefebvre 1991, 37). For similar reasons inverted, the non-existence of (interior) doors in the publicly available parts of the department stores is an important part of their function, and in many ways gives them characters as much urban as interior.

For now, the question is the constitution of the field of categories available in the department stores. One such differentiating factor has been discussed at length: the linear boundary—the wall, the floor, the elevation, and the fence. Such a boundary, if we believe Wölfflin, serves the purpose to suggest sameness within and difference from that which is outside. This is in large how it is used in the department stores. The sameness is quite easily comprehensible. The nature of the difference suggested, however, is in need of some discussion.

Again, it is possible to look to the painting for a first discussion: although separated by a linear boundary, what is around the enclosed figure is still part of the same motive. That is, the linear boundary suggests difference in kind, but not necessarily difference in belonging. Thus, for example, the walls between the suits and the shirts serve to represent a differentiation of kind (suits and shirts), but not differentiation in belonging. Rather, they are rather closely connected, and the use of one more or less implies the use of the other.

A similar argument can be suggested for the use of accessories and jewellery; they are different in kind, but serve similar purposes: adornment (of the feminine body). In these two examples, however, lies another important strategy of differentiation: dis-

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30. This is to claim that the often-stated simplistic division between “urban planning” and “architecture”, or urban space and architectural space is an error of thought. In as far as one is dealing with interiority and exteriority, with private and public, and with common and personal, the differences of spaces are not represented by such a division on much more than a conceptual level. I would argue, that most publicly available spaces have more in common with urban space than with an apartment—at least when it comes to its use.
tance. Not any distance, but distance measured by accessibility. There is an opening between the shirts and the suits as well as between the jewellery and the cosmetics. There is, in Debenhams more obviously, but in Åhlens as well, an opening between the lingerie and women’s fashion. Such a distance is created in two ways. The first, I would argue, is visual connection. I can see the suits from the shirts, I can see the Hugo Boss suits from the other suits. Conversely, I cannot see the street fashion from the suits, and I cannot see women’s fashion from men’s fashion. Distance and proximity suggest what goes together or is of similar kind and what is to be held apart or are of difference in identity. This rather simple argument does answer a lot of the distribution of the department stores—the women’s fashion is closer to accessories, jewellery, cosmetics, and body care than men’s fashion, and suits are found far away from street fashion and denim. Kitchen appliances and dinner commodities are far away from beds and bathroom, yet there is a pattern to which of them is closer to what in the overall structure (e.g., beds are closer to lingerie). The distance in question here is thus both metric and of visibility, where, it will be shown, the latter has more profound impact than the former.

This is how far the argument will be taken for now: distance suggests significant difference and in the extreme incompatibility, whereas linear boundary suggest difference, but does not mean incompatibility. They work together in as much as distance and linear boundary is a powerful statement of difference, whereas distance and intervisibility suggests difference, but of another kind, and proximity and linear boundary suggest complementarity. Suits complement shirts, and jewellery complements accessories. Painterly boundaries, on the other hand, suggest one or another kind of sameness. All CDs are suggested to belong together, while they are divided into categories whose borders are more or less painterly. The different parts of the street fashion sections have a more or less painterly character, while (as principle, if not always in fact) separated from other sections by linear boundaries. The more things should be kept apart, the more of these strategies are employed, and the stronger they are in use. From the analysis performed, an understanding is developed that in part corresponds to Hanson’s terms insulation, sequencing, categoric differentiation and relative position (Hanson 1998, 125-128), even if the discussion has been more focused on the contexts and commodities than her discussion on homes and houses, and it also has been more examined in their material realisations. I will return to this first in chapter eight and then in the conclusion of the thesis. The degree of differentiation and belonging, and the effects of what goes with what, or what is seen from where, however, is not only a construction of categories, but a powerful formulation of values. This is done mainly by using the up until now found operations of spatial construction of contexts, expanded to a more systemic level. This is the argument to be taken further in the coming chapter.
Figure 6.1: The general distribution of commodities on the main entrance floor of Áhlens City described by categories derived from information panels available in the store.

Figure 6.2: The general distribution of commodities on the main entrance floor (and half a stair down) of Debenhams described by categories derived from information panels available in the store.

Figure 6.3: The cosmetics department of Áhlens City and its closest neighbours, showing the distribution of brands (a common categorising operation) for cosmetics as well as a categorisations into types for other commodities (which are less clearly sorted by brand).
Figure 6.8
A slightly simplified map of convex spaces of the cosmetics area of Åhlens City (corridors have been removed). Note how there are certain areas where the boundaries of the convex spaces do not cross one another to significant degrees, such as between the areas right inside the entrance and those behind Lancôme and the other brands along the aisle.

Figure 6.9
If the more prevalently reoccurring boundaries are distilled from the overlapping convex space map a small number of boundaries emerge. These can be seen as the boundaries between contexts (a). These boundaries mostly take the form of walls, but the different brands sometimes create quite strong borders by the design of their booths, such as Lancôme clearly blocks the view to the cosmetics behind (b).

Figure 6.10
The context formations of the cosmetics area of Åhlens City form a fairly small number of areas with a few clear overlaps such as the L-formed chain of luxury commodities and high status cosmetics.
7. TRAINING THE AESTHETICS

It is this acculturation, this training, which takes place at every moment everywhere in the streets, on the walls and in the underground stations, on advertising hoardings and neon signs. Shop-windows thus beat out the rhythm of the social process of value: they are a continual adapt-ability test for everyone, a test of managed projection and integration. The big stores are a kind of pinnacle of this urban process, a positive laboratory and social testing ground, where, as Durkheim writes in The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, the collectivity reinforces its cohesion, as in feasts and spectacles. (Baudrillard 1998, 166)

Even if it was the case that the organisation of commodities in the department stores served only the purpose of making browsing and selection easier for the consumer and even if it was the case that the only reasons behind the organisation of books in libraries were questions of supporting navigation and search of the collections and thus the intent was more or less a neutral presentation, it would still represent a set of values. There are several reasons for this, of which perhaps the most important is the previously discussed inherent heterogeneity of space (see chapter three). There is something that lies deeper; there is something that is more accessible; there is a need for the distribution of categories in more favourable and less favourable positions. This comes from the spatial nature of the department stores—where “spatial” can be seen as quite wide a term, possible to apply to catalogues and magazines (what goes next to what, what goes on the first page, etc.) as well as to Internet sites and the configurational schemes of television programming and advertisement.31 It also returns as an important part of urban and building morphology, where social, cultural, and spatial structures work together and in and through each other (Markus 1993).

Such judgements can be made more or less consciously, and more or less based on theories, facts or notions and general feelings. All the same, there are limitations set by the space available and its formal characteristics. What is important here, as stated by Baudrillard, is that these orders, whether intended to or not, are communicative and participate in the acculturation of people to the way in which things belong.

31. See Beatriz Colomina’s discussion on exteriority and interiority of the encyclopedia (Colomina 1996, 32) or Kawamura’s discussion on fashion editors (Kawamura 2005, 81-82)—which will be returned to later.
together or apart, who is concerned with what, and what—if taken a bit far—is not the interest of whom. There is a duality in the fact that women’s fashion magazines contain men’s fashion as well, whereas men’s fashion and lifestyle magazine contain little to no women’s fashion (save lingerie); whichever came first, this situation contributes to a general idea of women being more interested in fashion per se than men and communicates this idea to the readers. In the same way, the proliferation of women’s fashion magazines compared to men’s is another producer of this idea as much as it is a logic market effect thereof (Kawamura 2005, 79). This is a result of how the works are built up, how their different parts relate to each other, and what probable and reasonable worlds are presented by them, as argued by Paul Ricoeur (1981, 176-193).

It follows from Ricoeur’s argument, as well as from Baudrillard’s and Lefebvre’s, that a “reading” of space and objects, such an acculturation as suggested above, is not necessarily a conscious process or perhaps even primarily not. As the system is lived, it is also incorporated in the perception of it: we are trained that cosmetics are something that (mostly) concern women and that women are (ought to be) concerned with cosmetics.

To understand how the department stores participate in this acculturation or aesthetic training one important question is how they present the world of commodities to their customers. This does not give them an all-powerful position but recognises their role not only as neutral outlets or containers but also as cultural constructors. In fashion theory, the spread of fashion is often treated as a roughly two-component question, consisting of fashion diffusion and fashion adoption:

Diffusion is the spread of fashion within and across social systems. Whereas the adoption process focuses on individual decision-making, the diffusion process centres on the decision of many people to adopt an innovation. (Kawamura 2005, 74)

Diffusion is the part of the process of fashion spreading that is about the collective idea of fashion, which includes how fashion is constructed by society and by actors in it to become more or less cultural “facts”. This is a process of the system of fashion and its different institutions. However, that the diffusion theory is of systematic and collective character does not deny the influence of actors whether they persons, organisations, or stores. The key question here is the transition between this systematic fashion process and the adoption of fashion into society, social groups, or by individuals, which is by no means a simple question: individuals are also part of the diffusion process and not only of the adoption process. Kawamura continues, “[…] people diffuse specific items of clothing as fashionable because they believe that they are fashionable. Therefore, we must investigate how the consumers come to know them as fashionable items of the time” (2005, 74).

She concludes two things from this discussion. First, those that diffuse fashion, and who thus have key positions of power in this, are not so much the designers but rather what she calls gatekeepers, those that make fashion accessible to the general public: “[t]rends are now set by fashion forecasters, fashion editors, and department store buyers” (Kawamura 2005, 77). This would mean that the designers and brands are under the power of the whims of editors and retailers—effects of which are caricatured (?) effectively in Lauren Weisberger’s The Devil Wears Prada, when the newly hired Andrea for the first time witnesses the commotion and serviceability of every top brand and designer as the editor of Runway (the book’s fictional top notch fashion magazine), Miranda Priestley, wants a skirt delivered the same day (Weisberger 2003, 46-57). It is not unreasonable to assign some of the strategy behind flagship and brand stores to this observation: only in these stores are the brands “all-powerful” over their own presentation as well as presence. Second, to succeed, society and the people in it must also adopt the diffused fashion, which is not always the case. Once diffused, the adoption process—as described by Kawamura—follows a similar process as that which Baudrillard terms acculturation although Kawamura lays more emphasis on the freedom of choice for the individual.

32. In January 2006, Interpress (the primary distributor of magazines in Sweden) listed their range of magazines as consisting of 72 women’s fashion magazines, 70 women’s lifestyle magazines, 5 gay lifestyle magazines, 8 men’s fashion magazines, and 31 men’s lifestyle magazines, with an addition of 27 non-gender specific lifestyle magazines. Not only is the number dramatically higher for women, it also shifts emphasis between men and women, from fashion (72-70) for women, to lifestyle (8-31) for men. When reducing the magazines that are different editions of the “same” magazine (Such as Elle UK, US, etc.), this grows even more apparent, as the relation remains mainly intact for men’s magazines, while the emphasis on fashion grows stronger for women (61-56).

33. According to Ricoeur, the process of interpretation is a complex process of negotiation between reader and the work, including narrative forms, sequences, configurations, and internal and external references, many of which follow fairly logical patterns and are based on continuous revisions based on the perceived totality of the work—or, the world as presented by (or present in) the work. As Ricoeur further argues, most forms of communication differ from the ideal of the dialogue in that the power over meaning leaves the author (in as far as such can be said to exist) once the text (or work) is handed to the “reader” (Ricoeur 1981, 176-193).
Only part of this process will be under investigation in the coming discussion. The question to be dealt with here could be described as an investigation into how department stores work in the process of fashion diffusion: how the department stores present the different fashions, how they make suggestions as to what is of higher and lower status, and how they describe what is fashionable.\footnote{This has been discussed thoroughly above, but it is important to remember that just because something is endowed with a certain status in society as a whole, it does not have to have the same status in every subculture within the same society. Resistance strategies, or resistance identities in Castell’s terms, are rather quite common. This does not mean that the resistance strategies subvert the system—they have even been incorporated into the system, where a subset of fashion systems thrive on resistance identities, and where some such may even make leaps in the overall system (such as the rise of the street- or youth fashion) (Klein 2005, 63-85).}

As found in the previous chapters, there are many factors co-operating to form the contexts and categories in the department store, and there are spatial (and cultural) limits to this process, which includes sizes, depths, and accessibilities in the store itself. These limitations make it necessary to make prioritisations on what goes where, what comes first, and what is given most exposure—which, however much anyone would like to think a rational response to consumer demand, is a question of judgement. That is, it is an exercise of taste (Bourdieu 1984, 99-166). This is not denying the power of tradition or history, such as that the early department stores being directed mainly to women—such factors naturally come into play, but can also be seen as participants in the system of values that form this exercised taste. Just as social relations, taste is performative and one way in which it is performed is in the presentation of commodities in the situation of shopping. Thus, in shopping, taste is formed, expressed, and trained.

When approaching the question of how status is conveyed in the shopping situation (as differed from, if possible, by magazines or advertisements), there are many questions to be answered and many possible approaches to be made. I will try to stay within the perimeters of how commodities are distributed in space and in relation to space—starting at the more local level that could be understood as a category or context or whether it would be in a department store, a shop, or a boutique. Again this is a methodological rather than ontological decision and the order could be reversed, even though it would likely have effects on what was found. I believe it will show, however, that while in some ways appearing different, many of the strategies or means used in one scale reappear in another but in a different form—or perhaps, they change their way of working as one moves from one scale to the other. This methodological step is chosen in part since it first will form a kind of scrutiny of how this question is usually approached, whereas the latter is a less common form of analysis where they may prove to support one another.

The point is that space limits, restricts, and makes possible such values, and through its heterogenic nature, demands and produces them. This may sound quite dramatic, but in much follows from the way in which categorisations, belongings and differences are built up and presented by the department stores and is more or less unavoidably part of the distribution and representation of the commodity system therein—especially in a situation where identity and signification is primarily based on differentiation. However, having stated this, it is of importance to once again make a reminder of the question for now as an investigation of the systemic and suggested values of the department stores, which is not directly the same as neither the conscious or even a comprehensive idea of an author as such nor necessarily what is appropriated by every customer. The dialectic between system and individual is a much more complicated process.

**Order, Exposure and Exclusivity**

Most people ought to recognise the idea of a flea-market or realisation consisting of piles of wares, haphazardly gathered on different makeshift tables or shelves, or on specially placed tables, and with little to no perceptible order except perhaps who sells or how recently it came from the storage. Low-price supermarkets cram pile upon pile on high-rise shelves so closely placed that it is difficult to make one’s way through. An experience decidedly different from that of the high-profile flagship brand stores such as Carlos Miele’s New York store (Asymptote, 2002), with a white, serpentine, fluidic volume “[... ] snaking from the front wall to the changing rooms in the back” (Luna 2005, 163), where the dresses and other apparel hang with close to a meter in-between in a single row along each wall; the abundance of free space with a few low table displays and single-file, sparse hangers along the walls of the Prada Tokyo Epicenter (Herzog & De Meuron, 2003) or the spacious character, though a small store, with three elaborate hangers of three to four clothing pieces each, a single pair of clothes models, one row of a rare few clothes and one set of square recesses with one clothing piece each of the Lucien Pellat-Finet store in Tokyo (Masamichi Katayama, 2002).

All of the latter, as all of the flagship stores presented by Ian Luna in his work *Retail: Architecture and Shopping* (Luna 2005), share a few things in common—some of which have to do with the internal distribution of the commodities for sale. They work with techniques that from a simple economic perspective might be perceived as hazardous devoting a lot of space to other things than the commodities for sale be it for exhibitions, for artworks, or simply for “empty” space or walls. It could be argued that they work more like museums than as regular grocery shops. And, it is perhaps in this observation, the store as museum, that the heart of it lays.
The connection in time and strategy between the evolution of brand stores and the “ [...] awareness that how a work is presented once it leaves the artist’s hands will frame the meaning or interpretation of the work itself” that evolved from situational art, further leading to the “[...] desire to maintain control over the presentation [...]” (Baskirk 2005, 168) is likely no coincidence. There is a series of connections between art world and retail world worth of notice, where they provide models for one another or where their development is more than likely interlinked. Claiming that the one, the “art world”, always is ahead of the other, the “retail industry”, is in such cases probably as much an expression of wish as of analytic result. The flagship stores are highly commercial, but suggest strategies of character that are aimed at both suggesting and enhancing their status as high-profile brands of different kinds and for different target groups.35 In other words:

The trademark of The Gap and many other clothing stores is that you can easily touch, stroke, unfold and otherwise examine at close range everything on the selling floor. A lot of sweaters and shirts are sold thanks to the decision to foster intimate contact between shopper and goods. That merchandising policy dictates the display scheme (wide, flat tabletops, which are easier to shop than racks or shelves). It also determines how and where employees will spend their time; all that touching means that sweaters and shirts constantly need to be refolded, straightened and neated. That translates into the need for lots of clerks roaming the floor rather than standing behind the counter ringing up sales. (Underhill 2000, 184)

The relation between amount of goods on display and the amount of exposure given to each commodity to some extent follow a fairly simple rule of thumb. By giving more space to each commodity, each commodity is given more exposure. In as far as exposure means attention, each commodity also gets more attention or requires or demands more attention. Although a simplification, this is a claim of importance and need to be discussed and analysed. Both if—and if so how—they differentiate the department stores from one another and how they participate in the internal differentiation of commodities in the department stores themselves. This discussion will follow two threads: that of retail theory through primarily Underhill (2000, 2004) and Miller, et alii (1998), and that of the relations between the mass produced copy, the model and the original through primarily Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1996, 1998), but also influenced by art theory, since—as evident from only the briefest of surveys of high profile fashion magazines—the ideal model for high fashion is high art. A recent example of this growing resemblance between flagship stores and museum is when Prada funded the building of an artwork, which consists of a completely enclosed Prada store in the Texas desert (nearest town is Valentine, with a population of 217). Store and museum, in a way, become one (Chen 2006, 56-61).

**Spatial Order: John Lewis and the Cheapjack**

As the blazing Arizona sun crested higher in the sky, I took off my cardigan and tied it around my waist. I pawed through racks of peasant skirts and polyester pantsuits, forgetting all about bridal showers and Kevin’s real-estate ambush and the ring stashed deep in the bowels of my dresser... and then I saw it.

Sandwiched between a moth-eaten corduroy shirtdress and gold lame trousers so hideous Liberace would roll over in his grave was a gorgeous peignoir set straight out of the 1920s. Made of peau de soie in the palest shade of dove gray, expertly cut to skim without squeezing the body’s contours, the nightgown was trimmed with insets of ivory Schiilfli lace at the neckline and hem. Very Ava Gardner. I could practically hear the tenor sax wailing in the background as I slipped the robe off the hanger and focused on the gown.

No holes. No stains. No giant rip, although there were a few loose threads along the side seam. The back fastened up with delicate mother-of-pearls buttons, only one of which was missing. Then I glanced at the price tag and my ecstasy was complete; fifteen bucks. (Kendrick 2005, 23)

As a rule of thumb in retail theory, exposure means sales. This is, as Underhill notes, a truth with some modification. The types of exposure, the type of com-
modity, and its context have influence on retail figures. Furthermore, a setup like the one at The Gap in Underhill’s example or those of the flagship stores presented by Ian Luna has a drawback—namely the upkeep of such a design: the work it takes to keep it neat and tidy is “[…] a big expense, but for The Gap and others, it’s a sound investment—the cost of doing business” (Underhill 2000, 184). This is a situation similar to the art museum, where every piece of art is given “enough space”—that is, every work of art is so important in itself that it needs to be observed in its own right with as little interference of other works as possible.

As a contrary example, Underhill describes how in a department store “[…] the beleaguered staff saved time by overstocking fixtures—jamming more clothes onto the racks than they could handle comfortably.” This as a means to save time and cost, which lead to that “[s]ome shoppers didn’t even bother trying to extricate garments, it was such a struggle” (Underhill 2000, 187). He further describes how too neatly piled goods can (to some) seem intimidating, which makes them not examine or buy the commodities in order to not disturb the perfection of the display. While this does sound like suggesting a middle ground, I argue that that is not the conclusion to be drawn. Rather, Underhill’s argument is centred on “the appropriate exposure for the appropriate good and customer.”

Miller et alii discuss this particular phenomenon by use of a department store, namely John Lewis (which, as they claim, serve both as anchor store and as characterising high-profile store of a shopping centre) and what they term “the cheapjack”. They make use of the latter because, as they say, “[i]n some ways the cheapjack is a kind of parody of the department store” (Miller, et al. 1998, 155). What they build this on is that both provide a wide and disperse range of goods that cover a wide range of uses or situations, but, as they continue to discuss the difference, they conclude that

36. In Underhill’s presentation, this is not that explicitly stated and comes more from a series of more or less anecdotal examples—such as the Wonderbra example cited earlier. This is especially true for the prioritisation problem, where Underhill usually sticks to telling what should be done; or what should be given exposure. The other side of the coin—that which as a result get less exposure, is only briefly touched upon—if at all.

37. The term appropriate is here used quite intentionally, even though it may sound as an attempt to be value-neutral or to assume there is such a direct relation between “a commodity” and “a status” or “a character”. Underhill’s relation to social and cultural values is highly unproblematic, in that his analysis does not go further than to note how people do or what they say, and taking this for “how it is” as a neutral statement. In this way, he can state that men do not like to shop for fashion, and women do not like hardware without problemising how come and what part the stores play in producing this situation.

The first quality that appeals to the John Lewis shopper is its stability and sense of order. The cheapjack if anything tries to appear more transient than it actually is, and there is a manifest lack of order in the way the merchandise is presented. John Lewis is spacious and light, the cheapjack is crowded and poorly lit. John Lewis sells on quality, the cheapjack on the basis of risk. One could never ‘research’ a purchase at a cheapjack in the way one could at John Lewis, because one has no idea what one will find, and there is no-one of whom to ask questions. (Miller, et al. 1998, 155)

Just as the department store, the cheapjack has “[…] a general tendency to have parts of the shop for particular types of goods, such as kitchen equipment, but this can be transgressed by any particular kind of goods” (Miller, et al. 1998, 153), and while the general ambiance of the cheapjack is crammed and the goods presented as a jumble, “[t]he fact that an object is piled up as though it was about to be thrown out does not necessarily mean it will turn out to be particularly cheap” (Miller, et al. 1998, 154). Their argument is that this is a general type of ambiance that follows the general social class or status aspirations of the store or of those the store is aiming at. Here are two important claims: first, there is a kind of general relation between order, spaciousness, and status claims; and second, this status claim has little to do with pricing. If these are correct, it is rather the spatial distribution of the commodities that—in the present context—constructs their status than the pricing, which perhaps would contradict general notions of brands, status, and the relation of these factors to the target customer groups. This can further be connected to the strategy of placing the same commodity in different contexts or categories—thus appealing to different customers and their tastes and preferences.

To understand this, I would argue that one of the keys is to be found in Daniel Miller’s discussion of thrift (D. Miller 1998, 49-62). As evident in his analysis, thrift takes on several forms, depending on shopping mood and/or commodity. Thrift can be seen as quantity per expense, or quality per expense, and most any mixture or modulation of these two ideas. I would argue that spaciousness, elaborate exhibitions, dispersity, openness, low tables with few wares on each, and so forth all imply just that which Underhill claims is their management effect: that whoever is in control of the space can afford to leave some of it unused and spend time and effort continuously correcting and sorting the display. For the more utilitarian minded this may seem wasteful and as if the owner of the store were charging more than they “should” for the commodities for sale. As noted above, this does not need to be the actual case—the
price difference of the actual commodities in the department store and by the cheapjack may be close to insignificant. Rather, the strategy here suggests either quantity for money (“we don’t spend our earnings on fancy displays”), quality of service (“we do our best to give you a pleasure in shopping”), or quality of goods (“each of the commodities we have for sale deserve attention”).

To further set the idea of thrift in a sociological context and to perhaps understand somewhat better how it can take on so many forms yet still fulfill the same rational ideal, one can again turn to Bourdieu’s analysis of appropriation and evaluation of art and culture, as Dario Gamboni summarises it:

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\text{[the study of the non-professional use of photography and of the visiting of museums in Europe enabled him to define the instruments of perception and appraisement applied to aesthetic objects by the popular classes and by those fractions of the middle class least endowed with ‘cultural capital’, in references to what Kant had negatively labelled ‘barbarous taste’. Such instruments equate aesthetic with social norms, thus submitting works to the demands of propriety, morals and pleasantness; they equate ‘what pleases’ with ‘what brings pleasure’, as well as the interest and value of representation with those of what is represented; they require from a work that it fulfil a function—be it only that of sign—and look to it for the unambiguous expression of a signified transcending the signifier. In short, they refuse the very separation of the aesthetic realm from common norms and criteria on which ‘pure taste’ and autonomous art have been and keep on being predicated. (Gamboni 1997, 182)}
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Let us for now just make the parallel between emphasis on form of representation versus content, and of formal and aesthetic ambitions of the store versus efficiency and utility of retail space. This parallel should not be taken on too easily, but points towards how it is not necessarily the formal expression chosen that serves to define status; rather, it may be the emphasis on formal expression as such. As Gamboni continues, “[t]heored through family, background and school education, tastes express views of, and relationships to, the world. The disinterested enjoyment of functionless objects, which constitutes the authorised model of aesthetic perception, implies a fundamental distance from economic necessity and to those who are bound to it, as the Bienne case made clear” (1997, 183). That is, highbrow aesthetic is formed as disinterest in utility in similar ways as the high-profile flagship stores share as common aesthetic denominator disinterest in their function as retail spaces. The same could be said of the presentation of commodities in fashion magazines. The high-profile or high-culture magazines distinguish themselves by a few means of which the presentation of fashion itself is the most notable: it is presented first as a subject rather than a practice, and it is presented with a disinterest to how the clothes look, and especially would look in a “normal” situation, and the presentation constantly takes forms reminiscent of (pop or high) art (see chapter four).

This is not to take these claims at face value, even though I would, as above, argue the general tendency of high-profile store to be more spacious (per commodity) and give more of an impression of conscious and deliberate (dis-)order would be recognised by most. As any general tendency, this comes with exceptions, and needs to be studied closer. This will be done in two stages. On the one hand, there are definitely commodities that are of different social status in the department stores (I doubt anyone would challenge that Hugo Boss and Armani have a higher profile and status in contemporary fashion culture than Åhlens and Espirit), and thus they can be compared from such a perspective to see how well it holds in the context of the department stores. On the other hand, the question can be put what strategies are put to use to ensure such a situation.

**Order and Profile in the Department Stores**

The question, then, is whether the difference of “John Lewis and the cheapjack” reoccurs in the studied department stores, and if so, in what forms. To begin with, I see the difference as of two kinds that tend to coincide: there is the degree of spaciousness and there is the attention to order (or self-conscious disorder). Miller et alii discuss the difference between the stores as a whole, of which one was a department store, which is again an example of how entire department stores are considered as homogeneous spaces. Although tempting to begin at this level it is of worth to again start at a finer scale, investigating differences within the department stores first, and then moving on to comparisons.

Selecting an arbitrary starting point, let us start at the cheapjack – the parody of department stores – piles of goods, little space, and little order. Can this be found in the department stores? Not unexpectedly, it can. In Åhlens, we find it in the areas that are best labelled “campaign areas”, which at the time of the more thorough studies performed contained Christmas decorations, wrapping paper and the like (found on the subway floor and in the home department). These area shifts between different offers, such as books, CDs, and DVDs. When no special campaign is ongoing, there tends to be reduced price CDs and DVDs here. They are usually stacked rather densely, a bit haphazardly, and—at least after a day or two—with complete disorder. Searching the CD stalls of the nice-price or discounted CDs it feels almost as if its deliberately jumbled, the same CD reoccurring in just about every stack. It can further be
found in the less expensive or less highbrow fragrances and cosmetics. Though still with a conscious, aesthetic layout, Maxfactor offers much more as a mass of cosmetics than M.A.C. and with much more allowance to browse the cosmetics by yourself. It reoccurs more subtly in the fashion departments. First, the accessories clearly follow an order and spaciousness-per-brand formula, and they are generally offered in a less ordered style. This, perhaps, most obviously for men’s accessories, which are found on the men’s fashion floor. The apparel requires some more attention. In general, in Åhlens fashion is rather ordered and presented in a spacious manner that gives fairly much exposure to each brand or piece of clothing. To understand the difference at work, a pair of examples are in order.

Filippa K and Hugo Boss have already been discussed as high-profile brands. It is also clear that amongst all brand departments they are the ones working most with few commodities on display and with much space per commodity, with the added refinement of having their own models of shelves, hangers, and display tables, and separation by means of floor material. In the men’s fashion, this goes to the extreme in Filippa K by low tables with one or two sweaters or pairs of pants of each model on top and with a few stacked under for the one who looks and with sparse hanging and display of clothes along the wall (Figure 7:I). The tables are luxurious and “hip”, and there is a lot of space unused. All clothes are neatly folded. The same goes for Hugo Boss, albeit in a different form. As comparison, other suits are neatly ordered, but stacked together more on the hangers, displaying order, while not giving as much exposure per commodity. The same differentiation can be found in the Denim departments, with Diesel, Calvin Klein, and Armani Jeans being the pinnacle of order and exposure.

The question then is this: what of the opposite? There is the obvious case consisting of the men’s underwear and a small part of women’s underwear, which would be classifiable as “cheaper or of odd sizes”, including Åhlens’s own brand, which are more densely stacked, where there are offers put in boxes with little order, and with packages such as “three for the price of two”. Each hanger contains a great number of clothes in fair but not total order, and there is not much space between each hanger. The departments run deep from the main aisle, and it is hard to get an overview of what is for sale (unless “most any kind” is considered an overview), and even though there are models put there for show, there is also fairly much on the walls making no specific item stand out (Figure 7:II). In certain respects, this is the language of the cheapjack, but perhaps it is better likened to the supermarket, offering value per price and showing it by obviously being restrictive with expenses such as space, personnel and fancy exposure.

In Debenhams, much of these patterns reoccur. The most ordered, and most sparsely filled departments, are the ones of the “designers at Debenhams”, followed by men’s suits. Curiously, one other place where order is paramount is the denim department—which will be returned to later on. Again, the finer brands of cosmetics and fragrances are given more space, have more space per commodity, and have more order in their displays. The lingerie department is far better ordered and spacious than men’s underwear.

In general, there are more clothes stacked on each rack, more hanged on the walls and pillars, and less order in the hangings of things. As different from Åhlens, Debenhams throughout the department store has racks, shelves, and boxes with offers placed in the aisles or by the cash registers to promote impulse buys. These are always following the general tendency of cheaper wares or offers of being rather haphazardly filled. They are not to be found in Top Shop or the Denim department, however, nor among men’s suits. Whether deliberate or not, the strategy of quantity per price is spread throughout Debenhams, and to the same degree kept out of Åhlens—or, rather, centred to a few campaign areas and classes.

Notably, there is a marked difference and spatial differentiation between this part of women’s underwear and the lingerie department, which is also much more ordered. This categorisation, at first derived from what was observed, was later confirmed (even suggested spontaneously) by Åhlens’s architect and in Karina Ericsson Wärn’s Chic

What is of note in this context is that during my field studies I never encountered or overheard comments in Åhlens on disorderliness or difficulties to browse the goods or the difficulties to navigate the range of commodities, but I did hear these concerns several times at Debenhams. On the other hand, I also overheard praise in Debenhams to how they offered other goods than “the rest of the city”, something that was not heard in Åhlens.
It must be emphasised that these differences in orderliness and spaciousness should not be interpreted as “good” or “bad” strategies. It is, in spite of what some retail designers may claim, not obviously the case that more people browse the more orderly spaces, nor that they are necessarily selling better. However, depending on what kind of customer one wants to appeal to, it may be in order to consider the relations between order, commodity, and space. As can be seen above, this is already done. In line with the reasoning earlier, this is not only a result of management practicalities but a means of communication what goods are for sale, what character they have, and for whom they are intended.

**The Pile and the Unique: Authenticity and the Model of the Work of Art**

In cultural consumption, the main opposition, by overall capital value, is between the practices designated by their rarity as distinguished, those of the fractions richest in both economic and cultural capital, and the practices socially identified as vulgar because they are both easy and common, those of the fractions poorest in both these respect. In the intermediate position are the practices which are perceived as pretensions, because of the manifest discrepancy between ambition and possibilities. (Bourdieu 1984, 176)

While the establishing of patterns in how commodity distribution and claims to status seem to be used in department stores—and in shopping in general—is of importance and to some extent would be enough for the coming analysis, it is still in place to more thoroughly discuss this phenomenon and the ideals behind it. Partly this is a way to double-check its validity, but also as a means to understand its workings so as to be able to discern if it is to be found where it would be less readily apparent, or to understand when it would appear to be at work, but perhaps is not. It may also be of importance for the understanding of shopping behaviour.

If it is true, then, that the cheapjack works by piling and gathering objects with seeming lack of order and with abundance as its primary rule and this is used to convey the idea of expendability, low-price, and thrift, then what are the aims of doing the other? How does this relate to the early Parisian department stores as described by Zola?

Uncle Baudu was forgotten. Even Pépé, who had not let go of his sister’s hand, was staring with wide-open eyes. A carriage forced all three of them to leave the middle of the square; mechanically they walked down the Rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin, past the shop windows, stopping again in front of each fresh display. First they were attracted by a complicated arrangement: at the top, umbrellas, placed obliquely, seemed to form the roof of some rustic hut, beneath which, suspended from rods and displaying the rounded outlines of calves, where silk stockings, some strewn with bunches of roses, others of every hue—black net, red with embroidered clocks, flesh-coloured ones with a satiny texture which had the softness of a blonde woman’s skin; lastly, on the backcloth of the shelves, gloves were symmetrically arranged, their fingers elongated, their palms as delicate as those of a Byzantine virgin, with the stiff, seemingly adolescent grace of women’s clothes which have never been worn. But it was the last window, above all, which held their attention. A display of silks, satins, and velvets spread out before them in a supple, shimmering range of the most delicate flower tones: at the top were the velvets, of deepest black and white as curds; lower down were the satins, pink and blue, with bright folds fading into infinitely tender palors; lower down still were the silks, all the colours of the rainbow, pieces rolled into shell shapes, folded as if round a drawn-in waist, brought to life by the knowing hands of the shop assistants; and, between each motif, between each coloured phrase of the display, there ran a discreet accompaniment, a delicate gathered strand of cream-coloured foulard. And in colossal piles at each end were the two silks for which the shop held exclusive rights, the Paris-Paradise and the Cuir-d’Or, exceptional items that were to revolutionize the drapery trade. (Zola 1995, 5)

First, this needs to be set in its cultural context: the strategy of seduction employed by Mouret has its basis in a society that is illustrated quite well by the situation of the heroine of the novel, Denise—namely a society where there is a constant and rather general situation of insufficiency. A constant theme in the novel is Denise’s and the other sales personnel’s economic problems, and how they both tried to find other incomes (such as lovers) and/or were forced to save money on one thing or the other in order to get by at all. In such a society, where thrift is not an ideal but needed to survive at all, abundance and overflow is an important sign of luxury. Once transition into the affluent society is made, where the availability of commodities is much more widely spread, mode of appropriation grows more important and status flaunting is often seen as less true markers of status than the conscious understatements (Davis 1989, 343). In the western world,

42. It could be argued, for instance, that a high consumption and demonstrative use of luxury commodities shows awareness of the luxury status and prestige of such commodities, which would be—using Bourdieu’s terms—showing signs of status awareness. This goes
given that some freedom is taken with such a statement, this situation of poverty is today less prevalent—and not the least, the identity of society is not one of social misery but rather where "[s]ocial identity that used to be based on the economic and political spheres is now based on something outside." (Kawamura 2005, 99).

This is a widely spread notion, especially by fashion and retail industries who thrive on the idea of the individual expression as the reason for consumption choices. Whereas there is much to be said of the discrepancy between such an idea and the actual situation, the point remains that the idea of society perpetuated is one of affluence (Baudrillard 1998, 2)—that there is enough to provide for everyone and where all too obvious references to traditional class society are shunned. This does not mean that fashion as class marker has disappeared: "[...] while obvious symbols of class identity have become less distinguishable, smaller details can still mark out distinctions. 'Quality', for example, is the key distinguisher of class: such fabrics as cashmere, linen and leather are associated with 'quality', as are good seams and proper lining" (Entwistle 2000, 134). More pointedly Nickie Huang describes "aristocratic denim collections" as follows: "With both fashion and function covered, only subtle design nuances distinguish a well-conceived piece from the rest of the pack" (N. Huang 2005, 50).

The suggested role of clothing and fashion is instead, as discussed above, to present the individual as just that—an individual, of individual choice and individual taste. Overflow is replaced by distinction, refinement, and unicity. It should be noted that already in Zola's novel, the ready-mades or prêt-a-porter fashion departments are of lower status than the personally tailored or especially made that is suggested by the goods given primary display—the textiles and fabrics. Whereas ladies of many classes bought the ready-mades, this is always done with an excuse or apology, especially among the finer ladies. The interesting shift here, from Zola's space of luxury to today's, is the one of retail and display strategy from abundance to spaciousness (or abundance of goods to abundance of space). How come, that although everyone knows there are mobile phones stacked in piles in the storage, Telia and Geab the Phone House displays them one by one with close to a metre in-between?

It is important to grasp that this personalization, this pursuit of status and social standing, are all based on signs. That is to say, they are based not on objects or goods as such, but on differences. Only in this way can we understand the paradox of 'underconsumption' or 'inconspicuous consumption', i.e. the paradox of prestigious super-differentiation which is no longer displayed in ostentation (Veblen's 'conspicuous consumption'), but in discretion, sobriety and self-effacement. These latter merely represent a further degree of luxury, an added element of ostentation which goes over into its opposite and, hence, a more subtle difference. Differentiation may take the form of the rejection of objects, the rejection of 'consumption', and yet this still remains the very ultimate in consumption. (Baudrillard 1998, 90)

While these words of Baudrillard may be called upon for following themes in the discussion of the role of exposure, order, and spaciousness, the point for now is how the shift takes place between luxury as accumulation of goods into something else—even lack of goods. Abundance per se is no longer a sign of status and can even be a sign of bad taste. This raises the question of what model, what set of values, lies behind such elevation of the rare, and how this is incorporated into the system of objects, and into the department stores.

There is an interesting dialectic of values at work in consumer society, where the unique and individual is what is praised, whereas it is assumed to be reached by consumption of mass-produced items. The unique comes down to choice, where the idea of individual choice is a driving force behind both distinctive and conforming behaviour (above). As a counter, in the general cultural context, the finest commodity one can own (save your own body) is an authentic piece of fine art, at times substitut-

A situation which leads into discussing society today not only as post-modern, but as post material (see Castell) in that the actual level of material prosperity that can be ascribed to any "actual" need has been surpassed and that material wealth is no longer the main aim for people, replaced by immaterial wealth in terms of good design, "free time", and so forth (Castells 1996). The term affluent society here is used primarily through Baudrillard (1998) and stands for a similar proposition in the more general proposition that wants are not (past a certain point) existing but produced in that that which is possible to want is produced and was primarily presented by John Kenneth Galbraith in his The Affluent Society in 1957 (excerpt in Lee 2000).
many ways, uniqueness, singularity, authenticity, and value are tied together. While it would be tempting to assign this to a more direct or single connotation to luxury shops (which is an important connotation, to be sure), this would answer little but this connotation and give no account whatsoever as to why the luxury shops and flagship stores make use of such a strategy of commodity distribution.

In such a discussion, it is inevitable to both turn back to the idea of identity and authenticity again in their particular formulations within consumption and the parallels to art discourse, which to some extent has been forced to deal with similar issues. So, first, let us reiterate the model of authenticity in fashion discourse and history.

Within fashion culture and history, there are two figures that serve to present this relation between the authentic and the unique—which are the Dandy and the Bohemian. Whereas the dandy served as model for the conscious distinction by refinement, the claim to authenticity of the bohemian lay more or less entirely in the claim to their uniqueness (Entwistle 2000, 130-133). A bohemian cannot, conceptually, be a copy (although it would come to no surprise that there are definitely certain limitations on how to be bohemian), but is a model in and of himself (Breward 2003). Should the bohemian be found to be a repetition or copy, he is no longer a bohemian.45

The other model from which the celebration of authenticity and uniqueness is derived, which itself continuously reproduces the cult of the unique, is the art world. Here the unicity of the work is one of the defining factors for deciding the work as being a work of art (Gamboni 1997, 121-125). This, it can be claimed, is in part a result of reproductive techniques also within the art world, making the issue of unicity an important one:

[...] from then on, artists had to defend the specificity of their products against those of industry as well as of handicraft, and this was achieved by eliminating from their practice the utilitarian project common to the other two and by stylizing the uniqueness of every work of art into an essential predicate, opposed to the interchangeability of serially produced industrial objects and to the irrelevant variability of handmade artefacts. (Gamboni 1997, 123)

In other words, it is the introduction of reproduction that produces the value of the unique. This can further be argued by what followed: a decisive change in how artists such as photographers and printmakers related to their works of art and in the techniques employed. Various ways of ensuring the unicity of the pieces were developed, including numbering, signing, destroying of negatives and templates and so forth. This (together with the museum as institution) elevated authorship over work and original as different from copy: before the introduction of photography, it was a common practice to have painters copy great works to put on display instead of the original—sometimes even several copies in different museums (Buskirk 2005, 70-77). In the end, this lead to a situation where the way to distinguish the art of reproductive media (such as photography) from the everyday commodity (a photograph) lie, as curious reversion of the media itself, in the destruction of the possibility to reproduce it.

Furthermore, many of the unique art pieces gain status by being replicated as long as the replica is decidedly different from the original.46 A strategy that, as Beatriz Colomina has clearly shown, has been used for this very purpose, when Le Corbusier uses the reproductive techniques in order to promote, canonise, and even create the unique, rather enhancing than destroying its unicity. According to Colomina, much of Le Corbusier’s influence and fame stems from his use of prints, photographs, and magazines to promote his own unique pieces of architecture, while only a few have actually been there (Colomina 1996). Reproductive media did thus not in itself carry a loss of value for the unique, but rather redefined the work of art as such.

This same model is followed by Haute Couture: it distinguishes high fashion such as haute couture from the somewhat lower-status prêt-a-porter and ready-mades, and even more from everyday fashion (Kawamura 2005, 39-56). Haute Couture, as a result, lives on the production of clothes that for various reasons cannot or will not be adopted as fashion without alteration, distinguishing the original from the replica, the model from

45. As so many other models of influence and high status, the bohemian was (is) inherently male in its norm. Similar strategies of expressive clothing were common, or even the norm, for women, but was instead used for their condemnation as victims of fashion (Wigley 1995). As different from women, men were not victims of fashion, but simply either followed the collective agreements on proper dressing, or were bohemians. Curiously, whereas this is implicitly stated by the histories of fashion studied in the project, little focus is spent on it in favour of the relation between expressive/seductive female fashion and distinguished/restricted male fashion. The Bohemian is rarely touched upon as anything other than what its own norm says it is.

46. Thus Buskirk argues that specifically Mona Lisa has become widely known as much due to two events—being first stolen and refound, copied, mass produced with an obvious small alteration (addition of a moustache) by Warhol as much as by reason of the work itself. Prints and photographs of Mona Lisa further participate in elevating its status beyond what it would otherwise have all while no actual copies can be allowed (Buskirk 2005).
the series. It also lives on the fashion shows and deliberate use of media such as fashion magazines to spread the images of their work. That is, copies that let the original retain its value as unique creations while spreading the ideas and models to the public, disseminating the fashion ideas and celebrating the unique work simultaneously. This may distinguish the fashion industry from the art world in as far as fashion journalists are not critics per se but rather reporters, whereas architects, painters, musicians, poets, and other artists expect to be criticised in their work; however, the same does not go for fashion designers. Throughout the fashion system, there are a series of collaborations between designers, retailers, editors, and journalists (Kawamura 2005, 79-82).  

Another curious effect of the above is that the same rules that differentiate the work of art from the mass-produced commodities is what lets the very same object rise in value over time and even socially and culturally transcend into valuable pieces of work in many ways comparable to works of art—traces of production, authenticity, and, not the least, rarity. Or perhaps over time the properties of authenticity are engraved in the mass-produced—history, traces of ownership qua traces of production and rarity by means of things being discarded and thrown away. The mode of artistic production provides a model and a means through which the mass-produced commodity, to which the model is built in opposition, to rise, and finally even claim the status as, in effect if not explicitly, works of art.  

Model, Series, and the Collectors’ Edition

In what ways do the above then apply to retail space, and specifically department stores, and the commodities therein? Without unity—even the kind as produced by minimal alterations for each copy—and without the traces of production of an artist’s handiwork there would appear to be little claims to authenticity possible. This would be the case if there were any actual claims of sameness between the stores and the museums, or the commodities and the work of art to name a pair of association discussed above. This would be confusing it, however.

47. I am fully aware that there are relations of power, silent or explicit cooperation and promoting of one another, and social structures underlying the relation between artists, art critics, and art literature. The above is not to subscribe to an all-too idealised view of the art world but to emphasise a difference in degree of collaboration and critique between fashion designers and fashion journalists versus artists and art critics.

48. This is not to say that art can not work in a critical way to the world of fashion or to mass-production and consumer society, but rather to say that even the critical work of art may be used by the system it criticizes for its own purposes, and even to support its grip on society—as argued by for instance both Entwistle (2000, 133-139) and Klein (2005, 63-86).

The system of signs from which the product draws its image is a referent system in that the sign lifted out of it and placed in the ad (in this case Catherine Deneuve’s face) refers back to it. […] Only the form and structure of the referent system are appropriated by the advertisement system; it is the relationship and distinction between parts, rather than the parts themselves, that make an already-structured external system valuable to advertising. (Williamson 1995, 26)

I would argue, first of all, that the commodities in the flagship stores and the department stores finer departments never lay claims to uniqueness or authenticity per se. It is pointless for any brand to pretend to sell actually unique clothes when all of it likely can be found not too far away, and it would also likely be a bad retail strategy if customers felt fooled by the retailer in question. Perceived dishonesty has repeatedly struck back on brands when too big discrepancies between advertising and the actual situation have been unearthed, especially when it comes to ethics and worker treatment (Klein 2005, 345-363).

At any rate, Filippa K have departments in both Åhlens and NK, as well as its own stores at Biblioteksgatan and Götgatan (to name two), and in each of the locations more is available than what is on display if one were to ask the personnel. Although some of the sweaters on display are put there one-and-one, by model, as are some other commodities in some of the “designer” departments at both Åhlens and Debenhams, this does not give them status of actual unique objects. What the stores do is to borrow signs from the world of “authentic works of art”, alluding to the aura of authenticity of high art and haute couture. There is no actual claim of uniqueness, and most customers are likely aware that there might be several more of the same size and model just behind the storage door. The suggestion is not of actuality but of contextuality and impression. This will be returned to shortly.

As important an association the work of art may be, as unique work of a single artist, and hereby authentic, there are other factors to consider, which are perhaps more sociological or at least more internal to the system of commodities “itself”. Again, the art market has provided a model under which fashion (and cultural economy in general) can work as “[…] the convention of the limited edition established the condition under which reproduction rights could themselves be sold or included in a bequest, thus continuing, even after the death of the artist, the artist’s authority to apply arbitrary limits to the production of the inherently reproducible” (Buskirk 2005, 73).

The difference between John Lewis and the cheapjack discussed above is not only one of external references to the works of art or economy or utility, but in the distinction as such, and in the ideas of what Baudrillard terms model and series. In a short version, the main difference in-between is quantity, which translates into quality,
which translates into space (Baudrillard 1996, 150). Again, fashion can be used to further develop this discussion:

The point is, of course, that all these ‘specific’ differences are themselves picked up and mass-produced in serial form. And this secondary seriaility is what constitutes fashion. Ultimately, therefore, every object is a model, yet at the same time there are no models. What we are left with in the end are successive limited series, a disjointed transition to ever more restricted series based on ever more minute and ever more specific differences. There are simply no more absolute models—and no more serial objects devoid of value categorically opposed to them. If it were otherwise, there would be no psychological basis for choice—and hence no cultural system. (Baudrillard 1996, 142-143)

The model stands for the singular object (or even idea), such as the haute couture designer’s dress, whereas the series is the mass-produced apparel that may or may not be derived from it. This value suggested is one of distinction rather than actual. It is rarity rather than unicity (in as far as they are different) and serves to mark the owner as one of particularity and choice. What is sold is not authenticity per se, but the sense of distinction as effect of ownership of what is rare (Bourdieu 1984, 260-317). The rare commodity serves as a symbol of membership of a group, where, as Kawamura puts it, “the more exclusive it becomes, the more valuable the membership is” (Kawamura 2005, 53). The fewer that carry the same symbol, the more powerful it becomes as distinctive sign—just as rare habits, tastes, occupations, educations, and so forth. (Weisberger 2003, 11). What they sell and their value lies in this relation to the unique and to the “community” of owners. Thus, whereas it is tempting to say that the direct reference between exclusive displays and works of art, perhaps it is better understood when complemented by ideas of the model and the series.

As further testimony to this, there is between the normal “endless” series of mass-production and the uniqueness of works of art another category that could be examined by be the collectors edition (previously or at times still the “limited edition”)—by now usually sold for computer games, CDs, and films. These are not necessarily that much different from the standard copy—the main product is usually even the exact same (the same movie, the same music, the same game with perhaps one or two little extras). In Baudrillard’s terms, this is perhaps a quintessential example of commodities that are the same in their primary qualities, but differentiated in secondary qualities.

This relation between model and series, original and copy, and authentic and false is a powerful figure that—contrary to what could be thought—is not limited to the material domain. It reoccurs in the situations where there is no discerning what is original and copy, and where the original itself is, in every common sense of the word, a copy. As Don Slater has found, it is in different ways enforced both normatively and technically in such areas as “sexpic trading” on IRC:

The idea of authenticity seems evidently inappropriate to the digital files exchanged on IRC, given that they are infinitely reproducible and completely manipulable using the simplest software. Paradoxically, although one can alter any picture down to the level of the pixel, during research I encountered no examples of images that have been openly worked upon with the exception of one genre (fake nudes of celebrities). (Slater 2000, 138)

This is true for the kinds of images that are directly scanned from various magazines as well, which more or less undeniably are copies. Instead, they are given authenticity by who scanned them and by their likeness to the original of the magazine. Instead of a free spread of everything digitally, communities form consisting of those who own, contribute, or exchange images and other material, and quite a lot of work is put in to restrict free access and free downloads. Although it could be seen as the utopia of never ending consumption and those involved generally have a view against property-rights and capitalism, it is the case that while “[…] traders could have everything for nothing, they might may well experience this as the worst possible outcome” (Slater 2000, 141).

Thus, scarcity of commodities on display is used to refer to museums and works of art, to limited editions, to collectors’ value, and to discerned choice (Figure 7:III). However, it is still dangerous to draw direct parallels between rarity and status, and rarity in society and the display in retail spaces—such an aesthetic is dependant on cultural condition, for as Baudrillard argues it is only in the affluent society that scarcity can be transformed into luxury. In the world considered as a global market, there is likely more Hugo Boss shirts and definitely more Diesel Jeans than Åhlens own shirts and jeans. The situation in Sweden, as some middle ground or regional context is difficult to assess. The aesthetics of space per commodity is thus a response to and production of values rather than a response to “actual” situation in the world as a whole. This made by using formal similarities to referent systems to bestow the commodities in question with qualities. As Williamson says:

Images, ideas or feelings, then, become attached to certain products, by being transferred from signs out of other systems (things or people with ‘images’) to the products, rather than originating in them. This interme-
The commodity is presented in the context as if unique thereby associating it to being unique—or at least rare—in any which context it ends up, suggesting the buyer as both unique in herself or himself and as interested in the authentic. By association to contexts outside of the store by how the commodity is placed within the store, the commodity is given its character (see above and Chua 1992, 114-135). Associations to works of art and museums are used as producing a contextual association to similar contextual situations, the rare or valuable commodity qua the unique and important work of art. Thus, it can be said that “[…] while the logic of the system, from which it derives its meaning, lies in the differences only (nobody would bother to find and push an ‘image’ for a product that was the only one of its kind on the market), the appearance of the system is one of ‘logical’ connections and similarities” (Williamson 1995, 29).

What I would argue is that this is not a case of deception. The rarity of uniqueness of the commodities are never claimed to be actual. In the rare few cases it is actual, it is in the world outside of the department store as well, and it is this rarity that is referred to. Thus the customers and the department stores are both participating in sanctioning this “illusion”—an illusion that perhaps can be viewed as the reproductive illusion Richard Allen speaks of when discussing the illusory effect of cinemas (Allen 2003, 230). That is, the reproductive illusion of films lie in that while they are definitely not “real” and indeed staged, the audience can still appreciate the movie as if it was real knowing it is not. Accepting this deception is part of the cinematic experience. Similarly, the representation of uniqueness should not be confused for deception per se, for there ought to be little doubt that people know what they buy are serialised products. What is performed is a staging of unicity, as atmosphere or aura, using similarities to how works of art (in Baudrillard’s terms models) are usually presented. This blurred line between model and series—the unique and the mass-produced—is nothing unique to the shopping situation, but it is at work both within art such as Dadaists and not the least Andy Warhol’s work as well as at home.

A System of Values

While the local order of commodities—that is, how the context is given form for the brand, the lifestyle, the category or whichever of these one would like to use—does serve to provide an idea of the claims to target customer made by the commodities in question and the relative distinctions of local expressions serves as differentiating factor, there remains a few questions to be dealt with. Questions that have to do with why categories are put where they are in relation to each other and what kinds of implications this have beyond the previous discussions of belonging and difference—or perhaps, in the extension of these questions. This is an area seldom approached as a value system and where the insufficiency of brand and lifestyle explanations will become obvious.

In line with the argument above, I would argue that there are few objections to the idea that—as a perceived general strategy of retail—the newest and most trendy clothing are put on display within close reach from the entrance, whereas the more specialised or less trendy is put in the back or to the side really only noticeable once one has entered and started to browse the store completed by some attractor commodities placed in the depths to make people pass by as much as possible.49 Discarding reasons for the placements, the fact remains that some goods are given more exposure than others, and some are more readily available than others. They are not always the same, and not always different—but the modulations of these two factors, which also participate in constructing contexts, can be used to analyse the values produced in the department stores on a more systemic level.

Similar factors can be found to be at work in other situations. The king lives on the hill, with his castle (his sign) visible for everyone, but where few can or will actually visit him. The Rector of KTH has his office with a window right down to the subway exit leading to the university campus, but on the top floor and behind not locked but quite controlled corridors and staircases. Trendy fashion boutiques seek their positions by squares and corners where as many as possible are and others are either forced to less advantageous locations or choose to locate themselves on either less exposed or less readily accessible places. The collections that “everyone” should see in the museum are placed where everyone passes by. This is more than simple rational results. It is also formation (Markus 1993, 11).

The question then is what they are forming. Thus far, the discussions have been focused on contextual situations of either adjacencies or intervisibilities and how distribution of goods within them suggests appropriate situations of use, of combination, of customers and of consumption. While important in the ongoing analysis, it is not necessarily a situation that differs the analysis of a boutique from a department store or a mall. What in a much more direct and concrete way come into play in the department stores are sequences, interrelations between departments and classes, and the

49. Such reasoning is, in fact, presented as good retail strategies by for instance Underhill (2000), for whom the placement of the goods for sale is of immense importance—even if he for the most part stays on a rather local level, and thus never tackles the contradictions that come from the reasoning about adjacencies and exposure. Something that, further, allows him to not treat the final decision as judgments of taste or expression of values.
situating of classes in a greater context of one another. Not only in relation to one another, but also in relation to other activities, such as eating, going to the toilet, coming down or up escalators, entering, or leaving, there is a sequence of goods from entrance to exit, which though in some respects free is also fixed by physical space forms a narrative configuration in which the plots of the visits can take place (Koch 2004, 113-117; Johansson 2003, 212-223). Thus, department store managers can be likened to fashion editors:

[The fashion editor, however, has two potent weapons: silence and space. She can ignore collections she considers bad, and she can give the largest possible amount of space to those she thinks are good, with priority in placing and the preference, if any, of colour reproductions. (Kawamura 2005, 32)]

Aside from deciding what to buy (or not) and what belongs together, there are prioritisations and judgements made as to what need to get exposure, what needs to be seen by many, what needs to be reached by many, and what, if anything, actually does not need to be seen. It is no coincidence that brands like Hugo Boss, Filippa K, Tiger, Armani, Calvin Klein, and Diesel are prominent on the first pages of (especially high-profile) fashion and lifestyle magazines and in relation to interviews with world famous fashion designers or art reportages with different inclinations towards high art or pop art. Less high-profile brands tend not to occupy those spaces. Thus, by use of sequence, placement, and narrative relations within the fashion magazines as spaces, they lay claims to characteristics that are supported by the form and expression of the ads, and as we shall see in many ways similar to how the system of contexts and the relative characters of these contexts support one another in their claims.

The same is at work in the department stores where distances and adjacencies play an important role, and separations, sequences of availability and exposure, and differentiations between categories-as-contexts are also significant. In the perhaps most simple example, there is in all department stores a clear separation, in metric distance as well in classes in-between (insulation) and accessibility patterns, between suits and denim. Just as in the earlier discussion on defining classes, this serves to inform the customer that they do not belong together. Distance and closeness between classes thus seem to play a role as well as the fact that one (generally) cannot see the denims from the suits.

Though a further discussion of status implication will be performed, this is not to say that fashion is all about status; it can be argued that it is not always the role it assumes. All the same, since status is one of the important symbolic meanings that fashion tend to express, and perhaps even to form, it is the one that will primarily be analysed here (Davis 1989, 337).

In addition, for the coming discussion it is important to look at the relation between the spatial system and power relations (Markus 1993, 23). While not inherently the same, status and power often follow from one another: status is linked to power. Social status gives power as a result of those of higher status being perceived as more potent to achieve what they set out to do. Similarly, those with much power are (usually) endowed high status for the same reason albeit inverted (Giannopoulos, Conway and Mendelson 2005). This is how fashion magazines can discuss “power dressing” and how to gain both power and succeed in your career through use of (the contextually correct) status brands (see e.g. Slitz Man #1 2006, themed “power”). The claim is that those who are perceived as powerful become powerful, and one way to be perceived as powerful is to dress as if you were.

One could here raise the question of status for whom and in which situations. At this point, I will refer back to the earlier discussion on systemic fashion: whereas something can be seen as of high status in society as a whole, this does not mean that everyone follows or emulates it or that it even is considered as high status for individuals or within subcultures, without this challenging the system as a whole. Neither is it to claim that the status situation is either fixed or compulsory. There are several ways in which it is both challenged and played with in the everyday practice of dressing. That is, however much the department stores present a system of values and such a presentation is in part formative it is not deterministic in the social context and individual use of
fashion as a whole (Entwistle 2000, 40–77). This will be dealt with in depth in chapter nine (individual movement and movement patterns), Twelve (gender system and individual), Thirteen (social structure and individual), and Fourteen (shopping practice and fashion appropriation). What I do argue is that the department stores participate in the construction of this general cultural context in which dressing is situated and taste performed. Furthermore, they produce a range of selection, which serves as the base for fashion adoption and appropriation. The point is that this is performed indirectly through acculturation rather than directly and concerning one specific object, endowing it with a value that it then would carry with it wherever it was put to use. Finally, there are several other things suggested by the system of commodities and their interrelations and sequences, which has to do with such things as public and private, difference and sameness, and complementarily and opposition. Let us turn to how these values are constructed in the department stores as spatial distributions and/or distributors. How are things categorised as system beyond what has already been discussed? To what degree is this done through the use of the spatial configuration? This investigation will be performed through the use of the spatial operations of exposure and availability, and how these form a kind of map of interrelations with exposure on one axis, and availability on the other—a map in which the focus now will be put on the extremes.

The Fashion Conscious and the Trendy: Catwalk Åhlens

As you come up the escalator to the women’s department (taking the most used escalator), you immediately face the self-conscious and hip Filippa K store, its black and white display tables, and refined and scarce display seen early on complemented as you get your bearings by Tiger, French Connection and to some extent Turnover on the one side, and Twist & Tango, Imitz, BZR, and so forth on the other (Figure 7:IV). These would be the most obvious trend-profiled fashion commodities of the second floor at Åhlens. They are also brands that profile themselves towards the trendy and fairly well-off (of Kleen 2006, 18), and which continuously have prominent placement, lots of exposure and a lot of advertisements in the more trendy magazines, aiming at self- and fashion-conscious consumers. A survey of fashion and lifestyle magazines undoubtedly supports a claim to the trendy claims of their position in Åhlens, a position that is similar in NK.

