



# 06

## SPATIAL INTENT

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## 6.1 FROM CLOSED MINDED TO OPEN MINDED SPACE

This chapter will deal with the shopping mall as a single minded space and methods of transferring this to an open minded space. According to Smiley (2002: 9), one central theme of political philosophy in recent years has been the importance of public space for the vitality of democracy. A democratic polity needs what the philosopher Michael Walzer has called “open-minded spaces,” places that are well integrated into their contexts and where a wide variety of people can coexist, places where a wide variety of functions encourage unexpected activities, places whose multiple possibilities lead naturally to the communication that makes democracy possible. In contrast to this retail space tends to be dominated by what Walzer has called “single-minded spaces,” that is, spaces so rigorously defined for a single purpose that they exclude the liberating openness of genuine public space.

Historically, shopping malls have been isolated, single-use developments that stand apart from the community and that turn their backs on surrounding neighbourhoods. In contrast to the first organised retail spaces, the arcades and markets, the organization of the mall has nothing to do with the context or existing patterns. This chapter is categorised in two portions, Integrate and Respond. This will serve as summaries of critiques and solutions to creating successful “open-minded” retail typologies. Typologies that will reflect the authenticity of their surrounding context.

## 6.2 INTEGRATE

Beyard et al (2006: 3) states that to design retail spaces as community civic spaces it is becoming more crucial to integrate the mall as a “site” with the surrounding community on physical and social levels; especially in the South African suburban context where these sites are the anchor points or de-facto downtowns. When envisioning what should be undertaken in designing retail spaces it is the responsibility of designers to look beyond the development of property and retail alone (Smiley 2002: 2). Designers should grab opportunities to create physical and functional integrations between the mall site and the residential and commercial properties beyond its borders (Gurcel 2013: 22).

Retail spaces tend to be blank architectural forms that are oriented inwards toward vast, climate-controlled shopping arcades (Plotz 2001: 2). The arrival of the air-con and the capitalisation of public space as discussed in chapter 2 have produced a potent internalised autonomous form that creates urban barriers, socially and physically. As the mall surfaced as a business model in the 1960s, architects took the backseat and planners retreated (McMorrough 2001: 196).

Jane Jacobs argued that designers and planners should start breaking the barriers these urban structures produces by turning them into seams (McMorrough 2001b: 372). A term used by Jacobs and Kevin Lynch that describes an edge condition where the tangible and intangible are allowed to penetrate through, a line of exchange along where two areas are sewn together. The research explains approaches to modify the autonomous un-contextual form of retail spaces and to explode it to be an all-inclusive space in programme and architecture. The critique and issues have been summarised into four narratives of departure in order to understand the context of the mall and how to address it: the Monolith, the Autonomist, the Internalist and the Imploder.

### 6.2.1 THE MONOLITH:

Karrholm (2012: 4) describes retail space as a disintegrated typology through the sheer scale between mall and the surrounding built fabric. Their exterior presence is typically monolithic and over scaled. It tends to be big boxes usually situated within small scale suburban environments (Beyard et al. 2006: 3). In order to redress the monolith, care needs to be given in producing spaces of appropriate scale and proportion.

1) **INTRUDE THE FAÇADE:** According to Crawford (1992: 13) a fundamental problem with retail spaces is the blunt façades designed with minimal openings in order to control customers and to maximise billboard space for anchor retailers. In order to integrate the structure into its context, the first approach needs to start breaking the façade. Open it up and let it be permeable to allow for physical and visual penetration.

2) **SCALE DOWN:** The extent of the first space of interaction with the structure needs narrate contextual scale. The balance of the edge needs to be reduced to human scale. A scale should permit the continuation of existing street conditions and be able to produce pedestrian orientated programme and design. This will create a more compelling form on site and in the larger district (Beyard et al. 2006: 8). The physical form to be reduced and the box to be broken down from monolithic structures to proportions that narrate to the scale of the surrounding built fabric. It will allow for more approachable and human scale intervention.