32. By calling them trend-profiled is not meant to say that they claim to follow fashion trends. As a general approach, most trendy fashion brands rather make claims to ignore trends—which undoubtedly have to do with the elevation of the timeless form and the free artist. Furthermore, it may be more correct that they strive to be in fashion and that they in some ways aspire to set trends rather than “merely” following fashion trends.

In the local situation, this tactic is used as well, presenting the newest and most up to date in the most exposed places close to the aisles. Thus, the common space of Filippa K, Tiger and French Connection discussed before, which contains not all of these brands but the most exposed and available parts thereof, in a way form a category of their own as “the trendiest of the trendy”, whereas this “trendiest of the trendy” character to some extent lends its character to the whole of their context (Figure 7:V). Similar situations appear, although weaker, in part of the street fashion section. In the men’s fashion department, a similar set of brands appear in the areas with similar characteristics right after the escalators. There are attempts made to this strategy in Debenhams as well, perhaps most notably in men’s fashion, in cosmetics, and by Top Shop—and, it must be said, it is attempted in the women’s fashion by the third party Oasis, although according to the personnel, it does not work. I would claim that this, in part, is due to the lack of understanding of the characteristics at work. If it is exposure—and early exposure—combined with availability that characterises the trendy, that which everyone should at least look at, touch, and want, then there are several ways in which Oasis does not conform to these characteristics.

First of all, the store is half a stair down in a vast and open landscape. It is thus neither the first thing one sees of that floor, nor is there any need to pause to get ones bearing once standing by it. The possibility of using the position to get early exposure, such as by the use of a perpendicular wall showing from even before entering the half stair down, is not used. And finally, the impression of the store in itself more closely resembles the cheapjack than the flagship store. This is a result of spatial form and systemic properties and relations. Curiously, it is not a result of its potential role as attractor either—it could be geared towards the secondary entrance into Debenhams from Mäster Samuelsgatan, which I will return to in the next sub-chapter. Hence, the position is more of that which is passed by than of the in-fashion, trendy catwalk character, which contains not all of these brands but the most exposed and available parts thereof, in a way form a category of their own as “the trendiest of the trendy”, whereas this “trendiest of the trendy” character to some extent lends its character to the whole of their context (Figure 7:V). Similar situations appear, although weaker, in part of the street fashion section. In the men’s fashion department, a similar set of brands appear in the areas with similar characteristics right after the escalators. There are attempts made to this strategy in Debenhams as well, perhaps most notably in men’s fashion, in cosmetics, and by Top Shop—and, it must be said, it is attempted in the women’s fashion by the third party Oasis, although according to the personnel, it does not work. I would claim that this, in part, is due to the lack of understanding of the characteristics at work. If it is exposure—and early exposure—combined with availability that characterises the trendy, that which everyone should at least look at, touch, and want, then there are several ways in which Oasis does not conform to these characteristics.

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of overview and exposure of the space below). This is a pattern that is followed such that the in fashion magazines most strongly defined trendy brands or styles take on the strongest of the investigated spatial properties of trend characteristics.

All in all, this shares characteristics found earlier in the study of libraries, in what they promote as “important for everyone to read” (Koch 2004, 124-130). The use of such characterising tactics for the commodities in the trendy zones, suggestions are also made of the public character of the commodities. Exposed in situations that in most every context are given public roles, they are hereby contextually given public character (Colomina 1996, 233-281; Hanson 1998, 109-125; Urbach 2000, 342-352)—which is part of assuming a trendy character to begin with.

This would imply that for trend characteristics to appear, single-routes and single-entrances, and clear movement hierarchies are preferable. While to some extent the case, such limiting actions upon the possible movement and route choices of people inherently contain other problems both in customer movement patterns and for the consecutive, deeper zones (Markus 1993, 25). Controlling movement tends to restrict exploration or limits the perceived freedom under which it can be done. Such a strategy, as shown by Alan Penn, is only reasonable to work within situations where the consumer is prepared to actually surrender such an exploratory behaviour and be lead after a pre-defined path through the store (Penn 2005). Whereas movement restriction or freedom and perceived freedom are not necessarily directly linked, and at times even hidden, there is a trade-off in controlling browsing paths that are not easily discarded.

There are a few ways to characterise these contexts: it is a position early in a sequence (in the store as a whole, or on a floor) that gets early exposure (before most other commodities of the store or the floor), and that this sequence is followed by customers—that is, that most (or at least many) customers follow a route where the context is a part. This last point will be scrutinized closer in part three of the current work, but can be understood by use of spatial models by use of integration and sequence. They are, simply put, located early in a sequence of highly integrated spaces, which are early in both exposure and availability.

The Discerned and the Powerful: Hugo Boss, the King of the Hill

She lived (Meadowlark told me) with her family—parents, younger brother, widowed grandfather—in a cramped flat on the sixth floor of a tall drab block with wind-whipped walkways (though Meadowlark had never been within twenty miles of the place—that was her description) one hour and thirty minutes by packed train from the centre of Tokyo. He also told me how she loved to preside over his anonymous executive flat. Loved to stand and stare from its window high above the nightless streets, a small, pale face with ink-black hair, gazing down into the neon heart of the city, transfixed by the windows rising all around them, by the pulse of countless lights, a perspective which for her commuted money and power. (Kramer 1998, 77)

There are, apparently, commodities that have a stronger charisma and attraction than other commodities and pull people deeper into the stores, overcoming whatever obstacle they encounter in order to reach what they are after. This is the hypothesis of much retail thinking. In a lapse of logic, this then manages to equate the milk bottle (a universal symbol for that which everyone needs) with the high profile suit hanging on the far wall. It manages to transform an operation of taste into an operation of retail value neutrality. This is, I argue, a result of a lack of spatial understanding and a simplified view of commodities as either wanted or not as much wanted. However, these two examples both occupy different positions and make different claims. First, when put straightforwardly, I would think no one would argue everyone needs the suit the same way everyone “needs” milk. It can even be argued that suits are needed by fewer consumers than quite many others a clothing. Second, the milk is not put on display on the far wall for everyone to see since it can be assumed that everyone will know it is there and search for it. Directly comparing grocery shops with fashion retail, or any retail where little need can be ascribed to just about any selection, is risky and problematic at best.

There are two dramatically different deep locations within a store: one is exposed early on, visible sometimes even from the entrance, while the other is not. The former is where one finds Hugo Boss, the latter where milk is located. The difference between them lies in exposure, whereas the difference between them both and the above discussed trend position lies in availability. This is a spatial situation that is not much more than loosely linked to geometric analysis of closeness and depth upon a plan, as

See the analysis of the Växjö City Library (Koch 2004, 146-148) where it was found that an apparent circular, open space performatively rather take on characteristics of trees and series, thus taking on powerful control and surveillance mechanisms in the way it is used, even if the intention may have been different.

It may be of worth to again point out that whereas there are different degrees in which buildings control movement and interfaces between people and commodities, all buildings do it. As clearly learned in the analysis of Växjö City Library, the apparent use of “open, democratic space” is not necessarily open nor free at all, and can at times take on both highly controlling and restricting character (Koch 2004), and even in an uninterrupted “neutral” grid system in a rectangular area there are spatial differences (Hillier 1996, 275-299; Shpuza and Pempos, 2005).
geometric symmetries can hide radical differences in accessibilities and visibilities (Ståhle 2005, 155-178; Ståhle, Marcus, and Karlström 2005). The situation to be scrutinized now is the one characterised by high exposure and low availability. This situation of early exposure and longer distance is consciously used in retail—in the simplest sense, they are formed by what Underhill calls endcaps:

Endcaps, the display of merchandise on the end of virtually every American store aisle, are tremendously effective at exposing goods to the shopper’s eye. Almost every kind of store makes use of them—in record stores you’ll see one particular artist’s CDs, or some discounted new release; [...] An endcap can boost an item’s sales simply because as we stroll through a store’s aisles we approach them head-on, seeing them plainly and fully. (Underhill 2000, 79)

This is a strategy that is also used in shopping malls by placing attractor stores in the depth of the so called streets to make people move past them all (Miller, et al. 1998; Fong 2003; Lancaster 1995). What concerns us primarily at the moment, however, is not whether they work as attractors or not, but rather the effects of such strategies on implied or suggested values and characters of that which is put in such situations. At this time, it is of worth to begin with something that is undeniably exclusive and of high status: jewellery and the way the more valuable and high status jewellery are locked away behind glass. The operation performed here, according to Baudrillard, is one of producing simultaneously proximity and distance:

Above all, though, glass is the most effective conceivable material expression of the fundamental ambiguity of ‘atmosphere’: the fact that it is at once proximity and distance, intimacy and the refusal of intimacy, communication and non-communication. Whether packaging, window or partition, glass is the basis of a transparency without transition; we see, but cannot touch. (Baudrillard 1996, 41-42)

55. In the analysis of urban green structures and availability, Ståhle demonstrates how the use of geometric figures imposed as “areas” in use by governments to calculate how much green structure is available in different parts of Stockholm radically differ from the degree to which they are accessible—where the latter corresponds far better to how they are both perceived and used. Here, a representation based on administrative borders obscures lived reality—something that tends to reoccur in many situations where too direct or simple geometric figures are used to understand either urban or interior spatial structures.

Proximity and distance: something that is close yet far away, visible but not touchable, exposed but not available (Figure 7:VIII). Glass does not actually render the commodity or the interior or whatever is behind or inside it unavailable. What it does is limiting its availability and by restricting access implying effort to reach it. By limiting our access to the exposed gold and silver jewellery, or the finest watches and pens, we are informed of their exclusivity, their desirability, their value—and hence their status and role in relation to other commodities. Something that becomes at most obvious when at work within the same category of commodities. It is used in all four department stores for jewellery, for collectors’ editions and boxes of DVDs and CDs, for the most exclusive perfumes, the most exclusive electronics (such as the most expensive and designed shavers in Åhlens and the most exclusive mp3-players and headphones in PUB), for the finest drink glasses and other glass wares, And so on. It is transformed gradually into desk sales, where the commodities are not locked away literally, but still require the intermediary of personnel to reach.

So, how does this translate into the configurative spatiality of the department stores? The answer, I would argue, has already been presented. If we shift the focus from the material of glass to the performative operation of the glass casing, the transformation needed to be made ought to grow quite evident: the act to be performed is one of ensuring exposure while decreasing availability—which can be done in more or less complex versions of Underhill’s endcaps. By means of material boundary or spatial distance, the availability to the item in question is lessened by making the effort to reach it greater, while the awareness of it is promoted. Produced by the glass casing is a situation similar to being far away but exposed:

Glass work exactly like atmosphere in that it lets nothing but the sign of its content emerge, in that it interposes itself in its transparency, just as the system of atmosphere does in its abstract consistency, between the materiality of things and the materiality of needs. (Baudrillard 1996, 42)

What comes out of the glass is not primarily the object itself, but a representation of it. Thus, the situation of exposure without availability can be seen as emphasising the representative aspects of commodities over their practical uses or tactile presences. Whether there actually is a commodity inside or not is in many ways secondary. Such an emphasis of representation or form over utility and use is, according to Bourdieu, in itself an operation of status, where the general tendency is that those high in the cultural hierarchy focus on form over content—albeit under the guise of disinterest (Bourdieu 1984, 18-63; see also Williamson 1995, 77-95).

Such strategies are commonly used by high-status and/or powerful actors—the king on the hill, the church and its towers, the master bedroom, the king’s chamber or audi-
ence hall, the choir, the boss’s office. This is not necessarily seen in itself, but it is a representation in form of the (closed) entrance to it. Perhaps most of all, however, the effect of the representation can be understood by comparison to the public work of art or the monument. Whether democratic in intention or not, the monument or artwork—often but not always “pure” representation—serves to impose its presence and demand everyone to notice and relate to it and to suggest values, memories, events, political figures, or institutions as important. As with a statue of the king, it is not to inspire everyone to try to be like the king in every respect, and definitely not to inspire everyone to try and take his position, but rather to remind everyone of his importance, and implicitly or explicitly, his power. Public works of art serve to communicate values and ideas as such that should be revered and treasured by everyone. The same operations are more or less at work in both advertising and the more political art, perhaps most obviously in totalitarian states of either kind (Gamboni 1997; Groys 1992). This role, as Gamboni argues, becomes evident in how the razing of such monuments is a powerful figure in revolutionary acts against that which they represent (Gamboni 1997, 51-91).

This would further suggest that not only does this form of representation confirm a given status, but serves to produce it. Power over what is visible, what is represented, becomes an important factor in cultural negotiations of what is of importance, and also who has the more power—who has the right to be represented (Zukin 1995, 278-283). The golden necklace is rendered valuable by being represented as in need of protective glass encasing.

To what degree this is then actually used in the department stores is a question with both a simple and a complex answer: it is at use and the more traditional and simple the spatial layout, the more so. It also, as far as the limited historical perspective of the current work can purport to claim, tends to grow stronger through historical process of space and commodity (re)distribution—it seems that over time these strategies are guiding the locating of high-profile status brands.36 They are most easily observed and most present in the fashion departments of Åhlens and the men’s fashion department of Debenhams. Most obviously in the position of the suits, and especially the high-profile ones of (in Åhlens) Hugo Boss (see Figure 7: IX below) and (in Debenhams) Thomas Nash’s suits. They are put either in existing endcaps (to the degree such exist), or by produced endcaps created by use of wall-like shelves. The fine suit is perhaps also the clothing most readily associated with power or status—the (male) chief or patron.

The second most thoroughly found attractors or high status commodities would be Denim, and especially certain brands of Denim such as Diesel, Nudie, and Acne. Whereas a claim of denim being high status clothing would, not long ago, have been quite perplexing, the situation have dramatically changed over recent years:

In a curious sort of backward evolution, denim—originally the uniform of the American labourer—is now the property of the fashion elite. This inversion has resulted in Aristocratic denim collections with tailoring and embellishments more suited to the runway than the workday. (N. Huang 2005, 50)

It is likely no coincidence that Huang uses words such as “elite” and “Aristocratic” in the description and that this corresponds to their spatial positioning in the department stores. Whereas denim or street fashion as such can be found in a wide range of “status contexts”, the high profile denim are either found in high profile or trend contexts, with or without a range of brands stretched out in-between.37 As noted earlier, the denim and street fashion strongly differentiate themselves from the traditional aristocracy of suits by distanciation as well as by disassociation through rendering one invisible from the position of the other (which is done in both Åhlens and Debenhams by use of floors and/or walls, Figure 7:IX). What is formed is thus two different branches, equally internally hierarchical, but not necessarily differentiated from one another in status. Thus there is a strong spatial force suggesting two differentiated sets of hierarchies, which should not be mixed and even may stand in opposition to one another. The aura of street fashion as opposing the traditional aristocracy can be retained, even while taking on the very hierarchical forms of it, rendering the criticism intended—if it was—to be neutralised.

If the Denim world, or street fashion, as Naomi Klein claims, lives on opposing the old hierarchies, they do so just as much by creating new hierarchies that run alongside following similar principles. It is simply not the case that there is a sudden turn in which denim becomes status symbols—if Klein’s observations are right, then there is a history behind it where street fashion and denim is built up with its own hierarch-

36. In a discussion with Åhlens’ architect the 28th of July 2006, it was confirmed that indirectly through discussions of “hot spots” and “exposed locations”, there are more or less explicit strategies conforming to such thinking. In her view, it must be noted, this was primarily a question of negotiating localisation of commodities with expected customer demand or expectations—even if there was an openness to discuss it as not only responsive but also formative of desires and values.

37. According to Vouge in January the year after, 2005 “[…] was also the year that saw the denim market go into overdrive, feeding our insatiable appetite for new brands and new styles.” (Quick 2006, 97)
chies and which then are adopted into society in general (Klein 2004, 114-118). Thus it would not be contrary to logic if the status pyramid of Åhlens suddenly inflated upon itself and the most status-conscious costume wearers also wore the highest-profile denims. In fact, tendencies towards that can be seen today—such as in that fashion designer Moises de la Renta’s (son of long-time high fashion designer Oscar de la Renta) claims that “I represent a younger consumer” and that “I am trying to bridge the gap between uptown—my father—and downtown” (Harris 2006)—a gap primarily between hierarchies and not statuses.

Another spatial characteristics intertwined in the position here discussed is that these are the spaces, or commodities, seen from most other spaces. They impose their position by visual presence, which we have earlier discussed as an exercise of power—in other words, they take on the role of expressing and representing power (Zukin 1995, 278-283), which in itself is convertible to status (Giannopoulos, Conway, and Mendelson 2005, 796-797). In Lefebvre’s terms, they dominate the social space by power of the presence of their representations (Lefebvre 1991, 164-168). In as far as visual space is concerned, the spaces of trend commodities and high profile status commodities are collapsed into each other forming one visual coherence, while that which lies in-between is hidden. The degree of direct exposure and following claims on consumer attention and awareness is thus often negligible—the difference lies in how they are reached.

This constant presence sets them in a specific position regarding their role in the play between commodity and context: their constant presence in several sub-contexts emphasises their roles as “authors” of the context—they serve to inform the consumers whom ought to be interested in taking the route to them and what ought to be found in them. It is, thus, no coincidence that, from the most used escalator to the Hugo Boss display, there are shirts, ties, and suits, or that between the trend zone and the denim wall of the ladies fashion, street, and jeans fashion is spread out. However, the implications of the discussion above are that not only does it connote power and status, but also it defines power and status in the context of the department store. That is, by giving other commodities these positions, another set of values would be represented as of high status.

Finally, within the model of the glass case, separating representation and object, lays the potential of their final separation into commodity and representation—that is, by exposing the suit in the shop window and putting it in the depths of the department store the situation is taken to the extreme. Exactly in the same way as the monument tells of the king, while his chambers are deep inside the castle. And in a peculiar turn of logic, this reconnects the milk bottle and the suit, since it is the (perceived or believed) knowledge of their existence as commodities making them attractors. The difference remains, however, that one is heavily represented and the other not.

The Attic, the Cellar, and the Wardrobe: The Hidden, the Private, and the Shameful

As a third analytic operation, the degree of exposure can be shifted, while (conceptually) retaining the degree of availability—that is, the focus can be put on what is more or less deliberately not exposed. Contrary to what may at first be thought there are in all department stores departments, or parts thereof, following such strategies. The question is what this implies in a system of values and in what different ways it is realised. Here, depth—the degree of availability—takes on a somewhat different character.

The depth of the interior traditionally is tied up with the private and moves towards public the closer to the entrance one reaches (Colomina 1996, 232-281). At first glance, this may seem to contradict the idea of the discussion above, but for a few reasons it does not. There is, in the traditional interior, really no difference between those who are allowed to be private, and those who are of high status or in power. This theme is repeated not only in private interiors, but also in most public buildings as well, save those of formation or reformation (schools, prisons, asylums, hospitals) (Markus 1993, 14-18, 95-145; Hillier and Hanson 1984, 183-197). However, these general observations of connection between status and depth all tend to do one thing: leave out the most private, the most hidden, and the least important: the closet, the attic, the cellar, or the maid’s room.

As different from the earlier discussed, the depth of these performs differently in a few significant ways. Whereas the master chamber is one way or the other made present for the visitor, the closet is not, but it is rather “[h]olding things at the edge of the room, simultaneously concealing and revealing its interior, the closet becomes a carrier of abjection, a site of interior exclusion for that which has been deemed dirty” (Urbach 2000, 346). Although arguably not always having worked this way, the closet/wardrobe changed character in the 19th century into something that promised to conceal what it contained and simultaneously hide itself, removing both its own presence and that of its content from the space of living (Urbach 2000, 344-345), which also allowed it to become a figure for other phenomena given similar social characters.

At first, it may appear difficult to discuss such a phenomenon in relation to department stores at all, supposedly all as public as possible, with focus on the hedonistic pleasure shopper and extravagance. It proves that it is difficult in one respect: in the discourse of department stores these spaces are left out. And, should they be discussed, it is usually in the form of the dressing rooms, which only with difficulty fit in to these characteristics and at times blatantly expose themselves (which also tend to be the focus of the discussion, see
Put in cul-de-sac positions within the stores, something that tends to prevent arbitrary intentional aim to reach them. Something further supported by their tendency to be not shameful or extremely private; they are just not for everyone, but for those who other commodities intended for children. The position they are put in, using the meta-
forms of clothing and often (but not always, see Åhlens for instance) connected to
the café and insulated from men's clothing by the home department. They are also
of the spacious exposure discussed above. They are also separated from the route to
the other.

In the study of libraries, it was found that a rather consistent set of media were
differentiated from the main body of the library collections and that these media fol-
lowed from characteristics of non-belonging or otherness: the children's literature,
the magazines (easy reading), and the speaking books (Koch 2004, 127-130). These
were usually separated out spatially and in rather strong ways, giving them their own
spatial branches separated from the main path often before even entering the library
proper. This does not necessarily degrade them, even if it is an effect whether in-
tended or not because they are the “other” and perhaps most of all they are aimed at
the other. Because children have no place in the traditional idea of a library, they are
separated by the distribution of books.

Corresponding to the children’s books and possible to use as a first study of the
same phenomena in the department stores, are commodities that are aimed at
children: toys and children's clothes. In all four department stores, these take on a
somewhat hidden position—in Åhlens, they appear in the lowest (toys) and topmost
(children's clothes) floor, in Debenhams on the topmost, in PUB in the lowest and
in NK in the back of the second topmost floor. In Debenhams, the children's clothes
are given a comparatively prominent position although the character of this is less
of the spacious exposure discussed above. They are also separated from the route to
the café and insulated from men’s clothing by the home department. They are also
relatively absent from shop-windows and to a fair degree from fashion magazines
and advertisements.

The children's clothes are hidden. They are definitely differentiated from other
forms of clothing and often (but not always, see Åhlens for instance) connected to
other commodities intended for children. The position they are put in, using the meta-
phoric terms of the heading, would correspond best to the attic or the basement. They
are not shameful or extremely private; they are just not for everyone, but for those who
intentionally aim to reach them. Something further supported by their tendency to be
put in cul-de-sac positions within the stores, something that tends to prevent arbitrary
explorative visits (Penn 2001).

The reason to refer to them as attics or basements rather than closets is that their
separation is less deliberate: they are not put in spaces that could be taking on different
characteristics deliberately changed, but in spaces having these characteristics to be-
gin with—they are thus not “hidden” through an active change of space. This as different from the wardrobe, which both socially and spatially stand for something different:

These two closets are not as different as they might appear. Taken together, they present a related way of defining and ascribing meaning to space. They both describe sites of storage that are separated from, and connected to, other room-like spaces, spaces of display. Each space—
storage and display—excludes and defines, but also depends upon the other. The non-room, the closet, houses things that threaten to soil the room. Likewise, in a social order that ascribes normalcy to heterosexu-
ality, the closet helps heterosexuality to present itself with certainty. (Urbach 2000, 342)

The closet tries to hide, whereas the attic and the cellar simply are used to store things,
which rarely concerns everyday life or everyone. This is where we begin to approach
that which is silenced in shopping literature save a few exceptions: in shopping space
there are things deliberately hidden. Whereas the toys, computer games, and chil-
dren’s clothing are put in the least visited areas, which generally will not be encoun-
tered unless one specifically aims for these commodities, exposure of other commodi-
ties are more consciously blocked.

What is hidden? Why is it left out of shopping literature in general? First, natu-
ally, this is done because the shopping discourse is caught up with its own idea of
hedonism, retail-by-exposure, and of how commodities seduce the customer; conse-
quentially, mostly focusing on that which gets most exposure. Even Daniel Miller, who is
critical of this “journalistic shopping discourse”, either avoids or takes no note of the
hidden (D. Miller 1998, 111-114). It is, however, approached in Gregson, Brooks, and
Crewe’s investigation of charity shops:

[s]patially, for example, charity shops exemplify Goffman’s ‘front’ and
‘back’ zones, with their distinctively different bodily associations (Goff-
man 1959). So whilst some of the work of the volunteer is that of shop
sales assistant (working on the till, restocking and tidying display areas
etc.), much, much more occurs in the back shop zone, a space char-
acterised for us by the distinctive smell of collections of second-hand
clothing: a crusty, musty, fuggy, distinctive bodily aroma. (Gregson,
Brooks, and Crewe 2000, 104)
The front and back zones then follow the formula of exposed and hidden, and the way the “dirty” body is present or absent. The body, in its actual presence—which includes smells—is made absent from the general space of the store and should not be allowed to make itself reminded. This coincides surprisingly well with the “hidden” in the department stores: on the larger scale, the hidden consists of primarily men’s underwear (in both Debenhams and Åhlens) and the customer toilets, followed by similar tendencies for parts of women’s underwear and men’s changing rooms. On a smaller scale, one can note that the most work-intensive and “dirty” cleaning equipment (mops, swabs, and scrubbing gear) are hidden on the backs of the shelves in the bathroom and/or living room area.

In the women’s underwear case, it would seem that the difference lies between “lingerie” and “underwear”, the border between which is unclear to say the least. Furthermore, there seems to be a difference between “pyjamas” and “nigilgees” as well as between bathrobes of different kinds. Here, there is a difference in quality and pricing as well as brand commodities and others—but also to those that are more decidedly “just underwear” or sleepwear and those that serve double shifts as underwear/sleepwear and embellishment. For the men’s underwear, they are all quite clearly hidden away (save perhaps one box of offers in Debenhams), and thus kept out of the normal visit, confined in space to be noticed by only those who go there. Not surprisingly, in the border zones to the other clothing, one finds the brand underwear such as Calvin Klein and Björn Borg—brands also the most prominent advertisers of men’s underwear. This is a spatial pattern that follows that of fashion and lifestyle magazines, where lingerie is quite present in both women’s and men’s magazines, whereas men’s underwear are much less prominent overall.

However, this is not to say that one is dirty and the other not (if that were the case, we could find “dirty” in both men’s and women’s clothing), but to point the connection between body and hidden. This is something that will be returned to extensively in chapter twelve, as the pattern is reoccurring and emphasized in other ways as well, and becoming as most clear when also considering the presence and absence of people and how the department stores guide movement through the commodities and spaces.

Cross-Mapping the Local and the Global

The question can be put if the local order and global system of values work together, or if—as could be perceived in much shopping literature—the former rather works on the very local context (whereas the latter does not really exist). This is not a question of which of them is most important or has the highest impact, but rather whether they coincide, contradict, or appear, for what it is worth, independent of one another.

For such a question, there could be several methods of analysis—and several have been used—but at the current stage a simple model is both enough and of preference. If one creates one map of categories, ordered in one axis after exposure and the other after availability on the one hand and another map of categories consisting of one axis of perceived orderliness and one axis of spaciousness thus forming two maps presenting the argued production of social or cultural status positions, these two can then be compared.

First, there is a rather clear pattern with which orderliness and spaciousness tend to follow one another. They are, in general, used to produce one another, and there are several ways that their use tends to connote high profile status of the commodities for sale. Second, when comparing the maps to one another, the distribution of the categories along an axis of implied status would more or less directly coincide. Furthermore, similar mappings based on how the brands, commodities, and lifestyles appear both internally in fashion magazines and as general degrees of presence in the different hierarchical levels of the magazine world, show the same general pattern.

The point here is not the mapping in itself nor to try and deduce a cause-and-effect chain. The point is rather the degree to which a range of different (spatial) means is used to reproduce the suggestions of one another. That is, the cultural ideals and values as expressed by the relative system of orderliness and spaciousness coincides with the system of values as produced by the relative degrees of exposure and availability and both coincide with the system of values as produced by fashion and lifestyle magazines. Coincidentally, this further means that they significantly correlate between the different department stores in as far as such comparisons are possible.

This is not to claim a deterministic set of properties, but rather to point to how, first, the findings of the two investigations of this chapter support one another, and second, how these are supported (and support) a general situation understood as what is expressed through the discourse of lifestyle and fashion magazines. That is, Yumiya Kawamura’s claim that department stores participate in the diffusion of fashion and in mediating cultural values by use of exposure and silence in ways that are similar and work together with fashion magazines has been given rigorous support. That this is a situation of collaboration between designers, producers, traders, and press as Kawamura argues (Kawamura 2005, 79-82) ought to be rather clear. In such collaboration all parts participate in producing the values (and corresponding system of objects) to be promoted.

Spatialising Narratives: Sequences, Scenes and Situations

The floor was always dark when I arrived, and I took the same route to my desk every morning. To my left when I walked in was the advertising department, the girls who most loved adorning themselves in Cloé T-shirts and spike-heeled boots while handing out business cards that screamed ‘Runway.’ They were removed, wholly and entirely, from anything and
everything that took place on the editorial side of the floor: it was editorial that picked the clothes for the fashion spreads, wooed the good writers, matched the accessories to the outfits, interviewed the models, edited the copy, designed the layouts, and hired the photographers. Editorial traveled to hot spots around the world for shoots, got free gifts and discounts from all designers, hunted for trends, and went to parties as Pastis and Float because they ‘had to check out what people were wearing.’

Ad sales was left to try and sell ad space. Sometimes they threw promotional parties, but they were celebrity-free and therefore boring to New York’s hipster scene (or so Emily had sneeringly told me). My phone would ring off the hook on a day during a Runway ad sales party with people I didn’t know really well looking for an invite. ‘Um, like, I hear Runway’s having a party tonight. Why am I not invited?’ I always found out from someone on the outside that there was a party that night: editorial was never invited because they wouldn’t go anyways.

As if it wasn’t enough for the Runway girls to mock, terrorize and ostracize any and every person who wasn’t one of them, they had to create internal class line as well.

The ad sales department gave way to a long narrow hallway. It seemed to stretch forever before arriving at a tiny kitchen on the left side. Here were an assortment of coffees and teas, a fridge for stored lunches—all superfluous, since Starbucks had a monopoly on employees’ daily caffeine fixes and all meals were carefully selected in the dining room or ordered in from any of a thousand midtown takeout places. But it was a nice touch, almost cute; it said, ‘Hey, look at us, we have Lipton tea packets and Sweet’N Lows and even a microwave in case you want to warm up some of last night’s dinner! We’re just like everyone else!’

I finally made it to Miranda’s enclave at 7:05, so tired I could barely move. (Weisberger 2003, 138-139)

While the above discussed spatial relations or relative positions are of importance for how space organises and can be viewed as an organisation, it leaves out important questions. Architecture is not possible to make use of as a paper, with different positions found by simply choosing where to begin, but constructs and limits routes possible to follow, forces start-points and endpoints, which context can follow after which, or must be included in a route, and hereby describes order not only as generally rela-

tive positions—things next to one another—but as sequences—one thing after another. This is crucial for understanding the earlier made distinction between trend and exclusivity, which thus far have been simply presented as dependant on sequence and distance from entrances. Such configurative positions, however, are not only part of direct experiences or walking routes:

Further, I sense how its spaces are organised, even the sanctuary to which I cannot gain access, the crypt, and those outside where I have recently been. I know what is near the entrance, what lies deep in, what is next to what, how all these spaces are connected. (Markus 1993, 7)

This kind of configurative sequences can be termed narratives. Narrative stands for the construction of plot or meaningful sequence in the telling of a story. The narrative serves to move the plot onwards as well as to from a discrete set of events construct a meaningful whole (Ricoeur 1981, 274-296). Through the order in which events are presented and the way in which they relate to each other, the plot is developed, understood, and explained (Coble 2001, 4-12). Tentatively, as space sets the limits of how we can visit different spaces as well as in what kind of sequences we can distribute commodities and functions, space, or more precisely, spatial configuration, serves as a part of such a narrative of architecture (Johansson 2003).

As a first, rather simple example, one can turn to the historical museum. Especially in early historical museums, but to some extent still prevalent, the sequencing of spaces into a series constructs a chronological narrative of history, linking it into a story of events or eras following each other (Markus 1993, 203-212; Bennet 1995, 95-98). In such a case, space as part of the narrative of the museum can hardly be questioned. Through the organisation of space, the chronological nature and order of history is disclosed to the visitor into a well-structured story that is possible to follow from start to end and in many ways similar to a fairytale. The degree of freedom in such a narrative is highly dependant on spatial configuration, as it sets limits to how it is possible to experience exposures and availabilities (what is seen, what is heard, what is encountered, what is reached). Such a series of spaces, one leading to the other, from entrance to exit, is a controlled narrative, where everyone is guided to “read” space in a specific order. Comparatively, a network of spaces form a much freer narrative, where the reader is left more to him or herself to produce the sequencing and to push the plot onward much in the same way as a hypertext novel (Coble 2001). These configurative locations in the narrative contribute to the roles and identities of the commodities.

Freedom in the narrative, however, should not be mistaken for total freedom in constructing the plot. As an example, in the City Library of Stockholm any visit to the library
proper begins, once inside the building, with the transgression of the long stair leading upwards, towards the light, reaching into the central rotunda filled with books showered in light, from which a choice can be made to move into any of the subsections. This part of a meaningful totality of a visit to the library is one that cannot be avoided and is part of a narrative of such a visit. Furthermore, in such a visit, the central rotunda would be a reoccurring scene in which the story takes place, and the scene through which parts are linked together, should different branches be visited. It would also be the place in which the choice of different plotlines would be physically embodied.

The idea of a story or a plot as a chronological structure should not, however, be overestimated. The order in which sequences are presented can follow a chronological timeline, but can also follow other patterns; the ability to out of sequences build a meaningful totality from scattered events is based on a configurative ability—which is to say that interrelations between parts are constructed into a whole, based on configuration, but not necessarily on sequence of encounter. As Ricoeur describes it: “[t]he art of narration, as well as the corresponding art of following a story, therefore require that we are able to extract a configuration from a succession” (Ricoeur 1981, 278).

Thus plot in narration is a result both of sequence and configuration and work simultaneously to build up a comprehensive whole and a story. Ricoeur further emphasises the role of configuration in the narrative, especially in the case of history, where he claims the narrative to be heavily reliant on configuration rather than succession. Furthermore, narrative is more about internal structure of the narrated than the actual narration, story, or experience.

A term already introduced is ‘sequence’, suggesting the physical moving in space over time. It would however be a mistake to emphasize movement as some preeminent architectural feature. A sequence may be of spaces themselves, or of functions, thus not necessarily having movement of a body as an intent. Rather, a sequence pertains to organization, and may be an organization of time, movement, people, functions or architecture. (Johansson 2003, 213)

Space can thus be said to conduct a narrative function in two ways—the first in how its configuration serves to support the formation of narrative in the building, the second in how it through setting restrictions on movement and the orders in which space can be experienced, sequences the movement or experience in space into spaces, which to some degree are translatable to scenes or events. Furthermore, it suggests that it is not independent from but in a free relation to the sequence in which spaces are visited or experienced a narrative of space is constructed in appropriation of a building.

This does not mean that the sequence or order in which artefacts, events, or aesthetic expressions are ordered in space and the order in which they are experienced are not important for the narrative of the building. On the contrary, the way commodities (artefacts, objects, functions) are positioned in space grow even more important as they participate in constructing the sequencing of events that together with the configuration serves to produce a whole of what it purports to contain:

In 1992 Fred Wilson mounted the most popular exhibition in the history of Baltimore’s Maryland Historical Society. Entering the institution as an artist, he created Mining the Museum, an installation that presented historic artefacts in new and unexpected combinations. Orchestrating objects and documents from the collection, some emerging from storage, others simply rearranged or otherwise highlighted, he both followed and subverted museum categorization to reveal an alternate history to the one traditionally on display. (Buskirk 2005, 163)

Space and commodity, through one another, produce a narrative, the preconditions of which are partly to be found in the configuration of space. Important to keep in mind, however, is both how space is both indirectly and directly formed by commodities, all whilst forming them. This narrative includes relations between sequence, availability, and exposure in the organisation of the system of values that are formed in the department stores. Spatial configuration thus sets limits on the range of possible interpretations of the system in that it affects the degree of choice in the spatial system. A series has a set configuration of how events or spaces are linked, setting constraints on the narrative, while a network has a freer configuration, where it is more up to the visitor to extract the configuration from the perceived structure. This is not to say that one is better than the other, but rather to say that if one wants one of these narrative effects, it leads to constraints on what spatial arrangements are available to produce it.

Thus, even though sequence is an important part in the narrative, there is a difference between sequence in plot and sequence in narration. Although both serve to disclose and create the story, they should not be confused. What comes of this is that narrative is not directly connected to a visit—it is rather a configurative property that has to do with how configurations and sequences participate in the formation and description of the contexts it holds. When discussing sequence, depth, and distances from entrances, the question is not whether they are experienced in that order or not; the question is their position relative one another and relative the exterior, which puts them in different positions relative the city, the exit, the deepest parts of the department stores, and so on.

Sequencing of spaces or events further creates distance and through distance also difference, as described by Hanson, using the term insulation (Hanson 1998, 125-
A sequence through many spaces (contexts, events) is longer than a sequence through few. That is, distance as an important means by which contexts are described as different is not necessarily metric distance, but rather the number of different contexts or spaces one must pass through from one point to the other. Thus in as far as boundaries formulate separated contexts they further create sequencing of spaces and produce distance (even in situations metrically remaining the same).

This is why sequence, as shown by Hanson (1998, 125-126) and Urbach (2000, 342-352), can be analyzed in space without proposing spatial sequence to be determinant of experienced sequence. It describes the way in which things are related as either a process or a hierarchy through how they are positioned in relation to another through one another and relative the whole. As Johansson states, sequence can be of time, movement, people, functions, or architecture—it is an organisational property. This organisational property is an important part in the formation of categories and in defining their positions in the value system. Having impact on both availability and exposure, sequence has ramifications of importance for the system of values in discerning spaces and contexts between one another. Together with availability, sequence differentiates the trendy from the exclusive. Together with exposure, sequence differentiates the exclusive and the hidden. That is, sequences of exposure and sequences of availability are only loosely connected to one another. Whereas the trendy and exclusive share similar positions in the sequence of exposure, they differ radically in sequence of availability.

Such sequences can be more or less rigid and simple in their organisation—as in series or trees, or more free, as in networks, allowing for rings to appear and enabling different connections between individual spaces. To put it in other terms, a space at the end of a cul-de-sac does not participate in any configurative rings; it has little to no permeability in the spatial system, and as a result, it is assigned (somewhat) exclusively to that which it holds, be it functions, things or people, whereas spaces which also function in the permeability of the structure cannot be exclusively assigned one single function (Hanson 1998, 123-124). The more routes it serves, the less distinct character separate from the permeability it can take on. Even if this becomes even more important when the actual use of the possible movement patterns is imposed, it does suggest structural spatial properties participate in constructing the character of each individual space. There is a difference depending on to what extent a space is forming a thoroughfare, and to what extent it forms a dead-end, which has effects on how it is both perceived and likely to be used.

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38. This is basically what is measured by the convex space graph developed by Hillier et alii, which focuses on this kind of configurative relationships, by use of physical architectural boundaries that form “convex spaces” (Hillier and Hanson 1984, 97-99, 147-155). Their argument for using convex spaces as configurative elements is that everything in a convex space can be said to be co-present, which is an important form of social relations (Giddens 1984, 64-68).
Figure 7: Filippa K. Shop at Åhlen. Note how few of the models are lined up on the table and the meticulous order in which everything is arranged, producing a sense of disbursement and placing demand on the browser to actually know why (s)he would pick up a piece and look at it.

Figure 7:II by presenting themselves as unique, and as highly valuable by being afforded so much space and exposure, some commodities make use of display methods that closely resemble those of museums. The most extreme case in Åhlen are a small selection of bags tops, whereas it in Debenhams is a selection of shoes on the youth fashion floor (below).

Figure 7:III compared to the meticulous order and exposure of Filippa K., the cluttered and used area of Åhlen own brands on the women’s fashion floor appears rather much as a “cheapjack”.

Figure 7:IV contrasted to the meticulous order and exposure of Filippa K., the cluttered and used area of Åhlen own brands on the women’s fashion floor appears rather much as a “cheapjack”.

Figure 7:V by presenting themselves as unique, and as highly valuable by being afforded so much space and exposure, some commodities make use of display methods that closely resemble those of museums. The most extreme case in Åhlen are a small selection of bags tops, whereas it in Debenhams is a selection of shoes on the youth fashion floor (below).
Figure 7: As one comes up the main escalators from the main entrance floor of Åhlen's city there are a few brands that provide an immediate context, thus claiming importance and the role of the trendy, most notably Filippa K.
TOp Shop works much like Filippa K in Åhlen in making sure what you both see and reach first when moving onto the floor is the same.

The use of glass focusing is a way to regulate exposure and availability. The representative (symbolic) function of the object is enhanced over its use-value adding to the references to economic value requiring protection.
Figure 7 ix

In Åhleus, traditional and urban men's fashion form two separate branches that, seen from where they can be said to begin, have little visual connection whatsoever with one another.

In Åhlen, traditional and urban men's fashion form two separate branches that, seen from where they can be said to begin, have little visual connection whatsoever with one another.
8. THE COMPLEXITY OF CLASSES

[...] as anyone who has played chess will know, objects are affected by the place in space of other objects; not only their presence, and their position, but even their absence, or ‘negative presence’, may be important. (Ardener 2000, 114)

By now it ought to be clear that while presenting a system of commodities, the categories and contexts at hand are constantly shifting, in interplay with one another and with the consumer as she/he moves through the department stores assuming different viewpoints—or perhaps better expressed forming narratives of visual, tactile and auditory contexts in relation to one another. The formation of these contexts is, by and large, performed through negotiation between space and commodities, which means that the analysis up to now has been discussing both. That this serves to inform decisions on spatial organisation has been repeatedly stated and will be returned to most clearly towards the end of the current work. What is to come now is a conclusion centred primarily on the system of commodities and how categories (a-spatial) and contexts (spatial) are formed. In part, this will be through studying the processes behind emergent orders. It will also address a few ambiguities and inconsistencies in the department stores and the systems they present.

An Arbitrary and Contradictory System

The system of commodities forms a fleeting system of signs assigned arbitrary values and meanings. At least to some extent; there is also a relation between (common) use and (common) meaning of artefacts (Eco 1997, 182-201). However, set in different situations, the commodities constitute different signs, have different meanings, and play different roles not only from situation to situation, but from perspective to perspective. This is not to say that it is not analysable; on the contrary, it is to try and pin down how such an analysis by necessity need to be performed in several stages, in several scales, and in several layers. The role of a specific commodity, like a model of brand denim, is constructed by relative position in its local context, and by the position in the global context, from the general cultural context, and from the way in which sequences are formed leading up to it. Furthermore, the interrelations between these (and other) factors need be discussed, as well as the different contexts in which the commodity can be found. In this way, sets of social relations are first abstracted from their social context and then invested into commodities in a negotiation of perceived quality and role of the object, and conceived quality with which one may want it imbued. In a way, these negotiations turn the commodities for sale into concrete abstractions of the social relations, which they then purport to be the sign of. The categorisations made in the distribution of commodities in the department stores are done by how they relate to identities and social structures and turn into category makers in social life. As Williamson puts it, “[...] having been signified as different, the products then become signifiers of difference” (1995, 45).

Let us then once again look at the system of objects as the concrete abstractions they are claimed to be of social relations, cultural values, and management priorities. That is to say, let us focus the attention to the relation between conventional and spatial realisation: the relation between category and context.

Objects and Space: Categories and Contexts

The first chapters of this part were primarily focused on objects and how they formed categories in a system of objects, the first as a theoretical and conceptual discussion and the second as performed in and by use of space. This points to the complex relation to what I have termed categories and what I have termed contexts: one could say that categories are the abstract or conceptual groups or classes of objects that can be induced from science, logic, philosophy, and so forth—or space—and that contexts are spatial situations as produced by spatial boundaries and what is included in them in forms of both individual commodities and categories hereof. An a-spatial and a spatial term which at times coincide and which to some extent serves to produce and characterise one another. Filippa K is created as a category by spatial clustering, and included in the context of Tiger and French Connection, both characterising the category of Filippa K, and producing a higher-level category including all of them, and also a higher-level context of all of them.

The production of categories, as performed by prioritised categorising operations, then both takes form and is formed by being constructed and represented in space, and this is done by use of primarily relations of visibility and accessibility; that which

59. Harvey uses the term concrete abstractions for money in that they are abstract representations of labour, in that they “[...] arise out of concrete social practices of commodity exchange and the division of labor” (Harvey 1989, 167). Bonds of personal relationship are replaced by exchange values, commodities and money, which means they are “concrete” in that they have a direct influence on people and social structures, and “abstract” in that they are an abstraction of the social relationships for which they stand (Harvey 1989, 167-168). I argue that the status of the commodity as a sign in many ways is similar—at the same time concrete, tangible and made us of, and an abstraction of social relationships of which they are made to symbolise.
is visible from one another and that which is close to one another. It is further formed by use of different boundaries, which can define them as either self-contained and important in themselves, or as part of a greater whole, and if so, which wholes are related to which in what kind of ways. Such borders have been described as linear or painterly, where linear stands for clear division between categories, whereas painterly for more fleeting relations. Spatially, one way the degrees to which boundaries are linear or painterly is modulated by visibility and accessibility such that the more there is preventing either, the more the boundary becomes linear (exclusive, defining), and the more open the relation is of either—and especially both—the more the boundary becomes painterly (inclusive, vague), that which is separated is presented as somehow belonging to a higher-level unity or the same general context.

Such spatial means are used to define the categories and contexts formed by the commodities, but are also produced based on the ideas of what categories and contexts are available for inclusion. They are also used to describe relations between categories, and their uses, and to produce different situations that pertain to social or cultural status by modulating the different conditions of exposure (importance) and availability (for whom to have).

The categories, as formed by prioritised categorising operations, then tend to take on a range of different characters that are formed as a situated practice, which inherently leads to them forming a complex system that to some extent is emergent, and where the apparent structure is, while at times appearing as a sorting into brands, discernible only as a set of rules which are changing in priority from situation to situation, and where the levels on which the individual rules operate shift depending on commodity, situation, and space. Thus it can be said that while there is a prevalent sorting after gender, brand, lifestyle, status, class, use, intended situation of use, privacy, publicity, surface, depth, and so forth, the position in the chain of categorising operation of all these factor vary greatly. As has been seen, and will be seen, some of them are always important—namely gender, status, privacy and publicity, intertwined with which can be found the more common ideas of lifestyle and brand. Indeed, the former are in some ways perceivable as ways in which the latter both form and produce identities for themselves in the social and cultural context.

These categories/context participate in shopping as a practice in forming a kind of stages for events—or, perhaps, what has been analysed here is the formation of categories that participate in the production of contexts, in which emerge situations—the central issue of Part III.

Category, Space, and Commodity

 [...] what is dealt with here is not the meaning of 'a' artefact', or necessarily 'a' space, but what systems of space and artefacts located in these—taking their inscribed meaning into consideration—mean, and how this, as a consequence, affects the meaning of the space, artefact or artefacts. How and after what order we choose to locate things in space assigns status, meaning and importance to both the artefact and the space in which they are placed mutually, both telling of the intended use of the space and the artefact and informing us about who or what it should be used in connection to or separated from. (Koch 2004, 118)

The contextual character of commodities and meanings have been discussed above at length, providing example after example of how this is performed both by producing sameness and difference and how this is done in different degrees and through different means. Complementarity. Differentiality. Sameness. Hierarchy. Closeness. Distance. Exposure. Availability. Also, these examples have provided ample evidence of both the fleeting identity of objects, and the fleeting character of the divisions and separations made use of. The point has been that assumed categorisations and orderings in the analysis of department stores (and retail in general) are not as valid as it may at times seem, and that there is a multitude of adjacencies and categories created that, each one considered on its own, are fully making sense. I would even argue that they make sense as a whole once these categorisations are allowed to overlap, to coincide, to contradict, and to take on fleeting positions in relation to each other where several categorising operations are at work simultaneously and once notions of “for each thing its proper place” is let go of. The question is not individual commodities—the question is the contexts produced by the commodities, in which these are situated, and how they form each other. However, even though categorisations are made primarily by differentiating operations, this must not be allowed to lead into an assumption of the big differences as those of importance, since they may stem from a series of smaller differential operations at work; differentiating processes that are not necessarily creation of opposites. Too much focus on differences risks leading to the construction of models that in themselves contain their analytic answers:

The tendency to see only division and separation takes its most extreme form in dualistic thinking, where only two categories are posited in op-
position to each other, and where one category is often valued more highly than the other. (Franck 2000, 296)

The structures dealt with in this thesis, it must be realised, are constructed by ideas of both belonging and difference however much it can be argued that belonging is a form of mutual differentiation. Neither do they form tables of mutually exclusive categories of grouped artefacts, but rather a mesh of categories evolved in the everyday practice of sorting. As organisations, they both make sense and do not—just as the apparent categorisation of literature found in the City Library of Malmö both makes sense and seems quite random, depending on what the idea of ordering principles is assumed, or what categorising operations are expected to be prioritised. Hence, by positing other possible connections against the ones presently made, the arbitrariness of the prioritisation comes to show.

Foucault performs much the same operation in the introduction to The Order of Things, when citing Borges (Foucault 2003b, xvi). He also points out that his intention is not to suggest one order being superior than the other, but primarily that they are different, and when used to think in one, the other may seem incomprehensible. He argues that for some—in Baudrillard’s terms—acclimatized to one order, one discourse, understanding arguments positioned in or coming from another discourse (another way of organising the world) is if ever possible then at least difficult. By showing the arbitrariness of the division of animals into classes performed in the Chinese encyclopaedia, he puts the finger on the arbitrariness of the corresponding categorisations made in our culture (Foucault 2003b:xvi–xxvi).

One such division, which is “universally” present in libraries, is the one between factual books and fiction. This, at first, seems like a logical order in which to classify literature. It is, however, not without its accompanying problems and difficulties. The conceptual division between for instance fiction and non-fiction—emphasized by the spatial division between the two—is not always self-evident as the most useful division. The question can be raised why a factual book on life in Belize has a closer relation to a factual book on northern Alaskan bugs than with novels taking place in India when cited Borges (Foucault 2003b, xvi). He also points out that his intention is not to suggest one order being superior than the other, but primarily that they are different, and when used to think in one, the other may seem incomprehensible. He argues that for someone—in Baudrillard’s terms—acclimatized to one order, one discourse, understanding arguments positioned in or coming from another discourse is if ever possible then at least difficult. By showing the arbitrariness of the division of animals into classes performed in the Chinese encyclopaedia, he puts the finger on the arbitrariness of the corresponding categorisations made in our culture (Foucault 2003b:xvi–xxvi).

Layers, Scales, and Levels

Individuals (and things) belong, then, to many pairs, groups or sets, each of which may be thought of as occupying its own ‘space’, or as sharing a particular ‘universe’. Members or one group may be ‘dominant’ relative to members of another group in one ‘universe’, while in turn being ‘muted’ in relation to members of a third group sharing with them a universe differently defined. A woman may be ‘muted’ relative to her husband and ‘dominant’ in relation to her children; gypsy men are ‘dominant’ in their own culture and structurally ‘muted’ vis-à-vis the English (Oakley 1978). (Ardener 2000, 114)

Something that makes it possible to assume, for instance, a primacy of brand as categorising operation is the many layers of ordering at work in the department store and the constant shifting of the performed operation between levels, scales, and layers. One could start with one example, which is rather obvious: one of the most significant categorising operations in the department stores (and shopping in general) is gender. This works in several different ways and on different scales.
First, the fashion is differentiated into men’s and women’s fashion each on their respective floor. In both Åhlens and Debenhams, with a floor in-between, in NK and Puh above one another—men’s clothing is always above women’s.\footnote{As has been discussed earlier (and in the coming) this is true with some modification: Youth clothing in Debenhams consists of both men’s and women’s clothes, and there are small islands of men’s clothing in the entrance floors of PUB and NK, albeit somewhat hidden. NK in Göteborg have the men’s (and unisex) department on the second floor and women’s on the third, and after the rebuilding of F.U.B. in 2005-2006 the floors no longer worked as gender separators.} However, when it comes to perfumes and cosmetics, the same is not obvious. They are not per se ordered into a men’s part of the department store and a women’s part. Instead, the fragrances are clustered together and then subdivided by gender and then by status—e.g. if the two genders are also given different statuses. For the cosmetics, the same operation is performed, although it is clearly working to show that cosmetics in general is concerned with women. The same goes for children’s clothing and, in Debenhams, “youth fashion” (Top Shop, Top Man, Denim).

For the Fashion departments, once ordered after gender, there are three principles constantly interwoven. They could be called (functional) type, brand and lifestyle—complemented by “activity” departments (training, bathing). As a functional type, lingerie and underwear are sorted together, divided into lingerie, underwear, and sleepwear as discussed above, and then ordered either by brand or by size. The same can be said of jackets and coats although this is not as clear. Brand stores appear such as Filippa K, Tiger, Kookai, and so forth, which are internally ordered after functional types and status and newness and clustered into lifestyles, while there are lifestyle contexts, which are then sorted after brand and functional type or the other way around. In the home department, there is one organising principle following a correspondence to apartment rooms—living room, kitchen, dining room, bedroom, bathroom—one organising principle clustering the electrics, one brand store containing most categories found elsewhere (Muji), and throughout these the bedroom, bathroom—one organising principle clustering the electrics, one brand store containing most categories found elsewhere (Muji), and throughout these the categorisation into activities such as eating, drinking coffee, sleeping, sewing, and so forth is predominant.

Intertwined with these organising principles, there is the status hierarchy, trendy and aristocratic, pushing apart or bringing together, but which can be seen in all scales and levels, saturating all layers. These work both “globally”, in the department store as a whole, producing hierarchies of classes, metaclasses, and categories, locally on each floor differentiating the categories and within each category as well and on each of these levels following the same basic set of rules: exposure and availability.

The use of both constitutes trend; the use of exposure without availability constitutes aristocracy. None connotes privacy, and primacy of availability constitutes the cheaper or more low profile brands or commodities.

Finally, when studying the whole of the department stores, there are two other ordering principles that run through both floors and the stores as a whole—namely that of privacy and publicity and that of surface and depth. Goods more available and more exposed are generally more of public character, and those more easily reached have to do with surface. The extreme examples would be the cosmetics and accessories of the first floor compared to men’s underwear hidden away in the depths.

However, to understand these operations they must first be understood as working on several scales and to be as much connected to accessibility as with “floors”. In Debenhams, this can be seen as “the private” is put deep inside or hidden (with the ambiguous status of lingerie in mind, explicitly put both in the depth and shallow), whereas Åhlens follow basically two general approaches: floors and escalators. It is no coincidence that cosmetics and perfume, street fashion, and a select range of kitchen commodities are found around one escalator, and for instance lingerie, sleeping, training, bathing and washing and books are closer to the other set of escalators. The division into private and public parts can only be understood when customer behaviour is taken into consideration, and will be scrutinised in the next part—the point now is the structure of the system.

The multilayered nature of the system makes some of this difficult to discern should one try to flatten it out, confusing a privatising operation on one level with one on another. Lefebvre presents this problem as a set of relations between public (G), private (P), and intermediate (M) spaces in the urban fabric, which are then subsumed into and reoccurring in each level. Thus there are in public space (G) spaces that are more public (g) and more private (p). A system that logically could be presented as consisting of G (g, m, p), M (g, m, p), and P (g, m, p). A space Gg is then completely different from a space Pg, but both have public character in one way or the other, same as a Gp and a Pp; space have private characteristics, whereas the former is part of public space (such as a street) and the latter of private (such as an apartment) (Lefebvre 1991, 147-158). Such figures are easily recognisable, and also clearly present in popular perception of city life—which shows in for instance William Gibson’s Pattern Recognition, Andre Breton’s Nadja and Zola’s work in how there are distinctly private milieus in such public locations as a bar in central Tokyo or a square in the streets of Paris, examples and questions which will be examined in depth in chapters nine and ten (Gibson 2004, 146-157; Breton 1991, 147-158).
2000, 80-90). That it is the same operation of differentiating into degrees of privacy or positions within status hierarchies both within and between emergent categories does not mean that internal and external relations or operations can be equated. Rather, I would argue, such an equation is erroneous.

Thus what comes from the investigation is, in part, a more diverse and rich understanding of how categorising operations are performed, which they might be, and how they work in several layers, where the choice of which to be given primacy in the scale or layer in question is—to the extent it can be seen now—arbitrary. And, with a change of priority, radical differences would appear: if one would, for instance, sort after lifestyle or brand throughout, the department stores would not look as they do now by far, which leads to the next question that of the relation between local and global choices and strategies.62

A System of Priorities

The top of the Labyrinth is an imaginary place, and Icarus fell down: the nature of the Labyrinth is such that it entertains dreams that include the dream of the pyramid. (Tschumi 1996, 49)

Given the system as analysed thus far, it is hard, if not impossible, to imagine there being any one person with a grasp of its whole in the durée of daily life and who methodically works through the placing of each individual commodity in relation to the entire department store and all other commodities. It is also difficult to imagine the entire tablet of categories consciously and deliberately considered in each management choice, and every categorising operation being weighed and prioritised in every instance. This is not, however, the line of argument. On the contrary: the line of argument would be that the totality of the system appears as a result of both overall strategies and particular decisions in abstract and often hidden negotiation. Complex systems—of which social and cultural ones are perhaps the foremost—responding to customer behaviour as movement patterns and sale frequencies are by necessity a result of different levels of decisions and a series of negotiations. This, it can be claimed, lies in their very nature.

All the same, ideas of hierarchy and authorship are powerful figures, which tend to saturate analysis of social systems, as well as human behaviour, architecture, and planning, and, curiously enough, of non-human systems (Johnson 2002). One such myth, for instance, is that of the ant queen, supposedly knowing what all of the ant society is doing, directing its every movement, is constructed based on the figure of feudal hierarchy rather than actual evidence, transferring an arbitrary, top-down social model to another context, based on the idea that there need to be a mastermind behind, regulating the perceived order (Johnson 2002, 29-67).

There are strong tendencies in the discourse on shopping space to assume such top-down workings, which at times engenders a misrecognition of them as extensions of the retail manager’s identity converted to expertise (of seducing the consumer), as is “journalistic” shopping discourse concerning brands and advertisement. Without denouncing the importance of management decisions for economic success or failure of a department store, such decisions must be seen rather as a series of interconnected situated decisions, which work on different scales and which follow from a negotiation between practices and ideals and where the decision may or may not be made by a single manager. Such decisions are informed (and perhaps formed) by input and suggestions from different layers of the system—from departments, floors, sections, area managers or workers, and are while at times related to the whole, made from comparatively local prioritisations. That is, the department stores function as systems of priorities. This is not to claim they are built up only by the small differential operations between one commodity and another, but rather that process works on all scales simultaneously. For such systems, it is of importance to understand how apparent order can grow from local or particular decisions; how the set of categorising and prioritising operations govern the whole, as opposed to the ideal figure derived downwards into the details. This claim, or the idea of such an emergent model, may be in need of some elaboration.

Managed Totalities and Emergent Complexities

Such a system would define the most elemental form of complex behavior: a system with multiple agents dynamically interacting in multiple ways, following local rules and oblivious to any higher-level instructions. But it wouldn’t be truly emergent until those local interactions resulted in some kind of discernible macrobehavior. […] That would mark the beginnings of emergence, a higher level pattern arising out of parallel complex interactions between local agents. (Johnson 2002, 19)
Emergent systems are systems in which global behaviour (the behaviour of the system as a whole) is built up and ordered on local decisions and in the local context but still form a coherent whole. To be emergent, the global behaviour must also be something other than a simple summary of the individual acts themselves. This is a very abstract suggestion. To approach it, though still not using the term emergence, Hillier and Hanson uses an example given by Rene Thom, which discusses the cloud formed by midges (Hillier and Hanson 1984, 33-34): the (global) cloud of midges is made up of a collection of midges who manage to create a stable cloud over a considerable period. Avoiding assigning awareness of the cloud form to the midges, the explanation for such a structural phenomenon can be quite simple—if every individual in the cloud moves randomly, until half of its field of vision is clear of midges, and then turns around so it is filled again, the cloud would be retained. This would even contain suggestions of why the clouds emerge to begin with—not because one of the midges, or all of them, wishes to form a cloud, but rather, their cloud behaviour arise from every one of them seeking other midges.

Of importance to remember, however, is that “[…] saying that the global form can arise from individual behaviour is not the same as saying that it is reducible to individual behaviour” (Hillier and Hanson 1984, 34), as the cloud is a form in itself and is dependent on the relational behaviour of the midges. Johnson gives similar example from the animal and bacterial world and provides further arguments as to why these forms of behaviour are independent of awareness of them by the participating organisms (Johnson 2002, 73-82), whereas David Porush uses the example of traffic jams (Porush 1991).

People are not midges.

There is a substantial difference between dealing with (assumed) swarms of insects or computer models based on similar logics and social systems. As a result of reflexivity, conscious decisions, degrees of awareness of social structures, any social system is more complex and depends on both local and global decisions (Johnson 2002, 73-100). That is, one cannot assume that there is not an awareness of the global system in decisions made, and decisions are also made about the global system as a whole. The reason to use an example such as the cloud of midges is to show how a system as a whole can exist without a conscious design of the same whole, and without participating actors either being conscious of or intentionally producing it. It is thus a conceptual model for a kind of system, not a suggestion for what how the commodity system works, and it is put forth to suggest that the values in the department stores are as much emergent as pre-determined or consciously designed.

Thus, the point to be made here is that while society cannot be understood as a cloud of midges, with actors performing locally without consideration of the whole, neither can social structures be explained in their totality as top-down or structure-aware decisions—daily life is made up of routines and decisions that are based on the situation at hand, with only a fleeting relation to the societal structures which they serve to reproduce (Giddens 1984, 41-82). As pointed out by both Barthes and Baudrillard, semiotic systems (which to some extent work similarly to emergent systems) are not dependant on each sign being set in direct relation to all other signs, nor does every use of a sign need to be consciously related to the totality of a system for this totality to exist.

Another point is that the order that can be found is not necessarily preconceived, but emerges from an apparent chaos, forming a “[…] dynamic system which undergoes the sudden transformation from apparently chaotic to increasingly ordered on the other side of the bifurcation point” (Porush 1991, 59). It is reasonable to believe, however, that there is an interplay between local decisions and global strategies forming one another, where local and global should not be confused for their spatial equivalents but with level in the system of relations: a local or particular situation would consist of a subset of elements and their relations, whereas the global system consists of all elements and their relations. That is, it is reasonable to understand the commodity system of the department stores as a result of interplay between “chaos and order”.

Another important thing to realise is that when moving between scales, the elements included likely change. In the fragrance department, the individual bottle can be considered, whereas in the management of the department store as a whole (both as physical spatial entity and as range of commodities), it is more reasonable to work with larger-scale elements, such as “fragrances”. The claim is not that there is a local construction of categories and a global management of these. It is rather a question of interrelation and interdependency. Or, as Foucault says:

It is certain, and of capital importance, that this technique was a formative influence upon new human relations, but it is impossible to think that it would have been developed and adapted had there not been in the play and strategy of human relations something which tended in that direction. What is interesting is always interconnection, not the primacy of this over that, which never has any meaning. (Foucault 2000, 439)

Here, it may be of use to return to a pair of examples given earlier: the changed position of the DVD movies and the ordering of literature. Both of these contain the complex relation of top-down and bottom-up constructs. When, for strategic reasons, DVDs in Ahlens are moved, this move sends a ripple of changes through the system that may not have been intentional, or even thought of beforehand, but are following from this decision. The categorisations of books when organising one’s bookcase depends both on cultural norms and ideas of a structure, and on the books available and how they form groups by individual relations. These examples also point to another important part that differ social formations from insect swarms: the order of books in
the bookcase is by necessity an expression of made prioritisations, since any organization of the books causes categorising conflicts. Or, as David Porush says: “We experience a world of time-bound dissipative structures, not a world of elegantly, predictable mechanical collisions and reversible, symmetric reactions. Any study of this world, Prigogine asserts, requires a science of becoming” (Porush 1991, 59). The system of objects in the department stores shapes values, ideas, and categorisations as much as they articulate them. A shaping that happens, in large, in the negotiation between culturally established ideas and material space.

A Pattern of Priorities Made: On Positive and Negative Differences

The built environment has come to be through human intentions and a scrutiny reveals prioritisations and conceptions behind its production. The spatial form is often taken for granted, at the same time as the built environment conveys, constructs and produces relations of power. (Friberg, Listerborn, Andersson, and Scholtend 2005, 1063)

The question is, then, of how such a system as the commodity system of the department stores is constructed. This is connected to the characterising patterns and properties analysed in chapter seven, working with exposure and availability in different forms. In this analysis, the last form of relation was left out: that of higher availability than exposure.

This was done for one simple reason: it can be argued that the commodities that end up in these positions share a common character of being less trendy than those in the most trendy location, less aristocratic than those in the high-end section, yet still not in need of being hidden. They would thus not be put there for properties of their own, but rather from other commodities or brand having higher priority—such that the Hugo Boss suits or Diesel Jeans have higher priority than other suits or other denim. The key lies in the work with what is perceivable as positive differences, which inherently are also negative, as argued by Baudrillard. Along these lines, one could argue the process of distributing commodities in department stores follows that of the building of a city in that

[b]uilding a city depends on how people combine the traditional economic factors of land, labor, and capital. But it also depends on how they manipulate symbolic languages of exclusion and entitlement. The look and feel of cities reflect decisions about what—and who—should be visible and what should not, on concepts of order and disorder, and on uses of aesthetic power. (Zukin 1995, 7)

The context system of the department stores should thus, as continuously argued, not be confused for a process of finding for each thing its place or that such exist. Every decision is a prioritisation made, which can be more or less personal, and more or less based on different sources and arguments. Understanding the series of different brands and commodities found in the spaces between the highly exposed areas should one assume they are put there because they belong there would be quite problematic. Why would Åhlens and Lacoste be comparable?

The organisation of the cosmetics department can be understood as a process of finding the best places for the high-profile or high-status brands be they of luxury or trendy kind after which the other brands can unfold (Figure 8 II). This becomes clear in subsequent rebuildings of Åhlens, where more open, exposed and available space becomes available, the at the time of the major observations more hidden brands are allowed to move into more exposed and available locations—albeit still less exposed and less available, or more precisely, less in locations suggesting high status of either aristocratic or trendy character than other cosmetics.

What characterises these in-between areas is thus not something specific, but rather “that which in the process of evaluation and prioritisation did not fit in trendy or high-profile areas”. The in-between areas of both Åhlens and Debenhams can be occupied both by brand clothing (Wearhouse, EDC by Espirit, att.) and the cheaper or less in-fashion or trendy (Åhlens, Espirit, what could be best termed “mature women”), or, in the case of the home department, that which is by priorities made not given exposure or put in the middle of the main movement patterns. I would argue (aside from its character as having less of whichever characteristics is given priority in the shop in question) it is also characterised by that which it lies in-between. We are thus not dealing with a fixed system of oppositions, but with a relative system of priority.

The process of systemising contexts thus follows a logic, which (aside from a few exceptions) continuously works by giving priority. Either as trend or as aristocratic. Public or private. Exposed or hidden. Et cetera. With the limitations to space available, there is only so much space of a certain character or position available, and only so many commodities can fit in there. Following, a sequence of “next best” places for whichever perceived quality one assumes of the commodity in question can be rolled out, which means that the apparently random set of things found in the in-between areas is not random, and is not put there because of internal similarity, but of difference from those in the prioritised positions. As cities, department stores are “[…] patterns
of human movement and decision-making that have been etched into the texture of city blocks, patterns that are fed back to the residents themselves, altering their subsequent decisions” (Johnson 2002, 40).

However, when it comes to these in-between areas, there are strategies in use to address this character of not being important: the most obvious example would be the shirts and suits sections at Åhlens, which deliberately creates a series of new “entrances” of a smaller scale within the general axis between Filippa K et al and the aristocratic position of Hugo Boss. Thus a small series of secondary situations of early-exposure-and-far-side-wall are created along the promenade to Hugo Boss. A strategy that is at work in some cases, and not in others—and which is partly dependent on the possibility and even positive effects of erecting linear boundaries them in-between, by the situation of proximity-but-difference suggesting complementarity rather than actual difference or sameness.

Again, it may be of worth to say that the claims here made is not to deny the impact of management strategies; the point is rather to discern how such strategies are built up. In a continuously changing situation, such as city planning or department store management, there is need to make decisions which have effects on the whole, which not all can be considered in advance, or even anticipated.

If the department stores serve to (re)produce values, tastes, and fashion, then one can again point to the same thing Kawamura does: the department stores have the power of exposure, silence, sequence, and placement (2005, 81-82). By giving priorities in what is exposed, what is reached, and what is set close to what, they convey ideas of both values and tastes, and by creation of categories and differences they inform and train customers in what goes together and what does not as well as what would fit what kind of context and what kind of person. Thus, if acculturation in the department stores is done by means of giving exposure, making available, hiding, references to museums, authenticity, uniqueness, by auditory means of for instance connecting music styles, volumes, and characters to commodities (such as Urban R&B in the street fashion department and soft music in the bed department)—it is so because it communicates choices and prioritisations. A communication of what is chosen as that which should receive most exposure and what is chosen to be made most available. Hence, the brand strategy can reappear in different scales, integrated in, subject under, or ruling over other strategies simultaneously—giving the impression of being a more coherent strategy than it is, since it is possible to find “everywhere”. A proposition that everything is a question of brand sorting, further, has little to nothing to say about why brands are sorted as they are relative one another.

**Concluding Notes: Consistencies and Ambiguities in the System of Values**

Thus far I have presented two models of value creation or two modes of spatial produc-
value system, where one example is the women’s fashion department of Debenhams (Figure 8:III). Here, there is a problematic mix of what spaces have what kind of characteristics regarding exposure and availability, which is possible to see in how the commodity distribution answers to what space would suggest. This, I argue, can be attributed to two factors: first, the relative youth of Debenhams as a department store, where (as suggested by a high executive in Åhlens) there has not been enough time to adjust the retail strategies and commodity distribution to customer behaviour (something that is “always needed when opening a department store”, according to the same Åhlens executive). The system of commodities, la langue, as a systemic state of performative practice, parole, has yet to adjust to how it is used by the customers. Second, of all the fashion departments, it is the one with least clear internal hierarchies. It is, simply put, few areas that can be assigned exclusively the relational character of exposure and availability of either the trendy or the exclusive. Take Oasis, Red Herring and Morgan, as examples. Is Oasis early on exposed and available, as seen from the main entrance, or is it an attractor, in the depths from the secondary entrance? It is even hard to tell whether it is exposed or available in the department store as a whole. Is Red Herring put as an exclusive foundation in the long axis through the department store, or is it passed by on the route from the secondary entrance towards Morgan or Pilgrim?

As a general pattern, instead, the high-profile brands tend to focus on the central positions that ought to be passed and (though an assumptions that is somewhat erroneous) most seen. In the complex structure produced by the layout of Debenhams, discerning clear contexts of relations between exposure and availability is difficult, and a somewhat amoeboid form is stretched out along the main aisles which in parts correspond to both the trendy and exclusive. A curious effect that can be seen is how the trendy and exclusive categories are here not only visibly, but also materially, collapsed into one another. While to some extent less present in Debenhams, however, the rudimentary ideas are there. The differentiation between trend and exclusive is to some extent discernible, and follows that which is suggested above—something that grows more clear with each repeated visit after the main observation period. It is also to be found locally, within classes or categories of both brands and type (such as accessories). However, a distinct problem for the system to form in Debenhams is the lack of distinct endcaps, most of which either run to windows, or they also are starting points or areas passed by en-route along other aisles.

For the second issue, I will make use of an example. A category in common for all of the department stores, which also gets the most dubious treatment in them all, is lingerie. The position of lingerie shifts between characteristics of the trendy, as well as the aristocratic, the attractor or even the hidden—often in the same store. In Åhlens, it is placed in the depth of the women’s fashion floor, but rather directly visible straight ahead from the escalator coming down from the home department in a way directly comparable to Star in Debenhams. In Debenhams and NK it can be found in what from a secondary entrance has properties signalling trend commodities, but in the women’s fashion floors form the far-wall exposed aristocratic or exclusive attractors, even appropriating characteristics of both the high-status and the hidden intertwined.

This ambiguity between, and within, the department stores in Stockholm can be traced in the expanded shopping context as well: if lingerie as a class shift between and contain ambiguous character between attractor and trend positions in the department stores, it does so in most shopping malls or even cities which I have been visiting over the last few years. At face value, it would seem to imply that lingerie, similar to costumes and in-fashion trend clothing, is a status commodity. This is not completely unreasonable a statement. What it does not mean is that it is used in the same way in the situated practice of dressing as other status or trend commodities, it is rather—as the example in Part I suggests—something that can be seen as luxury either as a gift to oneself or to someone else. By buying fine lingerie, one confirms one’s own status and the way in which it makes luxury underwear something appropriate—something quite explicitly demonstrated by an add in Metro (Stockholm) in January 2006:

It is time to start caring about the inside as well. If you’re about to spend your last coins on luxury, let it be the thing you have closest to your heart. The underwear. (Mravec 2006)\(^64\)

Second, and this will be discussed at length later on, if one were to look on the representation of the commodities, how they are presented, then it is valid to ask whether it is the representation at work is of lingerie as symbol of status, or that of the slim, well formed body—that is, what is performed through the apparent use of lingerie is an indirect disciplinarian of the female body, which would be all in line with the shifts in gender problematic and relations of power described by Entwistle (Entwistle 2000).\(^65\)

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64. The reference is translated from the article “Put the Luxury in the Bust” in Metro Stockholm the 20th of January 2006. The Swedish introduction said: “Det är dags att börja hys sig om insidan också. Om du ska lägga dina sista slantar på en lyx—lät det bli det du har närmast hjärtat. Underkläderna” and the title was “Lägg lyxen på bysten”.

65. In this context, it may be of interest to point towards what Entwistle says on the corset, and how the liberation of the female body with the removal of the corset and introduction of the bra may as well be seen as a disciplinarian act: no longer could all women look thin-waisted by use of corset, but must instead put in work, training and diets to keep thin and flat-bellied, thus increasing the discipline required by women to keep their body form “in-fashion”, rather than liberating it (Entwistle 2000, 20-25).
Still, as commodities, they obviously seem able to be put directly inside an entrance as in Debenhams—or in the cases of H & M Beautybox and Twilfit in the rebuilt Gallerian in central Stockholm (Figure 8:IV), or Twilfit by Sergels Torg and Norrmalms Torg—and in endcap positions. This points to both how commodities have a range of possible cultural and social roles that can be actualized through spatial distribution, and how ideas of keeping the category together spatially forces such choices between what in some senses are extremes—high profile (aristocratic) or trendy (youthful)—to be made.

These implications of these ambiguities, however, can only be fully understood if the social situation of presence and absence of people, and movement and browsing patterns following these, are included in the analysis, why it will be elaborated to its full in part three, and especially chapter twelve.
PART CONSIDERS WHAT ARE CHARACTERIZED AS A RESULTS OF AN UNCERTAIN DISTRIBUTION IN SPACE THAT COULD BE DICTATED BY THE POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS AVAILABLE. IT IS UNCLEAR WHICH OF THE POSSIBLE ENDCAPS IS GIVEN PRIORITY (A), AND A LOT OF THEM SIMPLY END IN CLOTHING DESK WINDOWS OR ENTRANCES AND EXITS (A).
PART III
A SYSTEM IN ACTION
9. A PRACTICE OF SITUATION

Every room is a stage, every public space is a theater, and every façade is a backdrop. Each has places for entry and exit, scenery, props, and a design that sets up potential relationships between people. In this sense, architecture and theater are sister arts, creating worlds where people interact in studied spatial relationships. (Read 2005, 53)

In the introductory discussion on space, I repeatedly turned to how space is characterised, defined, and even produced by the people in it as they make use of it. This is not a statement on the act of building as it is conceived today in general architectural or planning discourse nor on a notion of space as being constituted solely by people; rather the point is that space is defined by what (social) role(s) it assumes in our daily life. The apartment is given its character of home by being used as a home, but it is also a theatre of the family where each space takes on its own role as a scene, both through its appropriation and what social situations and activities it produces in a negotiation between people, space, and commodities. The dinner table suggests a social activity of eating by repeated use (Eco 1997, 182-187), but also eating dinner as a social activity by how it situates those making use of it facing one another (Baudrillard 1996, 44-45). The same could be said of the café or restaurant tables, whereas the traditional theatre or movie theatre puts a common focus on the stage or film, and the sports arena puts a focus on the sports field and the audience. Walking through the city, we encounter a series of activities, people, buildings, spaces, and places: a series of situations that form scenes or events in the route taken. The department stores, as any building, are little without their use and “[...] just as meaning in language requires a speaker and a listener who are members of the same language using community, so buildings and their texts acquire meaning when the subject (an observer, user, reader) experiences a building or a text about it; when the two worlds intersect” (Markus 1993, 5). Markus is pointing to the importance of how a building is used for what meanings emerge from it.

1. Eco does not use the specific example here given, but rather a spoon, a stair, a portico, and so forth; the principle, however, is the same. Use produces signification through codification.
2. Baudrillard uses another example: the living room arrangement of furniture. The argument he conducts, however, is how the “modern furnishing” is detached from earlier “inherent” values and instead serves to produce atmosphere by situating people relative one another (at least indirectly by positions and facings).
If one of the important questions for this understanding is the social situations appearing, then the intent is not only to discuss the role of participation in these situations or events, but how different forms of participation—including what would not necessarily be seen as participation—are involved in the cultural production of the department stores. Not only is it explicit interaction between subjects, but the stage of consumption, with its performance constituted by consumers as they go about shopping, and how such a continuous, ongoing theatre form situations that are the grounds on which meaning and commodity identity is formulated. In one sense, every shopper is a flâneur, enjoying, experiencing, and perceiving the spectacle of shopping, while participating in its production. In another, every shopper is an actor in the ongoing, continuous play of shopping. In a third, every shopper is part of an audience—both in the sense of perceiving the shopping activity and by being related to as the audience by the actors, who are themselves part of an audience (Chua 1992, 114-135). Such an understanding does not mean a reading of situation as (solely) the spectacular, new, surprising or extravagant, as it to some extent appears in the situationist theories. Rather, as Read states, the situation is everywhere, consisting of the people, spaces, building, commodities, and activities present; however, situations are not only made up of its participants—it forms the participants’ (social) identities, and the impressions they make on one another (Tschumi 1996, 141-152; Butler 2005).

Such an analysis does not mean surrendering everything to use, or to claim that, as Bataille says, “[it] should be taken into account that the rooms and art objects form only the container, the content of which is formed by the visitors” (Bataille 1997, 22). Rather, it is to acknowledge the impact of the function or programme under which the building operates, and the way this programme performs: that is, having established that the buildings are department stores and thus “spaces for shopping” means we may understand a general purpose or intent of the buildings, an overall programme or the building operates, and the way this programme performs: that is, having established that the buildings are department stores and thus “spaces for shopping” means we may understand a general purpose or intent of the buildings, an overall programme or function-type, while little is still understood of what these spaces are and what social and cultural processes are at work therein.

3. There are several problems with the term flâneur, which, used perhaps most by Walter Benjamin, stands for the strolling, observing intellectual male of early modern urbanity and which does not necessarily have a counterpart today. The point is that as much as the flâneur is an observer, he is an observer primarily of people—that is, he is observing the social spectacle of the crowded city (Benjamin 1997; Nava 1996).

4. Not to deny that included in the function-type department store is a series of practices, such as open display and availability of (most) goods and procedures of shopping, but to point out how these are subject to change. In certain ways, the figure department store now serves other purposes than traditionally, as “big building malls” such as

How does such a programme, and the building function, differ from use? And why is the difference important? To some extent, analysis of the program has often been substituted for analysis of use, or confused for one another (Hillier 1996, 374-375): as argued earlier, there is a strong tendency to discuss shopping malls or department stores as “a” type, which is homogeneous within itself and are homogeneous between one another. The need to study specific shopping centres due to such broad equalising assumptions has been pointed out by Meaghan Morris (2000, 178). Furthermore, while historically such function-types have been strong, as type or function meant predictable formal decisions and defined spatial structures and forms of expression, turning the type into a “shorthand” for a rich social and cultural description as well as an important source of meaning (Markus 1993, 37), this is less the case today: connections between function and type have grown considerably weaker since the advent of modernism, replaced by another assumed (or presumed) relation between form and function which, at times, have been confused for an idea of function-follows-form (-follows-function).

I do not mean to say that function-types are no longer existent both in conceptions and perceptions of space: planners may consider where to put a “shopping mall”, and people may go to “department stores”. The relation between form and function, however, is loose, and if the intended function tends to say little of the end-result form, form tends to say even less about function—aside from where cultural codes impose such a signification (Markus 1993, Eco 1997).

NK and PUB in Stockholm still in general are referred to as department stores, while some of the traditional principles of a department store are no longer applicable. Furthermore, there are several ways in which the program of “department store” can be realised, not only as different buildings, but within the same buildings, even when restricted to a more traditional or limited sense of what a department store is.

5. It is, to a large degree, this misconception of the representation of function for forming function that leads to arguments around a failure of functionalism, a failure that depends on a misunderstanding of what functionalism aimed to do (Hillier 1996, 371-391; Wigley 1995). An idea that at times have lead to the refuting of any connection between form and function altogether—although the discussion is normally more nuanced today.

6. It is along these lines Eco reasons around first a spoon to then transfer it gradually up in scale via architectural elements to whole buildings (Eco 1997). The reference to eating is codified into a spoon as it is used for eating, as a stair is codified.
Function is, however, a problematic term; introduced in structural sociology, it is a concept first found in biology and comes from the Latin term *fungio*, meaning to perform, execute, or accomplish something. It is tied to intention, purpose, or role so that the function of a school is to execute the education of children. Function, in a way, becomes institutionalised as type already in its origins, which can also be seen in how it is often used. While not denying the importance of function or programme for the codification or cultural production of a building, I claim it is important to understand just *how* this function is performed and to what extent other programmes are brought into the building as it is made use of in day-to-day life. In Lefebvre’s terms, *programme* and *function* becomes what is conceived and perceived, while *use* is what is lived (Lefebvre 1991, 53). What happens with the department store, its commodities, its customers, and its meanings as the processes of shopping are set in motion? What ideas and values are produced when this happens? In such an analysis, as we shall see (and have seen), form (paradoxically) becomes more important.

Thus, having performed the analysis in the previous part, the analysis will be completed by an investigation into the department stores as situations—in short, how the presence, absence, activity and rhythm of customers affect the spaces and commodities of the department stores, and how this in turn reflects back on the customers, “[…] partly because the shopping centre ‘experience’ at any one point includes the experience of crowds of people (or of their relative absence), and so of all the varied responses and uses that the centre provokes and contains” (Morris 2000, 170). Furthermore, in the interplay between consumers, department stores, and commodities and their distribution, these are formative of one another, and to understand one by necessity requires an understanding of the other. So, if the previous part analysed the system of commodities in how it formed categories, contexts, and systems of values, these contexts and categories are both further defined by, and serve as stages for, social situations that incorporate the presence and activity of people—through which they also gain a role in the everyday life of shopping. Such “everyday practices”, as they are named by Michel de Certeau in his influential *The Practice of Everyday Life* (de Certeau 1988), serve to both reproduce habits and to form them and indirectly to form social structures and signs.

Of importance to note here, is that the spaces do not necessarily have to be accessed in daily life to take a role in it. The character of the royal castle is as much defined by the denial of access combined with a symbolic presence and role. That is, the role of the royal castle in our “daily life” is that of representing the royal family. This is of importance to understand what is here meant with daily life: it is not a claim that with vertical movement as it is used for it, and thus, it starts to *stand for it*—a relation between function, type and meaning codified into objects by (repeated) use. With the degree to which department stores actually are public spaces is debatable, in part due to the control of peoples’ behaviour practiced within them, but they still form what in most respects, in everyday practice, becomes part of public space. This will be returned to in chapter ten.

8. By *added to* here, I do not mean one as existing before the other, or layered upon the other in a temporal sequence, but rather to say that while the thesis has its distribution of moving from the individual commodity, group and category through a system of commodities to people and activity, one is not pre-existing the other, or independent from the other, or more basic than the other. As will be clear later on, my point is rather a critique against that which is more or less generally assumed in shopping theory—that there are first commodities and desire, and then shopping behaviour; that there is first store, then commodity placement and then shopper movement. Such a view serves as much to obscure as to understand shopping behaviour as to explain it.

7. The degree to which department stores actually are public spaces is debatable, in part due to the control of peoples’ behaviour practiced within them, but they still form what in most respects, in everyday practice, becomes part of public space. This will be returned to in chapter ten.
and place, but throughout the process—construct the situations in which we find ourselves as we go about shopping. The outset here is that space and action qualify one another, which means both that actions define space, but also that space defines, produces, and restricts action:

Activity in space is restricted by that space; space ‘decides’ what activity may occur, but even this ‘decision’ has limits placed upon it. Space lays down the law because it implies a certain order—and hence also a certain disorder (just as what may be seen defines what is obscene). Interpretation comes later, almost as an afterthought. Space commands bodies, prescribing or postscribing gestures, routes and distances to be covered. It is produced with this purpose in mind; this is its raison d’être. (Lefebvre 1991,143)

In the former part, the approach was the understanding of these “implied orders and disorders” structured by space but also producing it. This implied order, these decisions imposed by space, and the way space is used is then as Lefebvre argued to primarily take place in lived space—the space of everyday life and activity. Here, Lefebvre separates a “reading” of space from lived space and heavily criticises the then contemporary way of semiotic readings of architecture. Right or wrong at that point, whereas Lefebvre is critical to a reading of space altogether, this comes from a different idea of the act of reading than I have made use of in this thesis. For Lefebvre, reading is a conscious act and a reading of space would require a deliberate act to perform such a reading. Because of this view, he says that reading is “[…] merely a secondary and practically irrelevant upshot” and has little impact compared to space as it is lived (1991, 143). As argued earlier, it is of importance for this thesis as a whole to point out that while I do discuss space as read, as textures and signs, the argument is that this reading is performed as much by living space as by perceiving it. Each visit to the department stores produces such a reading whether the intention is to interpret the texture of the department stores or not; such a reading is vital to the shopping act itself. The choice of what to consume in the relative system of signs from which it is chosen requires an understanding of the system and the commodities’ places in them. It requires that the system is at some level read (albeit as a texture) and this reading includes activities and social situations.

This third part of the thesis is then, by the introduction of the idea of space as situating practice, an attempt to move the analysis closer to lived space, which arguably is impossible to analyse. As structure needs be inferred from that which is structured (de Certeau 1984, 56-60), lived space must be inferred from the actions and perceptions that perform it.

One question of importance to understand such a lived space is examining how space decides actions of which the restraints and possibilities performed by the material reality that constitute the building is of key importance for the overall question of the thesis. In as far as space decides actions, part of what performs such decisions is space as defined by material boundaries. It is from this point of origin we will begin.

Department Stores as Situating Practice: Movement and Being in the Spatial Mesh

Moving through the department stores, there are spaces more crowded and spaces less crowded, spaces with a more intense pulse, more movement and more people, and spaces calmer with less fuzz and with less people. To some extent, these three are tied together. In some cases, there are many personnel; in some of these, there are many personnel relative to the amount of customers; and in some, there appear to be none at all. Steady streams of people flow from the subway station through the subway floor of Åhlen’s up the escalator to slowly disperse as they move deeper into the building. Some choose to take a detour, some head purposefully towards some unknown goal ahead, yet others seem to be there only to browse or just to be part of the flow. Many seem to be there on their own, yet others are in pairs, and a rare few are coming in larger groups. It all forms, in a sense, what David Seamon would call a place-ballet (Seamon 1994).

After some time of studying these flows, rhythms, and pulses, patterns start to emerge. It is fairly stable what parts are crowded and what parts are empty. The most used escalator at nine is the most used at noon, in the afternoon, and during the weekend. More people move through the cosmetics departments and women’s fashion than through men’s fashion. Not all of them shop, not all of them are interested, yet others are in pairs, and a rare few are coming in larger groups. It all forms, in a sense, what David Seamon would call a place-ballet (Seamon 1994).

Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of these “real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city.” They are not localized, it is rather they that spatialize. (de Certeau 1984, 97)

In general, the pace, the speed, and the quickness of browsing are higher in the more visited spaces than in those more secluded—as if movement and ac-
tion in general slow down, the further it comes from the bustling street. By Edwin Jeans, Armani Jeans, and Calvin Klein on the Men’s fashion floor of Åhlens City, one can even sit down and relax, watching the big screen TV. To some extent, this is relative to the distance from the entrance or at least whether it is an entrance floor or not. In the more bustling floors, areas where one is likely to need more time browsing (jewellery, CDs, DVDs) are shielded from the noise (both bodily and auditory to the di

g生意, for they are always (relatively) crowded (Shields 1992a, 101-104). In the department stores, the most crowded place would be by the entrance. This contradicts some shopping theory. I will return to this later. For now, the question is about the observations rather than their shopping implications.

The patterns shown in Figure 9.1, 9.2, and 9.3 (below) reoccur throughout the department stores, and more so once one starts to understand the mechanics of these emergent patterns, which are not always what retail assumes them to be. As Underhill notes: the many people in line at a cashier’s desk does not mean that either the store or that which is sold there is popular; it may be that checkout procedures make the time to perform a transaction high (Underhill 2000, 192). Such one example is some of the cashier’s desks at Åhlens’s Home floor, as clearly seen in Figure 9.2. Another example, which will be returned to later on since it contains other important implications, is the second floor of Debenhams (Figure 9.3), where George’s Coffee is rather well visited, suggesting many people moving to and from it. Movement outside (even directly outside of the entrance) is modest and does not deviate from the general more attractor neutral correlation (see below).

Similar observations have been discussed before in chapter three—forming similar patterns, actually—on the Au Bonheur des Dames by Zola, and the same reocurs in Andre Breton’s Nadja. In both novels, populated and secluded spaces follow regular patterns of use rather than random occurrence. In Nadja, there are spaces in the streets of Paris where the narrator and Nadja can go, since they know beforehand they will be relatively empty—as well as there, as Shields refers to Lefebvre, are spaces you can go just to watch the crowd, for they are always (relatively) crowded (Shields 1992a, 101-104). In the department stores, the most crowded place would be by the entrance among the many makeup stalls. Is this because everyone wants to buy makeup?

Spatial Patterns of Movement and Being: A Closer Look at the Empirical Material

The answer, naturally, is that it is not. In the case of makeup, it is rather obvious that there are many customers passing by on their way somewhere else. There are even more people passing by than stopping to shop or otherwise linger for a longer period. This is also the same for many a places in a city. They pass by, because it is the only or the closest or the most interesting route to wherever they are heading. Places become crowded, well visited, sparse, or secluded partially by their position in the city fabric:

9. Underhill has named this the butt-brush effect: “While reviewing the tape to study how shoppers negotiated the doorway during busy times, we began to notice something weird about the tie rack. Shoppers would approach it, stop and shop until they were bumped once or twice by people heading into or out of the store. After a few such jostles, most of the shoppers would move out of the way, abandoning their search for neckwear. We watched this over and over until it seemed clear that shoppers—women especially, though it was also true of men to a lesser extent—don’t like being brushed or touched from the behind. They’ll even move away from merchandise they’re interested in to avoid it.” (Underhill 2000, 18)

10. Here, it could be tempting to think in terms of understaffing or slow cashiers. Underhill makes a point, however, to say that it may as well be the procedures prescribed by management, or decisions of store design sub-optimised for efficient space use (in sqm) forcing cumbersome and slow work on the personnel.
The texture of space affords opportunities not only to social acts with no particular place in it and no particular link with it, but also to a spatial practice that it does indeed determine, namely its collective and individual use: a sequence of acts which embody a signifying practice, even if it cannot be reduced to such a practice. (Lefebvre 1991, 57)

With the earlier arguments of the loose relation between form and function in mind (above), as well as the discussion on space (chapter three), there is something in the form of Åhlens that makes the space occupied by cosmetics more visited (by passers by, if not by buyers) than the men’s underwear department. It could, in one sense, be described by the fact that one is closer to the entrance than the other. One is also found along a route, which leads through the department store, and one is positioned in (more or less) a deep cul-de-sac part of it. These factors seem to be rather reasonable explanations as to why there are many or few visitors in the respective department. The question is if they indicate a kind of logic that serves to structure movement and presence throughout. To understand just what such “closeness” and “along a route” means there is in need of some clarification—at least if they actually correspond to (parts of) how customers use the department stores.

It shows, that movement corresponds to (specific) configurative measures of space presented by Hillier and Hanson in The Social Logic of Space, and specifically the Visibility Graph Analysis as presented by Turner et alii (2001) (Figure 9:IV). Many works using space syntax theory start with explaining the theory, the arguments, and the models, ending up with a found correlation as proof as well as result. Instead, I consider the most interesting questions to arise after such a correlation is found. The fact that a configurative model of the department stores’ spaces can predict 74% of the movement pattern in Debenhams and 67% in Åhlens, is thus not the end of the discussion, but the start of it. Such a strong correlation might not be expected, which raises a series of questions on movement in general as well as on shopping behaviour. In this, they follow the pattern of the libraries: here too little correlation was expected and a similarly high correlation was found (Koch 2004, 85-95; Koch 2005). This goes somewhat contrary to what both the department store managers themselves think and what librarians think. I would argue that the surprise comes from notions on movement and behaviour that are problematic, and which are applied arbitrarily on both department stores and libraries as assumptions. Before moving on, however, it is of worth to more precisely look at what these correlations are.

First, it can be noted that some of it is what could be called system effect: if, for instance, one was to drop a hundred persons by the entrance of Åhlens and assign one specific goal to each one of them evenly distributed within the department store and then let them take the shortest route to it, some correlation would emerge. Everyone heading up from the ground floor would have to use one of two escalators. For the next floor, some would have already reached their arbitrary representation of space. It could be important to note that both of these reductions are being made, both inside the so-called community and by people outside of it. My argument for using space syntax is the combination of the theory of space, the social potentials as a base for the formations of space analysed, the analysis as revealing different sets of social situations and hierarchies, and its relations to practice in space. Space syntax, then, becomes an approach to space as relational and social, where that which constitutes space is specific possibilities to produce social situations, of which the physical boundaries’ effects on possibilities of co-presence in space tend to be the major defining trait.

### 11.
As much as some would like to claim, the methods are not simple, but require thorough understanding of both tools and approach to make use of properly, and to understand how to first change drawings into models useable in the UCL software and how these are to be constructed to capture that which is sought.

### 12.
There are several risks involved when handling analysis of the kind of which the different models developed in the research field are. On the one hand, there is the risk of Space Syntax being reduced to a hunt for statistical correlation. In such an interpretation, it becomes no different from any statistical model and replaceable by any that performs better as predictive instrument. On the other hand, it runs the risk of being reduced to a graphical representation of space, in which case it has no conceptual differences from any other, and therefore can’t be reduced to a statistical model and replaceable by any that performs better as predictive instrument. This works because they are rarely (if ever) fully juxtaposed as ideas and are both valid to some extent. Furthermore, practical knowledge serves to inform which assumption to make when.
Even counting only the floors themselves, however, which are not necessarily part of such a system effect and would definitely not have to be part of the situation if everyone only had one specific goal in mind, there is a strong correlation between movement and accessibility as analysed in the spatial model. More specifically, movement correlates to what is called global integration—in short, how close every part of the department store is to every other part in the department store and its surroundings (as measured by configurative steps in a set of isovists from points distributed evenly in a grid in accessible parts and with a substantial exterior added).

For such a correlation to appear, as Hillier and Iida argue, there is a need for the concept of distance in the graph to correspond to the conception of distance of those making use of the system. Thus there might be some need to discuss and de-mystify the terms used and how come they can work, which to some extent will be a speculative discussion. The point is that it does not depend on any mystic formula or claims of inherent syntactic mapping; rather, by a few quite simple arguments founded in sociological and anthropological studies, the patterns and correlations can be understood without claiming that the participants are consciously using any inherent syntactic knowledge directly similar to the space syntax graphs. Indirectly, the implications also question some common simplifications often made on movement and behaviour in general. For this discussion an important point regarding the graphs and analyses must be made: they are representations of spatial logics, not images after which people orientate themselves such as would be a “map”. These representations capture some of the same logics of space as we make use of in much of our general movement. One could name these logics tours, projects, and route complexity.

As a first step for such a discussion, let us look at the material and the found correlations closer together with the methods used. First, let us look at the correlation between movement and VGA analysis. How is it found and what does it say? The correlation is based on gateway observations—measuring flows of customers past a series of so-called gates within the department store as an average of five observations covering weekdays and weekends. The gates are defined clearly by material boundaries, and the interval of each observation period is five minutes in Debenhams and two and a half at Åhlens. Second, it must be noted that while gates may vary relative to one another after one or two observations, although fascinatingly often they do not once three or more are added up, the relative changes are negligible. Also, while the amount of movement varies over the day and increase significantly in the weekend, the relative amount of movement remains stable throughout. The relative crowdedness and rhythm of the different parts of the department stores are stable.

These observations are then both important in themselves and further correlate to the global integration value of a visible accessibility model analyzed with VGA analysis (in Depthmap v 5.12r, Alasdair Turner) to which is added a considerable weight of an exterior and with some model-technical operations to handle stairs, doors, escalators, and elevators. The correlation (which can be presented as in Figure 9:v) also sums up earlier key findings in the research field. That is, the configurative analysis

[...] of urban areas or complex buildings, such as hospitals, accounts for a statistical trend whereby navigation paths gravitate towards certain spaces more than others. People visit more integrated spaces more frequently when they explore new environments or when they seek specific destinations which they are not already familiar with. When familiar with an environment, people also tend to remember more integrated spaces more frequently, and to include them in cognitive maps more often. (Peponis and Bellal 2005, 65)
Integration, in a sense, stands for some kind of spatial centrality in the analysed system, which corresponds to degree of use. Tentatively, spatial integration seems at least loosely connected to social centrality. Why is this an important point? First, it shows that a fair amount of the movement patterns encountered in the department stores are relatively independent from the relative strengths of attraction provided by the different commodities or brands. Second, it implicates that the usual visit is as much or more of exploration as it is for a specific commodity or brand. Third, the social situations emerging to some extent depend on spatial form. And fourth, as mentioned above, it has implications for how people go about shopping and how movement is performed in general, which is of importance for the understanding of how department stores work as spatially situating. This means that the actual degree of correlation, or the specific correlation coefficient, is not the point of the current discussion. Rather, they provide openings and powerful support for the coming argument, which is about understanding how people make use of space and which leads to understanding emerging patterns.

An Architecture of Seeing and Going: Of Tours, Maps, Goals, and Projects

The found correlation is not to be seen as a sign of people following predetermined routes or adhering to some kind of dictates of spatial determinism, but rather as emerging from a set of disperse individual movements, sharing some certain characteristics that (together with system effects) that lead to the observed result. The discussion to come is thus not about individual choices or paths, but about understanding general characteristics of orientation and agency.

For the correlation to emerge there is a need of acknowledging the reflexivity of agency, which may seem somewhat contra-intuitive. It can, however, be traced in Underhill’s observation: “[i]f we went to stores only when we needed to buy something, and if once there we bought only what we needed, the economy would collapse, boom” (Underhill 2000, 31). Movement and shopping, as examples of human behaviour, are far less deterministic. I am not promoting an idea of behaviour as random or unreflective—on the contrary: in order for actions to be based on purpose and intent, they must be viewed in a larger context and as less definitive and precise:

Motives tend to have a direct purchase on action only in relatively unusual circumstances, situations which in some way brake with the

routine. For the most part motives supply overall plans or programmes—“projects”, in Schütz’s term—within which a range of conduct is enacted. (Giddens 1984, 6)

Giddens’s argument is not that actions are performed without intent, but that the intent or purpose takes on forms that are of a different character than what much shopping planning assumes (Penn 2005; Underhill 2000). The purpose, for example, can be to go and buy a pair of jeans, perhaps even a specific model, and perhaps to do this in Åhlens city. Then sets of a series of actions that are more or less routine actions and on which the motive have little direct purchase, such as finding the way to the subway, using the ticket or travelling card, stepping on the right subway train, and so forth. Actions are motivated by the original intent, but in themselves are not necessarily formulated with a specific intent or motivation each step of the way. They follow a routine pattern and (bodily) knowledge of how to reach Åhlens.

Furthermore, such projects must be understood as schemata and intents, which are continuously re-evaluated not only on their own merits and within an individual, but “[…] actors not only monitor continuously the flow of their activities and expect others to do the same for their own; they also routinely monitor aspects, social and physical, of contexts in which they move” (Giddens 1984, 5). During the construction and continuous reconstruction, the project and the purpose is continuously re-evaluated and re-constructed as situated practice. The trip motivated by the need or desire for a pair of jeans may end up with a walk in the sun and an ice latte by the waterside, and these re-evaluations are heavily informed by what is encountered en-route towards the original (or current) goal.

This questions the analysis of movement and behaviour common in both urban analysis and shopping theory: that of the power of metric distances (Hillier and Iida 2005, 476) and power of individual attractors to draw consumers to any point in the shop (Underhill 2004, 51). The managers I have been speaking to at both Åhlens and Debenhams discussed shoppers as goal oriented, and they claimed to have this image of customers as they planned for changes or for new stores; however, not only can specific goals be questioned in general, it can be questioned whether a specific goal can be assumed to lie behind every

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18. This is not to denigrate the value of the found correlation and its surprising strength—it serves as one of the foundations of the entire thesis. The point, rather, is that because it is so strong, attention must be put on what this means rather than on the fact that it is.

19. Note, for instance, how Underhill points to more and more of shopping selection taking place in the store itself instead of as pre-decided based on commercials, ads, or other sources (Underhill 2000, 161-173).
action especially when it comes to assuming or presuming such specific goals for the 
one analysed. Burgin finds this in André Breton’s novel Nadja:

No one would suppose that Nadja is going down the métro for nothing, 
but, as the ticket collector discerned, she is not necessarily aware of 
what she hopes to find there. There is more to our wanderings in the city 
than urban planners take account of. (Burgin 1996, 93)

It must be noted that the argument here still assumes a general sense of purpose and 
agency. The point is the openness and looseness of purposes, intentions, and behav-

iour, and the way in which this suggests that analysis that makes less presumptions 
about knowing individual aims are better versed to understand emergent patterns of 

movement.

How is this then connected to the observations and correlations found and what 
implications does it have for movement within a department store (or in general)? This 
must be understood in relation to what de Certeau calls tours and maps (de Certeau 
1984, 118-122). These terms are based on analysis of how people describe move- 
to or locations of something.

Of these two, the overwhelmingly predominant description was the tour – the de-

scriptions of the movement operations needed to reach the destination. de Certeau 
analyses how tour and map are woven together – how map descriptions complete route 

descriptions (so that, for instance, you first go right and take the second left and then 

text to A you find B). However, I would like to linger some on the similarity of the two. 

They are both relational. None of them take the form of “a hundred meters from”, but 

rather, “second right”, “next to”, “you go through”. One case (the tour) formulates 

a series of movement choices (directions, turns, passing by) and the other formulates 

relations of adjacencies (oppositions, junctions, separations). In fact, one could claim 

that neither form actual maps in the more specific form of how maps are usually rep-

resented as metrically scaled representations (something de Certeau also points out). 

That is, what could be called narratives and adjacencies are significant, and for the 
narratives actions are of chief importance for movement descriptions. 

In such an understanding of how movement is performed, one could introduce the 

notion of what I will, for now, call route complexity. In movement from one place to the 

other (which we may or may not end up reaching), the general strategy consists of a tour 
mapped out with little complexity. The route, as are the ones that de Certeau discusses, 
is made in a way that requires as little description as possible. For such purposes, 
configurations form compressed descriptions by referring only to the few turns taken, and 
as few turns taken as possible, any description of a route is compressed to a minimum 
(Hillier and Hanson 1984, 53-55).20 This is one implication of the found corre-

lation: the majority of movement in Åhlens or Debenhams is based on a pattern 
where when shoppers seek a specific brand or department, the choice of tour is 
based more on the degree of route complexity than on metric distance (within a 
certain limit of metric distances). In addition, the movement in Åhlens or De-

benhams is based on the more complex the route, the more likely a shopper 
will re-evaluate a choice of goal, as the shopper passes by more other possible 
choices or consider it as too far and decide to go elsewhere or not go at all. This 
agrees with Hillier and Iida’s findings, suggesting that the distance decay (a 
standard term in geography) is rather of configurational than metric character 
within reasonable distances (Hillier and Iida 2005, 479-480).

Of course, metric distance does play an important role in where an indi-

vidual chooses to go in as far as how far people are prepared to go due to, for 

example, time restrictions. The point is, that within the limited metrics of the 
department stores, one is much more important than the other (a metric 
distance analysis of Åhlens or Debenhams provide correlations of less than 30%). 

Hillier and Iida investigates the same phenomenon. They argue that the far 

better correlation found in configurative analyses (of several kinds) than metric 
distance suggests that movement is based on configurative thinking. As noted 
above, however, this is not saying that it is conceived or perceived as axial 
lines or visibility graphs; it is to say that routes are predominant in people’s 

movement behaviour and that space syntax analysis captures much of the logic 
behind such route constructions.

The correlations further suggests that an important part in what makes up a 
route is defined by spatial boundaries: the configurative models are construct-
ed using material boundaries of space, and hence one can say that what makes 
up spaces or contexts in which people navigate is in much space as defined by 
physical materiality. Thus, I would argue that the point of, and strength in, the 

VGA-analysis is that it catches the pattern that emerges from casual move-

ments and decisions when people actually focus on something else and when 
choices are made on grounds that have little connection to a representation in 
the form of the actual graph. We are again dealing with emergent phenomena 
rather than the results of direct intentions of movement following a specific

20. It is important to stress here, that this is not said to be the logic behind all move-

ment. It is probable that for some kinds of movement, route complexity has little 
impact—and in some cases it may well be the point, such as in a Labyrinth or, if 
we are to believe Alan Penn, in the IKEA stores (Penn 2005).
form of spatial representation (either metric map, network diagram, axial map, or visual graph). That is, the analysis allows for projects and tours, and continuous reflexive decisions by people as they move about, informed by what they encounter on the way. It is, from such a perspective, remarkably different from most generator-attractor models, which aside from containing some difficult assumptions on people’s behaviour and flexibility tend to build on assumptions of knowing attractors and how attractive they are, problematic assumptions (Hillier 1996, 161-175).

Thus, whereas it is often stated that the spatial models commonly referred to as space syntax analyses how people move based on the form of “space itself”, Hillier’s argument contains something that at times is forgotten: a presupposition for the model to work is a set of generators and attractors, and this set of generators and attractors are fairly evenly spread within a system. Not that everyone needs to be heading to or be interested in going everywhere, but that there is something potentially interesting in the whole of the system for people who begin their movement at any other point in the system. Integration, however much correlating to movement, does not produce or cause movement. It is a measure of how space structures movement and how it does so in relative degrees or densities. For what is to come, however, it is the relative densities that are of interest (Lefebvre 1996, 228-240), which I will return to in the next chapter.

The found correlation actually suggests that libraries and department stores share much in common with cities with respect to navigation in that they form structures of spaces where fairly evenly diffused potentially interesting destinations are mediated by spatial structure into different rhythms of movement and densities of browsing customers. How the department stores and libraries guides, suggests, and restricts movement influences what people encounter in their visit, and some spaces, as result of their relative position in the spatial fabric, will be used more and by more people. In space syntax terms, does this make a more integrated space or system inherently better? No. It does, however, suggest different situations emerging in different locations as a part of their relative role in the system. This is not the same as high integration being inherently good. The narrator and Nadja in Breton’s novel seek out places in the urban fabric that are secluded and private because they provide a social situation that fits to what they aim at doing, places that would be of low integration. In fact, and I will return to this, an integrated position does not even have to mean high sales figures. While there is a risk when dealing with quantitative data to equal high and good, my point is that it must be seen quite differently. Not everything—even when it comes to shopping—is best located where everyone is.

The Department Store as a Social Stage

Stage and scene, terms used to introduce this chapter, are decidedly spatial. And not only is it spatial—they imply activity, performers or actors, and audience. Thus they are invited metaphors for architecture in general. Using the terms theatre, scene, stage, or performance does not mean everything is perpetual improvisational theatre or to treat some as actors and some as audience. These terms invoke the interrelation between place (scene) and those who are and act in it (actors) and those who observe the going-ons (audience) of which any person is more often than not both of the latter (Figure 9b). Furthermore, it points to the possibility of multiple identities and roles that can be assumed by the same person depending on context and with rather rapid changes. As Katarina Bonnevier puts it: “[t]he term ‘scene’ evokes the reciprocal relation between setting and activity, within performance. As in ‘the scene of the crime’, referring to the place as well as the action which took place there” (Bonnevier 2003, 68). Thus it should not be seen as a scene in a simplistic interpretation, but as introducing the idea of how place, event, and people together provide situation, a term I will use latter in the text. When referring to the department store as a social stage, we are dealing with department stores as socially situating—as producing situations of relations between people, between people and things, and between people and architecture (Markus 1993, 1-38).

This is more than merely adding character to existing conditions. The department stores are both defined by their use as well as dependant on it, constantly restructuring and reordering their range of goods to keep up with the elusive shopping behaviour of people while participating in its production both directly, here and now, and as a rhythm and pattern over time: “[t]he promenade of others going about their work appears as a rhythmic order that supports and defines urban society” (Read 2005, 60).

This is the question of this part of the thesis: the interplay between shopping, shopper, and shop, which at times is treated as one being what happens when one (the shopper) enters the other (the shop) as an interplay between discrete entities—against which I would argue that neither really exists without the other and as such are interdependent. Shopping behaviour does not exist without shopper and shop together. The analysis will begin at the level of co-presence and how such social contexts suggest contexts of use for the commodities sold much in the same way as contexts and categories do: this type

21. It can be pointed out here, that this is one of the reasons why the addition of an exterior in the model is important. Significant amounts of the movements taking place in the department stores are originating, aiming or at least relating to the streets outside. Correlations appear regarding how well the department store space is integrated into the city fabric.
of analysis identifies how contexts of use are suggested by characterisation both by context of commodities and by the social context, the situation.

Can one make a contribution to architecture and/or shopping theory by understanding shopping as a situated, reflexive practice based on motives formulated rather as projects than as specific goals, which are continuously re-evaluated and reformulated with heavy influence from spatio-social context as it is encountered en-route? I would argue this is the case. First, however, the situations found in the department stores must be further understood.

**Figure 9:**

The high flows of customers around OASIS do not lead to a significant amount of customers browsing the same compared to for instance PELGRIM (jewellery, lower right) and STAR (left). (Grey circles are observed people and the arrows are proportionate in width to measured customer flow. The larger, thinner circles show people communicating with one another.)

**Figure 9:**

Crowded Cashier's desks in the Home Department of ÅHLÉN—notice how few customers are actually browsing any of the goods while there are still many in line at the desks.
Figure 9: It is a well-visited cafeteria (note all the people sitting in the chairs). While this would suggest it draws many customers through the department store, the amount of consumers it pulls past the departments outside is quite small.

Figure 9(v): Scattergrams and trend lines showing the correlations between integration and movement rates in the department stores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integration</th>
<th>Movement Rate</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>0.7372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>0.7004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>0.6541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>0.6675</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² = 0.7372
R² = 0.7004
R² = 0.6541
R² = 0.6675
10. SOME THINGS WE DO TOGETHER, SOME WE DON’T

He took a short-cut through the People’s Park. One of its gates opened out to Nanjing Road, Shanghai’s main thoroughfare, almost an extended shopping center in itself, stretching from the Bund to the Jiantan Temple area. The people were all in high spirits. Shoppers. Tourists. Peddlers. Messengers. A singing group was performing in front of the Helen Hotel, a young girl playing an ancient zither in the middle. A billboard in big Chinese characters exhorted Shanghai residents to promote good hygiene and preserve the environment by refraining from littering and spitting. Retired workers were waving red flags at corners, directing traffic and admonishing offenders. The sun was out, gleaming on the grated spittoons built into the sidewalks.

Detective Yu thought that he was merging with all of them. And he was their protector, too. But that, he admitted, was wishful thinking.

The First Department Store stood in the middle of Nanjing Road, facing the People’s Park across Xizhuang Road. As always, the store was crowded, not only with local people, but also with people from other cities. Yu had to squeeze through the throng at the entrance. The cosmetics section was on the first floor. He stood close to it, with his back against a column, watching for a while. A lot of people flocked around the counters. Large pictures of beautiful models greeted the young shoppers, their varied body language all the more alluring under the bright lights. The youthful sales women were demonstrating the use of cosmetics. They, too, looked quite attractive in green-and-white-striped uniforms, the ceaseless play of the neon lights shimmering around them.

He took the elevator up to General Manager Xiao Chi’s office on the third floor. (Xiaolong 2000, 62)

The people in the First Department Store on Nanjing Road form a diverse mass of visitors that freely access the department store, and who (most of them) do not know one another. They are part of a crowd of strangers that makes use of the space of the department store for a prescribed use (shopping), but all the same in a disorganised and (to some extent) free manner. There is a significant difference between these crowded rooms and the shop manager’s office three floors up—a difference which, for the purpose of the current discussion, could be described by two terms: access and presence of people. The former is, in the manager’s office, (more) restricted, and the latter is
smaller (and more limited by choice of the manager). Control over, access to, and presence of people in a space seem to serve to form social characteristics of the spaces as well as the actual people there (even if most of them in the public parts serve to form a crowd). Contrary, many public buildings (such as large parts of parliament buildings, municipal administration offices, police stations, etc.) can be quite restricted in by whom, when, and how they can be accessed, which in many ways gives them a private character. In a way, it would seem like what makes the spaces private and public is less formal ownership (private or public) but rather use (as if private or public)—a use that can be more or less disconnected from formal ownership.  

Similarly, when the narrator in André Breton’s Nadja moves through the town, the narration and the milieus in which it takes place follow one another, so that when the narrator first runs into Nadja, it is in a crowded public street (Breton 2000, 63) and when they later go for a private conversation, they do not move about just anywhere (or, perhaps I should say that they do not end up just anywhere), but rather in a decidedly urban space, which is more or less empty of people:

Place Dauphine is certainly one of the most profoundly secluded places I know of, one of the worst wastelands in Paris. […] The light is fading. In order to be alone, we have our dinner served outside by the wine seller. For the first time during the meal, Nadja behaves rather frivolously. (Breton 2000, 80)

While still in what is in many ways public space (they are sitting in the streets of Paris), they have sought a place for privacy, which more or less consists of a space where they can be alone. This theme recours in a rather complex pattern throughout Breton’s novel—the chance meeting in the crowded street, square, or station, and the private talk in secluded and rather depopulated urban spaces. This coincides with the situations found in Zola’s Au Bonheur des dames when and where private or intimate and public or common events took place (see Zola 1995) as discussed in chapter three.

These two situations, the crowded public space and the empty or secluded private space, are powerful figures and provide character both to space and to qualify actions in a space, reoccurring not only in these two novels, but in fiction in general. As much as this might be taken into a discussion of private and public space, what constitutes public space or problematics of public space being commercialised are not (directly) the question at of the current thesis. All the same, it may be in place to briefly outline the arguments since the status of the department stores as public or private is of some importance for the discussion to come, just as the concepts of private and public need be (re)introduced.

Public Space and Public Situations

Public space have been the focus of much debate lately (after having been declared more or less dead in the early 1990s) and is throughout an elusive and vaguely defined concept. For the most part, such debates have been about the decline or threat to public space: “[…] the commercial privatisation of space, the advent of the new enclosures such as, ironically, the shopping mall, and so forth” (Massey 2005, 152). Often, such discussions tend to romanticise public space as it was or once has been: a free space for everyone to share. Without denying such concerns, for they are noteworthy, it may still be of importance to nuance such a notion and to nuance the public space, which is declining. As Massey continues: “[f]rom the greatest public square to the smallest public park these places are a product of, and internally dislocated by, heterogeneous and sometimes conflicting social identities/relations” (Massey 2005, 152). Simultaneously, as argued by Zukin, “[…] as definitions of who should have access to public space have changed, public cultures have steadily become more inclusive and democratic” (Zukin 1995, 26). A shift in ownership in control combined with a shift of demands of access and representation in, one could argue, the opposite direction.

What is the difference between publicly owned space and public space? Is publicly accessible space the same as public space—and if so, for whom must it be accessible, and at what times and which conditions? This becomes problematic not the least because while any space is filled with social rules of conduct, the importance of such rules for the general public culture varies over space (Lefebvre 1996, 228-240; Massey 2005, 146-156). In some ways, a public character of space makes said space stronger for reproduction of social norms and routines, and what is socially acceptable becomes stronger imposed:

Public spaces are the primary site of public culture; they are a window into the city’s soul. As sight, moreover, public spaces are an important means of framing a vision of social life in the city, a vision both for those who live there, and interact in urban public spaces every day, and for the tourists, commuters and wealthy folks who are free to flee the city’s needy embrace. (Zukin 1995, 259)

22. This does not make ownership uninteresting. It is rather to state that spaces can be appropriated as public even if they are privately owned. The argument is that this makes ownership perhaps even more important a question indirectly, since in as far as public space becomes an embodiment of public life, the control of public life (and thus parts of society) is put in private hands.

TO KEEP ORDER IN A GALLERIA IS NATURALLY MUCH EASIER THAN IT IS IN THE CITY; SPACE IS LIMITED AND THERE IS ALWAYS A RISK THAT YOU ARE BEING FILMED. BUT THAT PEOPLE BEHAVE BETTER MOST OF ALL DEPENDS ON THAT IT THE MILIEU IS FRESH AND CLEAN.

IMRAN AHMAD, FORUM, #3 2004, 122
That is, public spaces serve as representations, producers and sites of negotiation for society and, using Zukin’s terms, public culture. Such spaces, then, are both privately and publicly owned; they are what is appropriated as public in everyday practice. What is important in Zukin’s argument above is the way such spaces serve as sites of negotiation and of representation of the public idea of society and culture. If a space is considered public, it is endowed with credibility for expressing a public idea of social structure. While tempting to define public space based on the two principles public stewardship and open access (Zukin 1995, 32), this, is, by Zukin’s own argument, an ideological definition rather than one of the actual situation.

Historically, as argued by both Sparke (1995, 89-96) and Nava (1996, 8-76), the first Department Stores constituted the first public space for (middle-class) women in the 19th and early 20th century, providing a public sphere and social context from which women had previously been denied. While privately owned, commercial buildings like department stores, according to Nava and Sparke, partially provided a public sphere that women were otherwise denied by social regulation. This is not the case today, at least not in the same way, but it still raises the question as to what is public space and what is not. The state of the department store as public or private space is debatable, however—Colomina even claims they are neither:

The point of view of modern architecture is never fixed, as in baroque architecture, or as in the model of vision of the camera obscura, but always in motion, as in film or in the city. Crowds, shoppers in a department store, railroad travellers, and the inhabitants of Le Corbusier’s houses have in common with movie viewers that they cannot fix (arrest) the image. Like the movie viewer that Benjamin describes (“no sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed”), they inhabit a space that is neither inside nor outside, public nor private (in the traditional understanding of the terms). (Colomina 1996, 6)

In Colomina’s argument lays the idea of public space as a relation between subject and the Other—something that also concerns (and is explicitly stated as such a relation by) Lefebvre (1996, 235-237). That is, a space for the confrontation with the Other is a public space, while a private space is a space for the subject. Public and private, seen as situations of social relations, is not a distinct dichotomy, but a field of different characters albeit related to one another. Public space thus consist of a complex set of different spaces that can not be equalized with spaces of public ownership; it is as much a term defined by access, appropriation, and practice as formal status, or as Zukin puts it elsewhere: “[…] the spaces where we experience public life in cities” (Zukin 1995, 11).

Thus, in practice, as they are related to in everyday life, department stores (and shopping malls) are public spaces, which endows them with certain credibility as representing public ideas and social structures. This has important implications and raises a number of questions concerning public space, which will not be covered here (Zukin 1995, 1998; Lefebvre 1991, 1996; Burgin 1996; Blomley 1996; Gabrielson 2006). However, in as far as department stores are public, they are sites of a public situating of the intimate and private in that they supposedly are sites where personal taste and inner self is to be found and expressed; in as far as they are private, they constantly produce situations of publicity in that they are of public access and constantly entail the confrontation with the Other.