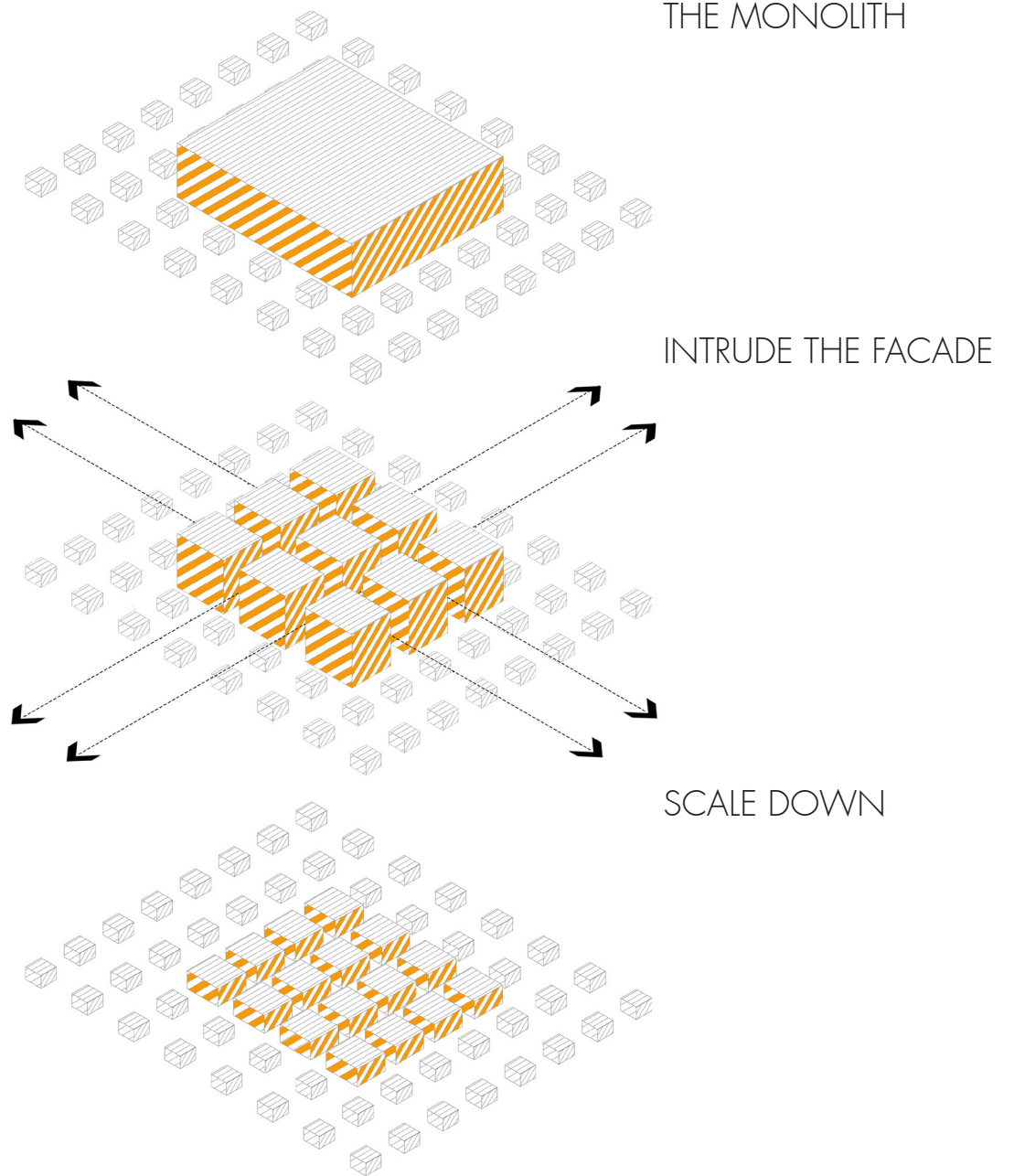


Figure 6.1. The Monolith (Author)

## 6.2

### 6.2.2 THE AUTONOMIST:

As (Beyard et al. 2006: 7) argues, most retail spaces harvests a system he refers to as the “island syndrome”. This is the result of design orientation towards infrastructure and systems such as parking and the maximum control of circulation. Threshold spaces is minimised and based around a few entrances in order to control the flow of people and products. The goal is to dishearten loitering outside the mall and to speed up the shoppers who will leave or return to their cars is the main purpose of this design strategy (Gottdienger 1995: 92). A familiar trick based on a diagram with department stores, escalators and benches placed at specific locations to increase capital turnover. This is fostering the disconnected design typology of retail spaces in our contemporary urban landscapes.

According to Smiley (2002: 20), it is important for these spaces to have integrated, open and well connected thresholds in order to break the isolation of the structures. It is also important to connect the mall site, to the extent possible, with other community anchors such as civic buildings, parks, offices and nearby street front retailing through building on to existing pedestrian patterns, public transport and to find new ways of dealing with parking (Beyard et al. 2006:10).