The question for now is not directly the status of the department stores as private or public space, but the situated practices within the department stores constituting more social and public and more secluded and private situations; publicity and privacy within public and/or private space. Following the earlier presented schemata of Lefebvre (Chapter Eight), both public and private space (and intermediate spaces) contain public and private parts without mixing with one another: there are private parts of public space, which nevertheless never turn into private space and the other way around (Lefebvre 1991, 152-158). This depends on what situations are to be found here. Hence this is why I will now talk about public and private situations, or situations of privacy, publicity and sociality rather than public or private space. It is also to emphasise that it is rather the emergent situations, and rhythms that produce the effects that are to be studied than a property of space itself. This is not to say it is independent of “physical space”, rather the opposite as clearly demonstrated by the correlations found above.

With this said, the question can then turn to what makes a situation public and how such situations are formed by space and use of space. This will be studied from two angles—the question of crowding and social centrality and the question of situating the I in relation to the Other.

Publicity I: Social Centrality and Public Situations

In a widow’s veil, mysteriously and mutely borne along by the crowd, an unknown woman comes into the poet’s field of vision. What this sonnet communicates is simply this: far from experiencing the crowd

23. Notably, much of the literature on public space coincides with literature on modernity and urbanity. This does not mean that the question of private and public is relevant only in an urban or modern context, but the strong separation between the two into opposite is in much a modern phenomenon (Burgin 1996, 139-150), as well as the questions of crowding, the self and the Other becomes perhaps emphasised in an urban setting compared to rural.
The ‘crowd practice’ of social centrality is supported by two factors. First, it is engaged in by all present whether willingly or unwillingly. Even if anonymously, one is present as part of a crowd, present for others and thus an object of their surveillance, scorn, commentary, cooperation, prejudice and so on. The public nature of a site crowded with other people is inescapable and undeniable. (Shields 1992a, 103)

That is, what Giddens would call situations of co-presence are important socially characterising factors for any space, a discussion that he primarily bases on Goffman’s work (Giddens 1984, 64-73). This is one first important note for the analysis to come: the way space is characterised by people being co-present. In one way, understanding the character of space goes via understanding what degrees of social co-presence can be found, such as how the same subway station appears as completely different when empty, and when full with people (Figure 10:1).

At first, it may seem as a simple question to say that public activities by necessity include many people or the attention of many people. The point is, however, somewhat the opposite: that presence and/or attention of many people suggests the situation to be public, to the degree of making it into one (however private or intimate the act in itself might be). To return to Shields:

The chance meeting of an acquaintance, the tactile but not too physical interaction with a crowd, the sense of presence and social centrality—of something happening beyond the close world of oneself, motivates many who are marginal, alone or simply idle to visit shopping centres as passive observers. Lefebvre (1975), calls this the sense of social centrality which characterises those good public spaces William Whyte calls ‘shmoozing’ spaces (1980). (Shields 1992a, 103)

The argument of Lefebvre and Whyte, according to Shields, is that social centrality or any public situation is intertwined with co-presence. This is not to say that they are directly equatable: what makes a space public also depends on the flow of people and encounters and the modalities of these encounters, which then are dependent on the rhythm and mass of people present. However, there is a limited degree of privacy possible when actions are perceived by others and when interruptions from chance-encounters are highly likely; what is socially sanctioned as public or restricted as private is connected to social situations of co-presence or seclusion.24

Again, when the narrator and Nadja seek to be intimate, they seek out even more secluded spaces, which, again, is similar to the examples taken from Zola in Chapter Three; it also reoccurs in Gibson’s Pattern Recognition—such as when Gayce (the main character) seeks out a lone computer geek in Tokyo for a private conversation (Gibson 2004, 146-150). Even hyper-urban Tokyo contains public places (a bar), which in advance can be assumed to be more or less devoid of people and thusly appropriate for the private meeting they are about to have. In these novels (to use these three examples, even if it is not limited to these novels by far), the private or intimate and public or common character respectively is not limited to a place—but to the way that space is populated, and in what way it is visible or secluded from other more or less populated spaces. A situation with more people, with more encounters with the Other, and more exposed to the Other, is a more public situation.

This has been addressed before, although indirectly, as concepts of private and public were introduced in the discussion of the layers and levels in the commodity system (see Chapter Eight). Of importance in this discussion, to reiterate, is the way these figures of private and public are multilayered.

24 Thus far, the discussion is centred on presence in the same space, as defined by boundaries such as walls, windows, floors, and so forth. This leaves out a significant amount of public such as media, but also public situations as people are situated in and by space. This will be returned to in the next chapter.
Public space (considered as publicly owned) has spaces more and less public and private in character (and use), just as private space (as a villa) has as have all the levels in-between. In the department stores, the women’s fashion is more publicly positioned as a whole, but contain more public and more private parts, some of which may be more private than the public parts of the as a whole more private men’s fashion departments. In as far as privacy and publicity is produced by presence of the Other, configurative spatial structures have high impact on what spaces become private and public. At least relative to one another—which, according to Lefebvre, is the most important question:

Let us insist on the relativity of rhythms. They cannot be measured like that of the speed of a mobile on its trajectory is measured, with a well-defined start (zero point) and a unit defined once and for all. A rhythm is fast and slow only in relation to other rhythms to which it is associated with a greater or lesser unity. (Lefebvre 1996, 230)

Mere presence or absence of people thus seem to play a significant part in characterising space and added to the discussion of context in Part II one can begin to define what would be a social situation: situation consists of what has earlier been discussed as context, to which is added people and event. In reference to Read, the context would provide a stage for the situating of events. Rather than the amount of people as a specific number, however, it is the amount of people passing by or spending time in one space relative other spaces that is the question. Thus, while the cosmetics departments of Debenhams, Åhlens, P.U.B., and NK may differ in having different amounts of customers, they share the property of being the most visited space in each of the department stores, taking the same relative role as most public in them all. This shared relative publicity within each department store is more important than differences in actual amount of visitors. What is characterised as private in a department store is so because it is situated in more private spaces than other spaces in the department store. While possible to argue for the existence of relations between publicity and social centrality of a more definite character (albeit culturally dependant), the main argument to come is based on situations as they appear relative to one another. It is these kinds of social situations that will be studied closer in the coming discussions.

Social Centrality and the Sharing of Space

In order to begin a study of how consumer flow and commodity distribution form and inform one another, and produce social situations and structures of meaning, it may be of worth to put forth a rather simple proposal: In general, that which is placed where there is a high flow of people, is also that which is expected to somehow concern many. There are two questions involved in this: one of the social character of the commodity and activity it is tied to and another of the directness of the commodity. The question is not simply addressing where many customers pass as either sold to many or presented directly as for everyone to own, use, buy, give, or even use together; the claim is that the degree of crowding of departments have impact on the publicity and social role of the sold commodities in some respect and that this is more or less unavoidable. The analyses to come aims to both verify such a statement and to understand both how different situations and relations between different customers serve to provide different characters to the commodities.

Such tendencies are reasonably easy to see in most retail where there is a lack of “must haves” such as milk. Instead, ideas of status together with motivations like how commodities appeal to many serve to inform commodity distribution. This is not the same as that many will buy it—such a direct relation can be pointed to in some but not all shopping situations and fairly few in a shopping mall or department store. Instead, motivations such as placing impulse buys at the front is at times used to explain retail decisions made for other reasons. As Underhill notes, the relation between what is placed close to the entrance of malls and what is selling much or on impulse is vague at best (Underhill 2004, 54-56, 65). His primary example, which is applicable on department stores as well, is fragrances. Expensive and luxurious, they are often placed directly by the entrance although later years often moved somewhat to the side (which may have to do with increasing awareness of allergies). They are, according to Underhill, too expensive to actually constitute impulse buys, and they are not attracting huge amounts of customers by themselves. Even if I would argue that the demographics of fragrance-shoppers he presents does not correspond to the ones found in the department stores studied, the argument remains as there is fairly few browsers compared to the flow of customers outside.25

His major explanations of this placement of fragrances are tradition and adjacency to cosmetics. This adjacency would then allow the cosmetics shopper to see the fragrances and be inspired to buy them while waiting for help at the cosmetics desk (which includes

25. I do not here mean to say there is no connection—the point is rather that the connection is weaker than might at first be thought. I will return to this later, but customer flow has bearing on sells only to a certain extent and other aspects are taken into consideration.

26. For Underhill, the majority of fragrance customers are elder, or at least mature, with decidedly established economies, while it can be said that the general impression in Åhlens and Debenhams is that the mean age of the customers is lower than that, with a high amount of youths (late teens to late twenties). This, it should be noted, is an impression and has not been actually measured in the project.
the assumption that it is in general the same customers buying both). While it is difficult to argue with such a connection, the same kind of questions could be raised around cosmetics: why are they placed by the entrance? Underhill claims this to be a problem, as cosmetics are, he says, private: something that is used in the privacy of the bathroom, ultimately intimate, and therefore should be put in a more proper, secluded position. He makes a direct connection between where things ought to be found in the malls, what situations would emerge from it, and in what situation the commodities are to be expected to be used; he also argues that success in retail follows such a formula. There is a flaw in his argument: it does not suit cosmetics and fragrances is a misconception of what kind of use it is that serves to inform the distribution in the malls and department stores. Whereas cosmetics are put on in intimate and private situations (albeit in public restrooms as well and in the subway), this is only a minor part of the use of cosmetics. Cosmetics, if anything, are directed outward to the public and to the Other. It has as sole purpose: the beautification of the self for the Other—even if the general line of argument in advertisement is to “bring out one self” because you are then supposed to feel better.27 The wearing of makeup, its predominant use, is an inherently public act.

This is, I have no doubt, one of the major reasons cosmetics are presented the way they are and in such public situations as they are. The other main reason is the visual appeal and sense of luxury, self-indulgence, and cleanliness that they suggest. They set the stage of shopping as one of taking care of oneself.28 This is an image that conforms to how they are present and presented in fashion magazines: cosmetics are for every woman, and if every woman is a shopper and the majority of shoppers are women, then cosmetics are also one of the things that most surely concerns most shoppers in the course of their everyday life.

But, tying back to the discussion above, the question can then be asked: if there is a connection between publicity and presence of people, does this mean that that which goes on in such public situations is also common? Can it be claimed that the placement of cosmetics by the entrance in the most crowded areas of the department stores (and malls) further serve to support and produce this idea of cosmetics? Naturally, stating such would be a simplification, but it does point to the relation between crowd, publicity, and public culture. That which happens in public space (that which is sanctioned public practice) is something that is commonly shared as acceptable public behaviour.

Following such an argument, it is in place to remind of earlier discussions where, for instance, Eco (1997) and Williamson (1985, 229-233) both in their own way argue that the way things are presented and used is also codified into them. This means that what is presented as of public concern, is also made into public concern. That is, what is presented in crowded locations is presented as public, and thus, a production of it as a public commodity is set in motion. As the department stores become lived space, cosmetics are made part of the most public space and thus lived as part of publicity. They become public in the logic of the department stores. Such a statement requires some moderation, since there are also questions of power and power over space involved, but in crowded space lays a kind of publicity. Of course, this is performed in a negotiation between what already is public, what for retail purposes ought to be public, and what amongst the range of goods sold in the department stores is least public.

If we, for a moment, turn to the libraries studied in the licentiate thesis, the same complex situation was found in the negotiation between promotion and accommodation in the distribution of literature: libraries promote some subjects and some literature, by placing them in crowded places (where many people pass by or browse), and set other aside for the especially interested only (Koch 2004, 124-125, 144-146). The studied libraries all promoted factual books and had a tendency to prioritise society and culture as subjects, while downplaying such literature as crime, fantasy, and genealogy. In the studied libraries, there was also a distinct relation found between flows and the way people made use of seats such that the closer to main flows the seats was found, the more they were used, and the more they were used in a social manner (more people per table, and more pairs or groups around a table). Reading places in more secluded spaces were both less used and to a higher degree used by single persons independent of their size. Ideas of what is a social situation and thus appropriate for social activities and spaces of social centrality, seen as crowded spaces with relatively high rhythms, seem to coincide.

Furthermore, as public and private situations are products of relative situations, as Lefebvre argues, one can find another key supporting such an argument of presence, publicity, and commodity codification: how things are considered not appropriate for everyone is moved out of public space, placed
deeper into the department stores and libraries, to the extent of at times being hidden. Something quite evitable in at least the early public libraries where books not fit for children and ladies were stored deeper inside in favour of books more appealing and suiting to everyone up front (Markus 1993, 171-184). Similarly, as noted before, Gregson, Brooks and Crowe find the use of Goffman’s front and back zones in second hand stores (Gregson, Brooks, and Crowe 2000, 101-122).

Thus, it would seem, there is a logic of what is of public concern, a logic of what is appropriate for public display and access, and a notion of what needs privacy which follows a logic of spatial distribution. How the distribution in space and through space interplays serves to signify spaces and commodities as of private or public concern. The proposal of this chapter is that there is a relation between what is placed in crowded areas and what is considered to be of public interest and what is somehow meant for private or public use. This is not really such a strange suggestion, and it was touched upon already in chapter six: in the shopping situation; the shopper constantly considers the situation in which that which is shopped is to be used in the choice of what to buy (Chua 1992, 114-135), and as such is the case, producing one way or the other similar situations are important. I believe it will come to show that while the notion of “crowd” must be moderated into different modulations, it is an important factor—a thing that much as (or more than) sales figures, the character of the commodities in question and the social situations in which they are culturally proper to use have a significant impact on how ordering is performed and hence order communicated.

Sharing Space
Let us linger for a while on a most basic concept for the ongoing discussion: that of sharing space. For now, the how of this sharing can be put aside. It is definitely of key importance, but there is also something in the simple situation of co-presence that should not be ignored. It serves as one of the key concepts in Hillier’s definitions of space (Hillier 1996, 122-132) and Giddens’s discussion of daily encounters and interaction. The relation between shared space and publicity is also discussed by Williamson, for instance, in how music players (iPods and other MP3-players) reduce the need of people to take notice of one another, of who is co-presence and sharing space with me, even if she doesn’t make use of terms as co-presence directly (Williamson 1985, 209-212). Giddens puts it like this:

The routines of day-to-day life are fundamental to even the most elaborate forms of societal organization. In the course of their daily activities individuals encounter each other in situated contexts of interaction—interaction with others who are physically co-present. (Giddens 1984, 64)

While one can argue that since then a spatial interaction such as through cellular phones or internet has grown the day-to-day encounters with others in situated contexts of interaction remain, and as Giddens states elsewhere: “the fixity of institutional forms does not exist in spite of, or outside, the encounters of day-to-day life but is implicated in those very encounters” (Giddens 1984, 69). A view, which he, at least at the current level of discussion, shares with Judith Butler and Michel de Certeau even if the specifics of how this works may differ. Both Butler (1999) and Giddens (1984) make use of Goffman’s theories when discussing how everyday routines of behaviour, interaction, and self-presentation constitutes the self, social relations, and societal structures. However, for Butler, the question is more directed to the performative situation itself, whereas Giddens has a tendency to discuss it mostly as a constructive element in the constitution of society as a system. For Butler it is definitely more a question of analyzing exercise of power and construction of repression and inequality, whereas Giddens focuses more on potentials and constitutions of reciprocal relations between individuals (at equal levels of power); they further have different views on the relation between mind and body (Glennie and Thrift 1996). In one way, these rather contradictory positions serve to illuminate the complexity of social situations—how they serve both to provide potential and restraints and used to exercise power and freedom.

Nevertheless, there is one kind of crowding, or public situation, that could be described as the sharing of space. In such a situation, one could argue, most people who are there are more or less on the same level of power and share some kind of general agreement on what the space in question is to be used for—at least to the extent that conflicts in interest are negotiated into a workable situation (Zukin 1995). In the department store, such a general agreement is more or less pre-decided: people are there to consume. While consuming, people to various degrees share the spaces of consumption with others, from the crowded entrance to the secluded fitting booth.

When entering Åhlens and browsing the cosmetics directly around the main entrance (e.g., Lancôme), I am sharing this space with often more than a hundred others. Although sometimes the numbers dip toward thirty, I am never alone—while if I inspecting a pair of Wolseys in the men’s underwear department, I am practically always

29. While it may here seem as if I dismiss concerns of power relations when it comes to shopping, this is not the case at all. My point is that as a result of power relations and negotiations of what is allowed, acceptable and expected, a common ground is constructed as to who has the right to enter the department store, what is allowed to be done in there, and in what ways. A part of this is imposed by the owner and other parts by society. When such common ground is established, those who share this common ground can share the space of the department store.
doing it with less than five others present, of which one or more are personnel and likely looking elsewhere. To reach the latter situation, I have passed all degrees of shared presence from the entrance to the men’s underwear department. With somewhat smaller figures, the same is applicable for Debenhams, where the usual situation in the men’s underwear department would be being alone or sharing the space with at most a pair of others. These situations are participating in producing one as public and the other as private concern. The trend contexts are, in the strongest fashion, spaces that are shared and shared by most consumers wherever they are moving to in the department stores.

Another part of sharing, in as far as it is dependant on co-presence, is the boundaries of the shared space. Again, we can compare the space of men’s underwear in Debenhams, which is effectively shut off from most anyone not browsing underwear, with the situation of for instance Kanebo on the first floor, which shares its space with quite a diverse and widespread field (Figure 10:II). One is defined by clear boundaries of linear character and one by painterly relations—which as discussed earlier have different implications. Sharing of space, thus, is not only dependant on flows, but on how flows are sequenced into spaces, and the boundaries that define these situations of co-presence. It can further be argued that there is a difference in how strongly one shared space is sheltered from others or not.

Take the two examples of the men’s underwear and Kanebo at Debenhams, or for that matter, the suits or shirts departments and the more trendy clothes at the women’s fashion floor at Åhlens, sharing space follows different formulas. In the former (men’s underwear, shirts, suits), there is a common sharing of space—that is, by the construction of the boundary as enclosing and linear, forming a convex space, those who share space tend to share with one another and with few others as long as they are browsing goods. The men’s underwear is constructed into few, close to one, convex space with entrances and exits to and from it. The latter pair, on the other hand, has a more fleeting character when it comes to sharing space—a more painterly border. Whereas they constantly share space with one another, as one move about between them, what other spaces (and hence to some extent customers) space is shared with alter dramatically. Those browsing Tiger share space with Filippa K and the row of designer brands along the escalator, whereas those browsing Filippa K share space rather with Tiger and French Connection. There are several overlapping convex spaces at work, forming different situations of sharing. The latter form makes sharing both looser as a concept and distributes it wider around.

With such an outlined concept of sharing, as coinciding between space and interest, one can then analyse how department stores structure things as shared (which to some extent means public) or personal (which to some extent means private). Using the categories common to all four department stores and allowing the categories to be represented by a brand or sub-category for sake of clarity, it would produce a pattern somewhat similar to the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Åhlens</th>
<th>Debenhams</th>
<th>NK</th>
<th>P.I.B.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetics (LaCoste)</td>
<td>Cosmetics (Kanebo)</td>
<td>Cosmetics</td>
<td>Cosmetics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessories</td>
<td>Body Skincare</td>
<td>Fragrances</td>
<td>Accessories</td>
<td>Fragrances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body/Skincare</td>
<td>Accessories</td>
<td>Body/Skincare</td>
<td>Accessories</td>
<td>Body/Skincare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s Trend (Filippa K)</td>
<td>Women’s Trend (Top Shop)</td>
<td>Women’s Trend</td>
<td>Women’s Trend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Fashion</td>
<td>Denim</td>
<td>Lingerie</td>
<td>Lingerie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitational Dinner</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Invitational Dinner</td>
<td>Invitational Dinner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Street Fashion</td>
<td>Lingerie</td>
<td>Women’s Fashion</td>
<td>Women’s Fashion</td>
<td>Women’s Fashion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingerie</td>
<td>Women’s Fashion</td>
<td>Men’s Underwear</td>
<td>COS and DVDs</td>
<td>Women’s Fashion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s Trend (Tiger)</td>
<td>Men’s Trend (Top Man)</td>
<td>Men’s Trend</td>
<td>Men’s Trend</td>
<td>Men’s Fashion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s Fashion</td>
<td>Men’s Fashion</td>
<td>Men’s Fashion</td>
<td>Men’s Fashion</td>
<td>Bed and Bathroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed and Bathroom</td>
<td>Men’s High Fashion</td>
<td>Men’s High Fashion</td>
<td>Men’s High Fashion</td>
<td>Men’s High Fashion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s Underwear</td>
<td>Men’s Underwear</td>
<td>COS and DVDs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not surprisingly, this pattern is reflected in fashion magazines in both degree of presence and in position in the magazines themselves. It is also responded to by the degree the more public commodities exist in magazines not targeted at the expected user. For example, lingerie is represented in men’s lifestyle and fashion magazines, whereas men’s underwear is significantly less present in women’s lifestyle and fashion magazines.

On the other hand, if focus is turned more to the degree to which who shares the space of the category in question is constant (the degree to which the shared space is defined by linear boundaries forming stable situations of co-presence) the list would look somewhat different—especially certain groups would be more clearly separated from their neighbours, making them less widely shared (such as men’s fashion in general and suits in particular). This would apply first and foremost to the more private commodities, like underwear, but also to fragrances, as a general tendency in all four department stores.

Note that the above is correct under the definition of sharing space outlined earlier, and requires some further attention. For now, the point is that as far as the sharing of space is part of producing a situation, and hence of providing character and identity to space, commodity and shopper, which suggests the sharing of space to be a concept that is of high importance. This means that if, for instance, the management uses
the strategy of placing trendy or popular commodities where many people are, they
express an idea that these commodities are of shared interest in one way or another.
They are somehow directed to and concern everyone making use of that space. This
is not to say everyone should buy them or use them themselves—on the contrary, this
would be a faulty assumption. They are, however, for everyone sharing the space to be
aware of, to be within reach, and to be buyable.

Sharing Purpose
When browsing Lancôme as exemplified above, sharing space with many people, and
when browsing Wolsey’s underwear, sharing space with few, there is another differ-
ence than the amount of customers to take into consideration. It can be summarized
by the question: why are these people here? Just by the entrance, a few steps inside,
in the main aisle leading into or out from Åhlems, it is fairly sure that most people
sharing space with the one browsing Lancôme is not there to buy cosmetics, and it is
even more certain that they are not all there to browse the cosmetics of Lancôme.
More likely, most of them are heading elsewhere. Contrary to this, when browsing the
Wolsey underwear, it is likely that most of the people sharing space are there for un-
derwear shopping unless they are personnel. This is secured by the relative depth in
which the men’s underwear is placed, the way in which it forms close to a cul-de-sac,
and the character of its boundaries visually disconnecting it from the rest of the de-
partment store reducing the reasons to be there to a minimum, except the actual
shopping of underwear.

Similar situations were created in the public libraries studied: certain categories
of literature and media were separated from others, detached from the rest of the sys-
tem so that they would not pollute one another. That is, the means to generate separa-
tion spatially are very similar in libraries and in department stores.

Perhaps the simplest and most obvious case is the children’s literature section
found in the libraries. As a specific genre, for a rather specific audience, it has also
received special treatment in all three libraries studied (Koch 2004, 127-130).30 They
are all secluded, especially in Malmö and Stockholm: before entering the library
proper, the children’s section branches off into its own space, to which the only com-
munication is via the main entrance space. The spatial strategies of the children’s
sections also tend to be different—more emphasis on surveillance and control of who
comes and goes. The children are, in this way, strongly separated from other visitors,
and the spatial strategies employed (relatively deep series or trees) express such a
wish of separation even more. The children also have their own cloakroom, own read-
ing places, information desks, and so forth, creating a miniature library inside (or next
to) the main library (Figure 10:III).31

This leads to children and parents or caretakers to be separated from other parts
of the libraries, while others rarely have reason to enter the world of children’s books.
In this way, children are singled out and separated from other visitors, not only giving
them their own section, but also implying they should not come to other sections. The
spatial separation is signalling a need to keep them apart, which exceeds the actual
browsing of children’s books. Children are disturbance and should stay in their own
specially assigned section.

In the case of libraries and children, there is at least in the traditional library a
number of reasons why this can be a positive separation: it helps parents and children
find books that suit the children, and it helps parents, librarians, and caretakers keep
an eye on the children while they move about amongst the media, and it allows the
children to be children, including playing, running, talking and now and then shout-
ing without causing disturbance for the regular visitors. This is not the point—the
point is that by spatial distribution, the difference is created and spatial form enables
a situation where only those with a purpose to go into the children’s section end up
there. As a result, inversely, it can generally be assumed that most people actually in
the children’s section share the purpose of browsing children’s books (or letting their
children do). This is produced by use of two strategies: first, the distribution of space
forming branches, series, and cul-de-sacs making casual browsing or wandering into
the branch unlikely; and secondly, the distribution in space of a single category in
said branch, appealing to a specific target audience. Altering one of these will alter
the degree to which they form branches for only those concerned. The tendency for
the two to coincide, however, is strong—both in libraries and department stores. One
suggests and supports the use of the other.

30. It is by no means limited to these three libraries, but rather form a common theme for
libraries—at least in Scandinavia. The reason to refer only to the three explicitly is that
these three are the only ones I have studied as closely, and on which I have published
material. It is, however, the common way to have a “children’s room” or at least shielded
of section for children in most (if not all) public libraries I have visited since.
31. The separation is in Växjö made less obvious to the eye, but not necessarily less strong.
Once inside the library proper, the children are effectively separated from the others,
the main contact being through the entrance to the new building by Smith, Hammer & Las-
sen. Empty space and fairly large distances, both configuratively and metrically, separate
them from the rest—space easily controlled, which is also surveyed by two loan desks,
with their own cloakroom. The entire section is characterized spatially by control and
controllability (Koch 2004, 127-130).
The most direct parallel in the department stores, perhaps not surprisingly, is the children’s clothes and toys. They tend to be put in branches and spaces clearly separated from most else and which are not part of a route on the way anywhere else. This occurs in Åhlens on the top and bottom floor (the attic and the cellar) and in Debenhams forming its own branch on the top floor. P.U.B. have their children’s clothing and toys in the cellar, and NK have toys on the third floor (the home department floor). Thus children’s clothes and toys are, by suggestion of the spatial distribution, only for those who intend to shop these specific categories. It is not difficult to find this a sympathetic suggestion, allowing children to remain less publicly commercialised. This is not to say that this is the reason it is done—what makes it interesting is the suggestion, and the strategies that produce it. Sharing of space becomes sharing of purpose.32

Returning to the first examples of Lancôme and Wolsey, we find that in the first case, those I share space with can be just about anyone; while in the latter, those I share space with I also tend to share purpose with: we are there for the same reason. This forms two radically different social situations even if both are public. One is a common, shared space for those who are in the space for what is found in it; the other is a kind of bustling street where the main reason to be in the same space is the aim of going somewhere else at least by most.

Why is this important? For one, the two situations describe what happens and what is shopped for as completely different things. One is for the concerned only and not to the same extent a public question as much as a question shared by the already concerned, while the other forms a situation that is inherently public and lays claim to the concern of everyone, and where everyone should be aware (or at least allowed to be aware) of what is going on and what is sold and who buys it. One forms, more literally, a stage, and the other forms what could be likened to a clubroom.

These two situations, forming two extremes, are in much built up by a relation between how many people are somewhere for the same reason and how many are there on their way elsewhere. In the urban context, this much has been said by now. The flow remains higher here for several structural reasons: these escalators are closest from most else and which are not part of a route on the way anywhere else. This much has been said by now.

Returning to the first examples of Lancôme and Wolsey, we find that in the first case, those I share space with can be just about anyone; while in the latter, those I share space with I also tend to share purpose with: we are there for the same reason. This forms two radically different social situations even if both are public. One is a common, shared space for those who are in the space for what is found in it; the other is a kind of bustling street where the main reason to be in the same space is the aim of going somewhere else at least by most. Why is this important? For one, the two situations describe what happens and what is shopped for as completely different things. One is for the concerned only and not to the same extent a public question as much as a question shared by the already concerned, while the other forms a situation that is inherently public and lays claim to the concern of everyone, and where everyone should be aware (or at least allowed to be aware) of what is going on and what is sold and who buys it. One forms, more literally, a stage, and the other forms what could be likened to a clubroom.

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32. It has been found in several studies, including the investigations of the libraries in the licentiate thesis, that tree-like structures and cul-de-sacs tend to discourage explorative or browsing behaviour, while other structures, where one is less often forced to return an already walked path, encourage it. In as far as this is a general pattern, not only would explorative behaviour in shopping be encouraged by rings and network patterns in department stores, but the parts with less ringiness is more perpetuated only by customers intending to reach said part. As can be seen, this seems to be the case.

33. The relation between local and global movement, or of strangers and inhabitants, or of cyclical or linear rhythms, are important for both Hillier, Jacobs, and Lefebvre for understanding how a city performs—where they all speak of more or less the same phenomenon: the mix of people from far away and the local inhabitants that form the life on the streets, and how different mixes produce different situations. The conclusions are not necessarily the same, although for all three the existence of both is important for the urban milieu (see Hillier 1996; Jacobs 1992; Lefebvre 1996).
to the children’s clothing department. An already structurally secured socially situating design is further enhanced by the distribution of commodities. I will not deny that kitchen utensils, cutlery, and decorations such as lamps, vases, and chandeliers may very well be something people would more often buy than a toilet scrub or a new set of bed linens. On the contrary, this is one of the ideas behind the sorting, and impulse buying and frequencies of sales do inform the distribution of commodities to some extent. However, this is not true as a general rule and not always in the same direction. It is one sorting principle, arbitrary given precedence in some cases and in others not—in the home department in large overruled by the degrees of publicity and privacy of the corresponding spaces in the home in which the commodities are to be used. The invitational dinner, taking its expression in the trendy kitchen gear, the designer plates and glasses, and napkins and tablecloths (which, by the way, are not sorted together with the other textile found in the home floor) that loosely defines a decidedly public situation in the home is placed in the most public parts of the floor. If this is because we buy expensive crystalline whiskey glasses more often than needles is questionable.

Many such decisions are consciously made by management based on customer movement—and, much of Underhill’s advice and analysis is built on studying where customers are, what they do and where they go, which is then to be followed by the management. How this comes together with the figure of the goal-oriented consumer is not clear. All the same, there is a tension between relying on attractors to pull customers into the depths of the store and the idea of placing products in “hot spots” to make them sell better.34

As the system of commodities of the department stores, as argued earlier (see chapter eight), is predominantly the result of a series of priorities made, the focus on hot spots, big sellers, and publicity then also provides a key to understanding the emergence of a private side of Åhlens. The public, urban parts are both geometrically closer to the crowded street of Drottninggatan, but also centred around the most used set of escalators, and the private, more secluded side centred around the other as a response to relative rhythms. The organisation of commodities answers to a situation of crowding, which is structured by accessibility and distance from the street. Around the most used escalator, we find cosmetics, trend and street fashion for women, kitchen and dinner appliances, and trend and street fashion for men. They all have a character of being outward, public, albeit in different ways. Centred around the other set of escalators, one finds books (and boots), lingerie, sleeping and training clothing (and apparel for mother’s), bed and toilet wares and textiles—a series which curiously enough end in suits and leisure clothing in the men’s department. Which would be odd, if the question was one of direct geometric transposition of character from one floor to the other.

How come the suits can end up in the far end has been handled earlier (chapter seven), and will be returned to later on (chapter eleven), but that they end up in a less visited part is only further strengthening that character. The men’s fashion floor of Åhlens is also differently structured than the others, in that it has no escalator leading on upwards on the western side, which allows for much more far-reaching exposure for the entire western half of the floor, and allows much more exposure relative to access. The situation of exposure-contra-availability signifying status takes precedence over privacy—also somewhat dependant on a flattening out of difference in movement densities between staircases the higher up in the department store one comes. In a system of object constructed by priorities made on the basis of exposure, availability, publicity and status, that which would appear as a curious turn of character, or as an illogical positioning in a simple, geometric analysis, rather turns the most logical. No other space provides a character of such aristocratic status as that where Hugo Boss, and to some extent, Tommy Hilfiger, is located in Åhlens.

In relation to what has been found earlier, the contexts of the departments suggest the use of the sold commodities in similar contexts outside of the department store, and this for the social situation of presence or absence of people as well. It is no coincidence that street fashion is located where more people move than is the department for “mature women”—it answers to a supposedly more public, urban statement of identity.

But, if much of the situating, as discussed thus far, depends on how it puts browsers and movers in relation to one another, the question rise if there are more general patterns of relations between moving and browsing.

34. The term “hot spot” is taken from an interview with Åhlens head architect, who also spoke of this tension that is, according to her, constantly debated by management: should hot spots be used to promote that which sells badly, or should it (as suggested by the Debenhams management) be used to sell more of the most popular commodities?

Rhythms of Flows and Rhythms of Being: Supposed Attractors and Relative Flows

We have, thus, a situation where there seems to be little relation between movement and browsing—or so it has been presented up until now, which is because much research makes opposite assumptions. Much urban planning assumes that it is the destinations that decide movement patterns, and much space syntax research assumes that analysing movement densities will include analysis of being. Providing the above schemata are correct, and supported by the observations made, there is a more intricate play between movement and being going on. However much they are dependent on one another, the interrelation them in-between must be further understood.

Both assumptions would, given the examples of Oasis and George’s coffee, seem to be faulty. I argue, however, they are not—at least not fully. Consider, first, as Penn and Turner (2003) show, if one analyse movement as based on one-trip behaviour (single-
purpose trips), little discernible patterns emerge, more or less regardless of amount of agents deployed in a system. The model, using vision-based agents following a number of different rules of choice for how to move (and thus not directly dependant on spatial integration), for instance, all provided the same answer in this regard. Single purpose trips thus have little effect on movement patterns from a spatial viewpoint—they have little effect on rhythms or stable flows, even if they can change individual routes. Second, as the relatively high population in George’s Coffee in Debenhams shows, analysing where people are as a means to understand where many people move is difficult. I will return to this shortly, but I would first argue that they provide a key to understand one another. If the trips to George’s Coffee form such single-purpose trips, then by Penn’s argument they ought not affect movement patterns much outside of it—which they apparently do not. Similarly, analysis based on movement patterns—such as space syntax analysis—serve to capture the flows causing these patterns, which are heavily dependant on of some kind of multi-purpose trips, and are thus weaker when it comes to understand destinations forming single-purpose trips.

We can here find both what forms single purpose destinations and what forms structural effects on being simultaneously throughout most of the department store, making the analysis difficult. This is, however, not to say there is no relation. First, it must be said that most shopping, most human behaviour, as argued in this thesis, takes on forms of multi-purpose projects—or rather projects open for change based on the situated context of their performance. Thus the cases of children’s clothing and George’s coffee are exceptions rather than rule, and for the analysis such obvious exceptions must first be disregarded. The question must instead be put if there is a relation between moving and browsing to be found, if the direct connection between passers by and browsers is low. In this case, Underhill provides valuable findings:

[…] how can our insistence on walking and looking forward be accommodated inside the typical store? One method is used in almost every store already. Endcaps, the display of merchandise on the end of virtually every American store aisle, are tremendously effective at exposing goods to the shopper’s eye. Almost every store makes use of them—in the record store you’ll see one particular artist’s CDs, or some discounted new release; in supermarkets there’s a stack of specially priced soft drinks or a wall of breakfast cereal. An endcap can boost an item’s sale simply because as we stroll through a store’s aisles we approach them head-on, seeing them plainly and fully. (Underhill 2000, 79)

Studying the patterns of movement and browsing in the department stores closer, it becomes clear how the commodities placed in some kind of endcaps are visited more than those placed along the aisles (Figure 10:IV). These endcaps are produced in quite a number of different ways, but all have the character of being what is seen in the far end—he it in the end of an aisle, directly when coming up an escalator, or lifted forth by walls perpendicular to the flow of consumers. In a most strong fashion, that which is most browsed is located in the endcaps of the most integrated aisles or around important crossroads where people can be expected to slow down or come to a complete stop to make a decision.

This is a pattern that returns in the extreme local and global cases. Even in the individual sections, there is a tendency of browsing the commodities placed up front or the ones in the back with less attention in the middle. This is a direct result of the degree of exposure together with ease of accessibility. The two characterising properties for the commodity system also to a high degree serve to form customer behaviour. Thus, while the specific use of attractors is likely possible, it is also a self-fulfilling practice: the endcaps tend to be browsed more in any case. What we find is links between spatial structure and movement patterns that conform to Underhill’s ideas of zones (Underhill 2000; Hosoya and Schaefer 2001), where the second and fourth zones are formed by their position in the spatial structure as much as by what they hold. While unique for every store, as Underhill says, the spatial mechanics behind them are, it would seem, similar. Analysis is thus possible to perform as following logical tendencies and as a result of the distribution in and of space and not only post facto when people are there making use of the stores. Relations of exposure, availability, and sequence play a key role, not only in structuring values, but also in structuring shopping behaviour.

The question could then be put how this is responded to by sales figures. While this is not the question of this thesis and the material available cannot answer such a question, the management of the department stores have confirmed that as a general tendency, the more browsed goods are sold more—which is also the most important point Underhill makes: in order to sell, one should make sure the customers come in contact with the goods. This preferably should be done by touch (Underhill 2000, 218). Curiously, it was said to be more clearly so on the lower floors of Debenhams. I would tentatively argue that this actually coincides with an overall argument of this thesis: the increasing degree of purpose required to move deeper into the stores and the deeper from the entrance, the more need for a strong sense of purpose and the less open for other suggestions. This, however much supported indirectly by other research, requires further investigation to say with certainty and will not be part of the current work.

The same is indirectly stated elsewhere (though perhaps differently): that which constantly seems to correlate to sales figures is the amount of time customers spend among the commodities in question and time browsing in a store or part of a store tends to equal time spent far more than movement (Underhill 2000, 34-39, 161-182), which is only partly and rather bluntly captured with analysis of movement
flows or cashier desk crowding. This shows in the observations: one of the reasons there is high degree of presence in George’s coffee is not its immense attractive power, but the simple fact that people spend more time there than elsewhere. We are dealing with the same phenomena, in part, as with the slow cashier’s desks—time consuming activities appearing as popularity, and lest one is careful, read as high customer frequency. This is, of course, the risk throughout—but then the question dealt with here is not how many people browse a section, a department, a shelf or even a floor, but the relative degrees presence that emerge as a result of whatever reason causes them.

Of Us and Others: The Catwalk, The Kitchen, and the Bedroom

If we allow ourselves to use the schemata found above, the amount of customers and the relative amounts of moving and browsing, to characterise the range of commodities for sale, patterns emerge that can be recognised from other sources, such as fashion and lifestyle magazines and from everyday discourse on television, in newspapers, and so forth. It also forms a quite illustrative schema of social situations, which helps explain the different situations encountered in the department stores in quite a simple summary. In principle, it would look like in Figure 10:V.

There are, one could argue, two extreme situations in the department stores, which to some extent are answered to in life in general. It is the privacy of the most private, the bedroom, and the flaunting publicity of that which is purely public: the catwalk and cosmetics, and the curious in-between of the most public situation in the private home, the invitational dinner. These three would, to some extent, be placed in three extreme positions in the figure above: one consists of a situation with few people who tend to share purpose (the bedroom), one consists of many where there are more people passing than browsing, some seen and others to be seen (the catwalk and cosmetics), and one where there are more people who come to share the same thing being both seen and seeing (the invitational dinner). These situations correspond to the distribution of commodities and people in the department stores by the distribution in and through space. By producing similar relative social situations in the store as in an imaginary place in which the commodities for sale are to be put to use, a logic begin to grow clear of how things actually are sorted. Using such figures, both Ahlens and Debenhams can be mapped out, showing the different degrees of presence, and the different relations of movers and browsers (Figure 10:VI).

In general, as a response to the dependency of moving and browsing, a figure based on absolute amounts would tend to show a cigar-formed pattern from the lower left (few of both) to the upper right (many of both). For the purpose of clarity, however, and with the importance of the relativity of rhythms in mind, the figures above have had the other axis exaggerated.

Of course, this order is a suggestion made up of implications and references, deviates from most anyone’s idea at some point, and may well be different than the general public culture in some cases where either manipulation of ideas or mistakes in distribution are made (intended or not). As such, then, just as any media, the department stores serve to support and produce the values and ideas of public culture by transposing it into a system of objects presented in situations, which suggests the character of these objects and thus indirectly the character of their subsequent use.

Most demonstratively, this can be seen in the trend contexts: aside from earlier discussions of their characters as exposed and available, they are also crowded with relatively fast rhythms. Compared to other situations on the same floors, they are most visited and with most people present. Naturally, there is a significant difference between the men’s departments of both department stores and the women’s. Both are quite much less visited and with a higher percentage of people being there with an intention to actually buy something, a larger part of the present sharing purpose. That, which is intended for most people to buy, is where there are most people. At least, this is true for the different fashion floors internally.

Thus, it is possible to claim that mainly two things constitute the private space: few people and little activity—which is basically caught up in two of Lefebvre’s arguments, that of social centrality and how he characterises public and private space as spaces of activity and spaces of rest (Lefebvre 1991, 153-156). It also stresses the import of understanding relations between movement and being. On the basis of such an analysis, it is then time to go deeper into the relative situations of movement, being and seeing, and what kind of situations they produce—the topic of the next chapter.
Figure 10:
A Subway Station (The Union Station along the Los Angeles Red Line). Despite the moving train it seems desolate and lonely when there is not many people present (top), when the same subway station is filled with people the impression is completely another (below). We can see contextual effects similar to those of 3.8. (Photography: NTSA)

www.nonphotography.com
Mapping out the products of Ahlens (top right) and Debenhams (bottom left) in such a schedule as in Figure 10: iv we find both remarkable similarities and a few discrepancies.
11. A STAGE FOR OTHERS TO SEE

She stands over the glove counter, and from her secluded outpost looks far across the hall toward the couture department. When the view is reversed, and a couture girl bothers to glance toward her, Mirabelle looks like a puppy standing on its hind legs, and the two brown dots of her eyes, set in the china plate of her face, make her seem very cute and noticeable. But pointlessly so, at least today. For this Friday is what she has termed the day of the dead, when for some reason—usually an upcoming Beverly Hills dress-up event—the couture department fills with women who are unlikely to notice the slender girl standing at one end of their hallowed hall. They are the Wives of Important Men. (Martin 2001, 11)

With the discussion of the previous chapter in mind, we can now turn to how relations between people are set up in a more precise analysis. Clearly, the spatial structure influence where people move, and what they browse—which to a high degree depends on what they can reach and what they can see. It also, as discussed briefly above, serves to influence who meets whom, who gets to see whom, and who is seen by whom. We can thus speak of the shop as socially staging, where people and commodity system work together to provide a range of different situations in which to navigate and find one that suits our taste, that fits our personality. Part of this lies in how we relate to the Other and the exposure to the Other. Mirabelle can watch the ongoing show in the couture department all day, and anyone shopping there is, more or less directly, put under her surveillance—including the staff. Potentially, anyone in Neimann’s glove compartment can do the same; the couture department is spatially situated in a stage-like manner in relation to the glove compartment. This relation, which may sound like pure surveillance, is—to reiterate the argument of this part—rather about producing a social situation with connotations to who is to shop there, why they are shopping, and for what situations, in connection to what activities and not the least, by implication of context, with what other commodities the bought commodities are aimed to belong. As Sean Nixon states it, Nixon’s statement does, however, still treat the shopper and the shop as concerned only with one another, missing one important social and cultural function of the practice of shopping: that of seeing and being seen. Underhill puts in the perhaps most simple way, as he discusses signs and their placement in retail, stating that the one thing shoppers watch most is other people (Underhill 2000, 64).

The fact that we are looking at others, however, also means others are looking at us. The more people around, the more there are that might do it—and the more people around who are willing to do it, without noticing what I buy and the less other people browse what I browse, the more I, specifically, will be on show. In some cases, this might be just what I want, perhaps proudly showing I both have the taste for and can afford expensive makeup; in others, it might make me feel uneasy, making me move on when I perhaps otherwise would have stayed and browsed the goods. Underhill makes a quite strong point in this case, when he gives the example of the placement of Wonderbras in an exposed position just by the seating arrangement where a gathering of men ended up sitting, judging and commenting every potential customer’s need for or potential with wearing a Wonderbra (Underhill 2000, 89). In yet others, I will be the one watching for whichever reason there is. This process, the activity of watching and being watched and the social play of the department store or the mall, is an important part of shopping as an activity. It is also part of the allure of social centrality:

[…] a great deal of shopping appears to be what used to be called ‘window shopping’, that culminates with a small purchase, or the purchase of something one did not intend to buy, or simply ends in a coffee-house. The act of just going out, to see, be seen, to see what is new, is an important form of recreation and even exercise. (Clammer 1992, 202)

It is these situations, the causes and effects, the social play of situating, the stage and the audience, that is the question of this chapter. Knowing how flows are structured, how browsing is distributed, and how this is connected to spatial structures, the analysis can scrutinise the situations more closely. Remember the discussion of Chapter Three, how Mouret could stand and watch the bustling of his Bonheur des Dames from a spot that anyone could reach yet few did (Zola 1995, 94-95). This position, it was argued, was made possible by two spatial properties—one placing Mouret in a position to look down over the main entrance hall of his empire, the other, the structuring of customer flows that kept most customers down there, in his view, “at his mercy”, which together enables the situation. This is but an extreme case of the discussion at hand, and similar situations are produced constantly in the department stores, both between personnel and customers and between customers.
The analysis of this chapter will primarily focus on the situations where there is a discrepancy between flow and browsing. The focus will primarily be the more public and exposed situations, studying the intricacies of different forms of publicity—nuancing and clarifying what was suggested above. This includes analysing further implications of flows and exposure: how exposure is produced also by the direction and directionality of moving and seeing, which strengthens exposure of some positions (endcaps), and lessens the exposure of others (to the side, along, behind). We will see how the mechanics found in part two return, in some cases moderated, but all in all being strengthened by how they not only define the system of objects, but also structures exposure and availability by governing flows of customers.

The discussion will first focus on questions like publicity and the process of creating a spectacle of the consumer as an analysis control, surveillance and exposure to the Other, to be followed by an analysis of how the same works as representational space (Lefebvre 1991, 38-46): how these situations are used to provide situations that for those comfortable with them are definitely positive not the least because of the social status implications they carry.

Publicity: The Consumer on Display

There is, in the situating practice of space performed by the department stores, a series of staging effects. Not only are people situated relative to one another and relative degrees of privacy and publicity produced through crowding or seclusion, it is further, in quite strong a fashion, dictates who is on stage for whom. Returning to Read’s statement introducing this part and as found throughout the discussion this far, there is an underlying argument, suggesting that presence is not the only factor to take into consideration. Rather, the situation includes the way in which relations are formed and framed in and by space and people. A public situation is constituted by being exposed to the Other or, as Colomina argues, the possibility or plausibility of exposure (Colomina 1996). Such exposure lies more or less inherent in a crowded situation (although anonymously could be said to come with it as well). Colomina argues, convincingly, that the higher degree of exposure compared to the control of such exposure, the more public a space, a situation or a person becomes. It is along such lines she for instance argues how Adolf Loos’s house for Josephine Baker actively produces the inhabitant (Baker) as public, not the least her body, by repeated exposure of her most intimate spaces (including the swimming pool) by means that ensures that she is not likely to see the one looking at her. Josephine Baker, the inhabitant and owner of the house, is put on display for the visitors, the Other, with little to no control or knowledge of whether she is watched or not—at least as when one allows oneself to somewhat exaggerate the implications of the design. Furthermore, Josephine Baker is made into a spectacle for herself by the way the design repeatedly exposes her to her own reflection (Colomina 1996, 260-264).

This does not deny the validity of the discussion of the previous chapter, for the exposure discussed here is to some extent a function of social centrality. The analysis here aims at the fact that if presence and absence of the Other, in short, serves to characterise space as private or public, then one can argue that the way in which the Other is present plays an important role as well. Am I watching the Other? Are we watching each other? Is the Other watching me? Three situations that to some extent form three extremes of possible situations between self-and-the Other in space. In a simplified sense, this serves to determine just who is in a public or private situation. The first could be argued to be similar to the TV-viewer, and thus, the I in question would be, more or less, in a private situation, in as far as there is not another Other watching the I. Following such arguments, Burgin argues that “[t]he flâneur who turns the street into a living room commits an act of transgression which reverses established conditions between public and private spaces” (Burgin 1996, 145). Public space, in this case, is space where one is observed, and private one where one observes (and is in control over who observes). This would mean that public space depends on one being observed, which also, indirectly, serves as surveillance and regulators for behaviour (Lefebvre 1991, 153-157; Foucault 1997b). When observed by the Other, the range of acceptable conduct is limited.

It is thus that Tony Bennet argues that the open-plan structures of modern museums have one primary purpose: disciplining the working class by putting them in the visual surveillance of the cultural élite and the bourgeoisie, constantly reminding them they are out of place and do not belong, transferring the behavioural patterns and values of those in power to those not (Bennet 1995, 22-55). Such strategies were also found in the three public libraries of the licentiate, with the extreme in Växjö (Koch 2004, 138-142). That is, when the artefacts could be provided with an electronic alarm system, the need to keep them out of the hands of customers became less direct and control can focus on conduct (Markus 1993, 177).

The analysis will thus need to ask two questions: how is publicity and privacy regulated by degrees of presence of people (as in degrees of crowding forming social centrality), and how is publicity and privacy regulated by situations and characters of exposure to the Other. This is a simplified way of expressing it, but, as will be seen, with these two basic questions there is much to be understood of how the department stores are structured and how they are structuring public culture. This chapter primarily aims at the latter.
Under the Scrutiny of Others: Control of Conduct

The next day, at half past seven, Denise was standing outside the Ladies’ Paradise. She wanted to call there before taking Jean to his employer, who lived a long way off, at the top of the Faubourg du Temple. But being used to early rising, she had been in too much of a hurry to get up: the shop assistants were only just arriving and, filled with shyness and the fear of looking ridiculous, she turned away to walk up and down the Palace Gaillon a moment.

A cold wind was blowing and had already dried the pavement. From every street, lit by the pale early morning light under an ashën sky, shop assistants were busily emerging, their overcoat collars turned up, their hands in their pockets, caught unawares by this first nip of winter. Most of them hurried alone and disappeared into the depth of the shop without addressing a word or even a glance to their colleagues striding along around them; others were walking in twos or threes, talking fast, taking up the whole of the pavement; and all, with an identical gesture, threw their cigarette or cigar into the gutter before entering.

Denise noticed several of these gentlemen stared at her as they passed. This increased her timidity; she felt quite unable to follow them, and resolved to wait until the procession had ended before going in herself, blushing at the idea of being jolted in the doorway in the midst of all those men. But the procession continued, and in order to escape their glances she walked slowly round the square. When she came back she found a tall young man, pale and ungainly, planted in front of the Ladies’ Paradise; he too appeared to have been waiting for quite some time. (Zola 1995, 31)

As you wander into Debenhams main entrance, regardless of where you are going, there are some undeniable situations that become part of such a visit: the exposure to the Other—the stranger, the unknown customer, the personnel. Sometimes you are forced to change direction, perhaps nod acknowledgement, or at least indicate your intentions. This is ensured by two means: the constant high flow of people in the main entrance hall and the placing of the personnel intensive cosmetics department directly inside and along the rather long route (Figure 11:I). This, one can argue, is both a serviceable and welcoming act—you are more or less guaranteed to, with the least of efforts, face a smiling cashier upon any visit to the department store. Simultaneously, this allows the department store as whole to scrutinise visitors, perhaps report people acting strange to the security, and ensures that the high flow of people is answered to by a high degree of personnel presence, making shoplifting less plausible than otherwise.35

This is seen from the customer perspective in the passage from Zola above, as Denise dares not enter the Bonheur des Dames for reasons of fearing being jolted by the crowd (which points towards Underhill’s “butt brush effect” (2000, 18)), and fearing the scrutiny she would be put under when entering. She does not know how to act, what to do, where to walk—in short, by not knowing the codes of conduct in the department store, she is both put in a subordinate position, and there are social barriers erected which makes her less keen on entering.

Here, to a large extent, control is performed through visibility—through the act of seeing or being seen—in the curious double action of providing service and exercising control. In all department stores studied this pattern is followed with cosmetics in some entrances being replaced by other commodities of similar character,36 a pattern that in general continues up along the main routes and escalators. In the libraries studied earlier, information desks are spread in the spatial system in strategic points, allowing as well easy access to as well as a logic in finding them and a means for the personnel of controlling who and what moves around in the libraries. Paradoxically, this service to the public also produces a control of the public, most significantly in Växjö, where information desks are distributed in space in a continuous pattern of intervisibility between the personnel working at them (Figure 11: II). Taken to the extreme in Växjö, this is also a means through which the visitor quickly and easily can find the nearest source of information, which they can always approach from the front—something that could be seen as inviting

35. While performing the observations, it took fifteen minutes before a security guard came and asked me what I was up to. Fifteen minutes later, he approached me again with a visitor’s badge, since too many of the staff had contacted him and asked what this strange, dubious non-shopper they had been seeing was up to. This while I had gotten permission beforehand.

36. For all the four department stores, the main entrance, counted as the one most used, leads to cosmetics and fragrances, while others lead to first and foremost women’s accessories and footwear (Åhlens, NK, PUB), lingerie (Debenhams, NK), skin- and body care (PUB, Åhlens) and a range of offers (Åhlens, PUB), and finally some office utilities (PUB, NK, Åhlens) or Café’s (PUB, NK). The general pattern here is one of fairly personnel-intensive departments, or ones with some kind of expendability—such as offers or cheap office utilities.
and a sign of openness. Once again, there is a complex relation between freedom, service, openness and control set at work, and one can raise the question which of them over time will be the most dominant.

The need for control, to have control over what happens to the commodities in a department store or to the artefacts of the library, is in many ways self-explanatory. A system based on winnings from sales or on controlled loans presupposing the return of books and the need to know who has borrowed it as a kind of security for this procedure to function makes it necessary to maintain control over who carries what where or who borrows what books when. Just as the over time growing amount of literature in the libraries produce different needs and different possibilities in the patterns of surveillance and control, so the over time growing amount and range of commodities produce different needs and possibilities of control for a department store. As Thomas Markus puts it regarding libraries:

Sweeping consequences followed from the acceptance that books would have to be stored in stacks, that readers needed reading rooms, and staff their own space. [...] Surveillance could concentrate on the readers and the books they were using rather than on the stored items. (Markus 1993, 177)

One of the innovations of the department stores as commercial spaces was, notably, the extent to which they allowed free browsing of the commodities—replacing elder systems of over-desk sales (at least partially) (Lancaster 1995, Bergman 2003, 134-139). Further advances, perhaps most significantly technological ones, have altered these modes of control. Modern technology has made it possible to more or less narrow it down to a small magnetic strip in the commodities, to control the passing of an exit, and to prevent any intended or unintended illicit moving of shopping goods out of the store (or library). Thus the need for direct control of what happens with the artefacts within the library is far less than it was when the library as a type emerged similar to ways in which the need to directly control what happened to the artefacts of the library is far less than it was when the library as a type emerged. This is important to remember when discussing changes of spatial strategies—changes in what is possible to do given the program supposed to inhabit the building in question.

Hence any spatial system allows for a certain degree of either control or freedom, be it control for those in power or social control from one to the other (a collective form of mutual social control), both in general terms—the hierarchy and routes of the system—and in more specific terms—the strategic locations of control, their number, and their distribution. This suggests a structure of power and choice in the building in itself, in society as represented by the building and, in the case of libraries, in knowledge, and knowledge-sharing (Koch 2004, 109-113):

Spaces can be so linked that communication is free and frequent, making possible dense encounters between classes, groups and individuals. These are the basis for community, friendship and solidarity. The alternative is controlled movement, under surveillance, for narrowly defined purposes of production, or for only for such basic biological needs as eating, sanitation or escaping from the fire. (Markus 1993, 25)

The degrees of such control vary widely with spatial form. To use the libraries as examples, one can say that Stockholm is a hierarchical system, a tree with branches of space reaching out in (comparatively) deep structures, where there are set relations of hierarchical order, where the relations between parts are strictly laid out in a certain way and where there is a high degree of spatial control of who moves where, who interacts with whom and what is related to what. At a first look, this system has an emphasis on discipline and power; there is a strong social control, and it is easy for anyone (e.g., the librarians) to have control over what happens. Exploratory behaviour is not promoted, neither is it presumed: you move into a branch because you know what is there and you wish to reach it (Penn 2001). Furthermore, once you have moved into a branch, you are forced to leave the same way, easily providing control over who and how many are in the different parts of the system.

Malmö, on the other hand, has an emphasis on freedom of movement, where every space (principally, if not in fact) have more than one route to and from them, describing a more loose set of relations and more freedom for each individual to construct

37. Such a development was not instantaneous and came differently quick to different department stores. In Britain, the change came much slower than it did in the United States or France (Lancaster 1995).

38. Spatial Control was a term used in the licentiate thesis to distinguish between two modes of control—one the surveillance of visual control, the possibility of seeing people, and the other how routes were ordered to lead movement through certain points (spaces). In a true tree structure, every space will always have strong spatial control over all spaces deeper in the system, since no one can move deeper inside the system than a particular space without moving through it, whereas a network structure more or less removes such control—there are many routes in each space that do not lead through it (see Koch 2004, 109-112).
the structures of relations between different parts. The degree of spatial control is low (once inside the entrance) and the general configuration is non-hierarchical and distributed. The system of Malmö tells of relations of bonds and friendship rather than of hierarchy and power (Markus 1993, 21-25).

Växjö, finally, has a to some extent more complicated system to interpret. There are both tree-like tendencies and open plan solutions, interwoven, and sometimes even disguised by the apparent circular form and superficial expression of freedom of movement. There are several places where secondary and tertiary routes are possible but not plausible, being either hidden or narrow paths behind the cylinder containing the elevator (Koch 2004, 151-158). There is freedom of movement, but certain routes are strongly promoted compared to others and these are also highly controllable.39

Now, let us return to an argument of the previous chapter on how encounters in day-to-day life provide not only meetings with people but inherently a kind of control, or test, of how well one is accustomed to the prevailing routines the situation requires. It was then argued that the rate of encounter and degree of presence influenced how important knowledge of such routines is. This is an important point as it forces repeated and constant scrutiny of such social or cultural knowledge. In addition, it is important to be familiar and at ease with the routines expected in the building or space in question increases the higher the exposure to the Other. With being seen comes the possibility of making a fool of oneself, of being awkwardly exposed as clumsy or unknowing (as Denise in Zola’s novel) or for that matter to excel in social and cultural rituals of the daily encounter. This proposes that the significance of routines and the problems coming from lack thereof is higher in visually well-integrated and highly exposed spaces. An extreme case would be the long way from the entrance to the library proper in Växjö or the long entrance hall of Debenhams where you are exposed to meetings and the surveillance of practically everyone the entire way.

It is along similar lines of analysis of visual control Bennet argues that the open-plan structures of modern museums have one primary purpose—that of disciplining the working class by putting them in the visual surveillance of the cultural élite and the bourgeoisie, constantly reminding them they are out of place and do not belong, transferring the behavioural patterns of those in power to those not (Bennet 1995, 25-55; H. Huang 2001). Bennett’s argument is that the modern museums primary tasks is to teach the lower class how to relate to culture and force them to follow the behaviour and norms—clothing, body gesture, language, and so forth—of the dominant classes. The routines taking precedence in the museums, he argues, are those of the people in power, who know how to act and feel at home, while those not accustomed to these codes feel left out and adjust best they can. Without doubt such a development would be supported by spatially situating exposure of people’s behaviour: by open-plan museums (Bennet 1995), by strategies of spatial distribution in libraries (Koch 2004), and by the halls of the department stores. Exposing people and their actions to personnel or other shoppers becomes a kind of imperative that only those who know how to behave in the situation should be there.40

There is little doubt that the increasing degree of constant openness and exposure characterising much of the retail world is in much a part of the need to maintain some kind of control over peoples’ behaviour—be it by exposing them to personnel, or by exposing them to other customers. It is an inherent part of open-space retail. This becomes as most obvious in the departments selling valuable (high-price) commodities of small size such as CDs or fragrances, characterised by low-rise shelves and personnel placed so they can keep an eye on the whole of the department.

All four department stores and all three libraries of the licentiate make use of such exposure to control conduct, though the department stores rely more heavily on surveillance by personnel than the libraries. Hand in hand with other characteristics of luxury—such as spaciousness and exposure of few commodities lain out on low tables—ensuring exposure of the consumer serves to place demands on the browser to appear, as Bourdieu would put it, at home in the situation. Those who appear to naturally belong are the ones who best fit in, and best feel at ease, be it amongst street-fashion brand jeans or amongst the suits of Hugo Boss. It is a strategy consciously used in retail as Underhill states regarding Diesel Jeans and their shop in a mall:

“Are you conscious that this is deliberately confusing?” I am referring to the fact that Diesel executives freely admit that they design confusing displays on purpose, based on the principle that a shopper who requires sales assistance is more likely to buy than one who shops solo. […]

“Okay, I guess it is. But only the first few times you shop here.”

This just deepens the sensation that you have to become a Diesel person—that you go through stages, from being ignorant to being somewhat knowledgeable to being a member of the club, which imparts a cultlike status. Which, again, is not a bad thing. (Underhill 2005, 82-83)

For a more in-depth discussion of the differences of the libraries in these regards see Koch (2004).
Albeit focused on the local display of the commodities, he points to the role of conduct in producing such status and once exposed to the general public, failure to recognise these codes, or demonstrating lack of knowledge become even stronger markers of non-belonging. Imposing requirements of knowledge creates status, which can be used in as a marketing strategy; the situation emphasises already existing demands on membership in the group for which the commodities are meant.

Following such analysis, one can say that certain commodities, and certain classes, are situated in more controlled positions, and in situations more exposed to the other. As already discussed, the general tendency is that the deeper into the system, the more the character of any encounter is one of sharing of purpose, while the more shallow, the more on the route somewhere else, the more the encounter is one of meeting people with varying motives for being there. Typically, the trend clothes and the street fashion, the cosmetics, fragrances and women’s accessories, and the more public home commodities are put under such exposure for those not seeking them—the more so for women’s fashion in general than for men’s fashion. Most people passing by men’s trend fashion at least share the purpose of heading to shop menswear, whereas that is not necessarily the case for women’s fashion.

Situating Radical Exposure: The City Library of Stockholm

Before summing up this chapter, to move on to how control and exposure more definitely participates in social structuring, the current argument will be pushed forth yet some more, by examples from the analysis of the public libraries, which provide a strongly situating model which can then be, less obviously, found in the department stores as well. This is, in simplified terms, the situating of the performer (the subject, the shopper, the browser) in relation to the audience (the Other, the passers by).

In Stockholm City Library, we find the Rotunda, the main hall once inside the library proper (Figure 11:III). In the rotunda of Stockholm, there is the interesting and problematic mix of the spatially deep spaces of the balconies on the second and, especially, on the third floor which, at the same time, are highly exposed to the most integrated space, the main floor of the rotunda, making them both hard to reach and easy to survey. This, as a design decision, can very well be as a result of what kind of literature was intended to be placed there, what supposed social class its readers were of and the need to keep these under observation—as noted above, at the time the library was built, changes in technology ensured that actual surveillance was less needed than the created situation may imply. The organisation of the books further strengthens this pattern of control, turning the persons on the upper floors, who are often few, towards the books and thus away from those at the entrance floor, who are often many. Any behaviour and any interest in the literature on these floors is under the surveillance of those on the ground floor, and thus the realm of possible action is restrained by a high degree social control. The person there is placed on a scene for everyone to watch, while turning him or her away from the centre towards the books and thus removing his or her possibility of knowing by whom he or she is being watched.

That is, through their position in the visual and physical configuration of space, there are several factors making it problematic for visitors aiming to browse the books of the upper stories of the Rotunda. The question is if anything can be put on the balconies without its status and the status of those interested in it becoming problematic: the tendency to turn the one observed away from those observing, combined with the spatial depth of the balconies, ensures there to be a purpose for the visitor to be there, while laying stress on the representative function of the books, and places the person on the balcony under the surveillance of those on the main floor.

This situation of spatial and visual control combined with the configurative depth has one other effect: that of contributing to the role of the actual artefacts to work as symbols (of knowledge). Since there are very few who actually come in contact with these books or any specific book or other artefact placed here compared to the number that only get the general impression of a great amount of books (in many ways inseparable from one another and undistinguishable as individual objects at the distance), their primary function turns into working as a field, a texture, of the gathered knowledge and culture that is literature. These books turn into primarily being a representation of literacy or knowledge, which further problemises the access to and use of them. They are supposed to stay in place and any removal of books from the symbol risk disrupting the powerful image of literacy evoked by the circular, multi-storied manifestation of produced literature. The hall is a hall of knowledge, literacy, and is primarily to be visited and experienced. The books—the walls, the sign, the symbol—are to be left alone, undisturbed, as a powerful representation of the transcendence of the human being to culture, knowledge, and literacy. Added to this is the fact that the books placed here are directed to a fairly small part of the visitors (Koch 2004). Several factors both emphasise the books here

41. It has here been argued by the opponent on the licentiate seminar that there is a similar situation in the British Library with a main hall with balconies, which does not produce such situations. This rather emphasises the point I am trying to make than questions it, however, since in the British library, one enters through the balconies, which means that they are not deeply located, but shallow. While similar in appearance, the configurative differences in relation to entering, accessing and leaving are radically different.
as representations rather than items to be used and stages the browsing of them as radical public exposure of the lone consumer.

The other example of control follows another version of the same formula: what is perhaps under tightest control in the libraries today is the access to computers. The computers are constantly put in places where who accesses them can be seen by many, preferably by personnel, and where what they are used for can be viewed as well. In the City Library of Växjö, the most extreme case, this takes the form of placing all computers for public use around the central atrium with screens facing outwards towards the main communication routes going around the same atrium (Figure 11:IV). Through the spatial positioning and design, the use of the computers is placed under a social control perhaps stronger and more effective than any control possible through technical means.

Perhaps it is symptomatic that of all the libraries the terminals in Växjö are most free to use for anything: surfing, mailing, writing reports, or browsing the library’s catalogue. The terminals giving the freest access to the net—in many ways the model and symbol for freedom in today’s society (Castells 1996)—are also the ones being put under the tightest of controls, both mutual social control between visitors and control of the personnel.42

Both these cases are situations of extreme exposure—while the Other can see you, you cannot see the Other. Your taste, your behaviour, your doubts, or your interests are put on display for whomever wishes to watch in situations where most every visitor coming or going have the chance to study you. You are also one of the few—if not the only one—on display. Theoretically, if slightly harder in practice, it is in the case of the rotunda of the Stockholm City Library possible for most anyone to keep track of what book you choose to take with you. This is a result of three factors: the amount of people who are likely to see you, the small amount of people on display, and how the exposed is turned away from the audience, rendering them unknowing of who watches or not—or if they are being watched.

Such exposure can be found in a rare few occasions in the department stores. Most closely come luxury cosmetics, some of the jewellery, and brand accessories. Even some of the cosmetics found right inside the entrance of Åhlens are situated in such a way (Figure 11:V). Public expressions of taste put on stage for every other visitor to see.

42. This exercise of control is not in itself necessarily a bad thing in the contemporary library. To a large degree, it is provoked by misuse of the net where people have taken offence or been ill at ease because of what some use the terminals for if they are not under strict control. As you can be anonymous on the net (until the degree of from which computer you are working, at least) this also risk causing problems reaching far outside the library itself.

The customer becomes a spectacle as much as anything else, at times even exposed to the street, used as advertisement and eye-catcher to make others stop, watch, perhaps come inside. That not everyone is comfortable in such situations ought to be obvious. That they shop elsewhere, such as by Maybelline and Revlon, is almost as obvious. By extreme example, the ways in which extreme exposure can be used to rather prevent people to shop, browse or be in certain places have been made clear. This is part in making sure the right consumer buy the right goods. I will return to how this works after a closer analysis of how situation provide sense of distinction.

Exclusivity and Expertise:
Expert Judgement, Expert Knowledge, Expert Taste

My goals were not so lofty: I was intent on finding a job in magazine publishing. Although I knew it was highly unlikely I’d get hired at The New Yorker directly out of school, I was determined to be writing for them before my fifth reunion. It was all I’d ever wanted to do, the only place I’d ever really wanted to work. I’d picked up a copy for the first time after I’d heard my parents discussing an article they’d just read and my mom had said, ‘It was so well written—you just don’t read things like that anymore,’ and my father had agreed, ‘No doubt, it’s the only smart thing being written today.’ I’d loved it. Loved the snappy reviews and the witty cartoons and the feeling of being admitted to a special, members-only club for readers. I’d read every issue for the past seven years and knew every section, every editor, and every writer by heart. (Weisberger 2003, 11)

It is thus possible to discuss the function of exposure, and especially radical exposure, in terms of control, and not the least, control of conduct. By exposing people, and exposing conduct, a mechanism is set in place that usually ensures behaviour, which suits what is accepted by the dominants of the space—in retail, the retailers, owners, managers, and wanted customers. The last should not be forgotten: it is relied upon heavily in libraries as well as in department stores. It is also, although expressed quite differently, one of the cornerstones of Jane Jacob’s argument on how cities should be built: she argues that by making sure streets are continuously monitored by both visitors and locals they will turn safe, keeping unwanted behaviour to a minimum without any direct or explicit intervention to prevent it (Jacobs 1992, 29-54). Curiously, it further provides possibilities of meetings and interaction, of waiting points, as strategic places in which to watch or be watched, of exposure between groups that might otherwise
not meet and is thus both positive and negative more or less regardless of ideology even if what is considered to be the positive or negative effects may vary.

Effects such as control of conduct or surveillance, and exposure—being put on display—does not only pertain to ensure appropriate behaviour seen as keeping directly unwanted behaviour such as shoplifting or vandalism in place or to make sure those who are unsure how to behave conform to the through various degrees of negotiation established codes. They also form a basis to strengthen who belongs where and to characterise the contexts socially and culturally as a kind of indirect guide to let people find commodities that suit them, their social position, and their idea of Self and the Other. On one end, that of the radical exposure, it suits to define luxury or expertise and to define situations as ones where only those of taste and discernment should be shopping or those who know what they are doing, which is the question to be dealt with now.

A Dance of Two: Service, Exclusivity and Lack of Flow

Then, out of idleness that permeates every day at work, she shifts her weight from one foot to the other. She scratches her elbow. She curls her toes, then angles her leg to give her calf a stretch. She flicks a paper clip several inches across the glass of the countertop. She runs her tongue along the back of her teeth. Footsteps approach her. Her automatic response is to straighten up and look like she is an ever ready supervisor as likely as customer. What she sees, though, is a rare sight in the fourth-floor glove department. It is a gentleman, looking for a pair of ladies’ dress gloves. He wants them gift wrapped and could they do that? Mirabelle nods in her professional way, and then the man, sharply dressed in a dark blue suit, asks her opinion on which is the finest pair. Being a sharp dresser herself, she actually does have an opinion on the merchandise she offers, and gives him the lowdown on smart glove purchasing. There is some conversation about what and who they are for. The man gives her some embarrassed, vague answers, often the case when men shop for women, and in response she suggests that the silver satin Dior’s are best. He purchases the gloves with a credit card, smiles at her, and leaves. Mirabelle watches him walk away. Her eyes go to his shoes, which she understands and knows something about, and her inner checklist gives him full marks in all categories. Mirabelle catches herself in the countertop mirror, and realises she has blushed. (Martin 2001, 12-13)

During the observations, more than once personnel came up to me to discuss what I was doing, out of interest or suspicion, followed by a usually rather interested and open attitude of both asking questions and giving feedback or advice, providing a lot of information that might otherwise have been missed. In such a discussion, I was told that the men’s suits department in Åhlens was very successful, especially in how it was well known to provide quick, good, and personal service to those coming there. Such a statement requires some dissemination, since the observations speaks of low customer flows (between 96 and 300 people per hour as compared to 1632 to 2040 at the entrance—both figures for weekdays), few browsing and few present (Figure 11:VI)—which would, following more shallow understanding of retail, suggest the department is doing bad.

However, I argue that the success of the department, as described by the personnel, actually is present in the observations; however, it requires understanding of just what kind of department it is and what is being sold. The suits are, albeit not as aristocratically exclusive as Hugo Boss, exclusive wares for the discerned mind (as described by the system of contexts as well as in fashion magazines and advertisements), although sold to people who are not to be expected to be experienced shoppers (by stereotypes and gender tradition). When coming to this department to shop, there is usually me, a rare few or no other customers, and one or two employees behind the cashier desk smiling and nodding a small welcome and letting me know I can get help whenever I want, skillfully phrasing the question at a point where the customer looks likely to need help (earlier the more inexperienced the shopper seem or the more he or she gives a sign of wanting help).

This leads to a situation where I can get service soon after arriving, can get it at a comfortable pace, can take my time, and can thoroughly discuss my choice with the employees, “the audience at hand”, which in this situation serve both as experts and substitute for the real audience in the context of the coming use (Chua 1992). While doing so, I can be fairly certain that the few passing by and seeing me are there for similar purposes somehow being of the same mindset as I. The rhythm also creates a semi-private situation between me and the employee, supporting more casual and personal interaction than would something directly inside the entrance, such as between the stranger and Mirabelle in Martin’s novel. This is especially true for those unused to exposing one’s taste, knowledge, or insecurity publicly. By using the lack of flow, the suits are provided in a situation that suits them in a manner of speaking. Exclusivity provided by, in short, how few actually browse the commodities in question, the ease with which I can get help and the time each employee can
give me without interruption. There is knowledge required here, but I do not need to have it; I just need to know the rituals of how to inquire and of how to shop with the help of employees.

Such relations between knowledge and personnel presence, which becomes as most palpable in how technical equipment is sold both in the department stores and in general retail; often with queue-systems, with personnel-intensive procedures, with high service rate and helpful, knowing salespersons giving advice and help, provide implications of discernment, of knowledge. In the situation where one can discuss ones choice with the provided expert, either to excel with ones own knowledge, or to be helped by that of the employee, it all contains an expectation of knowledge being required to shop whether it is for the new home cinema gear, a Hugo Boss suit, or Estée Lauder cosmetics. Not everyone by far would have the taste or knowledge required to buy what is right. A discernment that is traditionally tied to the higher classes (Bourdieu 1984) and the model of the wearer of the suit: the man (Baudrillard 1998, 96).

In the case of the luxury goods this is still, it might be important to note, in a situation where the consumer is put under surveillance by personnel and by customers. It differs from other situations of being few in how it still generates situations of exposure for anyone who actually do pass by, how the whole department is under employee surveillance, and how it lies en-route elsewhere making sure there is a stream of customers passing by even if they generally are also potential suit-or-tie shoppers.

The role of exposure also requires some attention. While luxury goods are in situations of radical exposure, some commodities requiring expert knowledge are less so—the more everyday technology of microwave ovens, vacuum cleaners and toasters. This is a different situation than the more extreme one found in Hugo Boss in Åhlens with more personnel per customer, more exposure, and less people coming and going into the department while everyone entering, browsing, or leaving are exposed to practically the entire west wing of the men’s floor. The stage is formed in a very peculiar way, with only the discerned entering the realm of the audience, yet everyone who does are shown the main stage, the pinnacle of discernment, the Hugo Boss store, and to some extent Tommy Hilfiger and Boomerang (Figure 11:VII). This is first and foremost a situation produced by spatial configuration: first, the configuration supports a situation where only those who are there for a reason tend to come there, forming shared purpose; second, the social situation provides a self-consciousness and subjectivity to those involved; and third, of all these, some are elevated to the position of “kings of the hill”. Their uniqueness, their discernment, and their taste is exposed, emphasised, and ensured.

Similar mechanics are used to provide situations connoting luxury and status elsewhere: the finest makeup, the jewellery, and the high-end street fashion. They are all situated with less flow through, with fewer shoppers, and with higher employee presence per consumer (and in general). Indirectly, it is also used in the trend contexts as different from the intermediate, of which the latter are also the ones with the least amount of personnel. It also serves to understand what the difference is between aristocratic high-status and trend fashion—the king and the catwalk. But, in the statement above there is one thing that needs yet further scrutiny to understand: the claim of situations supporting or providing subjectivity, of producing Subjects.

Under the Gaze of the Other: Giving an Account of Oneself

I didn’t tell her that for the first few months I had risen extra early with an intense determination to coax Runway looks from my very banana republic-heavy wardrobe. I’d stood with my microwaved coffee for nearly a half hour each morning, agonizing over boots and belts, wool, and microfiber. I’d change stockings five times until I finally had the right color, only to berate myself that stockings of any style or color were so not OK. The heels on my shoes were always too short, too stacked, too thick. I didn’t own a single thing in cashmere. I had not yet heard of thongs (!) and therefore obsessed maniacally over how to banish panty lines, themselves the focus of many a coffee-break critique. No matter how many times I tried them on, I couldn’t bring myself to wear a tube top to work.

And so after three months, I surrendered. I just got too tired. Emotionally, physically, mentally, the daily wardrobe ordeal had sapped me of all energy. Until, that is, I relented on the three-month anniversary of my first day. […] I didn’t explain that wearing Nine West instead of Manolos or jeans they sold at Macy’s junior department but not anywhere on Barney’s eighth floor of couture denim heaven had been my own attempt to show everyone that I wasn’t seduced by all things Runway. Instead, I just nodded, noticing that he looked supremely uncomfortable having to tell me that I was humiliating myself every day. I wondered who had put him up to it. Emily? Or Miranda herself? Didn’t really matter either way. Hell, I’d already survived three full months—if wearing a Prada turtleneck instead of one from Urban Outfitters was going to help me survive the next nine, then so be it. I decided I’d start putting together a new and improved wardrobe immediately. (Weisberger 2003, 130-132)

A key factor, if we were to look at luxury goods in general (finest suits, finest cosmetics, finest street fashion), is, as noted before regarding these departments, a high degree of
exposure that is only loosely connected to co-presence. Many of these brand- or lifestyle-contexts, be it Tiger, Filippa K, Hugo Boss, Diesel Jeans, Estée Lauder, trend, street, refined, and so forth, are situated so that even those not reaching them can see them, forcing a kind of publicity, of exposure. Most radical in the luxury cosmetics, as in the entrance aisle of Debenhams, or as in the luxury cosmetics side of Åhlens, exposing the comparatively few browsing them to everyone on the fairly crowded Klarabergsgatan outside. It is also inherently part of what constitutes the endcaps, more so the endcaps of the most integrated (most used) aisles, unless steps are taken to prevent it. This is not to say that exposure per se generates situations of luxury. That is to say, exposure produces expectancy of knowing and of the consumer being at ease with exposing one’s knowledge, lack of knowledge, or taste for the commodities in particular publicly.

Here, we can then recollect Bourdieu’s discussion and how he means that taste work as a situated practice in which it is the ones who are most naturally able to follow expected codes, the ones for whom it appears to come natural, who are the ones best equipped to deal with the situation. How does this then pertain to the ongoing discussion? It is of importance because those who are most at ease with these cultural codes would also be the ones most prone to situate themselves under such circumstances. In *The Love of Art*, Bourdieu together with Alain Darbel writes:

Statistics shows that access to cultural works is the privilege of the cultivated class; however, this privilege has all the outward appearance of legitimacy. In fact, only those who exclude themselves are ever excluded. Given there is nothing more accessible than museums and the economic obstacles that can be seen at work in other spheres count for little here, it seems quite justified to invoke the natural inequality of ‘cultural needs’. However, the self-destructive nature of this ideology is obvious. If it is indisputable that our society offers to all the pure possibility of taking advantage of the works on display in the museums, it remains the case that only some have the real possibility of doing so. (Bourdieu and Darbel 1997, 37)

The analysis then continues to investigate how education and the wish to and the practice of going to museums are interlinked so that it becomes self-fulfilling. In short, it is only those who already have the love of art who develop it. This is a crude summary of the argument they provide, but that part of the argument is not the point here, it is rather the earlier part: how the ones excluded from the museums primarily are the ones who exclude themselves. However much this is somewhat problematic as a statement, it does provide an important insight—namely that it is not only the elite producing exclusion, it is also the excluded. Thus while museums rarely are open for everyone, they are open for a lot more people than actually visit them (Bourdieu and Darbel 1997). This can be likened to the exclusive brands, departments, or lifestyles, for basically the same reasons, which I will try to explain more in-depth.

It has already been established, that while a factor, price is not decisive for differences in choice buying, but values of other kinds play important roles as well (D. Miller 1990b). How does, then, exclusivity retain itself? Aside from more direct reasons, such as that some people simply do not want an Armani suit or Diesel Jeans—which must be acknowledged—more forces are at work to ensure a sense of exclusivity in some cases, and mass-fashion in others. In chapters five through eight, the classifications and characterisations produced by the system of objects, as presented in space, were thoroughly analysed in “themselves”, which provided a lot of insight in how department stores (and retail in general) use store design and commodity presentation to produce connotations of luxury or thrift, of class or mass. Although an analysis has been provided above, the social mechanics of such situations and the conclusions made may need some elaboration. An attempt of understanding how and why these situations connote some kind of luxury and discernment is in place.

This forces us to return to a few questions dealt with earlier: identity and the Other. As argued earlier, identity is primarily produced as relational and as relative the Other (Butler 1999, 2005; Giddens 1984; Langman 1992; Castells 1997). However, to understand the peculiarities at work here, one can push the question a bit further, and state, as Butler does in *Giving an Account of Oneself*, that it is in the presentation to the Other, when the relation to the Other so demands, that narratives of the self is produced, and agency invoked (Butler 2005, 9-22). This means that in the departments where one early on faces the helpful questions or even nods and smiles a greeting one is early on requested to provide reason for one’s visit. I am, in short, forced to formulate a cause for my being there, a narrative that defines me as Agent with intent and reason:

If I give an account of myself in response to such a query, I am implicated in a relation to the other before whom and to whom I speak. Thus, I come into being as a reflexive subject in the context of establishing a narrative account of myself when I am spoken to by someone and prompted to address myself to the one who addresses me. (Butler 2005, 15)

Although somewhat dramatically put (Butler’s argument at the time is around persecution, but she points out it has bearing on any question of why one does something), her analysis can help explain how service works not necessarily in a double-edged way but in a socially defining way. Underhill notes that while early
contact with customers is one way to sell well, too early contact is also problematic (Underhill 2000, 37-39, 184-188). This is context-bound: early greetings and requests of if a customer wants help forces the thought of agency on the customer, which comes—as Bourdieu would put it—natural to some and not to others, depending on context, environment, and habitus. Some can casually answer why they are looking at exclusive suits, others cannot. The likelihood that the latter would exclude themselves from such situations is high. In general, it is preferred to remain in situations that one can handle with ease or at least without unease.43

Thus, by producing situations that either require knowledge how to deal with helpful employees or where taste or knowledge is exposed to the masses or exposed to a few others or under the surveillance of presumed experts (in the more crowded spaces seen as the personnel in the spaces where purpose is shared, in Hugo Boss and by Diesel Jeans potentially including everyone there), there is a requirement put on the consumer to be comfortable with the kind of scrutiny he or she is put under. Exposure does not generate exclusivity per se; it generates a demand on the browser to be sure of ones own taste and knowledge and being comfortable with exposing it. The more luxurious commodities are placed in such positions—the trendier, high fashion, discerned, expensive, culturally encoded—the more the situation demands of the consumer.

The second factor to take into consideration here, is the transition from being co-present, or seen by one another, to acknowledging one another. Once again, there is an effect of both crowding and spatial situating—who sees who, who is forced to acknowledge who, and who is only seen. Patrizia Calefato puts it in this way:

Gazing at the face is, above all, seeking the other’s gaze. This ‘face-to-face’ goes beyond mirror-like reflection, though it may recall it, and goes beyond the identity of self. Gazing into another’s eyes always brings with it a deflection from flatness of the reflected image to the refraction of a dialogue.

The veil over the face is foreign to western culture, perhaps because the subject is constructed largely by reciprocal gazing. (Calefato 2004, 64)

She continues in an intricate discussion of face, veil and makeup that is although interesting not the question here and now. The point is rather the argument that in the looking at one another, of acknowledging one another’s existence by mere eye contact (which, she argues, turns the meeting into a kind of dialogue), the Self is invoked—something that follows Butler’s argument in that it comes in the recognition of the Other. The act of greeting forces a situation of co-presence to shift into a situation of co-awareness (Giddens 1984, 64-73). This transition was downplayed in the licentiate, which focused more on co-presence alone as providing potential for co-awareness (Koch 2004, 136-143), which must be refined some, since the relation them in-between is more complex than then assumed, and different situations serve to provide differently strong tendencies of one transforming into the other. In a situation such as the men’s suits department, with very few people present, there is very little chance that I will not meet the gaze of everyone else present during my visit. I will acknowledge them and they will acknowledge me, in the briefest of dialogues. Hence for everyone there is a subject in his or her own eyes and in the eyes of the Other. The Self and the narratives and causes that need to be invoked pertaining to why I am there are actualised. Compare this to the situation of the main entrances where the subject’s anonymity is ensured by mass.

These situations of exposure and demands on the self can then be enhanced, supported or distracted by the design of the department itself, as well as the structure of the department store. As Nixon argues, one of the results of spacious and style-conscious store design is awareness of the shop itself not produced in less consciously designed environments:

This very awareness of the shop produces, then, a more self-conscious experience of shopping. The space of the shop and the articulation of its elements set the consumer in a particular relation to the shop around him. One effect, within the ‘spaciousness’ of Next for example, is that the consumer is put on display; (Nixon 1992, 149)

Thus, following Butler’s argument, the shop produces self-awareness, which in itself inherently contains awareness of the Other. The exposed position comes with it and is enhanced by it, and the staging effect of the department store is emphasised—making me aware I am on stage. This becomes all the more powerful, the fewer are around me, the more I am put on display, as compared to me. This is the case in Hugo Boss in Åhlens, and it is less so in the trend departments, and even less in the cosmetics save the luxury cosmetics.
The contexts in-between the more exposed thus do not only provide less exposure for the commodities; they also provide situations which have less inherent demands on customer knowledge, less demand of being at ease with exposing ones taste or knowledge, that is, less requirement of feeling justified with being whatever it is one is being (Bourdieu 1984, 228). These situations are by the situating practice of space places where if not more, then at least many people would feel more at ease browsing. Not by coincidence we have also seen, and it is worth pointing to again, how much of that which is found in such positions make more use of stacking, of spatially deep departments and of more high hangers than low tables, further supporting this unexposed situation already provided (chapter seven). An unselfconscious store atmosphere allows for a less self-conscious shopping.

Finally, I will then point forward to the next chapter in pointing out a not yet thoroughly discussed situation of exposure, which is again different: that of the cosmetics of the entrance. Here, one is put under radical exposure, much like in the balconies of the city library of Stockholm. What makes this different, and importantly so, is how it constructs subjects. If it is so, that it is in being acknowledged as subjects one becomes a subject and that this process in the course of daily life is performed in dialogue, which can be as little as the recognition of one another by eye-contact, then the effect of the radical exposure in the entrance hall and that in the men’s suits department is quite different. In the latter, there is no situation of mutual acknowledgement. The one on display, the one browsing the goods, remain object under the gaze of the Other.

The Department Stores: Expert Judgment by Situating Practice

In the second part of this thesis (Chapters Five through Eight), an understanding of how a system of objects is produced in the department stores, forming classes, giving them character and defining their differences, based on a series of categorising operations forming contexts for social situations was developed. In this process, as we have found, the series of social situations produced in these contexts are formative not only of the identity of the contexts themselves and guiding people in their navigation of fashion: situations, formed as much by space and spatial configuration as goal-oriented movement or intentions by the consumers, serve to guide the formation of the system itself. The department stores form a kind of complex adaptive systems, based on a mix of retail knowledge, shopping theory and trial-and error processes. These situations take on forms of privacy and publicity, of discernment and knowledge, and of demanding agency and purpose or allowing casual browsing. In much, this is formed by how the system situates people in relation to one another—personnel, mover and browser (in a crude categorisation), providing exposure, control, surveillance, co-presence, co-awareness, and situations of seeing and being seen.

The argument here is how this is produced in the sphere of social space and how the social situations produced are of complex nature and overinscribed with meaning as Lefebvre states it. What these textures of space signify, as Lefebvre continues, is dos and don’ts (Lefebvre 1991, 142); space regulates practices by situating people in contexts and relative others and the Other in ways that—using Hillier’s words—generate and constrain not only patterns of encounter and avoidance, but in these patterns also conduct (Hillier 1996, 24). Spatial situating serves to control and construct acceptable behaviour.44

Control and controllability, as configurative properties or in more general terms, as an example, is not to be directly translated to power or surveillance as suggested in the reference to Bennett. This also (at least in the case of visual control) provides a kind of co-presence and supports a fundamental requirement for social interaction and the forming of social relations (Giddens 1984, 64-73). More obviously in the libraries, but discernable in the department stores as well, key positions of visual control and surveillance work well as meeting points for either pre-decided meetings or catching up with people in more chance-like circumstances. The prime example is here the main entrance of Åhlens and just outside it, where people constantly line up in wait for one another, far from everyone either entering or leaving Åhlens in the end—although one might guess that this specific contribution to city-life generates customers to Åhlens in ways that are difficult to measure: how many of those entering Åhlens after the meeting would do so, without the meeting place just by the entrance?

Furthermore, the properties making the high degree of control possible in the rotunda of Stockholm also contribute to make the system more visually shallow, visually connecting—and to some extent making people co-present in—the deepest spaces with the most integrated one into one “metaspace”, at least theoretically enabling a sense of community and participation. The farthest space, in terms of accessibility, is visually collapsed into the entrance space, with all the implications and values this entails. We can see that the results of the visual control are double—in some cases both providing social control and providing possibilities for interaction, encounters and co-presence, and the possibility of integrating different groups of people through promoting if not more interaction then at least visual contact over social borders. While this must be taken for what it is—the social impact of visual contact over social borders is likely fairly limited, and highly varying between people and situations—

44. Such constructed and controlled behaviour is dependant on already constructed ethics and codes of conduct, on who meets whom, of who has power over space, over others, of the situation, traditions, and so forth. My point is that the degree to which these are maintained and part of how they are constructed depends on space.
the point is that there are potentials for encounters and meetings of positive kind in situations providing possibilities of control and surveillance.

All in all, we have seen how the department stores by forming contexts and situations in which different people feel at ease, prefer to be, happen to end up in, pass by or avoid, form a kind of system reminiscent of the social system—a reminiscence required for translations to be possible (Williamson 1995, 24-31). These situations-contexts serve to provide the associating link between goods and social categories or lifestyles that are sold. This is then buried deep in a cultural situation, where taste is, by argument of advertisements, a question of personal and individual taste, of who I am, which endows this social play with an aura of essential truth and self-fulfilment (Baudrillard 1998). This makes fashion and space suitable for interplay in the production of meaning, since both space and fashion (here using the words of Fred Davis for how fashion constructs meaning):

except in the instance of uniforms (Joseph 1986), it usually alludes, suggests and insinuates much more than it denotes, thereby bringing it closer to music and poetry than to declarative speech or prose. (Davis 1989, 338)

Davis’s argument of fashion is quite similar in many ways to Lefebvre’s arguments on space. Without suggesting determinism in spatial organisation, I argue that the social situation produced by context, by the system of contexts, and by how space guides movement and being in the department stores, serves to support the consumers to find what is, by expert judgement (Holbrook 2005), suiting them from a social and cultural point of view—something to be developed in chapter fourteen. The department stores take on, as noted earlier, the same role as fashion magazines (Kawamura 2005, 74-95). The point is we are now radically much closer to understanding how it is they do this than when the analysis began. From such a standpoint, we can then move on to further understand the social and cultural values that are reflected and produced, and scrutinise closer how this is done—shifting the analysis to focus more on some of what is constructed than the means of construction.
Figure 11.8
The entrance walk of Växjö City Library (white) and the positions of personnel along it. Note that the library proper does not begin until once inside the cylinder. The whole corridor must be passed even before reaching the collections, giving both personnel and other visitors a lot of time to see a newcomer.

Figure 11.9
(Opposite) The city library of Stockholm, the Rotunda. Note how the one searching the books on the balconies can be easily seen by everyone down on the main floor.

Figure 11.10
The public computer terminals in Växjö City Library are located so that most any person can see what is done with the computers without the one using them being aware if it is done.
12. THE PUBLIC FEMININITY AND THE DISCERNED MIND

It has by now been well argued how conduct is regulated, status implied, agency requested, relations established, and flows, gazes, stages, and situations produced by spatial situating and by spatial configuration both in a wide sense and in certain specific ways. By relating people to one another through relating spaces to one another, contexts, and situations implying status, subjectivity, aesthetic disposition, authenticity, self-consciousness, and so forth are constructed, which serve as underlying sorting principles that surfaces as orders of brands and lifestyles—or by which brands and lifestyles are organised.

One of the main arguments of this thesis is that ideas, such as lifestyle and brand sorting, serve as basic organising principles, but they are insufficient and lacking in explanatory power even though they may not be intrinsically wrong. It answers little what these brands or lifestyles are, why they are differentiated or gathered as they are, what choices lie behind their construction, their positions in the system of contexts, or their internal and external relations to one another. I would argue that one of the reasons for their continuous presence, the way they are constantly invoked, is their apparent neutrality, presenting everything as individual choice. Lifestyles and brands connect well with the ideology of the individual consumer, whereas the analysis and understanding of the organising principles of status, power, exposure and social and cultural positioning is dependant on acknowledging social structures and their influence on individual behaviour and values. As Baudrillard notes, such understanding is contrary to how the image of retail in the consumer society is built up—how it needs to be seen in order to function properly (Baudrillard 1998). Consumer society is an ideology of the individual and the individual’s taste, preference, and choice—it can even be argued that the ideology demands that the individual becomes individual by expressing these qualities through consumption.

Discerning the balance between individual choice and social structure is problematic and culturally dependent. It is also, one could argue, difficult to discern due to the simple fact that they are interwoven—much of social structures are results of or built into individual choices, just as much as influencing them (Butler 1999; Giddens 1984). In a situation where one is constantly proclaimed, however, the other needs to be scrutinised. What makes up the system of contexts, as found in the second part of this thesis, is thus a series of prioritisations, of ideas of values, which decides what belongs where, and what is to be exposed, public, secluded, private, hidden, emphasised, grouped, separated, and so forth. These categorising operations forming the system express values that are not equitable to “lifestyles” or “brands”, but work on another level:
Ads are in the business not of creating, but of re-cycling social categories, relying on ‘auras’, at once intangible and precise, which must be associated with the goods for sale. Any system which is already structured in terms of up-market and down-market is especially useful, the more so if it has high investment in denying its own workings. (Williamson 1985, 68)

Williamson puts a finger on what is also ongoing in the department stores. The status or class claims inherent in the fashion industry and fashion consumption is hidden under concepts more neutral, and this very surface neutrality, the apparent yet hidden denial of the social structuring performed in consumption, is what makes it all the more powerful. But there is a problem in her statement, as she insists on re-cycling. While the re-cycling is an important factor, no doubt for retail as well as ads, it must be noted first that even reproduction is a means of production, and second that—as proven by Nike in the 1990s if nothing else—there is indeed production going on (Klein 2005, 3-61; Hosoya and Schaefer 2001; Gunter and Inaba 2001). A constant diversification into evermore increasing numbers of lifestyles, subcultures, trends and counter-trends produced by the continuously increased proliferation of choices at one’s disposal (Baudrillard 1998, 60-68).

While the main discussion thus far has been questions of privacy, publicity, and status in the system as a whole, and regarding fairly local classes of commodities, the point has constantly been made that this also suggests a structuring of society and a defining of people. This may be seen as structuring of levels of taste, of status orders or class belongings, which has been covered throughout. Less covered thus far, however, is the question of one of the major categorising operations encountered in the department stores most evident for any visitor—namely that of gender. Clothing, bags, shoes, hats, underwear, jackets—even mittens, socks, scarves and makeup—are if not first then in a very early stage in the chain of categorising operations ordered after sex or gender (in which the equalising of gender with sex is an important factor). Doreen Massey puts it this way:

But there are other ways, too, in which space and place are important in the construction of gender relations and in struggles to change them. From the symbolic meaning of spaces/places and the clearly gendered messages which they transmit, to straightforward exclusion by violence, spaces and places are not only themselves gendered but, in their being so, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood. (Massey 1994, 179)

Inherently producing a difference in itself, as argued earlier, this also means that—as they are situated at times dramatically differently—“men” and “women” are also described as different not only from one another, but as social and cultural beings. Of different status, of different interests, of different degrees of discernment, purpose, public concern, fashion consciousness, and so forth. Gender, thus, as most anything, “having been signified as different, the product becomes signifiers of difference” to use Williamson’s words (Williamson 1995, 45). This is not in itself a new observation, but a constantly resurfacing discussion both in media and in research. The importance and power of the gender/sex question for the organisation of commodities in the department stores is significant. This significance is highlighted by the way any such sorting serves to define that which is sorted and those it refers to and its relevance to an ongoing debate. Furthermore, it forms, as we shall see, a particularly illustrative example of how commodity order structures and (re)produces social and cultural norms.

At this point, it is of worth to remind of Baudrillard’s discussion of acculturation (Baudrillard 1998, 166-167), which could be said to stand for the social process in which people adapt and internalise values, ideals and aesthetics through a kind of cultural training performed by ads, shop windows, stores, magazines, commercials and other media—is a continuously ongoing process including shopping. The presented order is, if not directly, then as it repeats itself, formed into a logical structure which is internalised as the proper logic and true—in this acculturation is similar to interpretations models such as the world in front of the work presented by Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1981, 176-181). Baudrillard’s argument further has close ties to what Bourdieu and Darbel says on museums (Bourdieu and Darbel 1991, 37-70) and to Entwistle’s argument that “[...] dress delivers ‘gender as self-evident or natural’ when in fact gender is a cultural construction that dress helps to reproduce.” (Entwistle 2000, 21)

Thus while it is argued in this thesis that consumer choice is in much about finding what suits personality, taste, and social position (which are interdependent), the shopping process is also shaping the same, training the shopper how to refer to society, the self and the Other and to one’s own mode of subjectivity. Part of this was dealt with in-depth in chapter seven, and continued in chapter ten and eleven. Thus, through acculturation, how the fashion system is presented in the retail situation, we are trained to think of cosmetics as feminine. This is not the same as the current order being a response to essential characteristics of people belonging to one category (class, identity, group, lifestyle, gender, sex, ideology, etc.) or the Other, but a construction reproducing itself by interaction with people. Just as in the case of literature in a library, such categories are formed by different ordering principles, of which those constituting class are important but not alone. Massey makes an important point, when she states that
This approach, therefore, underscores that it is necessary to understand not only class relations but also (for instance) gender relations as significant in the structuring of space and place, spaces and places. It is arguing that gender is not somehow a ‘local’ concern (and therefore, for reasons themselves associated with gender, to be seen of lesser importance) but that, along with other axes of the constructed divisions in the societies we currently inhabit, it takes its place in principle alongside other divisions, such as class, whose relative significance in practice needs to be evaluated in each particular context (see ‘Flexible sexism’). (Massey 1994, 182)

While much of the explicit discussion thus far has centred on status or class, it must be recognised that gender and other categorising operations are also participating in the structuring of society and are not equitable or subordinate to class. Class and gender are both interconnected and separated: if the experiences, ideals and norms governing identity formation are differentiated by both class and by gender, and presumably other factors, then there is a problem with equaling every member of either class or gender, and analysis based on only one of the two will fail to recognise important structuring principles. This becomes apparent in Massey’s discussion of post modernism, and the way she shows weaknesses in many analyses of Blade Runner, which, failing to recognise the power relations at play between Deckard and Rachel, provide problematic critique of the conclusion of the story (Massey 1994, 222–230).

As different from class, gender division does not hide itself behind apparent neutral organisation of lifestyles and brands; instead it disguises itself as natural by making itself obvious. It is thus also of importance to understand how this obvious order is constructed, on what grounds, based on what ideas or values—just as has been done when concerning brands and lifestyles (which are, as we have seen, categories summarily overruled by those of status and gender). In order to do this, however, there is need to put the discussion in a historical and theoretical context regarding gender and fashion, and the “nature” of gender.

*Gender, Fashion, and History*

The connection between femininity and fashion has been mentioned several times before and how consumption, fashion, frivolity and impulse have been historically connected to women. Not only were the first places of “modern” shopping such as the early department stores directed to women, but shopping in itself with the connection to fashion, change, decorations, surface, impulse and seduction became connected to women (Sparke 1995; Wigley 1995; Nava 2000; Chung 2001). The idea of a connection between flesh, desire, impulse, weakness and women is an idea that is well illustrated in Zola’s *Au Bonheur des Dames*, for instance when presenting Mouret’s business idea:

It was Woman the shops were competing for so fiercely, it was Woman they were continually snaring with their bargains, after dazing her with their displays. They had awoken new desires in her weak flesh; they were an immense temptation to which she inevitably yielded, succumbing in the first place to purchases for the house, then seduced by coquetry, finally consumed by desire. [...] And if, in the shops, Woman was queen, adulated and humoured in her weaknesses, surrounded with attentions, she reigned there as an amorous queen whose subjects trade on her, and who pays for every whim with a drop of her own blood. Beneath the very charm of his gallantry, Mouret thus allowed the brutality of a Jew selling Woman by the pound to show through; he was building a temple to Woman, making a legion of shop assistants burn incense before her, creating the rites of a new cult; he thought only of her, ceaselessly trying to imagine even greater enticements; and behind her back, when he had emptied her purse and wrecked her nerves, he was full of the secret scorn of a man to whom a mistress had just been stupid enough to yield. (Zola 1995, 76–77)

Mouret’s business strategy by and large consists of seducing Woman, who after the seduction will be easily lured to buy without thought, more than planned, and at whatever price is asked. This idea is closely related to the modern movement and its elevation of mind, eye, simplicity and discernment, with words such as design, universal values, minimal form, and culture being elevated over taste, fashionableness, surface ornamentation, and nature, where the latter were, consequently, described as feminine (Sparke 1995, 222–223). Many even directly related the so-called crimes of fashion and decoration to women and their weakness (Wigley 1995, 60–93). This idea of shopping as feminine, or something that is “womanly”, is strong still today, as are the ideas attached to it. When comparing Sachiko in Gavin Kramer’s *Shopping* and Bateman in Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho*, for instance—both devoted to brands and fashion—the former is concerned with being fashionable herself because this is how she will be judged by others, while Bateman is rather certain of his own elevated taste and knowledge and instead primarily focuses on judging others.

This situation is then translated into some kind of universal truths: “[s]hopping is still and always will be meant mostly for females. Shopping is female. When men shop, they are engaging in what is inherently a female activity”(Underhill 2000, 113). He further argues that “[...] for many women there are psychological and emotional aspects to shopping that are just plain absent in most men” (Underhill 2000, 116). Here, he does not only let many and most translate into all (as categories of female and male) and conform to the culturally produced idea of men and women regard-
ing shopping and emotions, but also equalizes biological sex with gender which is problematic to begin with (I will return to this later). At the same time, however, he also produces valuable insights in how norms and ideas are not always tied to actual statistical facts when concluding that in many cases, men shop a lot more on impulse than women (Underhill 2000, 98-111). These discussions seem especially contradictory as he also states: “[a]s women’s roles change, so does their shopping behaviour” (Underhill 2000, 99) and that assumptions that women will be doing all the buying “[…] becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy” (Underhill 2000, 110).

These contradictions, and the way in which assumptions are allowed to both become facts, and overrule tendencies actually seen in the observations, can be traced in the outset of the discussion when he states that “[m]en and women differ in just about every other way, so why shouldn’t they shop differently too?” (Underhill 2000, 93) In this, he himself succumbs to an error he criticises much shopping theory for: letting theory (albeit this one not formulated as such) decide what observations are to say.45 There is a difference; he knows what that difference is; he sets out to prove it.

At this point, there is some need to put this in a wider perspective, seeing as strongly gendered clothing and fashion is a cultural conception. I do not intend here to give a full account of fashion history, nor of fashion and gender—for that, I would refer to for instance Joan Entwistle’s The Fashioned Body (2000), Mark Wigley’s White Walls Designer Dresses (1995), Christopher Breward’s Fashion (2003) or Yumiya Kawamura’s Fashion—ology (2005), where especially the first two provide a lot of important and interesting observations and especially the first a good, comprehensive overview of both subjects. But, there are some important notes to bring up all the same.

Historically, the gendered division of fashion we have today, of clearly defined women’s and men’s clothes, is a fairly recent invention, which, contrary to what may be first thought, from a broader historical perspective has been emphasised lately rather than reduced. For clothing in classical antiquity or the medieval and early modern civilisations gender was a less important issue (Entwistle 2000). The gendered division of fashion has arisen primarily in the later modern era, from both aesthetic ideals and practical reasons. In short, women grew more connected with clothing since they often were the ones making them, and further they tended to focus more on outward appearance because there were few other methods for them to present or gain status (Entwistle 2000, 145-169; Kawamura 2005, 9-13). Simultaneously, as Kawamura states it, “[m]en gave up their right to all the brighter, gayer and more varied forms of ornamentation, leaving these entirely to the use of women. Elite men abandoned their claim to be beautiful and aimed at being only useful” (Kawamura 2005, 10).

With the modern movement came a more dramatic change, which included the men’s black suit and the degrading of ornament (which was then also stronger tied to the feminine and to women). The male body and the men’s suit were understood as utility and design, and women’s body as formed and used for sexual allure, her clothing as superfluous decoration and hence women’s attention to fashion was branded even immoral (Wigley 1995, 67-75). This established framework has remained during the 20th century and the first years of the 21st, even if men’s clothing have become more expressive again during the later second half of the 20th century as Nixon shows. Lately, the male ideal has begun to allow some degree of narcissism concerning both clothing and body (Nixon 1992; Kawamura 2005).

As Entwistle notes, it has often been argued for “natural” differences in men’s and women’s clothing, stemming from assumed biological roles—explaining for instance how women’s clothing are aimed at seduction, enhancing sexual attractiveness, and how men’s clothing are aimed at enhancing social status. Women are thus seen as body and beauty, while men dress for utility (Entwistle 2000, 158-176) or one following superfluous and seductive decoration and ornamentation and the other distinction and design. This situation, as noted earlier, is today reproduced not the least by the fashion industry itself, which tend to separate magazines into “women’s” and “men’s” fashion, and provide significantly more of the former. This could point towards women being more interested in fashion than men, but, it is then important to remember that “[t]here is in fact, no evidence to suggest that women are any ‘naturally’ more narcissistic than men and plenty of evidence to the contrary” (Entwistle 2000, 160). That “women” are not more naturally interested in fashion, however, does not mean that “women” today are not.

I will return to the idea of naturalness and how it is used shortly. First, it may be of worth to further point to how certain characteristics of fashion and clothing have been strongly coded into the fashion system, such as the skirt and the trousers turning into symbols of the sexes in themselves—markers of public toilets are often reduced to symbols, which as only designating differ-

45. It must not the least be questioned here just what every other ways? In having two legs? In freezing when it is cold? In enjoying a nice evening with friends? In sleeping, eating, having coffee, going to a movie now and then or enjoying a book? Put in a slightly bantering way, this points to how Underhill’s statement here can only be rhetoric—but a rhetoric that both shows an assumption that guides his analysis, and shows how the multitude of similarities between men and women, and the internal differences within these categories, are systematically disregarded in favour of a traditional gendered dichotomy as denoting difference.
ence have a symbolic skirt or pair of trousers—or even a skirt (the sex, the gender, the woman) and not the skirt (the sex which is not one, the man). So, seeing a person clad in a skirt or a suit assumptions are made that we see their gender and their biological sex, while this is an arbitrary connection established by codes of dressing.46

**Gender, Sex, and Performative Identities**

This raises the question of what gender is and how it is related to identity and to sex. If, as discussed above, both gendered fashion and gendered characteristics are arbitrary, then what are we dealing with, and how are “men” and “women” connected to such things as masculinity and femininity or male and female? While not intending to give a full review or presentation of these issues, a basic discussion and background is needed since it is of importance for understanding the coming analysis. The basic and well-established distinction in such a discussion is the differentiation between gender and sex, where in a simplified way of presenting it, one is social and the other biological. In a statement that clarifies the point rather well, Simone de Beauvoir in 1949 wrote:

> All agree in recognising the fact that females exist in the human species; today as always they make up about one half of humanity. And yet we are told that femininity is in danger; we are exhorted to be women, remain women, become women. It would appear, then, that every female human being is not necessarily a woman; to be so considered she must share in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity. (de Beauvoir 2000, 29)

There are females who are not women, who are not feminine—and similarly, there are males who are not men or masculine. Throughout history and in most cultures, the definition of what makes up “men” and “women” changes, in some cases dramatically, and also what is expected of them both in taste, knowledge, and prowess changes. This suggests that at least what characterises woman and man is susceptible to change and is based on arbitrary distinctions. All the same, these differences are often regarded as “natural” or as stemming from natural essences. As Grosz puts it, there is also within feminin theory a range of terms, which are used for or indirectly support such notions (Grosz 1995, 47). Many of these theories are used to lift forward women’s experiences, proficiencies, skills, thoughts, values, perspectives, and so forth, which surely has its value, since it is at times lacking in the situation in which they are promoted. However, at times this also turns into understanding the current social roles of men and women by these differences, which leads to a situation where

In claiming that women’s current social roles and positions are the effects of their essence, nature, biology, or universal social position, these theories are guilty of rendering such roles and positions unalterable and necessary, thus providing them with a powerful political justification. (Grosz 1995, 49)

There is a conflict between political ambitions and theoretical implications, which at times makes pointing out different roles and characteristics of the feminine and the masculine experience or values important, all while on the other hand trying to deconstruct the difference in nature of women and men. Thus an analysis of a situation where behaviour is different or is made to be different must include what these differences are and how they are expressed. However, they must also be critically examined and understood as cultural performatives. While a “sell more here and now” objective could perhaps allow for different strategies than theoretical and empirical research, similar to how political landscape perhaps need adjust political strategy that may temporarily seem to go against the ideas worked out in theory, unreflective use of found differences risk mistaking cultural constructions for effects of nature. This not the least when it comes to fashion, as

> [...] while distinctions of gender drawn by clothes are arbitrary, they often become fundamental to ‘commonsense’ readings of bodies. In this respect, fashion also turns culture into nature, it naturalizes the cultural order. (Entwistle 2000, 144)

Fashion—and fashion retail—thus serves a kind of essentialist understanding of gender in naturalising gender distinctions and representing them as neutral, while they are basically cultural constructions. Parallel to this argument, Markus and Cameron argue that “[...] examining the labels used for spaces within a building can alert us to the way spatial divisions become naturalized, though in fact they are the product of specific cultural/historical developments, and may subsequently be used to enforce those developments more widely” (Markus and Cameron 2002, 43). The department stores, and quite many a mall or shopping centre, separate men’s and women’s fashion usually labelling entire floors as one or the other. We find similar naturalising strategies of retail space and fashion system.

46. It can here be pointed to the second narrative sequence in the foreword. While it is never stated that more than one of the two friends is a man, it is likely that the first interpretation suggests they both are.
It is further of interest, seeing as much of the overall argument of this thesis is how space regulates behaviours, such as movement, browsing, looking, passing, and so forth, that Barthes (2006) and Entwistle (2000) emphasise the role of what the latter call dressing—the situated practice of wearing clothes, which in the end is an activity. Fashion is not only a system, but also something that is done in everyday life. This ties in to the idea of identity as it has been presented earlier—and as Butler puts it:

Hence, with the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performatory—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed. (Butler 1999, 33)

Whether there is some essential difference between “males” and “females” is not the point of this chapter. The point is that the division into two genders is rather arbitrary and that the characteristics of and expectations on behaviours and values associated with them are arbitrary as well. The connection between gender and sex is arbitrary. Furthermore, these characteristics are (re)produced as they are performed, and constantly renegotiated in every situation. It must also be emphasised that the understanding of gender as constructed, as Butler also argues (1999, 43), this does not mean to call it false:

There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constructed by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results. (Butler 1999, 33)

Butler also means to say that the lack of pre-existing essence to express does not imply falsehood or a lie nor does she say that there is a possibility of a society without cultural constructions. Rather, there is need to examine and criticise cultural constructions that for one reason or the other separates and discriminates people for questionable reasons. The analysis is thus based on a “there is no real difference” assumption, trying to read how difference is constructed. This would mean that, as department stores express ideas of gender division and gender characteristics, they participate in this performative construction of gender—not the least by pretending their order to be a result of consumer behaviour “as is”. Under such a premise, it becomes important to understand what this expression-constitution of gender is—and if gender is part of identity, this has bearings on any identity process performed and expressed in the department stores.

It is important to point out that while some of the discussion will focus on construction of femininity this is not meant to claim femininity as constructed as different from masculinity. Neither is it to say that one (femininity) is constructed in relation to the other (masculinity). They are rather constructed by one another. So, in constructing femininity in a certain way, masculinity is constructed as different, opposite, other than this—a dichotomy that is also constructed. However, in both modern and not seldom post-modern thought the latter, the male, is rather considered as the universal, the norm or the natural, even if this thinking has been attacked within post-modernism (Massey 1994, 224-238). This may lie in the gender construction itself, but does not make masculinity less of a construction.

Of Mind and Body

The dualisms of gender are thus powerful figures informing the choices and decisions made on everyday basis, and fashion is divided into men’s and women’s fashion in most situations, reaching even glasses, jewellery, watches and training shoes—at least some of which have little natural reasons. Central to such ideas, and often used to defend them when it comes to fashion, are ideas of the body, and how difference in body is the primary reason for the difference in fashion—the cultural construction is naturalised to biological form. At first, this may appear as a rather valid argument, especially given some anatomic differences that do exist between male and female sex, but this is not the only difference made either. It is even the case that when the difference in individual clothing pieces are negligible (or nonexistent), the question of whether it is men’s or women’s clothing is often invoked, and in stores selling both men’s and women’s clothing the different sections are one way or the other separated—even if the clarity with which this is done may vary.

Thus, Underhill can state that “The cuing now being used, for instance, even in dual-gender pioneers such as The Gap and J. Crew, doesn’t always work, as you can tell when you suddenly realize that you spent ten minutes browsing through shoes, sweaters or jeans meant for the other sex” (Underhill 2004, 108). Why this would be a problem, if the shoes, sweaters, or jeans fit well, is not further elaborated and reasonably not dependent on much but established gender
codes. Underlying ideas of how different designs fit different sexes serve as a vehicle to reproduce gender identities. Identities connected to notions of the body:

Furthermore, as argued earlier, women are more likely to be identified with the body than men and this may generate differential experiences of embodiment: it could be argued that women are more likely to develop greater body consciousness and greater awareness of themselves as embodied than men whose identity is situated less in the body. (Entwistle 2000, 30)

The aim of the analysis at this point is to investigate if and how this can be seen in the department stores. Is there a difference in how the body is treated, awareness of it is produced, and how gender and fashion are represented? This analysis will begin with approaching the question of surface, body and gender as they are organised in the department stores, to move on to more direct body representations, followed by an analysis of how ideas of gender and their characteristics are hereby connected to a relation to the body. This will pass through the different ways in which fashion is tied to body as it is transformed into everyday practice.

While, as Kawamura rightly argues, fashion is not the same as clothing and not necessarily about clothing, it has often been equalised in both fashion magazines and academic analysis (Kawamura 2005). This, as Davis argues, is a question of representation of how fashion meets people and how it is consumed (Davis 1989). Turning the pages of fashion magazines, clothes, and cosmetics surfaces as the most common subjects and as the most advertised—at least in women’s fashion magazines. When visiting the department stores and a number of other stores selling more than clothes, one also finds the labelling of “men’s fashion” and “women’s fashion” specifically for the clothes departments, at times including accessories, at times not. That is, once attention is turned to how fashion translates into everyday dress, the body is actualised through clothing. The analysis, however, is less concerned directly with fashion or its nature and more with how ideas of body and mind are represented, reproduced, or constructed.

**Body Surfaces**

First, let us turn to observations first found in the second part of the thesis—those of sequence and depth of distribution. Right inside most of the entrances, it was found, there are in most cases commodities that have a rather direct connection to body—either by appliance or by reference. The main entrance, in the cases where one can be pointed to, without exception lead into cosmetics and fragrances, closely connected to skin and body care and hair colouring. By some arguments, many of these commodities are of intimate concern—Underhill argues that much of it is put on in intimate situations, which would mean intimate taste, preferences and questions are exposed. On the other hand, they are the commodities that more unmistakably have to do with surface, and not the least bodies. Cosmetics are, in representation even if not in fact, pure bodily decoration.

Of course, this decoration is often presented as everything but decoration, of enhancing already existing beauty, or as caring for one’s skin (so it looks young). All the same, there is a connection here, as also noted above, between surface and depth, and position in the spatial system—especially depth. This is similar to how many libraries work, increasing depth in subject and in literature with spatial depth of its distribution (Koch 2004, Markus 1993). At first, this appears to be a rather weak allusion that becomes emphasised by commodity distribution.

One could argue that this does the double work of connecting spatial depth and “commodity depth” and of enhancing and supporting these tendencies in that which is organised. Hence, the tendency of cosmetics to be considered as superficial is enhanced by them being placed by the entrance, just as the shallow spaces of the entrance have their character underscored by the commodities placed there. This works at times together with notions of publicity and privacy, but at times not. However, these positions of “surface” or “shallow” commodities in shallow spaces, and their direct application of the body, one could argue, also do the job of connecting body with surface. In actualising the body by the entrance, it is presented both as public and as superficial.

As noted before, however, that which is found by the entrance is not just body, but women’s bodies. Through different means, it is ensured that it is first and foremost women’s bodies that are encountered. Cosmetics, which have long been for women only, are now defined as something for women by the introduction of small sections of men’s cosmetics (and grooming). Skin and body care, and hair products, are constructed as feminine (for women) by use of similar strategy—but also as they are predominantly directed to women for instance by how almost all hair colours are packaged in packages showing women.

Body as surface and skin, and bodily form, is then further actualised by the placing of, in Åhlens, silk stockings, stay-ups and long rows of model-legs wearing them, and, in Debenhams or NK, by lingerie being placed close by secondary entrances. All of these connected to women, with “man” curiously absent as if uninterested or meant to be uninterested. This suggested uninterest includes the practice of shopping.

This is then further reproduced as Entwistle says, “[…] fashion articulates the body, producing discourses on the body which are translated into dress through the bodily practices of dressing on the part of individuals” (2000, 4).
and by how women’s fashion and clothing is more readily available and more a necessary part of any visit to the department store. I will return to this strong public character in the next subchapter, the point for now is how women’s bodies are actualised early on in the department stores, while men’s are not although there are tendencies to the contrary: even if the men’s cosmetics spot may serve to define the rest (the vast majority) of cosmetics as for women, it also does provide representation of man as body, and indirectly the idea that men would care for appearance and cosmetics (albeit in their own way).

Furthermore, this actualisation is, through the commodities used to produce it, tied to the naked body’s surface: the skin. Thus, by representing one as concerned with skin, surface and body, the other is suggested not to be, or by suggesting that the skin of one is an important issue, it is also suggested that the skin of the other is of little importance.

**Body count**

If the above worked much on allusion and on making use of established cultural code to reproduce and enhance them, by and large produced by structural means (all from more local ideas such as before, after, close, shallow, behind, in front of to more global questions of accessibility and exposure), one can then raise the question if the same suggested difference can be found in a comparison between the established gendered categories of fashion. In this case, however, much there might be subtle differences in presentation, I will point towards one of the most striking differences, that is for different reasons often forgotten in the discussion.

In Åhlens, the women’s fashion floor is filled with 90 mannequins, whole or partial (not counting the 38 legs showing silk stockings on the first floor), and 37 on the men’s floor. In Debenhams, the numbers are 100 and 19 for the women’s departments (including Top Shop and the Denim Department), and 24 for men’s (including Top Man and the Denim Department). If we were to separate out the lingerie and underwear, the figures would look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMODITY</th>
<th>ÅHLENS</th>
<th>DEBENHAMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underwear</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even taken into consideration the amount of square meters assigned to each of the above categories, the figures are telling—and especially so when it comes to underwear. With a ratio of between two to one and three to one for clothing, and somewhere between seven to one and twenty to one for underwear, women’s clothing is much more displayed on mannequins. This may have emerged through the individual work of the different departments and brands, each on its own making use of dolls to display the clothing for sale, but, it is telling of how different the dependence on bodily form the representation of clothing is for the different gender categories of fashion (Figure 12:I). This returns in fashion magazines and advertising, and not the least in the treatment of men and women as symbols of fashion or lifestyle. Almost all women’s fashion magazines read during the writing of this thesis had women on the front cover, and the majority of the men’s fashion magazines—a majority that became even stronger concerning men’s lifestyle magazines (with increasing amounts of skin showing as well).