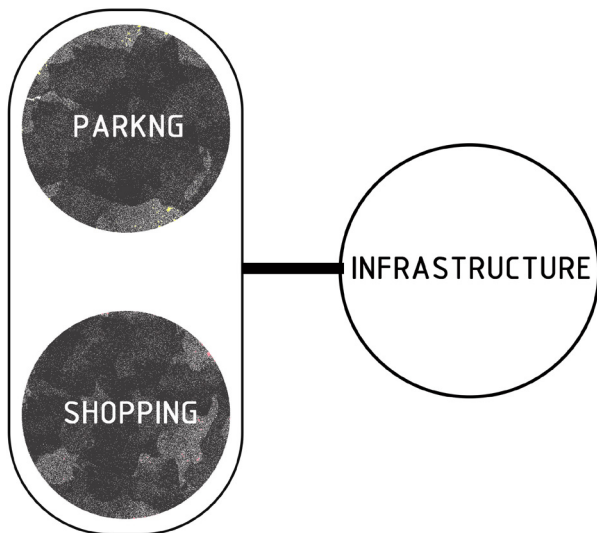


Figure 6.2. The Shopping Mall and Parking held together by infrastructure (Author)

### BREAK THE DIAGRAM:

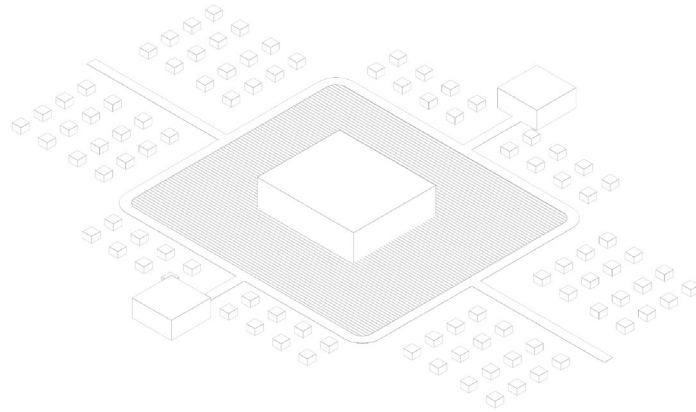
McMorrough (2001c: 724) argues that retail spaces are isolated from any environmental connection through the gulf of parking lots. A typology of centrally owned cluster of architecturally unified retailing spaces designed to accommodate automobiles while restricting traffic to pedestrians (Kawinski 1985: 48). Koolhaas et al (2001: 140) describes shopping malls as a simple diagram of shopping and parking held together by infrastructure. Smiley (2002: 13) argues that architects need to remember that they are designing these spaces for people, and not for infrastructure that engineers and developers love.

Parking in suburban shopping malls is an important factor as this is currently the only connection it has to people. No other building form contributes as much to parking spaces than retail spaces (Hitge & Roodt 2006: 26). In the South African Context, the Department of Transport sets a minimum standard rate for parking spaces in shopping centres. This sometimes produces unnecessary amounts of parking space that in reality will never be used. Conventional shopping centres often use three times as much land for streets and surface parking as for shopping. But parking is not only expansive; it is expensive. (Beyard et al. 2006: 24)

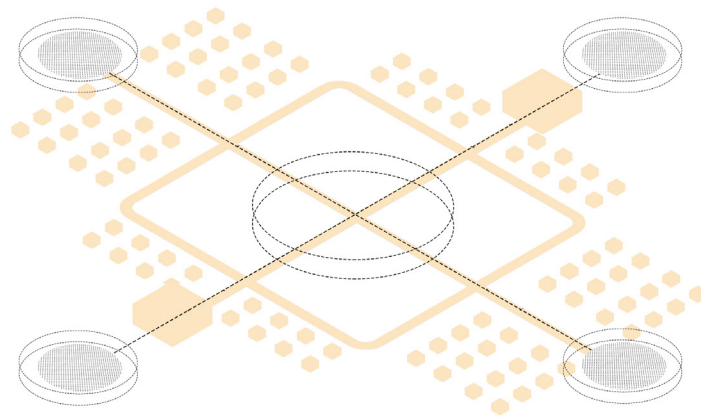
According to Beyard et al. 2006: 24), one method of reducing and rethinking parking spaces is to have better physical connections. He suggests that shopping centres should have better pedestrian connections and proper integration of public transport systems. This will encourage people to walk or cycle rather than use their cars. It will serve as an argument to reduce the amount of parking space required.

It is important that the space and not the parking becomes the destination. Thus designers should rethink parking as just a required ratio. According to Beyard et al. (2006: 25), there are two physical ways of dealing with this issue. Firstly to integrate parking within the context, design and landscape and secondly, to give parking more functions.