This is further supported by another representation of bodily presence: the number of changing booths available. These are also heavily overrepresented in the women’s fashion floors (in Åhlens thirty-nine compared to twenty-one, in Debenhams thirty compared to nine), which is further strengthened by their placement in relation to exposure and accessibility. 48

The availability of booths, with subsequent more frequent use, in which the consumer is made into a spectacle for herself (Burgo 1996, 112) serves to stress body, surface and form over mind. That is, as Lefebvre argues, the mirror serves to “[…] transform what I am into the sign of what I am” (Lefebvre 1991, 185) and thus subsequently it also turns “me” to the “surface of me”. The idea that I can see myself in the mirror, according to Lefebvre, is a lie that strongly constructs me as surface and visual spectacle rather than lived body—or visible body and surface over seeing body and mind—since the mirror indeed does not show “me” but only a reflection, which even moves opposite limbs in opposite directions as compared to me. The relative frequency of, and exposure to, mirrors and situations of seeing oneself in a mirror is a means by which one is constructed as body, object or visual spectacle, and relative lack of such exposure point towards a construction of someone as subject. 49

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48. In the count of fitting booths for Debenhams, Top Shop, Top Man, and the Jeans department have been excluded, since these dressing rooms are (somewhat) shared between genders.

49. This is a part of Lefebvre’s general analysis of abstract space. By the different means in which the subject is equalised with the image of the subject—and also hereby externalised from itself and the natural ways in which one perceives oneself such as by feeling, seeing parts of oneself, and so forth—vision is privileged, since by being seen one is acknowledged, in the end even without one’s own presence (Lefebvre 1991).
These observations are important for two reasons: they indicate the character of the commodities for sale as more and less by necessity reliant on the form of the body which they are to be worn by for their look, and they indicate the nature of the one who is to wear them, to what degree the wearer is a body, and to what degree the form of this body is important for the expression of the clothing. As Entwistle says: “In other words, men’s bodies are taken for granted or rendered invisible, in contrast to the attention paid to female bodies at work and in other public arenas” (2000, 173). This leads on to questions of the gaze, and specifically the male gaze claimed to be part of modernity (Nixon 1992, 151; Massey 1994, 232). I will return to the gaze in the coming—for now, the presence and absence of bodies require yet some attention in how the presence and absence of body also lays or removes emphasis on form.

Form – Non-Form – Norm

At this point it might be interesting to lift in a statement made by Heidi Slimaine, one of the foremost clothing designers today:

I never adjust the cut. Never. I made a smoking jacket for Sofia Coppola recently. She looks really good in it, but it is a boy’s tux. I just made it smaller for her because she is so tiny. If she were a tiny boy, it would fit him the same. (Slimaine 2006, 162)

This statement is interesting for two reasons, and they will be dealt with all in time. The first is the most obvious: he designs a man’s tux for a woman, and it suits her well. While neither he nor the magazine develop the ramifications of this statement, it does put its finger on how culturally constructed the “male” and “female” fashion is. While the argument is perhaps easily conducted that accessories and jewellery have little actual anatomical reason to differ between men’s and women’s, Slimaine’s design shows that for clothing, differences can be small or even close to none when it comes to fit.

The second point that shows in his statement is highly problematic and points to another important background for the analysis: when Slimaine says he will not make allowances for form, he fails to recognise that he already has. The tuxedo is formed after a specific bodily form that may or may not be more common amongst (young, well trained) men, but is definitely expected to be more common amongst men. Slimaine may mean that he would not make allowances for a big belly either, that is not really the point—the point is that in his statement lies the assumption of one, the woman, as form, and the other as neutron, as non-form or original. Not only does he question the differentiation needed between many men and many women, which can be seen as a progressive approach, he also quite clearly states that a traditional male cut is neutral: designing a suit for women would be giving allowance for form. Designing for men, apparently, is not (also Grosz 1995, 36-37). However, the relation between suit and form is more complex than this, and can be read in the above-performed “body count”.

Such an argument can begin with first how the suit, often defended as functional and simple, has at most partial ground in such explanations; and second, how this supposed look of function serves to provide psychological advantages (Wigley 1995; Colomina 1996). These advantages are somewhat intricate, but are based on two things. One is the way it de-emphasises clothing as identity—even if this can only be taken so far and still can be powerful among people wearing traditional men’s suits as Bret Easton Ellis (1991) shows. De-emphasising the suit as marker of identity, however, at times claimed to promote anonymity, rather does something else: it calls for man being seen as subject by internal qualities. Man cannot be identified and understood by fashion, as body, but must be known as a mind—as subject. In a culture where mind is privileged over body, this becomes a power strategy.

Thus even if the separation of mind and body can be questioned and the primacy or privilege of one over the other just as well, and the focusing of attention to one or the other becomes defining of gender and of status. If we return to Entwistle’s statement above, that fashion is tied to dress due to how it articulates the body—this must be most true in cases where dress either does articulate the body or is perceived as articulating the body.

Another effect of the presence of models and the underlying claim that the clothes are only properly seen if worn by a body is a claim on the wearing body to have the shape of the model. Models that are idealised forms hardly representing a large segment of the population—yet still suggesting a norm for how bodies should look (Calefato 2004, 73-81). The body is thus expected to provide a form for the clothing, as much as the other way around, something which becomes as most obvious in the lingerie departments. The hard plastic dolls hardly represents a normal body, and the (as suggested) perfect shape they have under the garments respond little to how the lingerie would carry or form it. In a sense, the role of lingerie as visual decoration is thereby emphasised over func-

50. It should be recognised here that the “allowance for form” can be argued in relation to the suit as model, with its historical and traditional roots, compared to which deviations from forms suiting a “male” body would be distractions. This does not deny the implications, and it is doubtful that a design of a skirt for men would be claimed to give allowances for form, even if the design would turn out different than women’s skirts.
The dolls’ function, which possibly could be more practical were they designed differently, becomes to provide an understanding of first, how lingerie is body adornment, and second, how this adorned body should look (with cup sizes, flat bellies and all that comes with it). This is present in the men’s departments as well, when fashion dolls are used, as also these are of ideal body shapes—it is the huge discrepancies of number of dolls in the underwear departments that underscores the difference in gender perception. There could possibly be a functional use of the clothing dolls in a lingerie department—the way they are present serves little to no such function.

The emphasis on form, finally, carries further connotations and suggestions, which need be brought up (not the least because the subject is often up for discussion when it comes to shopping and fashion), which can be presented in the words of Judith Williamson:

Who doesn’t know, privately, that sense that desire lives, not in ourselves, but in the form of the person desired—in the features of their face, the very lines of their limbs? The contours of our social world are equally charged, the shapes of public life equally evocative, or passions that are in fact our own. And in the most crucial areas of meaning, public and private intersect: for example in the way that ‘Woman’ carries a weigh of meanings and passion hived off from the social and political world and diverted into ‘sexuality’, a process seen at its crudest in the way Britain’s highest circulation daily paper replaces news with the page 3 pin-up. (Williamson 1985, 14-15)

In as far as this is true, the constant presence of bodily form, be it by the 38 legs wearing stockings in Åhlens (with stocking, as Entwistle argues, having been heavily sexually coded) or by the number of dolls representing body, this would mean that desire

for one is promoted as desire for the body, while desire for the latter is desire for something that is quite much harder to define, since if it was the wearer, it would be a disembodied wearer. In short, one could argue that it means that in the latter case must be desire for the commodity itself, while it in the former is the commodity worn by a body. This, however, requires further understanding of publicity and privacy and who is under the gaze of whom: who is it that wants and who is it that is wanted.

### Public Shopping for Privacy

Thus, by a closer look on some of the strategies of clothing display, we can see that the department stores do represent gender differently in how they treat relations between fashion, clothing, and embodiment. This is done in a way that in much conforms to ideas within the fashion system and in society. This relation to body, however, and the implications of exposure thereof—as well as exposure in general—require some further analysis. In this, I will return more closely to how space situates people in relation to one another. The use of mannequins to display clothing is not only done to display the clothing to the presumed buyer:

These conventions of using mannequins to display clothing, and creating scenarios for the window shopper, have changed little over time. Stores were designed with an emphasis on the visual display of goods, to make movement through them exciting and to create the idea of shopping as a leisure activity. (Sturken and Cartwright 2001, 194)

Summarily presented, this is often discussed as the shopping environment of modern society. It does, however, not answer the question of who is situated in exposure to whom? As discussed above, there are two general tendencies of the youth and urban fashion to be exposed more than other clothing and of relations of exposure and availability creating status as clothing meant for people of different identities. It has also been repeatedly pointed out the different ways in which such exposures produce different forms of publicity, and different forms of exclusivity. It has further been found how relative degrees of availability, exposure, co-presence, and co-awareness are interdependent and produce a range of different situations that set expectations on the customer in terms such as purpose, agency, and (knowledge of) codes of conduct. The question of

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51. Entwistle notes, which is interesting in relation to this, how arguments that developments in fashion have been suggested to move towards liberation is a truth only with some moderation. As example, she says about the freedom won by the disappearance of the corset that “[…] this conventional story of bodily ‘liberation’ can be told differently if we apply a Foucauldian approach to fashion history: such a simple contrast between nineteenth- and twentieth-century styles is shown to be problematic. As Wilson argues (1992), in place of the whalebone corset of the nineteenth century we have the modern corset of muscle required by contemporary standards of beauty” (Entwistle 2000, 20). With such an argument in mind, the flat-bellied dolls with shapely breasts affect ideals and serves as disciplining through laying demands on women to keep in shape.

52. “Stockings and suspenders feature heavily in erotic and pornographic literature and have acquired a set of associations which make them almost always erotically charged, even though the vast majority of western women habitually wear pantyhose or tights” (Entwistle 2000, 204).
who is exposed to whom, of who meets who, and who surveys whom is then, with a program that differentiates attractions and interests, no longer possible to see as arbitrary and equitable to individual choice, but strongly governed by spatial structure.

Having established these situating practices, it is now time to direct the attention not to how the situations are produced, but how gender is represented and (re)produced in the department stores by these spatially situating strategies, which will also show how the understanding of these situating practices are crucial for the understanding of gender identity as performed in the department stores.

In this, situations of exposure have already been discussed as generating publicity of different kinds, which means that shopping as (visual) spectacle is tied to creating a public idea of the shopper and the shopped, and, further both who is allowed privacy, and the nature of privacy, are important questions. At this point, the analysis turns its attention to how gender is constructed as private and public: whom, by gender, is made into a public spectacle, who is allowed privacy, and how private activities and concerns are differentiated.

### Visual Spectacles

The role of consumer may be seen as an empowering one for women, a source of self-identity and pleasure in the public realm. But such a view is complicated by patriarchal ideologies and practices, which do not allow for such straightforward self-interest on the part of the female subjects. Instead of consuming for themselves, it can be argued that female consumer consume in order to reproduce capitalism and also in order to represent male status. In patriarchy, where women’s role can be compared to that of a commodity, places of consumption reinforce such an ideology by representing women as objects of visual consumption in order to sell goods. (Rendell, 2000a, 107)

The double effect of the department store, as both producing a public space for women, which in many ways were lacking, and enhancing (some would say even creating) the modern idea of shopping as feminine, frivolous and self-indulgence has been well analysed (M. Miller 1981; Sparke 1995; Lancaster 1995; Nava 2000). This tradition as visual spectacle, of creating dream worlds of constant overflow, however, have gone through several changes over the years in shifting priorities, in changes in the chain of categorising operations, of changing status claims of the department stores individually, and department stores as a whole (Lancaster 1995). However, this tradition of visual exposure (pleasure) and spectacle can not be denied or ignored when approaching questions of how department stores work today, and some of what is produced to-day have its roots in the origins of the department stores, traceable in the women’s paradise of Zola. Shopping and consumption in general, especially concerning all things fashion, have been perceived as mainly a concern for “woman” both empowering her and turning her into consumption (Nixon 1992, Glennie and Thrift 1996).

Such, at least, is the argument. The question, by now perhaps a bit rhetorical, is whether this is a dominant feature of the department stores today. As for the relation of shopper to her or his own body, identification with body, form and beautification, this has been found to be the case, in both how certain classes of commodities (cosmetics and body care) are by different means presented as feminine (or for women), and how that which is directed to women have a stronger emphasis on first body, and second the body as (normative) form. This leaves some of the questions above unanswered, which has to do with spectacle and agency of which the current question is that of the spectacle.

I have earlier argued—and I reiterate this argument for clarity—that when speaking of spectacle here, it should be interpreted as everyday spectacle; that is, for most people a visit to the department store, which may once have been an elevated experience of mystery, is now more of a routine. The department stores cannot compete with amusement parks, entertainment centres, cinemas, or the like in creating extravagant spectacles, and the sight of masses of goods and shoppers is today much too common a sight for most people that, while still forming a spectacle, it has a less overwhelming impact than for instance when Zola wrote his novel. This is not to say that department stores do not still make use of this kind of strategies; it is rather to put them in perspective.53

All the same, if we return to the discussion of chapter ten and eleven, of social centrality and exposure to the Other as means of creating publicity, we can see two important factors for the ongoing discussion: the spaces most visited, and which are included in most visits to any of the department stores, are the spaces containing commodities culturally and situationally coded as for women, and the spaces most exposed to those not intending to buy there, or not belonging to the overall category of lifestyles or identities, also followed such a formula. This could be summarised by saying that the spaces of social cen-

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53. During the years of 2005 and 2006, for instance, NK have had several Catwalk shows of new fashion lines, Debenhams have had special event evenings such as “singles’ shopping”. Both Åhlens and NK repeatedly have had both authors and musicians signing their books or records or, and P.U.B. have begun a rebuilding to focus more on if not haute-couture then at least high-fashion.
trality, places which are, as Lefebvre argues, sought for just enjoying the atmosphere of presence of people, are predominantly women’s shopping spaces, and in order to reach the deeper and less central spaces such as men’s fashion, the home department or children’s clothing, at least (fairly large) parts of the sections devoted to women’s fashion and adornment must be passed. Burgin puts it, rather pointedly, like this:

The department store, shrine of commodity fetishism, also solicits that fetishism of which Freud speaks. To negotiate a route to some legitimate destination, the male flâneur must cross seas of dresses, and deserts heavy with the scent of perfume and makeup. He has no other choice but to enter these zones of the taboo. His alibi is perfect as his sense of illicit pleasure is inescapable. Absentmindedly browsing through a rail of garments he may believe he is thinking of a gift for his lover, but he is also blindly feeling his way across the mother’s body. (Burgin 1996, 113)

Such connections between consumption, department stores, and erotic enticement are rather common, and Burgin is not alone in making such descriptions by far (Kendrick 2005; Zola 1995; Lancaster 1995). The problem with such an approach is the emphasis it still lays on the male gaze—a large part of the connection between consumption spaces and eroticism is dependant on the presence of women’s bodies (and representations of and allusions to it), which at times are allowed to draw direct parallels between female body and erotic enticement. While the play with erotic implications (or direct references to) is undeniable in shopping, and I will return to it soon, the reason I bring it up now is actually to downplay it. Relative other retail spaces encountered during the research, direct erotic references were fairly absent in the studied department stores or most present in the CD sections.

The focus should instead be put on the forming of spectacle itself, the forming of gender as being for the enjoyment of others (not only as object of erotic interest, but also and perhaps more as social spectacle, of theatre, of scrutiny, of beauty) or not is strongly performed by the situating practice of the department stores, in that one is put on show for most or all visitors (as they shop), and the other is put on show this way only relatively scarcely. It must still be pointed out, however, as has been seen before, that much of the defining and characterising means of men’s fashion follow situating of exposure and spectacle.

Actually, one could argue that the term *catwalk* here, used to suggest the character of the contexts put most in “everyone’s” way, serves a double purpose: it shows what is trendy, what is public, and in what way it is public—it is also telling that the description fits better for women’s fashion than for men’s fashion. The relation between exposed/observer takes on the characteristics of the catwalk as most amongst women’s trend fashion and finer makeup. Here, consumers are forming a show as much as they are shopping—and, they definitely are more seen than seeing. In many of these situations, it is more than certain that the vast majority who see the shopper and the commodities will not be shopping there, which slowly turns towards the other extreme such as children’s clothing, which at least in Åhlens is mostly seen only by those who are there to shop them. An important part of this show is the gaze being already directed towards it. Prime examples here are first the cosmetics, but also trend categories, such as Filippa K, which is in Åhlens located so as to form a foundation for the gaze of any movement up the escalators—both coming up from, and heading to move up by, or moving through the women’s fashion floor.

In this case, it can further be argued that in as far as it comes to lingerie, which are in many cases located at best display window locations, and in the endcap of more than one corridor such as in Gallerian (Hamngatan) and Sturegallerian (Stureplan), are by all department stores comparatively moved out of the direct paths and gazes of the general customer, perhaps most so in Åhlens. While situated directly inside an entrance in Debenhams, the situation is slightly more complex, while close to the street, there is relatively low degree of presence, and it is thus still not radically exposed to most every shopper. This is not to say that lingerie *should* be hidden, it is not about right or wrong—the point of bringing it up is the radical difference between the location and exposure of lingerie and that of men’s underwear, forming different ideas of what underwear is about for different genders. That is, the private, as represented by underwear, is defined differently.

A Public Privacy

I have earlier concluded that if, as argued by retail and advertising, shopping is about finding what suits one’s inner and personal self, expressing one’s own inner self and personal tastes or giving in to desires and self-indulgence, then what is shopped is in itself a private matter and shopping is by its very nature a public situating of privacy. While, as clearly seen in the analysis performed, this is not the whole truth, it can still not be denied how the public situating of things that has with privacy to do serves to both control and construct identities of brands, lifestyles, types, and other assemblages of commodities. However, this does not take in account how certain things are regarded

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54. The placement of a day-spa and a restaurant together with the children’s clothing regulates this somewhat, but by and large these are located in a way that, for the visitors of the spa and the restaurant, the children’s clothing primarily take on the character of Underhill’s third zone (2000), that is, they are primarily passed by, and the directionality of movement gaze is guided to lead past.
as more private or public in society at large, which again is often tied to body, be it skin, closeness to skin, or bodily excrements (Gregson, Brooks, and Crewe 2000).

One could argue here that there are difficulties in the interpretation above. Things private are in public places and the other way around. I argue, however, that this would be from a rather shallow understanding of both the commodities in question and the idea of public and private. For instance, there is the lingerie and pantyhose: intimate, private, and even erotically coded, yet exposed and public. This occurs not only in Åhlens and Debenhams, but in NK and P.U.B. as well as, to an even greater extent, most gallerias and shopping malls (Figure 12:II). Constantly shown in the display windows, put by the entrance, or in the centres, lingerie is ever-present in the shopping milieu. If it were intimate and private full out, then this would be a selling strategy? How many would actually buy something that is, on all levels, extremely private in such a situation?

What can be seen is that in a peculiar way, some of the most intimate commodities, such as cosmetics and body care and lingerie, end up under the gaze of quite many who are not aiming to buy it. One could even argue that most of the people whose eyes are gracing the most central cosmetics are not even considering buying them and may well not be browsing them per se either. Any person stopping to try something out or discuss what to buy with the cashier is put on display for everyone else to see. This moves on deeper and deeper into the system, gradually shifting the relative amount of people there to browse the goods available compared to the amount of people just passing by; those who have a specific aim here and those heading somewhere else. Whenever you shop in these places, you are seen by many strangers who are heading somewhere else, displaying your personal taste (or insecurities) openly for everyone. You form a spectacle.

This, I have argued before, suggests that makeup is not an intimate issue at all, but a public one. Or, if it is intimate, it is an intimate matter of public concern. In one way, this publicity is quite logical, seeing as makeup is, in large, something that is worn to look beautiful (younger, healthier, more tanned, sexier) for others. That which is only for display is put in a situation of display. The relation turns extreme in the shop-window placement of Estée Lauder, Dior, Roc, Elisabeth Arden and Shiseido in Åhlens. They are not overly much visited, but many pass by, both in the department store and outside of it, the consumer and commodity forming (for those on the street) something akin to a TV commercial, the glass of the wall being a screen. The possibility to consider cosmetics as both private and public, however, puts the finger on the arbitrariness of such a distinction, and the way in which situating commodities actualises and prioritises some of the meanings of a commodity over others.

While the argument that cosmetics are not as private as Underhill claims but rather are inherently public can be made, the argument is less easily put forth how and why lingerie, as different from men’s underwear, would not be an intimate or private concern. Still, one need only to open any fashion magazine (including most men’s fashion magazines) to find lingerie advertised quite liberally (and present in ads for a number of other commodities from milk to cars to men’s fragrances). Choice, taste, and a number of other questions that could be considered quite intimate and personal are put on stage. However, as indirectly suggested by the cosmetics discussion, and as found in the discussion of the body above, the relative privacy or publicity of the body appears to be gendered. Again, Burgin provides a rather pointed example:

In the street, the crowd may momentarily open to allow a glimpse of a figure, a face, which is lost as quickly as it touches the erotic nerve. “Love at last sight”, Benjamin called it. The department store offers its own perverse variation on this phenomenon by means of those fragile curtained spaces wherein women are invited to leave the throng of spectators in order to themselves become spectacle. Spectacle for themselves, and for those strangers of their sex who may join them to undress, but spectacle also for the illicit gaze enticed by a gaping curtain. (Roland Barthes asks, “Is not the most erotic part of the body where the clothing gapes?”) I Hastily look away; some light, ricocheting around the mirrored interior to decay on my retina, has left a confusion (more cubist than surrealist) from which memory alone may extract the already familiar fragment of a loved body. (Burgin 1996, 112-113)

Shifting attention from commodity as public and private to activity, then the undressing, dressing, and evaluation performed in the dressing rooms are perhaps even more intimate than the cosmetics. The activity, which is provided with covering curtains, it can be argued, is further more detached from supposed public role of representation of the commodities. As argued before, the putting on of makeup is more a private, intimate concern while the wearing of makeup is a public practice. If anything, one could argue that these changing booths invariably are intimate and private spaces (even if Burgin makes quite a valuable point in how they produce the person as spectacle to “herself”, see also Lefebvre 1991, 181-188). As noted before, the amount of booths differ between men’s and women’s fashion in all four department stores. Further than this, however, the presence of those booths (and thus the reference to the activity of undressing and dressing) are also differentiated.

In Debenhams, when reaching the stairs down form the main entrance hall to the women’s fashion department, I have already been able to see not only the booths themselves, but into the entrance to them, and the curtains that shield the activity within. The same can be said about Filippa K in Åhlens, where the
entrance to the dressing rooms is (somewhat) visible as I come up the escalators from below. Furthermore, the booths of the lingerie section in Åhlens are in the endcap of one of the main aisles of the women’s fashion floor. In both department stores, most changing booths of the women’s fashion floors are situated so that they are both clearly visible, and so that the booths themselves (the small corridor and the curtains) are exposed to the aisles. Compared to the men’s fashion floors, the difference is striking. In Debenhams, one has to turn several times to see the first one, which is located behind ones back if one follows suggested routes (Figure 12:III). In Hugo Boss or the suits department in Åhlens, the same pattern is clear: the booths are hidden from view, for those not looking for them. The point here is the clear differentiation in degree of privacy or intimacy of the same activity. This differentiation is not only between genders, but also internal to genders—on the men’s fashion floor of Åhlens, as an example, the booths of the more “expressive and narcissistic” street fashion sections are more readily apparent than in the suits or shirt departments (where there, in the latter, are none). The analysis, it seems, supports arguments such as

It is now a well-established argument, from feminists but not only from feminists, that modernism both privileged vision over the other senses and established a way of seeing from the point of view of an authoritative, privileged, and male, position (Irigaray, 1978; Owens, 1983; Pollock, 1998). (Massey 1994, 232)

Whether this is to be judged as representation or not, the analysis thus far points towards that not as much in imagery as in spatial situating this is true for the department stores. Disregarded what they consume, for whom it is or how it is presented in its local context, women’s consumption and women themselves are turned into a spectacle, they are part of the consumption that takes place in shopping.

Now, it can be argued that the construction is not so much of the gaze as male, as of the directionality of the subject/object. Rather than producing a male Gaze (this presumes the one looking to be male), what is produced is woman as Gazed upon, by both men and women (including, not the least, herself). This construction, to some extent, supports the gaze as male, but underlying such a claim are also some heterosexual norms assuming that if one gender/sex is Gazed upon, exposed, then it is for the enjoyment of the other gender/sex (Butler 1999, 55-73). In fact, one can argue that the body, skin and adornment of women is presented for the pleasure of everyone, be they men or women, which primarily rather produces woman as spectacle than men as spectator. Furthermore, from the viewpoint of body rather than gender, the findings support what Wigley says that for the modern movement (regarding modern architecture and fashion) “[…] the logic governing both forms of clothing remains that of the gaze directed at the women’s body, or rather, the body (whether of a man or a woman) understood as feminine” (Wigley 1995, 272). That is, the construction that is taking place is of the connection between woman and body (via femininity, form and surface), and the construction is dependant on this connection being made. Women should be concerned with their appearance—not only for men, but for other women.

In as far as men do, they are involving themselves in a feminine practice. That there is an underlying erotic dimension of a heterosexual male gaze in this is undeniable, but it is not the only process going on and not the strongest.

**Body, Surface, Impulse, Object, Imprint**

Thus far we have found different identities of gender represented by characters such as directedness (for self or other), embodiment (body or mind), subjectivity (object or subject), rationality (seducible or purpose filled) and a number of implications both produced and which serve to produce such characters. It has been rather obvious how these are dependent on otherwise existing values and ideas, and how at times playing with established conventions is used as strategy. The department stores both confirm and in some cases exaggerate the gender dualism and its connection to sexual dualism. Thus, department stores do the same as Entwistle claim of fashion and dress in general:

In this environment, the suit works to obscure the male body, hiding its sexed features, as Collier (1998) has argued. [...] In other words, women are still as located in the body, whereas men are seen as transcending it. [...] This is not to say that women are embodied and men are not, but that cultural associations do not see men embodied in the way that women are. (Entwistle 2000, 38)

Sanctioned by the department stores, such ideas are continuously reproduced in many situations. However, some of the strategies employed are not only conservative, at least not in a simple and unambiguous way. For example, the situating of men’s cos-

55. Butler shows how the assumption that the exposure of one sex means that sex being constructed for the other to desire denies the existence of desire in both. Hence, “[…] we can understand this conclusion to be the necessary result of a heterosexualized and mascu-
metics has been discussed as a means to define all other cosmetics as women’s. At the same time, the public exposure of men’s cosmetics, in a culture where (albeit perhaps less so than earlier) cosmetics are for women, also heralds a change, proclaiming that men do use cosmetics, and to a degree where manufacturers have seen it fit to begin to produce cosmetics specifically targeted to a male audience.\footnote{Again, this is making use of constructed differences to both reinforce established conventions and to create yet another niche in which to excel. In a makeup class taken at the \\textit{MakeUp Store}, there was no mention of men’s and women’s cosmetics due to any natural differences between sexes, but instead questions of dryness, fragility, colour, tan tones, and so forth of the skin was in focus. Men’s cosmetics rather mean masculine cosmetics, where masculine is then used as synonymous with man.} Providing the argument of the thesis is true, such exposure will over time participate in naturalising men’s use of cosmetics, undramatising such an interest, and perhaps lessening differences in gender identity. A strategy that can, at the beginning, seem to emphasise difference simultaneously contributing to lessen it—providing such a development is otherwise acknowledged and supported.

Concluding this chapter, there is some need to shift focus for a moment to some other implication inherent in the distribution, which have been approached throughout the thesis before, completing the understanding of how gender is represented in the department store—which again works by confirming and reaffirming stereotypes.

\textit{Body and Mind: the Impulse and the Discerned Choice}

At the time of the writing of the thesis a mass e-mail was circulated with a “joke” image parodying perceived shopping behaviour of men and women. The title reads “Mission: Go to Gap, Buy a Pair of Pants.” Under this title is an image supposedly showing a shopping mall, with the gap close to the entrance, and two lines showing two different trails of performing the mission. One passes through every store of the shopping mall (sometimes making several turns inside them), the other leads straight from the entrance to the Gap store. Notwithstanding the simple idea of shopping underlying the image, assuming shopping to be what it arguably almost never is, the image clearly illustrates a continuously circulated idea of gender in general, and shopping specifically. The long, convoluted line was red and titled “Female”, the second, short one was blue and titled “Male”. Statistics were also provided: Male (Time: 6min, Cost $33) and Female (Time: 3hrs 26min, Cost $876). Clearly, one ‘got the job done properly’ and the other got distracted and wasted time and money. As any parody, this image, assuming shopping to be what it arguably almost never is, the image clearly illustrates a continuously circulated idea of gender in general, and shopping specifically. The long, convoluted line was red and titled “Female”, the second, short one was blue and titled “Male”. Statistics were also provided: Male (Time: 6min, Cost $33) and Female (Time: 3hrs 26min, Cost $876). Clearly, one ‘got the job done properly’ and the other got distracted and wasted time and money. As any parody, this image clearly illustrates a continuously circulated idea of gender in general, and shopping specifically.

This image, it still points to an important part of gender perception that has yet not been brought up—something which Baudrillard presents like this:

The invitation to self-indulgence is mainly directed to women. But the pressure is exerted on women through the myth of Woman. Woman as collective and cultural model of self-indulgence. (Baudrillard 1998, 95)

The masculine model is the model of particularity [exigence] and choice. All masculine advertising stresses the rule of choice, in terms of rigour and flexible attention, as a matter of ‘professional ethics’. The modern man of quality is particular or demanding. (Baudrillard 1998, 96)

While not excelling in analysis of gender, or having an unproblematic approach in his writings, the two statements of Baudrillard above still shows both insight in how ideas and conventions of masculine and feminine, of man and woman, are formative for those expectant to belong to one or the other of these categories. He further provides a concise description of the effects of the often present idea of the mysterious and irrational woman who acts and thinks with feelings, and the logical and rational man who acts and thinks with a rational mind (except when he sees [loves] woman). This has been connected further to fashion, frivolity, body, and superficiality, as argued, which have served as both a means of discarding fashion and shopping, and of degrading those who are concerned with it:

Such a thinking has a relentless logic to it and is in line with a broader belief that consumption was a passive activity, an albeit ultimately unsatisfying form of sexual and spiritual sublimination. The idea that consumption held women captive has been reiterated through this century, forming a \textit{leitmotif} in much feminist writing, suggesting an indissoluble bond between women’s suppression and their roles as consumers. (Sparke 1995, 187)

Following the argument presented in chapter seven, ren, and eleven, we find how different degrees of subjectivity, agency, intentionality, and discernment are produced by the situating practice of the department stores. In this, lie also assumptions made about impulsivity and purposefulness. This is the story of the milk and the candy once again although much more refined. This is not to say that everything that is placed in positions promoting impulse-buys are actually bought in such a manner—such a simple logic have proven problematic to say the least, both in the findings of this thesis and in the research...
of Underhill (2004, 47-60) and Daniel Miller (1998, 65-72). Still, there are the signs pointing towards a higher demand of intentionality the deeper into the building one has to move. While not directly connected to impulse and choice, a degree of purpose and intentionality is both suggested and to some extent required for anyone to reach the deeper parts of the department stores.

Hence, as found, these positions are often used for items that for some reason are assumed to attract customers anyway, such as diners, spas, children’s wear and toys. One step less deep (if even that), we find men’s fashion, while women’s fashion is located much closer to the entrance. The figure of impulse and discernment is reproduced both by allusion to an idea of shopping saying that impulse buys are put by the entrance and exit, and by a requirement put on those aiming for the deeper located commodities to both intentionally want to reach them and to put in effort to do so.

Here, the idea of the majority of shoppers being women, their impulsivity, and the possibilities to seduce them into self-indulgence is reproduced as a self-fulfilling speculation in how things are exposed and made available the ease with which it is reached or seen. It further serves to reproduce the idea of shopping as primarily the concern of women and for men primarily done when one know what one wants. That the commodity distribution and presentation further connects this to body or mind only serves to support the notion of impulse and rationality, and distinguish them by gender.

**Conclusion: A Reproduction of Gender Identity**

If the above shows the gender (re)production ongoing in the department stores, then we can say that in shopping and the department stores there is reinforcement of the overall gender models of society. Models in which, as Butler says,

> […] nature/culture discourse regularly figures as nature as female, in need of subordination by a culture that is invariably figured as male, active and abstract. As in the existential dialectic of misogyny, this is yet another instance in which reason and mind are associated with masculinity and agency, while the body and nature are considered to be the mute facticity of the feminine, awaiting signification from an opposing masculine object. (Butler 1999, 48)

Even in the degree to which one is represented by dolls, mannequins, and supermodels, the idea of one being dressed by others and the other dressing oneself is reinforced. We further find that, while connections are easily done, equating display or allusion to body with references to eroticism is problematic and seems to provide only little explanation for the practices of the commodity distribution and presentation in the department stores.

Rather than focus the discussion on eroticism alone (perhaps especially common in newspaper debates), which is comparatively downplayed in the department stores, the construction must be seen from a perspective allowing many different factors to participate. By association and context commodities, and the persons shopping there, are coded along axes of impulse and discernment; body and mind; public and private; high and low; changing or stable; seducing or chosen, and so forth. Together with an insistence of prioritising gender division equalised with sexes, these characters are coded into two genders/sexes, thus constructing “woman” and “man” as in quite many a way different. Not surprisingly, these characters are similar to general cultural ideas about gender and identity, not the least findable in fashion and lifestyle magazines (Figure 12:IV), although at times emphasised slightly differently in a curious combination of conservatism and progressiveness.

Much of this, it must be said, comes out of tradition—not only the gender perceptions themselves, but from a long tradition of how department stores are supposed to be ordered, all the way how they in many of the first incarnations were directed to women alone (M. Miller 1981; Lancaster 1995; Nava 1996). The aim here is not to present a culprit, but to understand cultural construction. In the case of retail, one can argue that efficiency of capitalizing on tendencies and notions of rather weak or underlying character makes some of them surface in a stronger fashion. Furthermore, as the department stores are adapting to how change in consumer preferences are perceived (even if they are simultaneously producing such changes), it can be argued that the encountered structures in the department stores are collectively produced by managers, owners, producers, and consumers alike. Naturally, the power to change lies more in one hand than another, but as these changes are both informed by and evaluated on the grounds of customer appeal, pointing towards one instance fails to recognise the complexity of the problem, and following fails to understand how mechanics of change need to be designed. It cannot, however, even be said that everyone would want such a change.

Fashion designer Roberto Cavalli states:

> Intelligence makes a man sexy. So does the way a man talks to a woman. A man has to act like a man at all times. Just as I never understood why women sometimes try to dress like men, I don’t think it’s a good idea for us to explore our feminine side. (Cavalli 2005, 68)

The impact of the presented identities is also a question that will not be dealt
with here, but both dependent on individuals and on the degree to which people are conscious of retail manipulation. Essentialist or not, there is no denying that the masculine and feminine model is reproduced in the department stores and that this follows a connection to a dual biological sex, and that there is a complex set of expectations and perceptions built into this reaching much further than any explanation based on bodily form would explain—an explanation that has proven to be much less substantial than it makes itself out to be. It is not obvious that the gender division is either natural or naturally located so early in a chain of choices. One could, still making use of similar situating practices, just as well work with lifestyles or types as a primary categorising operation—indeed, this ought to be what is done, if some of the shopping theory out there was right, that is, if it had not treated the gender division as a non-choice.

Finally, it can be pointed to how the analysis shows that any space, and even more any space as complex as a department stores, produces a hierarchy of situations where different spaces will take on different character not only by how they are designed in themselves, nor what is put in them, but by their relative position in the spatial structure. This works together with the distribution in space of commodities and functions to characterise these, together constructing a range of contexts and situations which are loaded with meaning and which represents values and ideas. This thesis has thus far analysed a significant part of such a situating practice, and what ideals and values it serves to reproduce, which has implications both outside of the studied objects themselves, and which also suggests that there are other questions, other ways in which the department stores structures values, which have yet to be asked. Many of these, however, will have to be asked at another time—at this point, the time has come to return to the original question and focus the attention on the structuring practice of space.
Figure 12:III
Access to and visibility of dressing rooms for women’s and men’s (opposite) fashion in Debenhams. The dressing rooms are visible already before entering the women’s fashion department (light grey) and are reached within quite a few turns, whereas it takes at least four or five turns to reach the booths of the men’s fashion department. The booths are also placed so that they are rarely seen in the latter.
Figure 12:1
Similar to the ways genders and sexes are described in the department stores they tend to be described in fashion magazines.

(Fotography: Andreas Rock for Plaza Magazine.)

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PART IV
A STRUCTURING PROCESS
Finally, we have reached the fourth part of the thesis, which summarizes the findings thus far and draws conclusions based on them. This will include conclusions that deal with shopping behaviour or department stores, although the focus will be turning more and more toward the main question of the thesis: general properties of space as a physical, social, and mental entity. Through the following chapters, the analysis will be concluded by a discussion of the activity of shopping, one discussing the department stores as spatial situating systems and producers of consumer culture, and the final chapter focused on more general conclusions about space. This may leave one or two threads still hanging, but this work (as most any research) should be seen as the beginning of a wider project with implications and suggestions for more research to be done rather than as a finished and concluded totality that answers all the questions it raises.

As foundation for this concluding discussion, the attention will be directed to the underlying question of society and its structure; one of the main issues dealt with in the thesis, after all, is how the shaping of culture, identity, and/or categories relates to shopping and space. That is, if department stores serve to influence taste and values, how does this relate to society and social structures? How are social structures and cultural values negotiated in, by, and through space?

The focus will be put on two key theories of that which is to come: Bourdieu’s analysis which is here seen as a dynamic model for how society structures itself and its relation to ideas of performative identities as presented by Butler. When juxtaposed, these provide valuable understanding of the relation between individual and system and for how a structure can retain its dynamism, which at times gets lost by the stabilising effect of the *habitus*. This discussion serves both to elaborate and deepen the understanding of system as it has evolved in this thesis and to relate it to subject or agency even if a total reconciliation between the two (system and agency) may well, as Jameson puts it, be impossible (1991, 326). It is important, however, to understand how to relate to the “systems” as presented in the thesis and to understand how they relate to one another. As Jameson argues, analysis needs to consider both approaches, not as unity or without contradictions, but exactly because of the contradictions that emerge and how the dialectic between agency and system serves to further the understanding of both. This is a view he shares with Lefebvre (1991, 158-160). This is not to deny that the current work mostly focuses on structure rather than individual; it is to say that if structure has any influence, it must influence individuals and somehow be appropriated. In addition, when the analysis is being brought to its conclusion, this relation must be addressed.
Bourdieu: Class, Structure and Structuring Structures

In the highly influential work *Distinction: A Social Critique on the Judgement of Taste* and other works such as *The Love of Art* (with Alain Darbel), which is more concerned with the specific cases of museum and art, Bourdieu analyses class and taste extensively, and many of his concepts and conclusions have become established as basic sociological knowledge. The main body of *Distinction* presents a range of empirical investigations and their results from which theory is continuously constructed. One of the main parameters in this analysis is the relation between class and taste: perhaps not surprisingly, he finds strong correlations between class and to what degree people have assimilated the established high culture into their own. However, even if it is unusually detailed and thorough an analysis in its own right at this level, the main point is not this at all, but rather comes to be seen when he scrutinises his own analysis, questioning his own variables, why a correlation appears between them, and to which degree one is actually the dependent variable of the other:

One has explained nothing and understood nothing by establishing the existence of a correlation between an ‘independent’ variable and a ‘dependent’ variable. Until one has determined what is designated in the particular case, i.e., in each particular relationship, by each term in the relationship (for example, level of education and knowledge of composers), the statistical relationship, however precisely it can be determined numerically, remains a pure datum, devoid of meaning. And the ‘intuitive’ half-understanding with which sociologists are generally satisfied in such cases, while they concentrate on refining the measurement of the ‘intensity’ or the relationship, together with the illusion of the constancy of the variables or factors resulting from the nominal identity of the ‘indicators’ (whatever they indicate) or of the terms which designate them, tends to rule out any questioning of the terms of the relationship as to the meaning they take on in that particular relationship and indeed receive from it. (Bourdieu 1984, 18)

He continues by making the acute observation that (in his own investigation) the relation between knowledge of composers or artists that correlates to class does so because such knowledge, an effect of taste, is one of the primary conditions of class membership and not an expression of the same post-facto. First, he finds that without analysis of the involved measurements there is a distinct risk of assuming that one affects the other, which would naturalize the “independent” variable and remove from it its character of cultural construction and performative formation. Second, the class system he analyses depends on unequal distribution of tastes for its existence. In short, he finds that taste is a major structuring factor in society (Bourdieu 1984, 18-63). This is both theoretically and methodologically important and must be taken seriously. For instance, it points to how class or group belonging is by and large constructed by that which is often assumed to express it (which follows the general argument of fashion and identity as conducted in this thesis), and such groups or classes are formed less arbitrarily and more dependent on social positions in both small and large scale. In this manner, the modern movement used taste directly as constructing both itself and the elevated mind that could appreciate it under the guise of universal values as above or detached from the vulgarity of taste (Wigley 1995, 35-58).

Bourdieu’s analysis further points to the weakness in the tendency to treat one (class) as the independent and the other (taste) as dependent. This points to what Grosz more explicitly criticises: this type of analysis naturalizes the independent variable and provides political justification of class or gender structure even if the argument conducted is aimed at questioning it (1995, 45-57). In establishing the current class structure, analysis is presumed to be neutral and analysing a natural phenomena. It is, to some extent, still possible to criticise Bourdieu for the very same action because he rather stubbornly sticks with professions as base for classes, but the use of this particular basis in Distinction is rather well founded and tested.

This touches on another point—namely the degree to which classes and their status form a dynamic system rather than a set structure. If the position of a class in the societal hierarchy is dependent on said class’s taste, then as taste changes so does potentially the hierarchical distribution of class-tastes as well as classes. However, it must be made clear that “change of taste” here is not to be understood as annual cycles of fashion or continuous changes in lifestyles, but as changes in whose taste matters and what general disposition is valued highest—that is, relational changes in the system of tastes. The former rather serves to consolidate the structure under the pretence of continuous change (Bourdieu 1984, 156-168). I will return to this question of change and kinds of change after a closer look at Bourdieu’s discussion on classes and tastes.2

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1. Here one can note a wide range of market “research” performed in daily newspapers where tastes (or more commonly: preferences) are presented ordered after gender, income group, educational level, or place of living, where the first is the by far most common.
2. It must be noted that for Bourdieu class is a much more finely differentiated concept than “working class” or “upper class”, even if these also figure as classes
In Bourdieu’s work, such relations are neither completely free nor, given a society, completely arbitrary, but depend on material and cultural preconditions. These material conditions, however, only have indirect purchase on taste and cultural and social disposition. In *Distinction*, there are tendencies towards material determinism, which can and have been criticized (Bennet 1995, 163-165), which is part of why the juxtaposition with theories more focused on individuals can serve to refine the argument. With this in mind, it is interesting to look closer at the relations between material conditions and the formation of taste Bourdieu presents.

The primary differentiation of tastes, Bourdieu finds, is what can be summed up in *cultural disposition*, which comes from the amount of *cultural capital* a class disposes over. In society, this capital produces social hierarchy together with economic and social capital (and possibly other forms of capital), which first of all creates a map of capital distribution rather than a one-dimensional hierarchy of top-down because there is a horizontal division between kinds of capital and a vertical division between amounts of capital. For the cultural capital, this is then defined as knowledge in the in society established high culture—a knowledge that is acquired not in school but either by extra-curricular activities or at home or (with higher age) in leisure or spare-time activities. Taking the form rather of indirect training, this knowledge for those acquiring it, those performing it, and most others is not experienced as education or learning but rather shows itself as a series of tastes, which has fostered this knowledge. For Bourdieu, however, it is the other way around (Bourdieu and Darbel 1991, 14-36): the higher in the hierarchy one goes, the less signs of actual training or studying of that which is valued as good taste can be found—it is simply done as if it was natural. This “natural disposition”, it needs be pointed out, is valued not only within society as a whole, but in subcultures and lifestyle groups—in part, it makes up “authentic” taste. As for being trained outside of school curricula and education systems, it tends to work conservatively.

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu more or less begins by deconstructing classes, moving on to presenting the dynamic model of a structuring structure, to then, by investigations into *habitus*, practices and dispositions connect the different tastes and their nature back to economic conditions. That is, disposition—as a vertical distributor in the hierarchy—becomes more or less described as a necessary effect of economic relations.

In addition, the cultural disposition and the division of tastes have another property that serves to differentiate tastes on the vertical level that according to Bourdieu’s findings remain the same even when taste or capital vary on a horizontal level. This is the tendency to cross-tastes order classes hierarchically—which in short draws on the relation set up between the person and cultural activities or artefacts, such as works of art. Hierarchical disposition is then produced by *disinterest*, or the degree to which the relation to a work of art depends not on utility or material conditions, but on intellectual gratification. The same would go for economic concerns and social capital and can be traced, for example, in disposition towards cooking and food (de Certeau 1984).

The “lower” classes are defined by the degree to which it is the utility that gives an object value, the degree to which one “likes” the motive in question, or the degree to which one can find a use for it at home. Working-class visitors to a museum would, according to Bourdieu, ask where the painting could be displayed in their home, what the motive is, and to what degree the motive is agreeable. Upper-class art connoisseurs are marked by disinterest in the motive and the possibility to make use of the work of art at home or in a gallery, instead focusing on form—that is, how the motive (if there is one) is formally constructed and how this relates to other works (Bourdieu 1984, 30-34). In taste of art as well as in taste in general, the less a class is forced to focus on utility as a result of their economic potential, the more the question of importance will focus on immaterial issues. Highest of these dispositions is the pure gaze:

The detachment of the pure gaze cannot be dissociated from a general disposition towards the world which is the paradoxical product of conditioning by negative economic necessities—a life of ease—that tends to induce an active distance from necessity. (Bourdieu 1984, 5)

The disinterest in utility is thus not a result of less need to focus on it, but a strategy for distinction from those who need do so which takes form in cultural disposition, tastes, and lifestyles. This is responded to in fashion and lifestyle magazines, for instance in how fashion photographs are used (Figure 13-I). This distinctive operation is, especially in the high end of the hierarchy, again masked as free choice and inclusive grouping—that is, it takes the form of including everyone who shares taste and lifestyle with the group. Since this taste depends on belonging to the class and group to begin with, this inclusive gesture that presupposes knowledge before inclusion is in effect an exclusive operation (Bourdieu 1984, 162).
These tastes and dispositions, acquired through learning from performed routines and day-to-day activities, then come together in the perhaps most influential term of all found in Distinction: habitus. Habitus includes the different backgrounds, lifestyles, and tastes and the position in society that this grants. Sturken and Cartwright summarise it as

[a] term popularized by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to describe the unconscious dispositions, strategies of classification, and tendencies that are part of an individual’s sense of taste and preferences for cultural consumption. According to Bourdieu, these value systems are not idiosyncratic to each individual but are derived instead from one’s social position, educational background, and class status. Hence, different social classes have different habituses with distinct tastes and lifestyles. (Sturken and Cartwright 2001, 356)

Habitus as the foundation of identity construction and class belonging and position plays an important role in understanding the pervasiveness of class structure even when steps are taken to reduce class differences by formal education, since formal education rarely provides the natural disposition to culture which is a precondition of class-belonging. This has lead to criticism of the term. de Certeau argues this is too limiting an idea and denies both individual freedom and societal change, subscribing the individual as an effect of class alone (1984, 45-60). Furthermore, both de Certeau and Bennet (1995, 164) argue it places a too direct relation between economic capital and taste. While there is merit to this criticism, it also misses one of the key arguments in Distinction, which is of severe importance for this thesis.

The Dynamism of Classes
What de Certeau fails to recognise, and what is often missed in discussions of Bourdieu’s class system, is the emphasis Bourdieu puts on change. Bourdieu actually first redefines class as the outcome, and then defines capital as changing. Thus one of the defining traits of any class, in the social space Bourdieu constructs, is its trajectory—or the change in position that the class is currently experiencing. This is why he speaks of the structure of classes as a “three dimensional space” (Bourdieu 1984, 114-125), consisting of a horizontal division of internal distribution of kinds of capital, a vertical division of hierarchy based on total amount of capital, and a third axis consisting of trajectory. That is, the change of either capital or position a class is experiencing. All of these serve to define a class. The same capital distribution in both amount and internal distribution can form two different classes depending on how said social groups’ capital and hierarchical positions are currently (recently) changing. Furthermore, the differentiating and hierarchical order is maintained only as long as it can uphold its own validity: the structure of classes is continuously reproduced by the mechanics it has been constructed by and the reproduction of these mechanics becomes important for the survival of the structure. This should not be confused for a necessity to uphold the same values, but as a necessity to uphold whose values are important.

Thus, by an apparent paradox, the maintenance of order, that is, of the whole set of gaps, differences, ‘differentials’, ranks, precedences, priorities, exclusions, distinctions, ordinal properties, and thus the relations of order which give a social formation its structure, is provided by an unceasing change in substantial (i.e., non-relational) properties. (Bourdieu 1984, 163)

The class system for Bourdieu is constructed not as a given in which people and classes struggle to either rise or fall, but is the result of such struggles. For each class the aim is then to come closer to the class above in the hierarchy, simulating its tastes and disposition, while differentiating from the one directly below by distancing oneself from it. This leads to a perpetual competition of tastes and dispositions, where the ultimate factor is power, and power over which taste and disposition is to be valued—since this forms the very base of hierarchical differentiation to begin with. If the system of values changes so will the hierarchy of classes—something one could argue has happened with the advance of media and the development of celebrity culture: media has provided a value base that is constructed around celebrity rather than previous forms of cultural capital, and this value base is constructed both as a means for media to gain power and as a result of media’s gain of power.

What Bourdieu here presents on the level of class-system is a dynamic model, which is both dependant on change, and which is under continuous change. There are, however, a series of forces that leads to the formation of the structure, but these are neither directly found in them nor similar in form. Tastes, cultural disposition, and different forms of capital thus define position in social space, but the positions available are structured by the underlying principles of class struggle, class differentiation, taste production, capital (both amount and internal distribution of), power over the definitions of taste and value, and class trajectory. The system is then powerful and pervasive because it masks these operations—the differentiating structure is hidden because it is the local issues that are experienced individually or by each class (with local here meant in a systemic sense).

In this, Bourdieu’s analysis points towards similar conclusions as Baudrillard’s: the focus on (in Baudrillard’s case) individual is a means for the system to hide itself and the structuring it performs (See Baudrillard 1998). This sta-
bility under the guise of change is also something that we have found as a vital part of fashion culture, which just comes to show how fashion is homologous to society and how the similarity of form makes the two quite suited to support one another (Williamson 1995). All the same, theoretically Bourdieu provides an early analysis of society as an emergent structure, even if he would not use the term and such an understanding comes from a specific interpretation of his analysis.

This defines the actual classes in many ways since the underlying system neither demands that the definitions are equitable cross-table nor that the factors that make up the definition are so. It only requires that each class is defined in relation to those closest to it. The analysis needs to focus on these underlying factors rather than on the class structure itself (if there is a difference possible to be made). As a homology, however, these class formations are not completely arbitrary, but formed from the same set of differentiating operations. What is more or less arbitrary is the ways in which the underlying structuring principles are made use of—that is, their expression in distinctive activities, tastes, and dispositions or their modulations. It is also possible that only some of the logics apply for each class and that they are differently important for their formation. Neither are they necessarily constant: “[I]n short, what the competitive struggle makes everlasting is not different conditions, but the difference between conditions” (Bourdieu, 1982, 164). This differentiating process would lead to the continuous production of more finely separated classes. However, Bourdieu’s analysis leaves little room for individuals and for agency and has a remarkably strong top-down perspective where simulation, dissemination, and what in fashion theory would be called trickle-down effects are the most important. In such a system, taken in its most strict sense, street fashion would never emerge and neither would “Nikevolution” (Klein 2005; Gunter and Inaba 2001).

Structure and Agency: Post-Modern Identities

Bourdieu’s analysis, as focused on class and class structures, can at times seem somewhat out of date, especially in light of the post-modern era, which is often celebrating the individual and the (apparent) democratisation of everything from taste to economic potentials. Bourdieu’s analysis is a strict structuralist interpretation of society. As such, it clashes with ideologies of individuals, individual choice, and individual tastes; it clashes with the ideology of consumer society. Compared to much post-modern theory, it can seem quite rigid, focusing on social structures at the expense of individual agents.

In some writings, one can even find statements that point towards it being out of date due to changes in society: in a confusion of ideal and achievements, (early) post-modern theory at times concluded that class society is no longer existent or that class is now replaced by lifestyles and individual choices—the proliferation of styles, groups, and subcultures (both seen and unseen) have been taken as a sign of a kind of equality. However, as Jameson states it:

The emergence of the “new social movements” is an extraordinary historical phenomenon that is mystified by the explanation so many post-modernist ideologies feel themselves able to propose; namely, that the new small groups arise in the void left by the disappearance of social classes and in the rubble of the political movements organized around those. How classes could be expected to disappear, save in the unique special-case scenario of socialism, has always been unclear to me; but the global restructuration of production and the introduction of radically new technologies—that have flung workers in archaic factories out of work, displaced new kinds of industry to unexpected parts of the world, and recruited work forces different from the traditional ones in a variety of features, from gender to skill and nationality—explain why so many people have been willing to think so, at least for a time. (Jameson 1991, 319)

When Castells (2004, 6-12) or Kawamura (2005, 95-98) argue that identities are now less based on class and that new media and mobility allow people to more freely form their own identities, this should not be mistaken for equality or the disappearance of classes. It is possible to argue that the emergence of lifestyles and other finer groupings in society are already suggested in the differentiating process Bourdieu argues for in Distinction—one of the effects is a continuously finer division into classes, subclasses, and groups.

I do not mean to say that there has not been a change in the rigidity of class society—both Bourdieu and Jameson notes this as well: rather I mean to say that under the guise of ideas, such as lifestyles and fashion-consciousness, there is a hierarchy of tastes and dispositions in society that in essence remains similar and at times equally strong, where one of the most powerful determinants of social position is taste, albeit expressing itself in other forms. However, since there is need to acknowledge a looser defined class system, at least on the surface level, with an often argued higher mobility and a more conscious relation to identity construction both from individuals and as demanded from society, the relation between such chosen identities and “social determinants” as habitus become an important issue.
Habitus and Performative Identities

What needs to be acknowledged, then, is agency and subject. Although social structures cannot be denied, neither can social mobility or individual choice. This is not solved by claiming that structure is the result of personal choices and nor does it say that the individual can avoid the system or overrule it. Both of these solutions to the issue tend to avoid the question rather than work with it. They are also both founded on a similar assumptions: that the two are separate—which leads to further problems when trying to discern the degree to which people can transgress or challenge the system on their own. The point is not that individuals can affect the system—it is that everyone always affect the system, and it is by this the system retains its stability. In such an understanding, the fact that everyone can affect and challenge the system is obvious and that the impact can be close to none, since everyone else also produces it. The degree of consciousness and choice in supporting this system is debatable and probably often rather low, since it is built up out of habits (Giddens 1984; Bourdieu 1984). Keeping in mind the focus of the thesis is the system as presented by the department stores, it is still interesting to understand the translations between system positions, such as habitus or class, and individual identities. This will be done in a tentative comparison between Butler’s and Bourdieu’s theories.

Setting aside for now the conflict between theories of performative identities as processes between individuals and the habitus as collective constructs and (if we are to take de Certeau’s critique to its full implication) determinant of individual taste, it is possible to simultaneously draw parallels between Bourdieu’s and Butler’s theories (letting them be representatives of two different positions). If we look at Bourdieu’s argument on what constitutes class belonging—taste and dispositions—and how these are both learned and upheld, we find that they exist to the extent that they are enacted and that they are learned not from explicit instructions, but from acculturation and indirect training:

And just as the apprentice or disciple can unconsciously acquire the rules of the art, including those that are not consciously known to the master himself, by means of a self-abandonment, excluding analysis and selection of the elements of the exemplary conduct, so too the art-lover, in a sense surrendering himself to the work, can internalize its principles of construction, without these ever being brought to his consciousness and formulated or formulable as such; and this is what makes all the difference between the theory of art and the experience of the connoisseur, who is generally incapable of stating the principles of his judgements. (Bourdieu 1984, 66)

Such lines of argument considering identity and class belonging are rather similar to Butler’s. It does, however, require some attention to how this can be and that some freedom is taken with both Bourdieu’s and Butler’s arguments. Redefining how habitus produces identities by making use of the discussion presented in Butler’s Giving an Account of Oneself (Butler 2005), one can perhaps reach an understanding of how habitus (e.g., family background) participates in the construction of the self closer to the individual that allows for personal identity and choices. Because habitus consists of a series of tastes, routines, values, and ideals, habitus would not necessarily have to be determinant in a direct manner, but rather form a set of demands and inquiries that serves to produce the self—inquiries that force the Self to define itself and around which this Self is constructed. In the home of academics, the demand of defining oneself and giving an account of one’s own position and responsibilities towards academic concerns usually comes both more often, earlier, and more naturally. The narration that forms the Self by necessity includes a relation of certain kinds to high culture and to a more involved level of the same (Butler 2005, 9-22), which is not to say that the same taste would evolve, but that a disposition is produced by constant demand of positioning.

Thus it would be neither only the family or parents, nor school, nor any other specific actor that transfers the range of values and dispositions of the habitus, but the identifying operations necessary as a result of what the environment expects the Self to give account of. Therefore, it would not be the specific accounts that would be the habitus’s contribution to the resulting identity, but the ways in which they are given and the relation they present to the enquiries: disposition is generated that belongs to the habitus even if the explicit evaluations made differ. Thus one can say that if there is an expectancy of fashion interest, that is to say, if the self is requested to give an account of its own relation to (and interest in) fashion, then the self will include the disposition to fashion forced by such inquiries into itself—and narratives of the Self and identity come not necessarily from what is lain out as expected relations, but from a production of such relations forced by inquiry.5

Such a process of identity generation via inquiries would parallel the processes of acculturation (Baudrillard 1998, 166), the indirect training of what is

5. Thus gender difference in fashion relation does not have to come from training in a traditional sense, but can just as well be constructed by differentiation in the degree to which in intention benevolent choices are put forth expecting the individual to make the choice herself or himself.
expected, what is liked, what is disliked, what is interesting, what is appalling, and so forth. It further comes from knowledge gathered indirectly from the social milieu and the interactions taking place in it, the artefacts found in it, and practices of discipline both against the self and against others, delineating what is acceptable, and what is not, where the latter is extensively analysed by for instance Foucault, and in more specifically architectural analyses for instance Bennet and Markus (Bennet 1995, 63-69; Markus 1993, 95-145). This, it must be stressed again, is not to fall into class-determinism, but to try and discern how social structures affect people on a more loose and indirect basis, which also allows for more freedom and choice for individual agents. Neither is it meant to claim that the theories used are all through reconcilable. Rather, the point is how their differences can be used constructively and to set the mainly structural discussion of the current work in perspective.

One can argue, however, that the common denominator of Butler’s, Bourdieu’s, and Foucault’s arguments primarily focuses on the same general idea: practices and how they form structures and/or identities. Butler does this by looking at how hierarchical power relations and situations in the local situation are constructed and used. Bourdieu does this by looking at how practices define classes and social structures on a macro-level. Foucault does this by looking at how practices are enforced through discipline and the exercise of power over the individual. If it is true that the mediator between structure and agency, between class and individual, is to be found primarily in practices, then such practices need to be analysed.

It is from such a point of view the current work operates—that societal structures are formed in and by practices and that they are performative. Through such practices, relations of Self to Self, Self to others, and Self to the Other, using Markus’s concepts (1993, 21-22), are produced and maintained and formative for social classes and relations. This is not to claim that I have solved the relation between structure and agency; I am fully aware that a tension remains and that the balance of influences remains unclear. Although the focus of this work is system and structure, individual choice and agency have been (and will be) used to challenge and develop the understanding of these systems and their workings and how they affect day-to-day conduct. In the end, however, the task of in-depth investigating how the structuring investigated in the current work relates to appropriation into daily life is a concern for another project.
14. SHOPPING CULTURE: IDENTITY AND SOCIAL POSITIONING

From such a perspective as presented in the previous chapter and set against the view of society as a consumer society, the question of consumption and shopping can then be re-approached in an attempt to sum up the implications of current work as compared to shopping research elsewhere. The discussion will continue to build an understanding of shopping not as acting out of pre-existent identities and needs, but as an act of social communication, negotiation, positioning, and production. A first step in this will be to scrutinize the shopping activity “in itself” before returning to the department stores, where the latter will focus more on the spatial configurations and social situations making up shopping.

I have earlier argued (chapter two) that shopping and consumption are different things. Consumption is much wider range of activities including everything from reading a book to going on a vacation travel, while shopping, as a part of such a wider range of activities, is not the same as purchase, exchange, or the simple finding and acquisition of goods. This view leads to an investigation into how identities of commodities are constructed in shopping space, how a system of categories and contexts serve to form these identities, and how each commodity is capable of assuming a wide range of different identities based on their location in this system of contexts. These contexts are defined by and formed as a response to the social situations in which they are found: seen as situations of social centrality, co-presence, seclusion, exposure, and relations between seeing and being seen. These situations, it has been found, are in no small degree produced by spatial configuration and how it guides movement, presence, gazes, and routes through shopping space, and how different means of delineating the boundaries of categories (and spaces) serve to describe their interrelations on the local level, while distances in both metric and configurative measures are used to describe substantial differentiations.

All of this has importance for shopping as a social and cultural activity; that is, how the process of shopping ought to be seen and analysed. I will sum up these implications in relation to the theoretical framework established in the previous chapter. This will be done first by re-considering questions of commodity, identity, social relations, and consumption as communication and production of these. I will also discuss how findings in this thesis interplay with and suggest support for changes of or contributions to shopping theory. Finally, I will examine how the systemic approach to the suggested shopping practice works as interface between the system of objects and tastes and individual tastes, desires, and consumption.

Commodified Social Relations: Negotiating Social Position

The overall consequence of the supposed transformation of (western) society into a consumer society, as argued by Baudrillard (1998), Castells (1996), and Jameson (1991, 1998), is that both identity and social structures are formed by what we consume rather than what we produce; that is, identity and social structures are defined by our position in the system of consumption rather than our position in the system of production. This position is formed by the economic limitations to consumption as well as expressions of tastes, preferences, lifestyles, and otherwise self-defining and communicative acts of consumption. This in how we relate to ourselves, how we position ourselves against others, and what identity and position we wish to communicate or assume in these relations—something discussed throughout but not the least in chapters two and five. This has then been completed in chapters nine through twelve and in the previous chapter. For the sake of the coming discussion, let us reiterate shortly the view of Self and the Other that this entails.

At the heart of the general argument of shopping in this thesis lies the formation of identity as a relational construct, not necessarily as lacking interiority, but with such an interiority being produced by relations to and interaction with the Other (Butler 1999, 2005; Castells 2004; Giddens 1984). This construction is then produced through different forms of communication between the Self and the Other, forming social relations of both power and bonds, which position the self in the social web and define the role it has regarding family, friends, strangers, and more abstract concepts such as state or community (Markus 1993, 22). This formulation of identity takes forms such as dispositional, expectations, tastes, and knowledges that have direct or indirect purchase on consumption or which are constructed in consumption. Consumer society further includes and is maintained by an ideology of consumption, which is an important part of maintaining its “miraculous” status (Baudrillard 1998). Free choice and individual preference and taste is celebrated and proliferation of goods and styles are argued to provide the ultimate freedom for the individual (Baudrillard 1998, 61, 72-73). Such freedom has been questioned as both economic and cultural positions, established tastes and norms, and a series of other factors have purchase on consumer choice and behaviour.

In addition, some nuance has been put on the primacy of consumption as this primacy is true to only a certain extent—at least, as it is regarded by Baudrillard, Bourdieu, Lefebvre, and Jameson, consumption is in fact limited to what is offered by the system of production. As both Baudrillard (1998, 74) and Bourdieu (1984, 41) argue, even if there is no direct purchase on demand by supply or on supply by demand, the system of production participates in the
creation of the system of demands by what it makes available and in what forms and in what quantities. The system of production is thereby constructing, in its own production of commodities, the lack of commodities. The ideology of consumption, however, disguises this dependency on production, ensuring that identity, gratification, and social position is sought via consumption.

While consumption here must be seen as a wide term, the specific analysis of the thesis has focused on the part of it which could be termed shopping: the act of going out into commercial space with or without the intention to actually buy something. Important for the discussion has been to see this as an act of production and social positioning as much as anything else. To refresh and refine this argument, the discussion can be conducted via a perspective of communication.

Consumption as Communication

One of the primary functions of consumption, one could argue, is communication—something that from the perspective of identity herein would be true also for consumption directed at self-definition or self-redefinition seeing as such a self is formed relative to others: a communication ranging from quiet negotiations of dinner decisions to explicit communication of fashion statements or of brand belonging. Thus, while it becomes clear in the more explicitly communicative consumption and shopping (such as fashion consumption), it is important for other consumption as well, such as the choice and acquisition of kitchen gear, books for the bookshelf, or where one chooses to go on vacation. Bourdieu puts it in this way:

Consumption is, in this case, a stage in a process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or a code. In a sense, one can say that the capacity to see (voir) is a function of the knowledge (savoir), or concepts, that is, the words, that are available to name visible things, and which are, as it were, programmes for perception. (Bourdieu 1984, 2)

One communicative role of consumption choices is to represent the Self (or its enlarged versions) in relation to others—that is to say, communication of social position, disposition, and taste. As discussed, the latter tend to be more important in as far as defining the objects, tastes, and identities, since their quality is a distinctive one rather than an essential one and many apparently inclusive groupings are built up on distinctive and differentiating logics, as seen in chapter five (discussing Linda Well’s editorial in Allure).

It is by these differences, objects are given meaning—or rather, it is from their position in the system of objects that meanings of individual objects are produced. It is of worth to point out that I have deviated some from Baudrillard’s concept of one total system of objects in favour of a more context or situation sensitive version where a more loose overall system of objects have different instantiations in different situations or for different people. This is not to deny an overarching system, but to say that given such a system there are also a series of instantiations of object systems serving to produce or challenge this overall system at home, in stores, in museums, and so forth.

Thus there are more reasons why shopping is a form of communication than would there be a consciously communicative intent behind it, which it can be seriously questioned if there is in all or even most shopping (D. Miller 1998, 65-72). As Baudrillard points out, the fact is that we more and more are forced to choose (not between not shopping or shopping) between different products that are in most respects the same—that is, objects between which the only difference is their secondary (aesthetic or symbolic) qualities. When we buy a spoon, a car, a TV, or a sweater, our choice of object cannot be made based on either need or utility, but by necessity becomes as an enactment of taste. As such, this choice communicates our taste, and indirectly our ideas of who we are. Such ranges of choice are presented and suggested by the stores in how they arrange commodities relative to one another and what they present as different.

The point to be made here is that this produces consumption and shopping as a communicative act whether communication is intended or not and whether the one performing the consumption is aware of it or not (Lefebvre 1991, 140-147). In relation to this, Daniel Miller makes an important point when he criticises much shopping literature for being too concerned with the self-indulgent, narcissistic fulfilment of personal desires—but, at the same time, he fails to recognize the important communicative act and identifying process of, to use his example, continuously buying the same ketchup bottle as “my family always have bought”, which is a reproduction of family bonds and traditions (D. Miller 1998). Not the least, it reproduces the idea of family and the importance of family history and unity. This is a criticism to which I will return shortly; the discussion now turns to shopping as production.

Communication as Construction

While consumption both is communication and can be done with communication as part-purpose, arguments around consumption as communication risk to subscribe to a view of consumption as a passive (or possibly reactive or narcissistic) activity. Contrary to such an idea, consumption is neither only a passive activity nor necessarily a consciously self-identifying process, but also a process that on several levels serves to define the Self and its en-. 
labeled modulations. Thus consumption is a kind of production, which is and has long been parallel to what traditionally has been called production:

In reality, a rationalized, expansionist, centralized, spectacular and clamorous production is confronted by an entirely different kind of production, called “consumption” and characterized by its rules, its fragmentation (the result of circumstances), its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi-invisibility, since it shows itself not in its own products (where would it place them?) but in an art of using those imposed on it. (de Certeau 1984, 31)

There are several ways in which such a production could be understood to be performed, which in general would be ascribing different degrees of freedom for the individual. On one side of such a scale would be to entirely subscribe to the individual system, where the system would determine both available choices and the choices made by individuals. With certain interpretations of Baudrillard and Bourdieu such a view could be read in their theories. On the other side, the individual has a range of objects from which to freely choose and to construct a meaning and identity, which from certain views could be read in de Certeau’s or Underhill’s arguments. Both these positions are unreasonable and to some extent both interpretations would be misreading the theories even if they do point to the positions taken by the authors.

All the same, if consumption and shopping is in part a means of communication, this in itself makes it a process of production—production of which it purports to communicate. In case this communication is an identity, then the communication, directly or indirectly, constructs this identity and so is the process of consumption that constitutes this communication. This is somewhat in opposition to Daniel Miller’s A Theory of Shopping (1998). Miller argues that consumption is primarily about defining one’s relation to others, and in much about defining relations that are of the nature of bonds. However, while this has important implications, it does not change the meaning of commodities being a primarily distinctive one, and neither does it deny shopping as production of identity. It does, however, point to how much of consumption must be understood not as explicit and intended identity construction, but an indirect production via definition of social relations that for many would not be perceived as about defining the self.

In chapter two I argue that this to some extent is based on an idea of identity, identity creation, and desire that all of those he opposes would not share. For instance, it leans towards an essentialist (almost Freudian) idea of desire as something produced in and by the self, which exists first and then is responded to by a shopping act. It further sees “buying for a family member” as not being part of creating an identity. Thus, while Miller does have important points (not the least of which is in how consumption must be nuanced to a social activity with friends and family), bonds are important. All the same, shopping for identity does not have to mean self-indulgence, and even if he does not consider it so himself, thrift—the idea of buying only what is necessary and trying to save money—is in itself an identity producing behaviour.

However, another important point of Miller’s analysis is the way in which shopping, consumption, and commodities serve to not only represent relations, but they are directly formative of them in the explicit or implicit negotiations of gifts, shared artefacts, generosity, and so forth, which serves to communicate, negotiate, and produce relations between people and continuously both monitor and develop them in direct ways (D. Miller 1998, 114-122, 137-148).

There is still one important point when discussing shopping and consumption as a form of construction, especially regarding identity construction, and this in regards to Butler’s discussion in Giving an Account of Oneself (2005). If we scrutinize the argument thus far, on the inherent communicative function of objects in consumer society, the degree to which choice of objects-as-signs is forced, and the way through which the range of such choice is produced in the shopping situation, then yet another important issue arises: the demand of choice is imposed on the subject by the system. That is, in forcing a choice, the system of objects poses an interpellation on the shopping subject, demanding an account of taste and values, and requesting an identity that can be enacted in the choice and acquisition of objects—we can say that by forcing the subject to choose, the subject as having disposition, taste, and preferences is not only expected, but produced. The practice of shopping is thus producer not only of identity, but also of the configuration and composition of identities, and what dispositions and self-narratives need be included therein. In this is included, which is of note, a construction of the self as shopper and consumer.

Thus consumption as communication and construction of self and social relations is not necessarily limited to actively communicative shopping of fashion or lifestyle commodities, but all consumption as soon as there is choice involved, thus such choice is, to use Bourdieu’s words, an enactment of taste. Too far-reaching implications of the hedonistic/narcissistic process of consumption or shopping need be scrutinized and set in a proper context of continuous taste and value production and not the least communicative and productive element of any action, regardless of whether the actor is aware of it or not—as Lefebvre argues (Lefebvre 1991, 140-147). The question remains: What is shopping?

Shopping Practice: Systemic Construction

Thus far, I have mainly restated the argument presented in chapter two and elaborated on in later chapters. These questions remain: How this has evolved? What more specifically has been found? What implications does this have for the un-
derstanding of shopping as an activity? These questions will need to be based on a few different discussions on the found behaviour and the material of other research such as that of Daniel Miller (1998), Miller, et alii (1998), Underhill (2000, 2004), and Hollbrook (2005).

The first two keys to understand shopping seems to lie in discarding notions of goal-oriented shoppers and power of brands or individual commodities. There are findings in this thesis that support such a claim. It has also been argued for by for instance Underhill (2000, 2004) and Becker, et alii in their work Passager (Eng. “Passageworks”, 2001). It can also be found in the general argument of the project nature of human behaviour argued for (see chapter nine). Simply put, Underhill notes that more and more of our choices are made in the store itself (Underhill 2000, 161-182), on site as we shop, and the findings in this thesis support this by giving little to no support for goal-oriented patterns of moving and browsing (see chapters nine and ten).

Aside from making the shop important for what sells, I argue this has implications for how shopping is performed. I will, at this point, present an important point that has to me grown clear during the project, and which more or less grows out of the material already presented, which has to do with the nature of shopping and which can be traced in John Clammer’s observation that

[…] a great deal of shopping appears to be what used to be called ‘window shopping’, that culminates with a small purchase, or the purchase of something that one did not intend to buy, or simply ends in a coffee-house. The act of just going out, to see, be seen, to see what is new, is an important form of recreation and even exercise. (Clammer 1992, 202)

In short, what I claim is that not only is purchase not a necessary part of shopping, but rather, it is not part of shopping at all. When a purchase is made, when goods and money change hands, shopping has ended—or even, once selection is made and the shopper has shifted into a buyer, then shopping as such may well already be over. This, of course, demands some explanation as to what shopping in such a case is and why such a claim can be made.

Window Shopping and Acculturation

One of the more important means through which culture and the system of objects are appropriated and internalized, according to Baudrillard, is acculturation. Acculturation is, in short, the way we through advertising, shop-windows, fashion magazines, store arrangements, television, radio, and so forth, are trained in the meaning and role of objects in society, both as consumption objects and as relative one another (1998). It is by acculturation we learn that suit and tie belongs together and that white socks do not go with black shoes and a dark, striped suit (at least not currently). We are taught that suits are for men, skirts for women, that fashion follows cycles, and that flat screen indeed is far much better than a tube TV. This acculturation is not really about learning about a brand, a suit, an object or a style—it is about gradual training in the overall system, learning the status, role and meaning of commodities, groups of commodities, and lifestyles and personalities connected to them.

This process of acculturation is, as we can see, not far from Bourdieu’s discussion about taste: it is the indirect training that has the greater effect and greater validity. In such a situation, the need to express identity on the site of shopping increases, since the desired life must be traceable in the shopping situation directly for the actual link between desire and commodity to be made. It is not enough to pound a message through advertising and then expect this message to linger all the way through the shopping process and end up in a selection of the advertised brand no matter what: this is evident in both the analysis above and in the growth and proliferation of brand stores, which lead to the flagship stores of the most powerful brands.

These situating practices, which the stores are, then serve to continue this acculturation, this aesthetic training, in a process serving to differentiate lifestyles, brands, and objects, as well as to produce relations of what goes together and what does not, tying these to people and identities. Indirectly, this both depends on as well as produces and reproduces social structure. The more this can be done without awareness of this structure the better. Stores, advertising, fashion and lifestyle magazines, and so forth all participate in an aesthetic training of the public, which is not at all limited to offering a range of goods for choice, but rather purports to construct the field of possibilities, the semiotic system of difference, in which then the individual can navigate and find a position that more or less fits with the social position and identity the individual feels he or she belongs to although this identity is constructed in consumption. These positions are differential and exclusive, and by their nature they produce structures.

6. The importance of brands and commercials was questioned already by Baudrillard who, twenty years before Underhill, stated that the power of the brand name is waning, already stated that at a certain point of saturation, when there are too many brands for a brand to rise above the noise, when there are too many commercials, ads, stores and claims of brands trying to make their way into our heads, then the brand name and advertising will lose direct purchase on consumption and, following, to a higher degree work in such indirect ways of producing desires for lives (lifestyles), and then tie the commodities to such suggested lives (Baudrillard 1998). Indeed, as Williamson argues, what advertising does is not selling us things, but lives (Williamson 1995).
One of the more influential parts of shopping is continuous training of tastes. This, while possibly perceived otherwise, is also what is done actively in window-shopping: it serves little purpose but to gather information of the range of objects for sale, their positions in the cultural system, and thus negotiating possible desires and availabilities together with habitus and wanted social position or lifestyles, ambitions, change, and so forth. With spring and fall fashion—and of late more and more parts of such a fashion cycle (Karimzadeh 2006)—people go out shopping not necessarily to update their wardrobe but to learn (and negotiate) the changes in the fashion system and how it is to be appropriated into everyday practice of dressing. This includes testing the system through fantasies of ownership, of wearing, of challenging, or combining, which depending on mood and economic circumstances may lead to a purchase. The practice of shopping is about this acculturation, aesthetic training, and negotiation between self and system.

Constructing the System of Selection: A World in Front of the Work
There is still some need to analyse the process of aesthetic training in the system of values that is represented by the arrangement of objects. Naturally, there is one part of it which consists of the more direct forms of expressions, which comes from cultural codes and everyday practice of dressing and use of objects—that is, by seeing who uses what, who wears what, and who does what a continuous training of what suits whom is constructed. This is, as we have seen, also performed in the stores and in relation to the world outside (chapter six; Chua 1992). It is also something that is not revolutionary to shopping theory. But the argument is going a bit further in stating that it is not only the most local questions of placing things that go together next to one another or combining clothes on a doll and presenting them; shopping is also a question of construction of a system. That is to say, the process of shopping, up to and also in selection, is not about choice or finding something suiting oneself, but rather of understanding the system and how it is to be appropriated into everyday practice of dressing. This includes testing the system through fantasies of ownership, of wearing, of challenging, or combining, which depending on mood and economic circumstances may lead to a purchase. The practice of shopping is about this acculturation, aesthetic training, and negotiation between self and system.

Standing the logic of the system of objects, with the local, contextual, or particular instantiations of the shopping space(s) one uses; a system that in the end may or may not have positions, which are homologous to the social position that a shopper has or strives for. The actual purchase or desire of a commodity depends on finding something that either by urban location, by local context, or by position in a larger system corresponds to a social role. Strategies to achieve this may be many; many of them are related to spatial distribution of commodities.

If the above is correct, then to understand this system is not about mapping it out in its entirety, which there is no use in claiming shoppers do neither in Debenhams nor in Åhlens. On the contrary, the argument is that they do not and especially not to great detail. What is constructed by use of a range of different clues is a logic of the system: a way to understand the distribution, the different contexts, branches, and categories, how to relate situations to one another, and what is presented as being for whom to consume, built upon actual knowledge of only parts. By use of such clues, a “world in front of the work” is developed, a world that contains the underlying logic of distribution without making it explicit, and that serves as a base for interpretation of the store, its categories, and its commodities (Koch 2004, Ricoeur 1981). Only when such a logic is produced can an actual choice be made.

Hence I do not believe shopping can be understood from the elementary interfaces of wanting (desiring), choosing (finding), and buying (acquiring)—at least not in a simplified sense and as a process coming in that order. First, it would suggest an old school Freudian view of desire, where desire exists in the Ego before the actual acquisition (the shopping) and more or less independent on context (Ferguson 1992). Second, it suggests that the choosing and inventorying is made once a shopper has the desire and that the taxonomy of commodities consists of stable, consistent, and coherent classes in which a shopper can inventory “the selection of teakettles” (Penn 2005). Third, it suggests that the identities of commodities are inherent in the objects themselves and that the same shirt would be interpreted the same way regardless of context. Fourth, analysing shopping through the interface of buying simplifies consumption and shopping into a not necessarily crucial event. Retail strategy today is actually much concerned with minimising the actual event of buying—the situation where the shopper needs to part from her or his money (Underhill 2000). It is difficult to conclude from this any simple definition of shopping
and—"drives", "desires", or "reasons"; such an evaluation would risk obscuring the complexity of the shopping activity. Still, I will try to present a view of shopping.

First, shopping, as any social act, serves to construct identity and social relations, both through what is consumed and through the act itself. As such, it is relational and choice of commodity is based on perceived positions of the commodities in a system of objects conceivable as signs. Second, this means that rather than being defined before the shopping act the objects or range of objects in question are defined by their relative position in the store, shopping mall, or city in question. Third, commodities form identity as much as categories and groups as individually, drawing on each other, and differentiating from other categories. Such relational systems help in understanding how the "same" commodity can sell in one store and not in another. Fourth, the range of identities suggested by the store is not decisive for the final choice of identification of the customer, but serves as basis, or map, from which a negotiation takes place that in the end leads to a choice of commodity—or to a choice of no commodity. Finally, as different from consumption and purchase, I suggest that shopping is primarily about an interpretation of the configuration of commodities at hand forming identities and categories available to which different approaches are possible.

Naturally, this is to some extent an open system: no one is forced to follow what it suggests. It is possible to not find something that fits one's identity or to resist the suggested range of identities in favour of constructing one's own (Castells 2004). This relation between system and individual is returned to below. Furthermore, there is of course a cultural coding of commodities outside of shopping, which will affect both how they are met in the store and how they are dealt with after. The point now is the importance of shopping as a construction and interpretation of the system of commodities from which to consume and from which to confirm and/or produce one's identity and relations.

The absurdity of the situation, however, is that once we have gone through the analysis and once we have understood the activity in this way, one can raise the question whether shopping is a good term to use or if it would be beneficial to work with a more general term for such a practice that can be used more comfortably by libraries, museums, department stores, malls, and so forth, without claiming that going to a library is shopping. There is a danger in a conclusion where shopping is allowed to serve as basis for such a more general set of practices in that marketing or retail strategies then could be assumed to be what libraries or society in general should be about. My point in the current thesis is the opposite: shopping must be understood as a sub-practice of a wider range of activities of consumption-and-production that share the common properties of being about social positioning and structuring qua space, commodity, and spatial practice and analysed and understood as socially structuring procedures. In short, we ought to work with shopping through such filters as we do museum and library visits rather than the other way around.

Agency and System: Acculturation and Individual Choice

Everything suggest that the differentiating system of consumption is a powerful tool for demarcating (1) categories of needs within the consumer himself which now have but the remotest of relationships with the person as a living whole; and (2) categories—or "status groups"—within society overall which can be identified by means of some particular set of objects. Hierarchies of products and objects thus come to play precisely the same role as that formerly played by a range of distinct values: they become the basis, in short, of the group's ethos. (Baudrillard 1996, 190)

As noted several times before, assuming a one-to-one relation between the value system of the department stores and that of their customers is risky at best and denies the agency and personal tastes and preferences of the customers, consumers, or browsers. Taken too far, it also tends to suggest that the department store (and its system) has too much power over the individual commodity and its use in the practice of everyday life. In addition, it makes the subject a slave to the system. While not denying such power all out, my argument is not meant to suggest that the department stores impose direct or deterministic rules for how the sold commodities are used or valued, but they work as indirect processes of aesthetic training.

To understand what this means, however, it may be of use to further discuss the relation between suggested values and individual adoption even though that is not the focus of the thesis. It is also important since it again questions some assumptions often made in retail or shopping theory, which has to do with what is considered important, valuable, of high quality, and status defining and what is consumed in everyday shopping.

Evaluation and Acquisition

This 'bracketing off' of the world beyond the text is a deliberate epistemological and methodological stance taken by structuralists, who claim that we cannot know the world beyond its representations. This stance effectively displaces the idea of embodiment and the individual and can give us no account of experience or agency. It therefore tells us nothing about what sense people make of fashion, what pleasures it affords, or how fashion structures the experience of dress and the clothing decisions made in everyday life. (Entwistle 2000, 70)

One of the perhaps biggest problems in analysing the system of values and its cultural impact that by and large is at the heart of much retail theory is the link between taste, acquisi-
tion, and evaluation. Customers are often considered to buy what they want, and thus value what they buy as “the best.” Direct links between what is considered to be good and what is bought are made. At times, statistics interpreted in this way are used to “prove” how little popular taste and “elite” or “professional” taste coincides. When looked at a bit closer, however, it proves to be a more difficult question. As with desire, acculturation does not directly influence singular or individual choices but form hierarchies of quality and taste that are widely spread and communicated (Baudrillard 1996, 166-167), but not into direct purchases or desires as much as into everyday evaluation and social structures. What this proposes is closely related to recent findings in consumer research, such as in an investigation of the relation between elite and popular taste by Morris B. Holbrook (2005, 75-86). Holbrook’s analysis clearly shows the complexity of the relation between “professional judgements” and “popular taste”, which may help to provide a key for how acculturation and fashion dissemination works and how come there may be discrepancies between fashion trends and what is sold within the upkeep of the fashion system:

Specifically, in the case of motion pictures evaluated in a real world setting, it appears that—consistent with the Dignity-of-the-Common-Person Hypothesis (DCPH) and reflecting aspects of “good taste”—films judged as high in worth by professional critics tend to receive positive evaluations from ordinary consumers. However, consistent with the significant-but-weak or “little taste” phenomenon, the relationship between ordinary evaluations and popular appeal is only moderately positive so that the overall relationship between expert judgements and popular appeal remains quite modest. (Holbrook 2005, 85)

8. This follows both from the magazine discourse of personalisation and from the hedonistic and rational consumer discussion as long as the relation is set up as a choice made by an individual for the commodity that best suits the personality of the one the buy is intended for, be it oneself or (as Miller suggests being the most common) for a closely related. Such a discourse, as noted above, avoids both the arbitrariness of the system of objects (Baudrillard, Foucault), the contextuality of their character (both in the shopping situation and in their intended use; Baudrillard; Kwon; Entwistle), the habitus and social context of the consumer (Baudrillard; Miller), the different modes of thrift possible to make use of in the shopping situation (Miller; Giddens), which in itself also allows for choices that deviate from perceived quality or suitability for factors such as social belonging, mood of the day, perceived status of oneself, negotiations between standing out and belonging, approval of audience-in-absentia (Chua), and so forth, and the distinctive character of identity and meaning (Barthes; Baudrillard; Bourdieu).

What differentiates Holbrook’s analysis from the more common ones is the way he makes use of two operations: a comparison between expert judgement and ordinary evaluation made by consumers; and a comparison between ordinary evaluation results and popular appeal, somewhat equitable to actual consumption. The correlation, somewhat surprisingly it may seem, is higher between expert and ordinary evaluation \( r=0.841 \) than between ordinary evaluation and popular appeal \( r=0.225 \), whereas it shows that ordinary evaluation mediate between expert judgement and popular appeal (Holbrook 2005, 83-85). That is, expert taste is transferred to consumers in how they evaluate quality—what makes a “good” movie—but not into what movies people choose to see or perhaps like. In Lefebvre’s terms, there is a discrepancy between what is perceived and what is lived. Thus, only to a small degree do consumption figures respond to transference of taste and aesthetic hierarchies. Consumption is also modulated by prices, availability, rarity, and a number of other factors—a suggestion that is supported by Baudrillard’s distinction between systemic and individual desire.

Whereas as the acculturation process, the training of the tastes, and aesthetics of people through media (such as magazines, ads, stores, display windows, films) have a strong influence on what people consciously would perceive of as in fashion or of good quality or simply to be good, the impact on what is bought would be less direct. The wording weak but significant correlation shows just that: there is a decided influence of professional taste on popular consumption, but that the impact is rather difficult to perceive. What Holbrook’s paper does not discuss is how time might factor in such a process. Could popular taste lag behind professional taste, making popular appeal correlate to expert judgement with a displacement in time? This would be the assumption of trickle down theory of fashion (Kawamura 2005, 73-83), which works under the assumption of a fashion elite setting trends, which are then slowly trickled down in society and only after it has already passed as a trend in the fashion elite reaches everyday dress. This may have been valid but is, as Kawamura notes, not easily said in the case today (Kawamura 2005, 98).

In relation, such a trickle down theory Holbrook’s claims provide at least tentative keys to the problematic opposition made between everyday dress and the system of fashion: without the intermediary of ordinary evaluation, lived and perceived risk being confused, there may appear to be less agreement on the general system of values if one looks to popular fashion consumption, but might be much more if one were to instead investigate what people find as trendy or “in fashion”. Perhaps, Holbrook’s findings help understand why, as claimed by Castells, resistance strategies used by many sub- and youth-cultures (Entwistle 2000) can function while depending on acknowledgement of ideals and values provided by the general system that is to be opposed, and thus, contradictory to intention, tend to support or even strengthen them (Castells 2004). In the end, as Klein describes, the resistance
strategies are transformed by the fashion system into “lifestyles” and incorporated as part of the fashion production and continues living on said image of resistance from within the system itself (Klein 2005, 63-86, 102-105).

The Situated of Practice of Dressing

Mirabelle wears her tight maroon knee-length skirt over low heels and a smart white sweater that sets off her blunt-cut nut-brown hair. Loki and Del Rey aren’t here yet, and Mirabelle has the annoying thought that they might not show. It wouldn’t be the first time they’d left her stranded. As Mirabelle never shows her distress, it is assumed she is fine in all circumstances and Loki and Del Rey never figure that their failure to show is really a thoughtless ditching. She gets a plastic cup of wine and does the thing she always does at these openings, something so odd that it sets her apart from all the others. She looks at the paintings. It is a perfect disguise. Holding the wine dictates her posture so she doesn’t have to think about where to put her hands, and the pictures on the walls give her something to focus on while she stands sentry for Loki and Del Rey.

Twenty minutes later, the two women appear, snag Mirabelle, and head two blocks up to Fire, an avant-garde gallery—or at least on that thinks it is. This opening has more of the party atmosphere that everyone is looking for, and some of the revelers have even spilled out onto the street. For Liki and Del Rey, this is the warm-up party for their final landing spot, the Reynaldo Gallery. The Reynaldo Gallery, representing the big money artists, is set in the heart of Beverly Hills and needs the prettiest girls and the most relevant people to populate their openings. After getting enough alcohol at the Fire Gallery to hold them—they know the bar at Reynaldo’s will be impossible—they drive into Beverly Hills, park and lock, and cross Santa Monica Boulevard to the gallery. They push their way in and finally slink through the crowd and into the heart of the matter. The party needs a volume control but there isn’t one, and everyone would be straining to hear each other except they are all talking simultaneously. Loki and Del Rey decide to brave the tumult at the bar, and at first Mirabelle hangs loosely by them, but eventually the chaos separates them and she finds herself in the vacant narrow rim that circles the room between the crowd and the paintings. Only this time she is less intent on the pictures and more intent on who and what is going on in the room. In a sea of black dresses, she is the only one wearing any color, and she is the only one wearing almost no makeup, including the men. Her eyes scan the room and spot several celebrities dressed in the latest nomad/wanderer fashion and several very handsome men who have learned to give off the seductive impression that they would be consummate fathers. (Martin 2001, 23-24)

Both Entwistle’s and Kawamura’s works are unclear as to the relation between practice and perception although they both (and especially Entwistle) provide valuable insights about fashion promotion and individual choice. Especially for Kawamura, there is a strong emphasis on the free choice that supposedly has emerged in the western world in the course of the 20th century, which would allow one to construct one’s own representation by use of the combinatory system of fashion. This is a problematic claim taken at face value, and somewhat is what Miller would call journalistic analysis (consumption as hedonism or for self-fulfilment), whereas it can be said that

[…] when talking about individuality and identity and the role played by fashion and dress it is important to recognize that identities are socially meaningful. The individual may want to ‘stand out’ but she or he also wants to ‘fit in’ with a group. (Entwistle 2000, 139)

This means that what is sold depends on navigating the shopping context to find what is perceived as “me” or “us”, which somewhat corresponds to Bourdieu’s habitus (Bourdieu 1984, 101-112), which may or may not be modulated somewhat “upwards” in the social hierarchy—a habitus that may change depending on daily mood and certainly does depending on which context the commodity is thought to be put in use. Thus, the characterisation of one thing as “hip” and another as “high status” may serve to bolster sales on the other end of the fashion hierarchy depending on who is buying. It is, for example, highly possible that the presence of Hugo Boss and Lacoste makes a choice to buy Åhlens and Espirit seem like a choice of thrift in a more profound way than would it have otherwise.

9. Changing habituses of either people or things—and especially the former—depending on situation or mood is not something that easily conforms to Bourdieu’s theories; it is one of the liberties taken with the analysis he performed in order to give greater room for the subject to construct its own identity and for the situation to have influence.
Such suggestions do not claim that the individual cannot deviate from perceived or lived habitus or consciously “go against the grain” of the suggested system (Stevenson, Jackson, and Brooks 2000). The main point to be made here is that the use of sales figures to understand the cultural influence of advertising or retail strategies is a blunt instrument that might even give false results. Sales figures and hierarchical status do not inherently coincide. Neither do they necessarily oppose one another as the popular distinction between fine and mass culture suggests. Furthermore, the notion that trends are set exclusively at the top of the social strata is only valid (if it ever was) after some modulation, including the acceptance of social change and of a disperse range of hierarchies within the social structure. Or, as Entwistle puts it:

However, without accepting the proposition that fashions develop at the top or that emulation is the key motivation of fashion, one can still argue that what is ‘fashionable’ or in today’s parlance, ‘trendy’ or ‘hip’, has always to be differentiated from the mainstream. Once a style becomes widely adopted, it is no longer different, and thus no longer ‘hip’. At any one time, one or more group may be associated with ‘hip’ and be responsible for setting a trend. Today this group is often likely to come from the street, from youth subcultures rather than from an elite at the ‘top’ of the social strata. Fashionability thus depends upon distinction or differentiation which, once copied universally, is negated. (Entwistle 2000, 117)

Although not strongly correlating rarity with hip, they are definitely interdependent. If authenticity and rarity are considered valuable or discerned, there is a somewhat negative correlation between amount of solid goods and place in the cultural hierarchy (which goes for most subcultures as well that often are directed against anything that can be labelled mass culture). Again, claims of unicity, originality, distinction, and rarity are valued and used to propel a style into fashion although only to work against it once it, in retail terms, succeeds, becoming widely adopted and sold. Any assumptions made based on one leading to the other is, however, as likely to be wrong as right: part of the key to this lies in how individuals choose to adopt or resist the range of identities for sale. The actual consumption of commodities is thus to some extent disassociated from the system of values—at times even negatively correlated—which is why sales figures are not necessarily a valuable instrument in understanding the cultural production of retail and shopping and perhaps even less so in the context of singular department stores or shopping malls.

What the process of acculturation allows is thus, as Williamson states, a similarity of systems between the department stores as differential, hierarchical systems, the fashion or commodity systems, and the social system, which allows for translations to be made between different contexts and between the different systems. In such a translation process, both translator and situation influence choice. What it further indicates is that the shopping process is much a process of finding oneself “at home” somewhere since how “natural” the wearing of the chosen clothes seems is one of the most important factors for whether it is accepted or not (Bourdieu 1984).

Perhaps here is where a key to the discrepancy between perceived and lived (ordinary evaluation and popular appeal) are found. Although one may know what is supposed to be seen as good, what is in fashion, or what is trendy, this does not mean that one wishes to be so or feel comfortable with it. The trendsetters and fashion hierarchies do not mean everyone (currently) tries to reach as high within such a hierarchy as possible. Just as clothing is a situated practice (Entwistle 2000), it comes from Baudrillard’s and Bourdieu’s discussions that so are interior design and furnishing of the home—the choice of commodities that are used to create the “personal” space of the living room or apartment. And just as any such system, as Lefebvre points out, it can be consciously used or not and manipulated to say what one wishes to say should have the knowledge. Whereas Lefebvre goes so far as to speak of objects that lie, there are other nuances to take into consideration, which run contrary to the discourse of the hedonistic seduction of fashion and self-expression and which must also be taken into consideration in a time where “authenticity” and “individuality” are heralded as everyone’s must such that “[f]ashion then provides a surface which is partly expressive, but which also in part protects individuals from having to expose their taste in public” (Kawamura 2005, 96).

When discussing identity and fashion, even as something that is constructed in the shopping process and by the department stores, the identity or Self shopped for is always one placed in a context extrinsic to the shopping: in a social situation and a practical context outside of the shopping activity itself (Chua 1992). Furthermore, the context outside of the store has more impact on the individual object or set of objects in their situated practical use. This, as discussed earlier, perhaps especially when it comes to fashion as not only what, but what configurative combinations (Kawamura 2005) and perhaps most of all the how to dress and wear clothes are of immense importance for how clothing is perceived (Entwistle 2000). The identities of commodities are thus, once bought and used, highly susceptible to change — and will do so continuously during their lifetime. This is not what is at stake in the analysis herein.
15. THE DEPARTMENT STORE: A STRUCTURING OF SITUATIONS

Having reviewed the implications of the current work in as far as shopping in general is concerned, it is now time to return to the department stores both as type and as the specific instances analysed. In the overall conclusion on space of the thesis, this chapter focuses more on the particular department stores analysed, while the next chapter will take a more theoretical approach on space. As for the empirical material, the focus of this chapter will be the findings that have emerged rather than the material itself: through the thorough analysis of chapters five through twelve, the empirical material have been scrutinized and analysed in detail, leading to a series of observations, which have implications for how the department stores in question work as spaces and how the public space of department stores in general work.

The attention can thus be turned to the space of the department stores, the different ways it participates in producing contexts, categories, and systems of commodities, and how it structures movement, being, gazes, and presences into social situations, which together generate systems of values participating in social and cultural (re)production—and, hence, not their efficiency or success as retail spaces. The focus, more precisely, will be on space as structures of and structuring relations. From such a perspective, the analysis posits questions of meaning: not of the authored meaning of an architect or a manager, but of the process and whole of the department stores as they are made use of in daily life (Koch 2004; Lefebvre 1991; Ricoeur 1981). As public spaces, to the extent that they are such, they serve as places of negotiation of public culture and of the value system of the societies in which they are situated (Zukin 1995).

The argument of the current work is that there are similarities between department stores and libraries both historically and morphologically in how they structure practices by controlling interfaces between the public and things—in one case commodities, in the other literature. In many ways there is also a link to museums, even if the latter is concerned with a partly different kind of interface. The three emerged in the same period and followed (and still follow) similar spatial strategies of control and exposure, of guiding movement and seeing, and of communicating values, which as Bennet argues is no coincidence but a step in the shift from societies of control of disciplinary societies (Bennet 1995, 89-108). Cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, and art also provide a model for fashion and fashion retail (Rendell 2000b). This is not said in order to equate the three types, but rather to point to historical and programmatical links as well as similarities in spatial and morphological strategies, which makes it interesting to compare them. Thus the conclusions will draw both on the findings of the current work and on those of the previous licentiate (Koch 2004).

It will in the coming discussion be a difficult balance maintained between discussing the types department store and library and the cases of empirical research—a tension that comes from the loose connection between type and implementation (Koch 2004, Markus 1993). Although statements are made about department stores and libraries in general, these need be taken for what they are even if founded not only on the findings of the ongoing research but additionally on findings or implications of other works (M. Miller 1981; Markus 1993; Lancaster 1995; Bennet 1995; Nava 1996).

This conclusion will follow the general disposition of the thesis in that it will first approach the system of commodities as constructed in and by the department stores to move on to discussing the emerging social situations to finally sum up these in a discussion of how department store space works as producer of ideas and values (by use and interplay of the former two as guided by space).

A System of Constructive Context

The second part of the thesis, chapters five through eight, focused on how the department stores construct ranges of categories, which simultaneously are based on and produce identities of commodities (seeing as the latter undeniably are endowed with certain meanings in a general cultural context). How is this done? What categories are created? How do these categories give their character or identity in the larger context? The main operation of this analysis was the study of department stores as contexts and as systems of contexts where the contexts are given identity in interplay with the commodities in them and their relations to the other contexts in the department stores. These contexts are distinct spatial and constructed by relations of contingent intervisibility, separated by boundaries of stronger or weaker character, and more fleeting or definite (linear or painterly) to further be connected into narratives separated into branches, formed into series, trees, or networks, or juxtaposed to one another. Following is an attempt to summarise and analyse these contexts from a spatial point of view, which may leave part of the analysis out in favour of a more concentrated discussion. The point is to sum this up and draw a general conclusion regarding department stores and their role in society, setting a stage for the coming conclusion of the thesis in the final chapter.

The Formation of Categories: Principles of Contextuality

One of the primary operations of the department stores, it has been demonstrated, is the ordering of things into a comprehensible system in which is included a construction of a range of categories. While informed by more or less culturally established categories outside of the stores, this process has been understood as continu-
uously at work and dependant on both what possibilities space offers and what commodities are available to work with. The construction itself tends to be based on the use of clustering and separation by different means: in the simplest case, it could be likened to the use of storage boxes or bookcases where each box is filled with things that somewhat are judged as belonging together and so in ways that are for some reason more important than other possible gatherings of the objects. It can even be argued that it is in this sorting that the belonging is constructed. However, there are some issues to consider:

This can only be explained if we radically abandon the individual logic of satisfaction and accord the social logic of differentiation the decisive importance it deserves. And if we distinguish that logic of difference from mere conscious determinations of prestige, since these latter are still _satisfactions_, the consumption of _positive differences_, whereas the sign or mark of distinction is always both a positive and a negative difference—this is why it refers on indefinitely to other signs and impuls the consumer to a definitive dissatisfaction. (Baudrillard 1998, 63)

While the apparent process here is one of inclusion—things that belong together are placed together—the operation is one of differentiation: certain things are gathered together because they are similar in ways that are different from how they are similar to others, and this _difference_ allows them to form categories. This is especially true in a society where the proliferation of items have grown to such an extent that the base of choice is based rather on symbolic qualities than use value (Baudrillard 1996). The point is that this differentiation process is at work in the department stores as choices of belonging and separations are made and given expression by spatial distribution. It is the results of this distribution that have been scrutinized in the current work and lead to a series of conclusions.

First, it can be seen how spatial organisation is used to construct categories by what can be called _proximity_ and _intervisibility_—by commodities being placed close to one another and by how they are either seen simultaneously or one can be seen from the position of the other. The ordering follows certain basic spatial conditions that tend to be relations of visual character (Figure 15.1 below). This can then be modulated by availability, but for the formation of categories properties of visibility seem to be of prime importance.10 This can be seen in how cosmetics or clothes of a brand (or other category such as type or style) are placed _next to_ one another or on shelves _facing_ one another. Such strategies of facing can then be used to produce complex categories, so that, as an example, Yves St Laurent, Shisheido, Elisabeth Arden, and Dior form a category together with both cosmetics in general and jewellery although there is no direct link between other cosmetics such as Revlon, Maybelline, DeCleor, Lumene or L’Oreal and jewellery. Thus, Shisheido is both part of a _cosmetics_ category together with other cosmetics, and part of a _luxury_ category together with jewellery—which, through this overlap, also defines Shisheido as _luxury_ cosmetics. This allows for a series of overlapping categories where the most stringent ones could be said to form _convex spaces_ in which “all” walls face one another in a comparatively non-dubious way.

This formation of categories is not performed based on a taxonomy of pre-defined positions—neither in department stores nor in libraries or bookcases. While culturally established norms and categories exist, the sorting encountered in the department stores is produced by practice, which can be described as _categorising operations_ (Foucault 2003b). That is, what is the foundation of the order is not a range of categories but a range of priorities of what characteristics are to serve as a base for the formation of these categories, such as _brand, status, gender, type_, and _use_. These are performative operations rather than categories, and which operations are given precedence is constantly renegotiated from situation to situation. The emerging categories can always individually be argued for rationally, and similar operations can be found in most situations even if the emergent whole is less easily described. We can see that fragrances tend to be sorted _first_ into type, _second_ after gender, _third_ after brand. Furthermore, these brands are ordered after _status_. Fashion, on the other hand, is sorted by gender first, and then after brand, lifestyle, or type in varying order. They are all structured into _status hierarchies and positions in the fashion system_. At times, the sorting of fashion includes _age group_ or _body shape_. Of importance here is that rather than being a category brand is one categorising operation among others, which is definitely not first in the chain of operations in most cases even if it is one of the most directly perceivable ones. While apparent, there are thus several other operations performed that both produce other kinds of categories, produce categories on other levels (both above and below), and not the least which structure the brands relative one another into a system of relative positions and values. These categorising operations are all performed by spatial operations of _intervisibility, proximity, distance, and separation_.

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10. It can be of worth to refer to the discussion of chapter four in that visual does not necessarily refer to something seen by a seeing subject—it is a form of spatial relation, which can be described in terms of visual relations.

11. The constant presence of brand as a categorising operation must thus not be confused for the department stores as ordered simply into brands. In reality, it proves that brand usually comes rather late in the chain of categorising operations, as good as always _after_...
While formed spatially, these categories are abstract ideas of how the world of commodities is ordered and in this way the department stores participate in a general acculturation process in society, similar to how libraries participate in producing ideas of how knowledge is ordered and acquired (Koch 2004). The department stores thus participate in the formation of lifestyles and identities through how they present the system of choices available and the values and logics underlying this system.

Parallel, or intertwined, with the production of categories, this sorting is also a process of a more directly spatial character in the formation of contexts; that is, this describes how boundaries and commodities produce a context (which include and to some extent defines categories) for social situations and events. These contexts are thus not equitable to categories, and the two should not be confused for one another. That lingerie is constructed into a category and simultaneously serves as a context for lingerie shopping that does not make them the same. The produced category of Filipa K in Åhlens first serve as part of the context of the category of Tiger, secondly it is situated in the context of Tiger and French Connection, together with which it, thirdly, serves as part of the general context-category of “catwalk” or “trend” fashion.

The formation of these categories-contexts is then both informed by and forms commodity identities. It has been seen how the “same” commodities can be sorted into a number of categories simultaneously without it being contradictory—such as Tiger Jeans being found in three different contexts in Åhlens, and thus belonging in three different categories. The point here is that while the commodities sorted together serve to define and form the context, the context also identify the commodities or identities are understood relative to one another and relative to the idea of the motif of the paintings and conceptually to how commodities or identities are understood relative to one another and relative to the formation of their boundary. A linear boundary both serves to emphasise the differences between the different sides of the boundary and to emphasise the importance of that within the boundary as an entity and this entity as being important to recognize. Linear boundaries, thus, presents categories, objects, overall type, gender, and status. That it is an apparent and easily graspable principle, which can always be found, does not make it primary: this is confusing the apparent for the actual. Similar to the argument of Baudrillard regarding the focus on individual desires (Baudrillard 1998, 92-94), however, this apparent order, this apparent focus on the individual brands, allows the system of values to hide itself under apparent neutrality of personal preference of brands.

The identities of objects are thus worked out performatively and contextually while serving as part of the context for one another. For the shopping situation, this was discussed as three kinds of authorship: that of context, that of object, and that of external references. The commodities can serve to characterise their surroundings, such as the location of a big-screen television and leather seats in the men’s street fashion of Åhlens, or they can be characterised by their context, such as silk stockings are defined as embellishment by being set in the context of cosmetics, accessories and jewellery. These contexts also gain character by reference to situations and contexts outside of the store that helps define them. The important point here is that all these characterising operations are constantly at work, and all commodities are simultaneously authors of their context and authored by it, even if the relative roles differ. Understanding contexts, thus, means understanding the interplay of authorship between object, context, and external references.\textsuperscript{12}

It must be stressed, that no matter how much something is identified outside of the department store as part of a certain lifestyle or identity, this is renegotiated inside of the department store and can be overruled to a fairly large extent. That such redefinition may be a bad retail strategy, since the system can feel unfamiliar or strange to the consumers, is another question altogether. Thus there is necessarily a constant negotiation between categories as formed in shopping space and as formed otherwise that both serve to influence one another.

\textbf{Differently Different: Complementarity and Separation}

If these categoriescontexts are formed by differentiation, then the question must be put how this differentiation is performed. In addition, from the point of view of the current work, how this is done by spatial means must be considered. Two major operations were found: that of construction and form of boundaries and that of distance (Figure 15:I). These operations both serve to define the relations between categories-contexts as well as describe how well defined or self-sufficient they are as categories.

For the first question, the boundary, the terms linear and painterly as derived from Wolfflin’s work, were used (Wolfflin 2003). This was done because they relate to the idea of the motif of the paintings and conceptually to how commodities or identities are understood relative to one another and relative to the formation of their boundary. A linear boundary both serves to emphasise the difference between the different sides of the boundary and to emphasise the importance of that within the boundary as an entity and this entity as being important to recognize. Linear boundaries, thus, presents categories, objects, and

\textsuperscript{12. These identities are not worked out once and for all within the department stores or in the shopping situation, but are continuously developed throughout the lifetime of any commodity (Miller, et al. 1998).}
or people as individuals, as different from others, and as of a well-defined and singular character. Painterly relations, on the other hand, de-emphasise the singularities or objects within a motif and emphasise the interplay between the different parts. A painterly boundary stresses the interrelation and contextuality of categories, objects, and people, and stresses the need to understand their position relative to their surroundings. These strategies are used in a range of different ways, but primarily participate in the production of categories and their relations to one another. For example, the boundaries between different parts of the street fashion sections of Åhlens have a more or less painterly character while (as principle, if not always in fact) separated from other sections by linear boundaries.

The other important operation defining differences is the use of distance: by increasing distance—either configuratively or metrically—difference is expressed as substantial. Street fashion is far away from suits. Cosmetics are close to fragrances. These distances can be emphasised (and, configurationally speaking, increased) by use of linear boundaries and de-emphasised by use of painterly. That is, as a simple example, the separations of walls and floors, blocking intervisibility, increase the effects of distanciation as a means to describe substantial difference. By the same logic, that which is separated by linear boundaries but still close by one another is described as different but closely related. A typical example is how suits and shirts are in Åhlens placed next to one another, but with a linear boundary in-between or how ladies’ fashion and lingerie are placed in a similar manner in Debenhams. Finally, distance is used to express difference internal to the context such that Diesel Jeans (and a few other brands), for example, are put in the far wall to demonstrate their status, while other brands are spread out along the route to the escalators separated by painterly borders (if at all). The more things should be kept apart, the more of these differential strategies are employed and the stronger they are in use.

These two operations have, as has been argued, limitations set on them in how space restricts the degree to which they can be used and the possibilities of making use of boundaries and distances serve as formative for what organisations are possible to conceive for the department stores. Åhlens City has seven floors, which implies a general range of seven overarching categories. The degree of differentiation and belonging and the effects of what goes with what or what is seen from where, however, is not only a “neutral” construction of categories, but a powerful formulation of values.

Systemizing Contextuality
As these categories and context are differentiated between one another—as a logic of this very differentiating operation—a system takes form which expresses a range of values and judgements, informing the consumer (and the managers and personnel) of what differences are substantial, what differences are important, and what differences are of less importance. This value system, by necessity, is hierarchical, expressing hierarchy of the contexts/categories. This is something that, it can be argued, comes as a necessity from the heterogeneous nature of space (see chapter three). The department stores thus serve as spaces of negotiations of hierarchies and differentiation and as communicators of the results. We can see, for instance, how suits are constantly ordered away from street fashion, how the high-profile suits are sorted in depths and endcaps, how the less prestigious apparel can be found in spaces that are little exposed but on the way to other spaces, and how certain commodities are even hidden in the depths altogether.

First, somewhat similar to how they form categories, the department stores form a more abstract system of relative degrees of spaciousness and order, which lays claim to degrees of rarity, uniqueness and exclusivity. By reference to ideals such as models, unique artefacts, and works of art (expressed as relative degrees of rarity within the department stores), the commodities are given an implied status, which is not to confuse with actual uniqueness or rarity. Thus the designer dresses in Debenhams are hung in shallow departments with few dresses on display and a lot of display area per dress as well as presented in an orderly fashion or at least in a fashion that clearly is conscious of its own form of presentation. This contains references to rarity and to the ways art is displayed, to flagship brand stores and luxury shops, as the focus on form of presentation over utility such as efficient space use. This is a rather simple shift of character by use of local properties such as densities, heights of stacks, order and spaciousness (Figure 15:II)—the point is how it positions the commodities in the overall social system through how it expresses disposition (Bourdieu 1984).

The other found system is the more concrete spatial system of relations between contexts, which requires some more elaboration. In its foundation based on relative situations of exposure and availability, this takes its form in specific ways which can be described through its four extremes: highly exposed and readily available, highly exposed but less available, little exposure but readily available, and neither exposed nor readily available. All of these are relative as there are few things that are unavailable in the department stores.

The first case, highly exposed and readily available, constitutes the contexts that can be loosely labelled as trendy. This is a general observation of the type of situation where the degree of such trendiness is primarily within overarching categories such as cosmetics, men’s or women’s fashion, or fragrances, but also between such overarching categories in how concerned with so-called trend they should be. All the same, this strategy is used not only in department stores but also in retail in general: the most new and in-fashion is put on early display and within fairly easy reach. From a retail perspective, this is perhaps nothing new.
The point is that this is an operation using the same spatial means as other positions, only shifting the degree to which they are given priority. In regards to this claim, what Underhill would call “entry zones” need to be taken into consideration—that is, there is a certain distance from the entrance in every store in which little attention is put on what can be found (Underhill 2000) and once such a zone is passed the trend areas begin.

Second comes the situation of high exposure and low availability, which was found to primarily constitute the spaces of the high-profiled or “aristocratic” brands or context-categories, such as the finest suits, the most exclusive brand denim or the finest jewelry. From the trend areas of Åhlens, for example, high-profile commodities (such as Diesel Jeans and Hugo Boss suits) are exposed on the far-off walls that can be seen from here. As spaces of representation, the aristocratic and trendy contexts are thus collapsed into one another, differentiated only by how easy they are to reach. This also stresses the status of both and emphasises a connection of representational importance between the two high-status locations of trend and aristocracy. In short, the in the fashion system highest valued trendy and high-profile clothing forms one representational space while separated as lived space.

Third, it can be seen how perhaps contrary to popular thought there are a number of commodities, which are limited in both of these properties—commodities which are, in effect, hidden. The extreme case here is men’s underwear, which tends to lie deep inside the department stores, in spatial branches of their own and with little exposure to the rest of the store. As a general character, these commodities tend to have to do with privacy, or with only concerning the people who actually seek them out, such as children’s clothing, or children’s books, and genealogy in libraries. Similar strategies have been found by Gregson, Brooks, and Crewe (2000) for how second-hand clothing retail handles “dirty” clothes and can be seen in video stores and the like in the placement of erotic movies. One can argue that they form, in the contexts of the department stores, a kind of heterotopia (Foucault 1997a).

Fourth, finally, are the commodities, which by priorities made do not fit in the above positions. They are thus not necessarily forming a character of their own, or being “untrendy” or low profile per se. They are simply the categories (brands, types, commodities), which are less trendy, less high profile, less luxurious, less private, and so forth than the others. These are often supposed to be bought for reasons of them being passed on the way to the attractors in the far ends—a reasoning in much coming from supermarket retail. The analysis herein, however, suggests that this is a comparatively small part of the actual process in the department store: it can rather be said that they provide positions in the system of contexts that correspond to social positions (such as less trendy, less self-conscious dressing or less interested in trend or status), which is not to be confused for a degree to which identity is expressed through fashion, but is rather a question of what identity it is that is expressed.

Here, both the strategies of exposure and of availability must be understood as performative operations. Exposure consists, in short, of making commodities or categories represented either in themselves or by other means. Availability consists of being within easy reach. This means that there are several ways of producing or restricting both, which from the perspective of performative operations are the same: by encasing the finest jewellery in glass boxes or behind glass doors, the same operation is performed as when putting the exclusive suits on display against the far wall—exposure is more important than availability. In other words, representation is more important than utility, and this is underscored. Even within the cosmetics, it can be seen how the most luxurious ones are the ones requiring most effort to reach relative their exposure. Thus Åhlens exposes them to Klarabergsgatan, while in order to reach them, one must make a circle through one of the entrances and navigate past other cosmetics (Figure 15:III).

However much this is performed by different means, the relative positions are predominantly produced by spatial configuration, governing exposure and availability both in spatial properties of a more local character (endcaps, directly inside the entrance or up the escalator) and of more systemic character (behind, above, deep inside, two stairs up). Availability is regulated through manipulations of configurative distances and accessibilities, and exposure is regulated by how these properties guides movement, facing, directionalities, and gazes. Availability is thus formed by sequences, distances, route complexities, and depths, where configurative depth has a higher impact than metric distances: number of turns, or number of contexts needed to be passed, produce distance rather than number of metres.

Theoretically, this could be treated as two spatial systems: one of exposure, and one of availability. The range of values would then emerge via the interplay of these two. However, both terms are used deliberately in that they suggest influence on and of the presence of people: commodities or spaces are exposed or available to someone. Thus, the question is not exposure as a term for a local situation, or a universal property inherent in a spatial position, but as a term of systemic performative exposure; that is, through the regulating practices of the two systems, exposure, and availability is mediated and decided by how the systems are made use of in everyday practice by people. Thus, to understand how they work, the relation between the system of contexts and how people use it must be understood. This has been done as an analysis of the department stores as situating spatial practices.
Situating Practices

These contexts, formed in interplay between commodity and space, serve as stages for social events and activities—that is, they form contexts for social situations. Situations are called social in that they are formed by how people are put in relation to one another, how gazes meet, interaction appears, flows are guided, and how people pass, stop, talk, watch, turn or otherwise become positioned relative one another in space. Situations define the contexts in them, and what they are for.

While described in this order, however, it has been repeatedly pointed to how this is not a historical process of contexts-gives-situation, but a negotiation between uses: the way social situations are produced in the department stores inform the distribution of commodities and contexts in order to make sure that the most public commodities get most exposure and that intimate shopping can happen in private (or private enough situations for it to take place). Furthermore, situating ensures that the exclusive commodities are found in exclusive atmosphere. The social patterns of the emergent situations and the distribution of contexts and commodities also respond to one another so as to promote purchase, even if this purpose, as has been found, is not the only one guiding the decisions.

This has been extensively analysed in chapters nine through twelve, in how the relation between such things as presences, contexts, exposures, co-awareness, and staging work, and how this in large comes as a result rather of architectural design decisions: to a perhaps surprising degree, the emergent situations depend on configurative spatial structure. These mechanics and the emergent situations are discussed below.

Regularities in Shopping Behaviour

An important part of the analysis in the current work, which even if given comparatively little space is of importance both for the discussion as such, and of perhaps even more importance when it comes to understanding work with department stores as architecture, is the surprisingly high degree to which patterns of movement follow certain properties of spatial configuration. By setting the ways, it is possible to construct routes in and through the department stores, configurative relations regulates patterns of movement, making some places more visited, some less visited, some more often seen, some less often seen, and also which are seen most, from furthest distance or least, as well as sequencing narratives of what is reached early on, late, or not at all.

This is done both in a directly necessary manner in how certain categories are placed behind others—such that you cannot look at Hugo Boss suits without passing by either suits or Dockers, you cannot browse Diesel without passing Tiger and Filippa K in Åhlens City, you cannot visit Top Shop in Debenhams without passing either cosmetics or ladies’ fashion, and you cannot visit George’s coffee without passing suits or shirts. Indirectly it furthermore guides movement to produce more plausible narratives, such that most visits to Åhlens likely include passing by cosmetics, most browsing of the home department would include passing through ladies’ fashion, and most visits to any part of any fashion department likely includes passing by at least one of the trend areas.

These emergent patterns structure degrees of presences, co-presences, exposure to the Other, total as well as relative amounts of passers-by, and browsers among other things. The spatial system structures such things as sharing of space and the degree to which sharing space means sharing purpose: as good as everyone ending up by men’s underwear are there because they have sought it out, while most people present by Lancôme in Åhlens, or Pilgrim in Debenhams are on their way somewhere else. This creates a configuration of the present people in their relation to the context, their reasons for being in it, and their plausible continuing actions. This will be returned to shortly; first, I will briefly describe just what these models are and how they relate to movement.

The models providing the correlations are configurative models, based on integration of isovists evenly spread in the system, defined by where it is possible to move with a significant exterior added. Metric models of the same system provide comparatively weak correlation (r-square value of 0.3 instead of 0.6-0.7). This means that configurative properties (number of turns, number of contexts passed, etc.) are important properties for structuring the use of the department stores (Penn 2005). The surprisingly high degree of correlation between movement and spatial system further suggest that spatial structure is more important for how people move in department stores than is perhaps expected and is definitely more than expected by most managers. Such a high correlation was found in public libraries as well using models built after the same principles, and suggests two things.

First that movement in the department stores and the libraries is not to be understood as single-purpose trips with one pre-defined goal, which the customer/visitor sets out to reach. Such movement would provide little to no correlation. Instead, the correlation depends on most visits being what could be called multi-purpose trips. The latter term, often used within space syntax research (Penn 2005, Penn and Turner 2003), is one I prefer not to use since it suggests the same general approach to movement as the “single purpose trip” only added more specific purposes. Rather, the correlation points to people’s behaviour following continuously re-evaluated projects, which are constantly reformulated in both goals and means, and done so in a fairly loose manner.

13. All as modelled and calculated in Depthmap v 5.12r by Alasdair Turner.
When I go to buy a pair of pants, I may end up in a specific store, I may choose to buy something else depending on what happens along the way, and I might even end up doing something else completely—all while each consecutive step is formulated as purposeful and with some kind of goal in mind.

Second it supports the idea that movement and movement decisions follow routes or tours (de Certeau 1984), which is to say that they are understood as a series of directional or relational choices: go past cosmetics, up the escalator, turn right, second left and then it is the third brand on the right. Such routes also serve to provide ideas for how far something is by degree of route complexity (Hillier and Hanson 1984; Hillier and Lida 2005). This is not saying metric distance is irrelevant, but it is within the limited metric range of the department stores of little importance compared to sequences of contexts and number of turns needed (that is, number of orientation operations needed).

The character of movement patterns thus encountered and understood points to one thing that has been made clear through a series of following studies of the empirical material: that something appears to be an attractor—that is, the places where there seem to be many people—does not mean it generates high rates of movement to or from it. George’s coffee in Debenhams was continually busy, but this did not significantly increase the rate of movement to or from it. Spatial structure seems more important than distribution of attractors for creating flows of people at least as long as there are attractors through the entire spatial system.

The last thing to point out, which is of importance not the least for retail, is that relative this movement, browsing tend not to be directly linked as in that the commodities closest to the main flows are most browsed, but rather that which is most exposed close to the main flows is most browsed—typically different forms of endcaps (which also are often generated by entrances or escalators). From a configurational point of view, this indicates that that which is at the ends (or beginnings) of the most integrated isles will be most browsed. How this relates to actual sales has not been investigated in the current work, but has elsewhere been claimed to be more or less directly proportionate (Underhill 2000, 37). The focus here has instead been put on the social situations this produces, and the implications on identity, social relations, and cultural ideas and values this has.

### The Gaze and the Face: Publicity, Social Centrality, and the Sharing of Space

One of the processes in the department stores is thus the situating of people relative to one another and the production of degrees of presences and absences as well as the degrees to which purposes are shared between the ones present or not. Since this forms regularities and patterns, it can both inform the choices made regarding commodity distribution and serve to describe the contexts to characterise them socially and to suggest the identities and dispositions of the people browsing them. As a cultural constructing process, this can be said to primarily deal with the ordering of degrees of publicity, degrees of discernment or impulse, and the shoppers themselves as subjects or objects.

Publicity, it has been argued, is in large formed by two properties, one being the simple degree of crowding—or social centrality—and the other being the degree of exposure to the Other, where the latter comes inherently from the former, but can be produced otherwise as well. The former, social centrality, is as a concept also more centred on the space or place in question whereas the latter is more centred on the situation of (specific) people. All the same, the argument has been that by understanding where there are high flows and high presences of people; we understand how the department stores describe commodities to be private or public concern. This argument has been supported by the commodities encountered and their social roles as well as their presence and character in fashion and lifestyle magazines. Furthermore, it shows how certain characteristics of commodities are prioritised over others and how spatial situating actualises possible identities. Thus, for instance, lingerie and especially pantyhose have had their decorative character actualised, whereas their private characteristics have been downplayed, and the same could be said of cosmetics (where the public act of wearing makeup is actualised rather than the more private or intimate act of putting it on).

Such actualisation of possible roles, while acting within what general cultural ideas suggest, further serve to enhance these roles, and to describe this as their roles in society in general. That is, something that has its public character emphasised in the department stores is also suggested to be of public concern in general. This does require that the suggested role is compatible with established codes, but it does not suggest it simply follows such codes, neither that these codes are worked out only externally to the department stores. On the contrary, the argument is that the department stores, by prioritising certain roles and identities over others, participate in this cultural codification also in regards to what is of public and private concern. Thus, the constant placements of cosmetics, women’s accessories, and women’s fashion where there are most visitors suggest that these are of more general public concern than other categories sold in the department store. This, as Underhill states (without making any following conclusions), then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Underhill 2000, 110).

Furthermore, as a result of how movement is regulated in the department stores and how distances and depths in space demands purpose and intention to reach, the distribution of commodities also suggest the degrees to which the shoppers need be intentionally and knowingly aiming for the commodity or category in question to reach it. That is, the degree of both intentionality and discernment...
demanded of the shopper increases with the depth of placement in the spatial system. Further emphasised by how this lessens the degree of crowding, suggest shared purpose of those present, and also supports co-awareness of the browsers: that the present shoppers acknowledge one another as subjects. This constructs relative situations of the purposeful, discerned, and particular subject of choice and the irrational, seducible, and frivolous object of impulse. Degrees of privacy, through lack of crowding, thus also participate in suggesting purpose, agency, and the production of the shopper as subject. This is done both through how the situation requires the shopper to be self-aware and to be at ease with being in such a situation (Bourdieu 1984), and through how such situations constantly produce inquiries to the shopper, forcing narratives and purposes to be constructed, and the shopper as agent and subject (Butler 2005).

Finally, the relative degrees of shared purpose and shared presence provides further suggestions as to the character of the commodities present and the ones shopping for them. The fact that most people do not stop to shop at Lancôme in Ahlens, but most people visiting pass by and see it, ensures that the one actually shopping becomes rather a spectacle for the crowd than part of it, and they are thus situated (and produced) as objects of the gaze of the Other, whereas the fact that most people in the men’s suits department will acknowledge one another and are there for the fairly much the same purpose forces them to become subjects to one another and thus to themselves. Situations are also produced in different ways making people into spectacles not only for the Other but also for themselves (Burgin 1996; Lefebvre 1991). Here, it can be noted how especially women are made into spectacles, and objects of the gaze of the Other (both men and women), whereas men tend to be made into subjects. The way space is shared, by whom, and relative degrees of sharing of purpose or acknowledgement of one another—how people are made to face, meet and recognize one another—is thus as an important factor as the degree to which space is shared, and both work primarily as situations relative to one another (Figure 15:IV). They are, however, by the regularities of rhythms as results of the structure of space, constructed by strategies of distribution in and of space.

The Crowd Surveying Itself: Situations of Seeing and Being Seen

Finally, then, it can be said that the emergent situations in the department stores, together with the placement and presence of personnel, through how it exposes shoppers and behaviours to one another, lays demands not only on agency and purpose but on conduct in general. That is, as museums serve to train the unknowing in the ways of the knowing by placing their conduct under the surveillance and scrutiny by means of spatial strategies, so does department stores and libraries, and even more so in the more open space morphology that tend to be promoted—and the degree to which this is done is used to put different demands on knowledge and being able to conduct oneself after certain unwritten rules on the shoppers/visitors of different contexts following degrees of exclusivity and expertise claimed to be required for the commodities and styles in question. This has been extensively discussed as strategies employed in public museums by Bennet (1995), and Bourdieu and Darbel (1998) and was discussed regarding libraries in the licentiate (Koch 2004), which has been further developed in the current work.

The first operation in this case is the constant strategy to put the shopper/visitor under the scrutiny of other shoppers/visitors and to make sure that this is known. This is in part done through open plan solutions, especially around the entrances, but also by other means such as the low counters, display tables and shelves of the exclusive departments, and the way in which the entrance halls form long stretches with personnel-intensive departments such as cosmetics, with comparatively few browsers relative flow of people and amount of personnel present. This staging effect of the entrances ensures that people know that they are seen by personnel and other shoppers while they go about shopping, while the openness and the presence of smiling personnel early on also suggest good service and pleasant environments. This can thus be added as yet another reason for the organising of the department stores: the ways it produces control and surveillance by the apparent act of providing service and a welcoming atmosphere.

Especially in Växjö City Library and Debenhams this grows obvious through the long, highly surveilled entrance halls, produced in part by spatial morphology, and in part, especially in Växjö, by internal distribution of commodities and functions.

The second operation can be described as a kind of staging: setting the shopper in stage-like situations in certain contexts, demanding from them ability to feel at ease with browsing the commodities in question, and demanding them to know the conduct and procedures allowing this. Such situations can be found primarily in the “aristocratic” or “luxurious” contexts, such as Hugo Boss suits, Diesel denim, the finest cosmetics and jewellery and—even if to a lower extent—the most trendy fashion such as Filippa K. The latter does this to a lower extent primarily by ensuring there are more people browsing at the same time, allowing each of them to be less under scrutiny individually, and by the flows of people just passing through which comes as a result of location. However, this staging is then in certain situations further emphasised by, again, personnel offering service: by being offered help and guidance, one is requested both to know how to relate to such offers, and to feel at ease with being acknowledged as someone interested in the commodities one is browsing—that is, one is requested to fit a narrative of the self into the perceived identity of the context, which implicitly demands that the identity of the Self and the Context fit one another. This is both training conduct and producing and emphasising identity of the context: if I learn how to behave in the context and feel at ease in it, it will start to feel like “me”, but also, the demand is put on me to know what it is to feel at ease with, and how to act in it, which assures that the context is recognised as having an identity.
This constant production of situations where the browser is seen by more people than he or she sees assures that there is a constant surveillance at work, that the crowd is controlling the conduct of itself. In this is a negotiation of what constitutes appropriate conduct included, as in any space somehow public, but it is also something enforced by personnel and a situation where those who feel at ease and as knowing the proper way are those in power, transferring their ideals to those trying to adapt.

The Department Stores: Situated Fashion Magazines

If libraries can be said to answer questions such as “what is knowledge”, “how is knowledge structured”, “how is knowledge acquired”, “for whom is knowledge”, and “how are interests and subjects related”, department stores then give answers to questions such as “what is fashion”, “how is fashion structured”, “what is in fashion”, “for whom is fashion and for whom is that which is in fashion”, “what is of public and private concern”, and not the least, “how can I express my social position, and read that of others, through their ownership and use of commodities”.

By constructing a system of contexts and situations, through the ordering of things and people in space, a range of identities are formed in the department stores expressed as lifestyles or tastes. These identities are formed differentially relative to one another and through the dispositions and social relations they suggest. This is done both through internal relations between commodities and objects, through positions in the overall system of space regarding exposure and availability, and how they are situated relative the flows of customers, their gazes and the emergent social situations.

The department stores thus order the range of goods into a series of social identities and to a large degree this is understood as social positions and dispositions, which provide the identity of the goods sold—both directly in the local context of the department stores and in the way they participate in the general acculturation process.

The social process in the department stores, and the act of shopping, is then not one of finding the object which suits my taste, but to understand the “map” of identities through the commodities and situations encountered and then navigate in it and negotiate between Self and System to find something that fits. The process is one of translation between homologous systems; social system and ones position in it and commodity and situation system in the department store, a similar approach to Williamson’s translations between commercials and individuals (1995). In this, it must be acknowledged that while it can be argued that department stores are training tastes and producing ideas of what identities are valid they are also providing a service that is, in fact, perhaps more important than offering a range of goods for free selection: they are helping the shopper to navigate the system of fashion.

Such service is by necessity cultural (re)production; the point of pressing the service part of this practice is to point out that this is not a question of pure market manipulation, but a mutual process where the department stores also provide customers with a guidance that they may very well be requesting—knowingly or unknowingly. However, this would mean that it is not only the mix of goods for sale or what goods are sold that are important questions for the success of a department store, but the ways these are ordered into an understandable whole, which guides the customers in the fashion world and which is translatable into the general cultural context of fashions and identities. Depending on what is shopped for, such guidance can be more or less wanted and can work better or worse for the customers that visit the department stores in question.

However, if they can be compared to fashion magazines, they can also be compared to what was in the previous chapter referred to as expert judgements. That is, what the department stores present is the judgements and values of fashion experts, which have impact on values in public culture but have a much less direct impact on everyday evaluation and acquisition. It is, as Castells argues, several strategies possible when relating to the suggestions made, such as legitimizing, resistance, and project stances (Castells 2004). The point is not the three forms, however, but that even if the overall argument in this thesis is the strong role of space and spatial categorisation of commodities in the shopping act as suggestions of identities; this is not to say that consumers are subject to mindless conformation to the suggested range. It also points toward that retail and shopping theory need to be concerned with relations, situations, and contexts and how they form systems of tastes to understand shopping behaviour and sales figures as much as individual preferences or cause-and-effects of local and particular situations. It is, after all, entirely possible that it is because there are things that are less exposed that something exposed sells much or that it is exactly the situation of being less exposed when browsing a specific category that makes the shopper feel at ease with the situation and thus identify with the commodities and decide on a purchase.

It is thus possible to see the department stores as a sort of built fashion magazines, presenting a range of different identities to their visitors, describing what goes together, what does not, what is in fashion, what is important to be aware of, what is new, how activities, identities, things, and tastes relate, and how this can be answered by commodities. As such, they are thus far from neutral spaces offering a wide range of individual goods from which each individual can make an informed selection, but rather a cultural map that both supports and helps customers to find something that fits them and also produces ideas of the customers, of society, and what fits different people. In fashion and lifestyle magazines, however, it is possible for individuals to read them “against the grain” (Stevenson, Jackson and Brooks 2000).
Seen as such fashion magazines, it can be noted that Åhlens City and Debenhams work differently: Åhlens provides rather strong support for the customers in their navigation, whereas Debenhams is much weaker in such suggestions—especially when it comes to navigating status and formulating categories. At the same time, gender and age groups are much stronger factors in Debenhams than in Åhlens. It is possible to find problems with both of these approaches as guidance given at the same time is a reproduction of values.

However, from this perspective, Debenhams was dramatically different from the other big department stores in Stockholm’s City. If this played a part in its financial problems or not remains to be answered, but it does indicate that for the context of Stockholm, Debenhams may well have provided something else than what customers expected from a department store.
Figure 15: The range of exclusivity expressed through degree of order and spaciousness as shown by the photographs below (a) jewellery, (b) the Denim Department, and (c) bags on the women’s fashion floor.
With the findings regarding department stores and shopping summed up, the time has come to take the discussion on space further, and go deeper into situating and structuring qualities as derived from the investigations performed. For this discussion I argue the analysis above has been needed: it is by understanding how something is situated in and by space, in specific instances, the question of space as structuring, situating principles can be addressed, and in which the theoretical queries can be scrutinised (Lefebvre 1991). That is, as argued in chapters one and four, in order to understand the structuring performed in and by space we need first to understand how spatial structures work in interplay with commodities and people, from which the structuring process can be inferred. This conclusion will move through discussion of spatial properties and concepts dealt with throughout the thesis, shifting the focus from how objects and people make use of space to how spatial form works as the principles these uses are based on. One could say that the focus is turned more towards architecture both as theory and practice—at least in as far as architecture is a question of organising space.

What is to be done, then, is to more clearly refine the spatial strategies for structuring commodities, categories, contexts, situations, and events, and to reverse the operation to understand how these spatial strategies provide keys for how these very thought structures, as spatial conceptions participates in the production of ideas of how to organise the space, which is to make them possible. This final chapter will take the form of three stages: one summarising the overall argument, one centred on specific findings, and one discussing implications and future research prospects.

In this discussion a few bold propositions will be made, which draw the implications of the arguments and findings further than is perhaps fully founded in the current work—but this is both to clarify the argument and to demonstrate how suggestions herein can contribute to discussions on a more general, theoretical level. Thus propositions made are not always to be seen as statements of facts, but as arguments which are to be further developed in future research, and which are to be moderated as they are incorporated in a greater theoretical context.

**Focusing the Argument**

As a first step in this conclusion, then, let us again look at the whole of the argument from a spatial or architectural point of view: from how space, commodity, and boundary produce categories, to how these are organised into configurative systems which are, as results of priorities and choices, formulating values and ideas, to how these
interplay with consumers to produce situations further defining what kind of commodities and spaces are encountered. The point here is to present the whole argument in a summarised form in order then be able to focus on the findings of the thesis, which in part will be particular and specific, separating the overall argument from more specific or particular findings to make both clearer.

This summary of the general argument will be performed in three general themes—one of the interplay between commodity and space in the formation of contexts and categories; one of how these contexts-categories, as local formations, are systemised into larger wholes in which they are also positioned relative to one another; and finally as a discussion of the interplay between these systems and people—how they guide and affect one another, and how they both serve to produce one another. This is not, it should be said, following a causal or temporal process, but needs be seen as three different forms of structuring in which space is a vital component, and in which architecture participates as an indirect but powerful actor. That they normally come at different stages due to practicalities (such as which are easiest to change, and what degree of power is needed to change them) is another matter, which is not the question of the current work (Koch 2004).

Construction of Category: Context Formations

The study of the interplay between space and commodity as an ordering process took off in how space and commodity work together in a negotiation of belonging and difference constructing categories and contexts. While this depends on programme and use of space as well as cultural norms and social situations, the argument is that this dependency is not causal but rather one of negotiation and communication. By organising things in space, both space and things are given identity, and ideas of what things belong together and what things do not are established. This is in part a result of properties of physical space, which forces choices to be made as everything cannot be equally connected to everything else, or close by everything else—and repositioning and recontextualization are not as easily and quickly done in space as in thought (Spindler 2006). Choices are, by and large, arbitrary and may be made differently for each given situation, but also both follow cultural norms and ideas and participate in their formulation. Stanford Anderson puts it this way:

While avoiding notions of total arbitrariness, pure conventionalism and utter relativity, it is necessary to recognize the conventional, partially arbitrary construction of culture. These conventions encounter testing and limiting empirical conditions which we may hypothesize as the sources of problems and thus as the impetus of change of our conventions. (Anderson 2000, 492)

That is, in the process of organising commodities in the department stores, there is a negotiation ongoing of what categories these commodities are best sorted into and how these categories relate to one another. In the process discussed, such categories can be seen as cultural norms, or conventions of thought while the empirical conditions they meet appear as the commodities are to be distributed in space, and space is produced in order to support such distribution. This is a process going on in several scales and layers with constant overlaps and contradictions, but where part of such organisation takes place on an “architectural” scale.

In chapter six, a comparison was made between organisational departments and their distribution in space, investigating how grouping and separation of commodities on the first floor of Älplens City was used to form suggestions of belonging and difference, which only partly coincided with the organisational departments. The analysis was built upon the idea that both commodity and context define one another simultaneously, and that understanding commodities and their belonging goes via their contexts—an argument based on both Baudrillard’s atmosphere (Baudrillard 1996) and theories of Tschumi (1996), Kwon (2002), and Buskirk (2005). What these and many other theories lack are the role of architectural form in this formation of contexts, atmospheres, and configurations.

For this discussion, the major operation was the establishing of context formations. Such context formations can then be found on a range of scales from the individual shelf in the bookcase to larger entities such as floors or buildings. The scale of interest of the current work has been at the scale of intervisibility—a scale on which architecture plays a decisive role. These context formations are formed in space as fields where the majority of the included commodities constantly provide context for one another via relations that are based on situations of intervisibility and defined by boundaries and separations formed by framing operations of architectural character—walls, high-rise shelves, floors, elevations, and so forth. Intervisibility here thus forms one important form of spatial relation, which is not to be understood as what can be seen from a specific point or by a specific person—such understanding is limiting for the analysis and assigns a primacy to a seeing subject, which is not the intent of the analysis here (Burgin 1996). Instead, it is a question of connections and relations in space, which allow the positions of the commodities to be theoretically visible from one another. Such relations suggest interrelation and co-belonging in a category and a context. The simplest case of this is the convex space, or the box, where everything is rather easily seen in relation to one another, and related to one another, which in a simplified architectural example corresponds to a traditional room (Hillier and Hanson 1984). It was
found that there was both a finer subdivision of commodities made and that to some extent the categories emerging were different than the labelled departments.

If intervisibility suggests co-belonging, then the formations of boundaries and differentiations describes what is not forming a context to what, and what is not, or only weakly, connected to each other (Ardener 2000). The boundaries serve to do two things: first, it describes that which it contains, and second, it describes how this relates to its surroundings—which in part is two sides of the same coin. Such boundaries can be of more well-defined, explicit character, and of more fleeting and gradual transition—which has been discussed as linear and painterly borders (Wolfflin 2003). The more defined boundary emphasises the importance of the differentiation and indirectly the unity of that which is enclosed: it forms something that need be separated from the surroundings and which thus forms its own entity. In comparison, a more fleeting boundary deemphasises the difference, allowing different categories, contexts, entities, or motifs to blend and to form a whole of more interdependent and connected parts. This does not only define separation, but is also differently allowing for events or activities in the spaces separated. One can argue that the more linear the boundary, the more allowing adjacent spaces are for contradicting activities, and the more painterly, the more difficult such would become. On the other hand, painterly boundaries allow activities to blend and perhaps contribute to one another in an in certain ways freer fashion. The linear boundary, thus, describes less interdependency of one side with the other, whereas painterly suggest some kind of closer relation. Furthermore, linear boundaries emphasise the included category or object as an entity, whereas painterly emphasise that which is included as part of a greater whole.

These boundaries, it was found, cannot be simplified to walls and open spaces, but must be understood through filters of exposure and availability: one can say that the more a boundary limits either, the more linear it becomes. A wall or a separated elevation without communication routes can form linear boundaries in that they limit movement, whereas they can still form painterly visual boundaries in allowing both sides to be visible from one another depending on their given form or material (Quetglas 2000). Furthermore, the characters of these boundaries as linear or painterly are relative, meaning that what in one context, or one scale, constitutes a linear boundary and in another seem painterly. This is not suggesting an arbitrary interpretation, but rather that a linear boundary is so mostly in as far as it is more linear, more separating, more definitive than other boundaries. For the construction of categories and separations, restricting intervisibility seems to have more profound impact than does access; and for relating categories to one another accessibility seems to be vital (Figure 161).

There is thus a negotiation in space of what commodities together form categories, which are constructed by things being described as related to one another. This negotiation, it was argued, is performed via categorising operations rather than via preconceived categories simply distributed into space—that is, as commodities are distributed in space, one is forced to make choices of what belongs together, and what does not, which are made in situated performativity. It is not a concept that is distributed, but a choice of belonging based on an arbitrary decision of what characters, what parts, or what properties of the commodities in question are to be used as decisive for this belonging (Foucault 2003b).

In all these cases objects thus produced categories by strategies of integration and intervention (Kwon 2002) to either define or support the identity of the situation in which they were placed. Although both of these are part of any placing, the degree to which either is dominant differs. Thus, objects are defining series of atmospheres and contexts in which commodities are situated, which at the same time constitute these contexts. This is an argument that comes full circle on itself (and, in reality, such self-construction is partly the case). At the same time, we have seen how the same commodity can wander around in different categories, and how this changes both category and commodity, or at least presents them as different than other groupings would. But, the general process here—as becomes obvious in the home floor of Åhlens—is not one of similarity of commodities per se, neither is it a simple situation where commodities are giving character to a category: the production of contexts depends on external references in relation to which they can make sense (Williamson 1985, 1995).

In general, in the department stores such operations were found to be based on a range of different characters of which supposed powerful ones as brands were found to be less important, and where social status or target group of customers, at times understandable as lifestyle groups and at other times as genders, classes, or interests, were found to be more important.

**Systemising Contexts: A Play of Exposure and Availability**

If department stores and spatial constructions in general serve to negotiate a range of categories by how they form contexts (or context formations), these are not only existing as singularities one by one, but are also related to one another in a range of different ways. This is partly through the more direct connections that have been discussed as boundaries, but also in how they are organised into sequences and configurations that tend to describe the strengths of connections and differences them in-between, as well as other relations of power, belonging, difference, and status.

In the organisation of things in space, discussed primarily in chapters seven, eight, eleven, and twelve, two key operations have been identified in the current work: that of making things exposed and that of making them available. Exposure is about representation and awareness; availability is about
ownership, need, and for whom the commodities in question are intended. As extreme examples, one can see how the traditional king is constantly represented by statues, images, news, stories and so forth, and he is available for actual conversation for only a few, whereas traditional marketplaces and kiosks are readily available for everyone—open early and late, located where many pass by anyway, and so forth, while often not making a big deal of announcing themselves, and especially not for those who are not passing by anyway. Furthermore, there is the both non-exposed and secluded attic and cellar, and the mass-fashion shops and chains which are both exposed and within easy reach. Curiously, it is mostly the latter that is discussed in the retail and shopping theory encountered in the current project, and the first is generally treated as “attractors”, which have gained little support in the current work.14

Exposure and representation, as Zukin argues, is in much a question of claiming importance, and especially so in public space (Zukin 1995). The right to be represented in space is a way through which to claim status and power as much as a result. Such representation takes on many forms, but as a result of how we organise space and things in space, it is to a significant degree a question of what (commodities) is given exposure (to whom). Contrary to this, there are things that are either not given exposure, suggesting less importance, power or need to be so, and things even deliberately hidden (boxes in the attic, shameful activities, criminals, sick) (Foucault 1997a). In the current work, the questions have been how things are exposed in space—setting aside the question of such things as commercials, advertisements, and other representations.

Availability and access, on the other hand, is much a question of who is concerned with (or allowed to reach) the commodities in practical use—that is, how many are suggested to be interesting in buying that which is for sale. There are things more readily available, which is both a result of and a claim to be something everyone should visit, and which “everyone” should make use of. Contrary to this, there are the exclusive clubs, the private home, the kings castle and the finest art-galleries which are not passing by anyway. Furthermore, there is the both non-exposed and secluded attic and cellar, and the mass-fashion shops and chains which are both exposed and within easy reach. Curiously, it is mostly the latter that is discussed in the retail and shopping theory encountered in the current project, and the first is generally treated as “attractors”, which have gained little support in the current work.14

Exposure and representation, as Zukin argues, is in much a question of claiming importance, and especially so in public space (Zukin 1995). The right to be represented in space is a way through which to claim status and power as much as a result. Such representation takes on many forms, but as a result of how we organise space and things in space, it is to a significant degree a question of what (commodities) is given exposure (to whom). Contrary to this, there are things that are either not given exposure, suggesting less importance, power or need to be so, and things even deliberately hidden (boxes in the attic, shameful activities, criminals, sick) (Foucault 1997a). In the current work, the questions have been how things are exposed in space—setting aside the question of such things as commercials, advertisements, and other representations.

Availability and access, on the other hand, is much a question of who is concerned with (or allowed to reach) the commodities in practical use—that is, how many are suggested to be interesting in buying that which is for sale. There are things more readily available, which is both a result of and a claim to be something everyone should visit, and which “everyone” should make use of. Contrary to this, there are the exclusive clubs, the private home, the kings castle and the finest art-galleries which are not necessarily unavailable, but which are restricted in their availability either to a certain clientele or by requiring effort to be allowed into. This suggests that that which is found here does not concern everyone directly in daily practice, as well as those who are there have intent and purpose of being so. As discussed earlier, there is a strong relation between exclusivity, status, and rarity—or, in cruder terms, there is an opposition between mass and class (Bourdieu 1984; Underhill 2004) (Figure 16a:H). Availability has, in the current work, been studied as distribution in space primarily as a result of configurative depth (which has also proven to coincide with patterns of movement and browsing).

These figures are not absolute, but general spatial characteristics of cultural conventions, which may be changing over time and space. They are, however, powerful figures, both in urban situations and, as found, in the department stores. The most exclusive, high-status commodities work with different ways of ensuring exposure while moderating availability, whereas the trendiest work with assuring exposure and availability to a lot of customers. Furthermore, commodities of private characters tend to be found in secluded locations—both unexposed and of modest availability—whereas the less trendy mass fashion and more practical-purpose commodities are primarily found in situations characterised by being available. They are found along the routes leading somewhere else.

As spatial strategies, this can be termed positioning. For such positioning, which is not limited to how we place commodities but can be seen used for functions such as working places, information desks, emergent patterns of social groups in a party, and so forth (Markhede and Koch 2007), the factors above discussed as exposure and availability are vital. They set the roles of that which is positioned, how it relates to others, and how this relation is produced both as distance and proximities, as visual connections and as hierarchies. It further describes how contexts are formed as an interplay and negotiation between that which is positioned in space, be it people, things, or functions. This positioning, thus, is an active process of the ones governing it (either the elements themselves, or someone with the power to make decisions for them), including every element relative which positions are taken.

Such positioning is in part local—one can argue that the way categories and contexts as atmospheres are formed in space is via positioning of commodities—and in part global in the spatial system: contexts, categories, places, and so forth, are organised in relation to one another. Sequences (series, trees, networks) of contexts are formed, describing relations of a configurative, narrative kind (Foucault 1997a; Ricoeur 1981; Cobley 2001), and as sequential orders in which they may have to be seen, or are most likely to be seen. This forces yet another negotiation: what is most important—that something can be close by certain other things, or that the same thing is encountered early on or later in a visit? Is it the formation of the scenes themselves that are to be the focus, or the sequence in which these

14. A common theme for most retail and shopping theory encountered has been dealing with exposure alone, more or less disregarding or equalising it with availability, and following suggesting that everything is best sold as exposed as possible. Secondly, the ideas of attractor and impulse—having gotten little to no support in the investigations herein—have constantly been strong. There are exceptions, of course, such as Gregson, Brooks and Crewe’s (2000) work with “the hidden”, Underhill’s (2000, 2004) discussions on “too exposed” situations, and Peni’s (2005) analyses of Ike discussing how space leads the shopper onwards—to name a few.
scenes evolve? Is it important for people to be aware of something, or is it more important to allow privacy for it? In the department stores, these spatial properties are made use of almost as a game, where the relative degrees of exposure and availability are constantly in use to suggest status, character, and role of both commodities and activities (Figure 16:III)—and in the prolonging the users of them.

Situating the Self and the Other

The spatial organisation of commodities into context formations, suggesting categories and belonging, relations, and differentiation, the positioning of these into relations providing different degrees of availability and exposure, and the sequencing of contexts into series, trees and networks, then must be understood to be done so in relation to how space is then to be made use of. This may be more true for spaces for which there are programmes, but it is also possible to claim that such programmes are worked out performatively for most any space—also for the spaces for which there is a formal programme. All the same, these programmes regulate activities and behaviours, suggest uses, and participate in the production of both contexts and their relative positions. Analysis of architecture, and such things as use or situations, thus by necessity must take programme into consideration both as part of architectural form and as informing subsequent use—all while programme needs to some extent be inferred from use.

Furthermore, if the discussion thus far has been about positioning of commodities and contexts situations of exposure or availability, it is important to keep in mind that such exposure and availability is in relation to people. Things are exposed to someone and available for someone. It has been found that similar mechanics as those discussed—sequencing, interrelations, intervisibilities—also work to inform and structure movement patterns and presences in the department stores. Not only that, it situates the movers and browsers relative to one another. Some spaces are visited by many, and some by few. In general, this corresponds to depth into the department store when it comes to movement, regulated to some extent by exposure when it comes to browsing.

The effect of this is that some situations become more exposed than others to many, or to few, while some are more secluded. This only corresponds to direct presence in certain parts of the spatial system, namely in the parts where the systems of exposure and availability coincide. In others, presence of others is significantly lower or higher than the degree to which people are exposed to others. These situations provide social situations of dramatically different character: private, public, secluded, staged, shared, central, and so forth. They also put different demands and allow different possibilities for those in them.

One extreme is the crowded central areas with constant meetings with new people, flows of people passing by, and constant movement. In general, these situations are public, and describe that which is found in them and what goes on in them as public (Lefebvre 1991; Shields 1992a). Indirectly, these spaces serve as sites of negotiation of what is of public concern and what is not acceptable either as public behaviour or to be represented in public (Zukin 1995). These situations, generally, are characterised by high exposure and availability, which are somewhat inherent in one another.

Another extreme is the situations of extreme staging. The few are put under scrutiny of many, demanding of the “performer” to feel at ease with this scrutiny, and knowing how to behave (Bourdieu 1984; Bennet 1996; Butler 2005). In general, these situations have been found when for some reason demands are put on people who are present; the most exclusive commodities are put in this kind of situation. It provides both opportunity to excel in taste and knowledge and excludes the unknowing by their own choice—the likelihood of the “wrong” clientele to enter such a space is low, since it would mean demonstrating the lack of knowledge for the Other.

A third extreme is the situation of few present and of seclusion. Only a few present, perhaps only one, and the ones there are there for the same purpose: they have all come here because they want to. These situations are relatively private and suggest that which goes on in them to be of private concern. It also tends to—as the former—depend on purpose, as there are little other reasons to come here. The more these spaces are somehow made for specific activities, groups, or interests, the more there is a sharing of purpose.

The fourth extreme becomes again that which is less one of the above, but also allows for instance brands or clothing that requires less fashion-consciousness and less focus to be put on being fashionable for those browsing. This is not a question of degree to which they participate in identity formulation—it is a question of what kind of identity is expressed. In this case, it is one that is less in need of, secure with, or at ease with the more trendy or aristocratic. It is also a position usually corresponding well with thrift (D. Miller 1998).

These situations form regular patterns in space partly decided by patterns of accessibility and partly by how so-called attractors are distributed, which make people go out of their way to reach them. However, the findings of the cur-

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15. The correlation (r-square value) between spatial visibility integration (as calculated in Depthmap 5.12r) and movement rates in the aisles proved to be between 0.62 and 0.7 for the department stores, when a significant exterior was weighed in. This means that 65-70% of the emergent movement patterns can be predicted by analysis of spatial form. It further suggests that a significant part of movement in department stores in general is dependant on spatial configuration.
rent work suggests that the former (movement patterns) has low direct impact on presence of browsers (being) as well as the other way around; presence of people browsing have only low impact on how many move to and from a location. There are regularities of such relations, but these are not directly translatable. However, the relative degrees of these two—passers-by and purposeful presences—formulate social situations in space. When it comes to purpose, the places people go to only if they are interested in what is there are places that suggests shared purpose and shared interests—they are spaces for those who think alike. On the other hand, spaces central in the general texture of space tend to be spaces where more or less everyone passes by, and very few share purpose or interest in being there except from being on the way somewhere else. Indirectly, this suggests degrees to which those present share intents, purposes, values, and even identities.

As has been found, these figures provide a final key to how one can understand the distribution of commodities in the department stores and how space is designed and structured to accommodate this distribution. These figures suggest roles, identities, and values and are part of the negotiation of cultural norms and concepts (Figure 16: IV). In the situated practice of the department stores, these situations are perhaps the most powerful and least powerful parts of the negotiation process going on: spatial organisation participates in the production of social structures, norms, values, and ideas of identities of both personal and structural character for both commodities, people, and activities.

Findings and Conclusions
With the overall argument summarised, we can focus on the findings of the current work and especially those regarding architectural space in as far as such a term is valid. This will be done in a concise form. Following the division of the chapters, little context will be given for each summary and the finer nuances will (by necessity) be left out. These conclusions need to be contextualised both relative to this work as a whole and relative to other research on shopping and architecture. They will then be followed by a short, general conclusion attempting to sum them up, before two of the main themes and implications of the current work will be expanded and speculated upon in the final sub-chapter. The conclusions here will centre on how space is involved in production of ideas and values.

Spatial Organisation of Objects: Contexts, Categories, and Value Systems
In chapter six the formation of the department stores into context formations was investigated. That is, this chapter focuses how space and commodities form contexts, which gives identity to both, and which further suggest belonging of commodities in categories. Such spatial contexts formations are formed as fields where most parts of the field constantly provide context for one another. In part, they are expanded forms of convex spaces as described by Hillier and Hanson (1984). They are further defined by their boundaries: it is by the boundaries that the change from one context to another is performed.

Such context formations suggest co-belonging of that which is gathered within its boundaries: they propose categories. Categories are, in their spatial (local) sense, formed by relations of intervisibility and nextness. In short, by being placed facing one another or being next by one another, commodities are suggested to somehow have with one another to do. In this way, department stores (and many an other building) organises activities and things, and at least in the latter case this suggests categories. This kind of context formations seen as categories have been found to correlate with social and cultural categories as found in fashion and lifestyle magazines and depend on activities, purposes, statuses, genders, and types rather than brands, providing a more subtle but not necessarily weaker information than the brand logos or labelled categories.

The definition of what these categories are is then negotiated between objects in a continuous play of authorship, where context formulate identities of commodities and the other way around. In this interplay objects can be included with two strategies: intervention and integration (Kwon 2002). The former tries to redefine the context; the latter tries to enhance, support and be described by it. In the department stores the formation of categories and their meanings were based mainly on external situations (Chua 1992), where the most important references proved to be activities and identities, where the latter was clearly tied to gender, social position, and status. The strength of such a relation between context formation and category is probably depends on programme, but in the department stores it is strong.

These categories were then related to one another in two ways: by the formation of boundaries and by positioning and distance. Boundaries can be seen to be of linear or painterly character, which suggests the boundary to be sharp or weak, and the enclosed category to be strong as an entity or more dependent on surrounding context (Wölfflin 2003). This can then be completed by distance, where proximity suggests belonging, and distance suggests profound difference (Hanson 1998). The boundary and distance work together so that close-ness and linear suggest complementarity (suits and shirts), whereas distance and linear suggest substantial difference (men’s and women’s fashion, street fashion and suits). The effect of distance is similar with painterly boundaries, albeit weaker: long distances over painterly boundaries are used to describe the status range within a category such as street fashion or fragrances.
Boundaries can also affect vision and access more or less independently one another, and in general, the more they do of both, the more they become linear. For category belonging, it seems vision is most important, and for compatibility it seems access is most important.

In the department stores are thus formulated categories pertaining to identities, activities, or social positions, which are described both in how much they form their own, separate entity (children’s wear, toys), how they relate to neighbouring categories (distinctly different or closely related), and how compatible they are (for different people or situations, or to be used simultaneously or by the same person). This is done through distribution in and of space, and these categories are rather based on identities and social groups than more commonly assumed brand (Tiger, Hugo Boss) or type (Jackets, Shoes) categorisations.

These categories (as concepts), or context formations (as spatial elements), arranged into relative positions to one another, form spatial systems—the topic of chapter seven. It was found that by elaborations of the two properties of exposure and availability, the department stores served to describe such things as positions in the fashion system and social positions and activities for which commodities were suitable. By comparison to fashion and lifestyle magazines, it was found that exposure suggests importance of awareness, and availability suggests who should own it.

This forms a system where high exposure and availability were used to suggest the most trendy, high exposure and low availability to suggest high-status or aristocratic, low exposure and low availability to suggest the private, and low exposure and high availability to suggest impulse or for the less fashion (or status) conscious. These suggested positions have been found to correspond both to fashion and lifestyle magazines and to more established expressions of identities or status such as spaciousness and attention to form and aesthetics of the store or department itself.

The character of that which is found in the different types of location demonstrates the degree to which this is a system of priorities, where there is a constant negotiation of what is most aristocratic, most trendy or most private is the process, rather than taxonomy. That is, the distribution of commodities in the department stores form systems of priorities and choice—priorities and choices, which are constantly remade, but follow regularities in how they make use of the spatial system. This was scrutinised in chapter eight.

By use of configurative spatial analysis of the department stores and the distribution of commodities in them, it has been found how they by spatial means serve to suggest values and social structures underlying the system of commodities, and suggesting what kind of identities and social positions are supposed to be interested in what commodities. In this way, department stores serve to participate in the formation of social structures and cultural norms. This is done partly by manipulating relative degrees of exposure and availability.
These basic correlations then have more to say, which was investigated in chapters ten and eleven in a discussion of how they regulate privacy and publicity. First, this was a discussion on social centrality as generator of publicity and seclusion as generator of privacy. As a general pattern, it was found that commodities were given a public or common character by being put in places where many people were and private by being placed where few ended up. Second, it was found that the result of placing things deeper and more secluded is that most people coming there do so for a purpose, while the people passing the other commodities could be there for any number of reasons. Availability thus structures not only presences but also degree of purpose expected by the buyers.

In chapter eleven, this observation of degree of purpose as regulated by availability was taken further into analysis of how consumers were put on display, how exclusivity and expertise was invoked, and how subjectivity was promoted by the presence and absence of people, and of who is exposed to whom.

The focus was first put on how exposure of people to one another serves as a control of conduct—by exposing people to one another, the crowd is made to survey itself. This grows stronger the more the situation puts few under the scrutiny of many, situations which generally were created either for exclusive and status-filled commodities or literature or for that which was not be touched. The argument was that this was for the same reason: by exposing a single person to a crowd, there is high demands put on conduct, purpose and security and comfort with displaying taste or interest to others. This can work both restrictive (for the insecure or the shameful) and supportive (for the self-confident or exhibitionistic). Extreme exposure can suggest both high and low status, but puts demands on the people interested to feel at ease with being scrutinised for this interest.

It was found that there were three situations characterised by few people were present, which were differentiated by exposure. Aside from the aforementioned private (which also is little exposed), few people present tended to suggest exclusivity and expertise. This is an effect of both expectancy of purpose and exposure of conduct. First, few customers present allow more time spent by personnel on each customer, which in itself is a sign of exclusivity used mainly in two situations: in the high-status exclusive, and in the electronics departments. Both, it can be argued, require expertise, and hence require the possibility to get thorough and time-consuming help should one want. As different from the expertise of the electronics, the exclusivity of the finest cosmetics and suits was underscored by the high degree of exposure to people who tended to not come there, placing the expert taste on display.

Finally, the low degree of presence was suggested to produce another thing: subjectivity. The less people present and the less reasons there are to be somewhere the more likely each one present is to acknowledge the other, if only with a look. This acknowledgement is of other people as subjects. Furthermore, as Butler argues (2005), requirements on purpose also request agency and invokes narratives of the subject. This is even more evident when there are others for whom this agency is displayed. In the exclusive departments, this is further enhanced by personnel helpfully offering their service (but also requesting purpose). This puts further requests on agency, which in the prolonging requests knowledge and taste that allows for such purpose. Thus it serves to ensure that it is mostly those who already have the taste and knowledge to buy luxurious commodities that are at ease with doing so.

It is found that by structuring presences, gazes, and exposure of people, the department stores produce situations that suit different people, different identities, and different activities. These then serve to suggest both for what commodities are meant, for whom and in relation to whom. In this way some things are suggested to be of interest to many, some are suggested to be bought by many, and some are suggested to be bought by few. This is related to degrees of impulsivity, discernment, subjectivity, knowledge, and taste. The exclusive puts few on display for many and the private puts few in seclusion while the mass fashion is put in crowded situations where the trendy is on display and the less trendy allows the masses to browse in peace.

Chapter twelve, as the last of the empirical investigations, turned these findings on one of the more prevalent categorisations encountered, that of gender, to scrutinise how this categorisation was done, and how the genders were differentiated from one another.

It was found that women were described as form by constant stress on surface and bodily form, while men were described as non-form. This emphasis on body returned in focus on the body itself, both in number of mannequins and in presence and exposure of changing booths and in the degree commodities directed to skin were directed to women. Comparatively, men’s clothing was more often displayed on simple hangers or even wrapped in plastic and cosmetics were rare.

Furthermore, men were described as discerned by request of purpose, while women as impulsive by suggestions of impulse buys. By further regulating of presences, gazes, and acknowledgement, men were described as subjects to each other, whereas women were described as objects under the gaze of the other (both men and women). This entails a few other suggestions, which has to do with publicity (women, and women’s fashion, women’s cosmetics, and so forth, are put on display) and with vanity (commodities directed at beautification and surface are directed to women).

Thus women are by distribution and situating of commodities and shopping activity described as superficial, impulsive, form, body, and women’s fashion and beautify is described as public concern, whereas men are described as mind, non-form, subject and discerned and purposeful. This follows the pattern of fashion and lifestyle magazines both in how much the genders are interested in fashion and beauty, but also in whose beauty, whose fashion they are interested in, for whom and why one makes oneself beautiful, and for what purposes. However, most of all, this reproduces the
genders as (a) two and (b) different and ties this division to biological sex. Overall, however, the department stores studied tended to play less on eroticism than much other retail in Stockholm city.

Conclusion

The department stores form a kind of architectural fashion magazines informing, suggesting, producing, and negotiating norms and values. This is done by the interplay of space, commodities, and people in a continuous process of change. As such, they are both supportive of navigation and understanding of value systems such as fashion and (re)productive of the same. It can be said that the orientation in fashion as a status system was more pronounced in Åhlens City, whereas the differentiation between genders was more pronounced in Debenhams. This suggests that far from forming a general, homogeneous, type there are at least two types of department stores, which if not aim for different customers support different kinds of shopping (or at least shopping strategies). However, the investigations suggest, as concluded in chapter fourteen, that shopping is a question of production of and orientation in systems of objects as much as representations of systems of values (fashion, lifestyle, status, etc.), which would mean that so-called window-shopping is what it is “all” about. For this kind of orientation, the investigated department stores formed a kind of maps or textures. How this relates to individual preferences and choices has been discussed, but it is in the end a question for other (further) research.

This is done by spatial means in how things are forming categories, how categories are linked together, and how categories and commodities are given exposure and made available, which further is linked to where there are many and few and where shoppers are exposed to others to different degrees. Much of this can be understood as results of space as forming systems of exposure and availability, which indirectly regulates presences.

We can thus speak of three spatial systems—one of accessibility, one of exposure, and one system of the relative degrees of these two compared to one another. These three systems are always played with in architecture. While it is possible to work in ways that equalises the two, this is achieved only in very few situations and even requires conscious and deliberate design in order to establish. Thus while this is the core of architectural design, it also seems to be something that lies more or less inherent in spatial form overall. This does not mean that the different positions possible to take have inherent connotations or meanings—such connotations are the result of cultural negotiations and conventions. It does, however, mean that they are part of such a negotiation and in a given cultural context also suggests and produces characters of that which is found in such a position, which is in line with what established conventions say should be found in such situations. Or as Lars Marcus puts it: “The ‘social order’, in this way, is given physical expression in the ‘spatial order’, while the spatial order supports the social order. We can say that the spatial order is one of the more important means by which the social order reproduces itself” (2000, 25).

In such a pattern, it is not surprising that the most trendy—seen as that which “everyone” should be aware of and wear—is given much exposure in readily available locations; the exclusive is given much exposure but is put in places requiring effort and purpose to reach, that of lower status or pure impulse is put in readily available locations but given little exposure, and there are things put both hidden and deep (the private). Again, these are figures that serve to simultaneously confirm and suggest status and roles such as positions in the fashion system. In this way, space can be used to suggest and support social formations, to reproduce them, and possibly to challenge them. At any rate, these two systems participate in the spatial negotiation of statuses, roles and identities of commodities, people and activities.

Suggestions and Future Prospects

Two main themes of the thesis can thus be said to be the negotiation of concepts through distributions in and of space and the play of exposure and availability to produce values and identities. These two themes can be expanded and speculated on, which also outlines questions that require further research to understand. As such, they will be formulated in a bold manner in order to make clear just what needs to be more thoroughly investigated but also by a strong and speculative formulation clarify some of the implications of the findings. The point is further to try and lift the question back up from the objects and activities studied towards making contributions to more general discussion of architecture and space, which as stated early on is an underlying aim with the project. While they thus form serious suggestions, these are suggestions to be taken further, and worked with, changed and elaborated as they are incorporated in a broader theoretical context.

A Game of Exposure and Availability: Simulacra and the Glazed Façade

In the current work, exposure and availability as concepts have been worked with as effects of concrete material objects and how they are situated in space; that is, the focus has been on how the objects “themselves” are exposed and the degree to which they are made available. The focus has further been on how exposure is something produced by visual means and how availability is a question of being able to touch, reach, and purchase the commodities in question. These concepts can, however, be expanded as a play that happens not only directly and in the concrete materiality of local space, but in a much wider range of situations and as a play that is not only performed by visibility and tactility, but including auditory, olfactory, and kinaesthetic experiences and as concepts for virtual worlds. A key to such an expansion, which also is of importance to
architecture (and not the least shopping architecture), can be found in the use of glass encasings and glazed walls, which will serve as case in point here as it is here the play takes on its most demonstrative form in the department stores.16

For this discussion, Baudrillard makes an important point: he describes how the effect of the glass casing transforms the commodity into the sign of itself: what glass, seen as a transparent boundary, lets through is not the object itself, but a visual representation hereof (Baudrillard 1996). In this process, he claims that the object is turned into a representation of itself, instead of being an object possible to use or even touch. In other terms, what is done is that the glass gives exposure but restricts availability, which as the argument is presented would imply exclusivity and status. This is also how glass casings are used, and it is also in the case of glass casings that this is as most consistently true throughout. There is nothing put in glass casings that is not exclusive—collectors editions, most valuable jewellery and watches, expensive pens, designer razors, and so forth.

The same argument could be conducted for the cosmetics along Klarabergsgatan, for the fragrances in Åhlens City, for the lingerie of Debenhams and NK, for shoes in Åhlens, and so forth. However, this would miss one other important point in Baudrillard’s example of the glass casing: these transparent boxes are invariably locked, requiring personnel to open them to allow touching or trying. That is, for the glass casing to perform the operation of emphasising representation and restricting availability, such an operation more or less requires the glass box to be enclosed. If one can open the box on ones own, this emphasis on representation implying exclusivity and status and this restriction of availability implying rarity and effort to get hold of will lose power. This is as if there was an opening in it through which the object could be reached. The glass box can thus be seen as a performative operation regulating the relation between exposure and availability of that which it contains so that one is promoted over the other. In this way, exposing the commodities within their right to be reached through an entrance in the same glass manner. Comparatively, many stores such as H&M or 7-eleven have fairly direct access to that which is exposed through the glass through an entrance in the same glass motif. The relative difference of exposure and availability are vastly different. The jewellery and watches standing close by the entrance, but encased in glass boxes and counters, do the same as the ones along Klarabergsgatan—while calling for attention and for being acknowledged the effort required to reach them is often higher than what lies deeper into the stores. These tactical, performative operations are almost exclusively in use by high-profile status categories and can shift dramatically by simple means of shifting the degree of linearity of the boundaries as accessibility regulators. This is a similar operation as that of placing commodities or categories in endcaps—the far ends of sequences or aisles. They are seen much more than reached, and thus, their representative function is emphasised over their utility or their function as goods that should be bought. In comparison, a solid wall does not let anything of that inside reach through in as far as exposure or representation is concerned: availability, in as far as there is such, is emphasised over representation, and emphasis is put on the ease to reach, get a hold on, or acquire.

These actions are used in the direct ways investigated in the current work, but gradually reach into other relative situations. The performative action of the glass casing, the glazed wall and the over-counter shopping—all setting the relative degrees of exposure and availability—can be further traced in advertisements and images, where exposure is given even more primacy over availability, or in mail-order catalogues formed as long lists of items for sale, where it can be argued availability is of more importance. This gradual transition between these becomes quite pointed in an example such as can be seen in Figure 16:V, where all strategies are in use at the same time: the commodities are put in glass cases, behind glazed walls, with advertisements around them, and the actual sales goes not via the glass casings but over-desk inside of the store. We can see that the transition from display windows and “open” glazed façades into the stores is conceptually but a small step, and from certain perspectives the boundary between them is rather fluid: when does the Estée Lauder counter and the products turned towards the street change from being an exposed interior of the store to being showcase commodities put in display windows?

16. It could be said that kinaesthetic experience is taken into consideration in the analysis herein to some extent as narratives, movements, sequences and distances are considered, but there is a lot more to study in this field as well as in visibility and tactility even if the latter pair are the ones given most attention.
Another comparison possible to make is how the lingerie department of NK (chapter twelve) has mannequins on display, but one can see past them into the store and the commodities for sale—occasionally some of them are rather turned inwards than outwards—and how H&M Beautybox (chapter eight) has display windows with mannequins, which are separated from the store interior of the store, but where reaching the commodities themselves is actually less of an effort. It is not an easy and simple thing to answer, which of these makes the strongest disconnection between exposure (to the street) and availability (the effort to reach). How much does it matter that the suit on display in the shopping window on Hamngatan or the bathtub in the window of H&M Beautybox are not the same as its copies sold two floors up or somewhere inside the store—or is it, in fact, the same commodity that is bought? If objects are in their mass-production turned into signs where each copy is indistinguishable for one another, then in the extreme, as is Baudrillard’s argument, they can be said to actually be the same commodity.

Finally, if these two systems work to propose social and cultural positions of status, privacy, publicity, power, and so forth, the question must be put on what grounds this is done. Is there a fashion system that they support or express, which they produce, maintain or even imitate—or is it all forming part of the simulacra, of the claim to suggest social structures that are not actually there except in their simulation? Does this map of positions actually precede the positions themselves, defining and communicating them? This would be Baudrillard’s argument (1933). While this has merit, there is a danger to take this as a suggestion that there would be no social structures—which is not the argument made here. The point of Baudrillard’s argument is that it is in its representation (or simulation) that the fashion system is produced and hence its social significance. The map of the fashion system, the simulacra, precedes that which it refers to.

Whether subscribing to this point of view to its extreme or not, it can be argued that the endcap, glass casing, the glazed façade, the display window, the online store image, and the advertisements are gradual steps in separating exposure and availability of objects—leading even further on to images and virtual representations. Be that as it may, this gradual transition of emphasis from object to sign suggests that objects gradually are turned into signs by such strategies, into simulacra, to use Baudrillard’s term, which further suggests that it is possible to treat the whole range as such an interplay—that is, images and virtual milieus—as situations of objects being to different degrees exposed and available. At least in online shopping, this must be the case. It can also be argued for advertisements and for virtual products such as downloadable movies and music—see for instance Slater’s (2000) argument online sexpic trading. That is, it seems to be possible to turn the table and treat images and virtual milieu as part of a similar play of different forms of relations to objects, virtual or material, which would be complementary to a focus on material objects as turned virtual or into images.

Distributing Space and Commodities: A Collective Negotiation of Concepts

Finally, then, one can turn back to the materiality of architectural space and objects in order to elaborate on the findings in the current work and suggest wider implications for the role of space and architecture in the processes scrutinised. This turns the attention back to the processes analysed mainly in chapters five through eight, but attempts to move to a more conceptual architectural level.

It has earlier been discussed how bookcases form a structure in which literature and/or knowledge is structured, and how this depends on the form of the shelves and the books. In this form, the bookcase is to some extent like department stores or libraries, at least conceptually—there is a spatial structure with limited amounts of positions, which forms a series of closer and farther relations between one another, but also constitutes a whole. The bookcase and its shelves can be said to have the capacity for a number of categorisations roughly equitable to first the number of shelves, either subdivided, or added together in rows and columns (Marcus 2000). However, there is more to learn from the bookcase than this as it comes to spatial structure—namely the structuring principles behind the structure of the bookcase itself. That the bookcase organises books, and somehow requests and implies such an organisation, is clear. It does so, however, in a specific way, which is not comparable to for instance a series of tags or a set of boxes. This becomes clear when one looks a bit closer.

The bookcase does not only organise books, but also lines them up in rows, which are (mostly) visible and reachable for the owner, customer, or library visitor. These principles of exposure and availability, cultural values and priorities for sure, still serve to set the range of possible forms for the bookcase; the bookcase does not only organise books; it makes them browsable and available. In as far as bookcases are concrete, material, spatial structures, the ways in which this is possible is limited by the three-dimensional structure of space and how this is linked to vision and access. The bookcase can be seen as practice consisting of the three parts of organising, exposing, and making available of books.

Not only are possible ways to structure space decided by internal structural conditions; the way it is possible to conceive of spatial structures also informs the range of orders that we then produce spatial structure for. That is, as Semper says, the enclosure produces the idea of the enclosed, the different ways in which we can perceive of spatially distribution of things contribute to the way we can conceive of things ordered, and this order—structured by conceptions of space—serves to inform how spatial structures that are to be inhabited by this order are conceived (Wigley 1995). These spatial structures then further produce ideas of how order is possible to conceive.

This means that once we have conceived of principles for how things are to be organised, once we have decided that it is into “family”, “private”, “public”, “common”, “gender” and so on, based on what we can order and differentiate into spatial entities,
Deleuze and Guattari (2004) in how easily connections, relations, and situations are something that differentiates this process from a thought process such as described by alisations and empirical conditions encountered in material space (Anderson 2000)—emphasised that this is a negotiation between partially arbitrary choices and conceptual perspectives a way to think and to negotiate cultural norms and concepts. It must be other way around (Foucault 2000). The practice of spatial organisation is from such a be disregarded. As Foucault points out, the interesting question here is the interrelations to be made of what connections are of more importance and what connections can and by space and one of the reasons for this is how such an organisation forces priori-
is via the negotiation of difference and belonging performed as things are ordered in
spatiality of thought can be further argued on more conceptual bases such that most
structures are also produced. While on a concrete level in Semper’s discussion, the
spatiality of thought can be further argued on more conceptual bases such that most
models of thinking consists of spatial conceptions in one way or the other, even if they
may detach themselves from physical space (Spindler 2006). Such a link between
space of thought and concrete material space is, however, not the point of the current
argument—the point here is how the latter participates in thought processes regard-
less of how much thought can detach itself from its material surroundings.

Thus one way in which ideas and concepts are negotiated and formulated in society
is via the negotiation of difference and belonging performed as things are ordered in
and by space and one of the reasons for this is how such an organisation forces priorities
to be made of what connections are of more importance and what connections can be disregarded. As Foucault points out, the interesting question here is the interrelation—that is, that the situated practice in space informs conceptual thinking and the other way around (Foucault 2000). The practice of spatial organisation is from such a perspective a way to think and to negotiate cultural norms and concepts. It must be emphasised that this is a negotiation between partially arbitrary choices and conceptualisations and empirical conditions encountered in material space (Anderson 2000)—something that differentiates this process from a thought process such as described by Deleuze and Guattari (2004) in how easily connections, relations, and situations are remade. The forced prioritisation of belonging and difference that becomes necessary is both limiting and creative, and, as it is based on choices made, communicative. Such organisation, however, is not only a question of creating categories and contexts, but of organising them in relation to one another and to general patterns of situations of privacy, publicity, seclusion, and centrality—to name a few. It is also possible, one could argue, that by chance or choice, configurations of relations are produced in this process that would otherwise not have been thought of; that is, transitions of new ideas goes both ways: from thought to material world and from material world to thought. Thus space (and architecture) could be seen as something society thinks with, not only of or by, or qua monuments or formal expression, but also in a continuous negotiation process of distributions of commodities, presences, and events.

Department stores form systems of objects that adapt continuously to the desires and values of customers and managers as well as to patterns of shopping behav-

17. The works of Deleuze and Guattari have had but a small role in the project; the reason I include them here is rather to point to future ways of developing the understanding and how the suggested material form of collective thinking could be related to thought in general. I do not claim to have made a full analysis of their work—the point is that the very dynamism of their model of “a thousand plateaus” is partly based on the possibility to make instant reconfigurations of relations, which is not possible to do with commodities and spaces. All the same, their description of this model of thought (as are most, as Spindler (2006) points out) is spatial.
Figure 16:

Linear and painterly boundaries as presented together (a) shows how the fragrance in Debenhams is separated by linear boundaries with jewellery in Debenhams, whereas some are not (behind the wall) in Ahlin’s Street fashion on the men’s floor. Brands and types are separated by painterly boundaries, whereas the area is separated from others by linear boundaries. However, attention to form and activity in the display itself is also important. Here we can see how the denim department in Debenhams makes claims of status, whereas a corridor in the women’s fashion floor does not.
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Software and Websites


LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Plans have initially been provided by Åhlens, Debenhams, and the City Libraries and have subsequently been adapted by the Author. Photographs and figures not given a source in the captions are by the Author.

Figure 2:I.

Figure 3:I

Figure 3:II

Figure 4:VI

Figure 4:VII

Figure 4:VIII

Figure 4:IX

Figure 5:V
Oil on Canvas (98.5x79.5). Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn. Simeon in the Temple. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm. With Permission from Nationalmuseum (Object: NM 4567).

Figure 6:IX
See Colourplate IV
Figure 6:X

Figure 7:VI
The City Library of Malmo, performance in the Calendar of Light. Ulla Brohed. From the Public Photo Library, the City Library of Malmö. Courtesy of the City Library of Malmö.

Figure 10:I
(b) Subway Station, Union Station LA. Nitsa. 2001. Courtesy of Nitsa/nonphotography.com.

Figure 11:II

Figure 11:III

Figure 12:IV

Figure 13:I

Figure 15:IV

Colourplate I

Colourplate II

Colourplate III

Colourplate IV

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Everyone knows a work with the scope and depth of a thesis cannot be produced on one’s own—but this is usually how it is presented. While this thesis is “mine”, from such a point of view, it must still be recognised that without all the input, the discussions, the time, the effort, the criticism, the questioning, the suggestions, and the support given me from colleagues, friends, family, and others I have been in contact with both in direct connection to the work or in other forms, this thesis would not have been what it is—if it had even been at all. All of you have in your own, unique way made this work possible, and are to some extent part in its completion. While I would like to thank you all personally, I have here limited myself to those formally involved in the project in one way or the other; this does not diminish the gratitude I feel to those not here mentioned by name.

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