THE AUTONOMIST



BREAK THE DIAGRAM



CONNECT TO CONTEXT

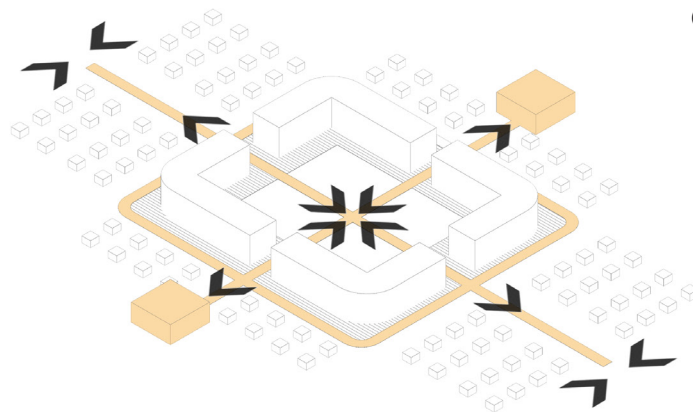


Figure 6.3. The Autonomist (Author)



## 6.2

### 6.2.3 THE IMPLODER:

In 2005 Jean Baudrillard published an essay titled “The Beaubourg Effect: Implosion and deterrence”. Written as a critique on the centre di Pompidou in Beaubourg, Paris, by Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano, he produced a theory known as the “black hole analogy” (Baudrillard 2005: 4). In this theory he appraised the building to foster a phenomenon he refers to as “cultural implosion”. His comparison of the structure being that of a monument to mass simulation, a centre that functions like an incinerator, absorbing and devouring all cultural energy, like a black monolith or a vacuum-making machine. He describes the building as being the “hypermarket of culture” where it is a future form of controlled socialisation.

According to Baudrillard, the designers produced an architectural envelope that only the interior void could respond to. He concludes this theory as the result of a design that is a monument of total disconnection. His argument was based around the fact that this cultural museum was placed within a context of existing culture. Its disconnection and the programme overpowers and excludes existing activities. This “sucked” the social environment of the neighbourhood into the building. Replacing the internal void and producing a cultural void in the neighbourhood.

This “black hole effect” can be compared to the effect shopping malls have on the settings they are placed in. According to (Smiley 2002: 6), shopping malls undermine the communities in which they are located which fuels disinvestment in these communities outside the mall boundaries. As malls provide people with large chain and anchor stores, it gradually sucks in the customers of previous small business owners in the surrounding neighbourhoods. This eventually leads to bankruptcy of small businesses that leaves behind voids through the economic downfall, as well as cultural downfall of the neighbourhood, as it imposes homogenous products from distant manufacturers.

This occurrence was proven in a study done by the University of South Africa in 2008 to test the effect malls have on small business owners in South African townships. The study, conducted in Soshanguve, Pretoria, tested the effects the construction of a shopping centre next to the Mabopane train station had on surrounding traders. The study found that there was a 47% decline in small businesses after the six month existence of the

mall. It also found that three in every five of the remaining business owners experienced a decline in profit, turnover and product range (Lighthelm 2008: 54)

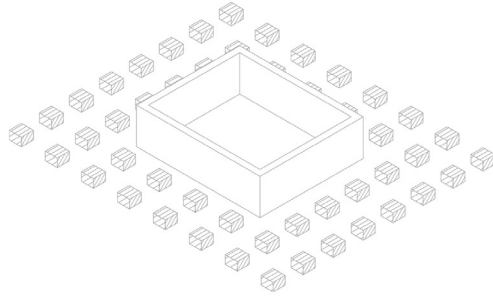
Architects do not always have an input on how the building they design will react to its context after completion (Ball State University 2015). Nonetheless, in order for the structure to have a constructive rather than a destructive (implosive) effect on the communities they serve architects should understand the communities they design for better.

It is important to create not only successful social spaces but also spaces that will create economic opportunities and be an asset towards the communities they serve (Gurciel 2013: 34). Synergy needs to be created between on site and off site, as well as new and existing programmes. Including existing small business owners that will reflect respond and strengthen the authenticity of the surrounding neighbourhoods. A system that will explode outwards towards the community.

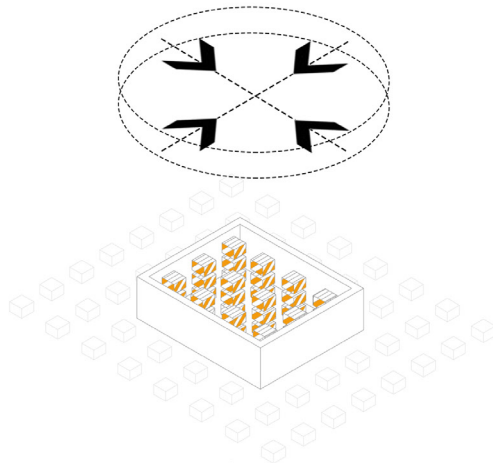
CONTEXT



THE MALL



IMPLODE



EXPLODE

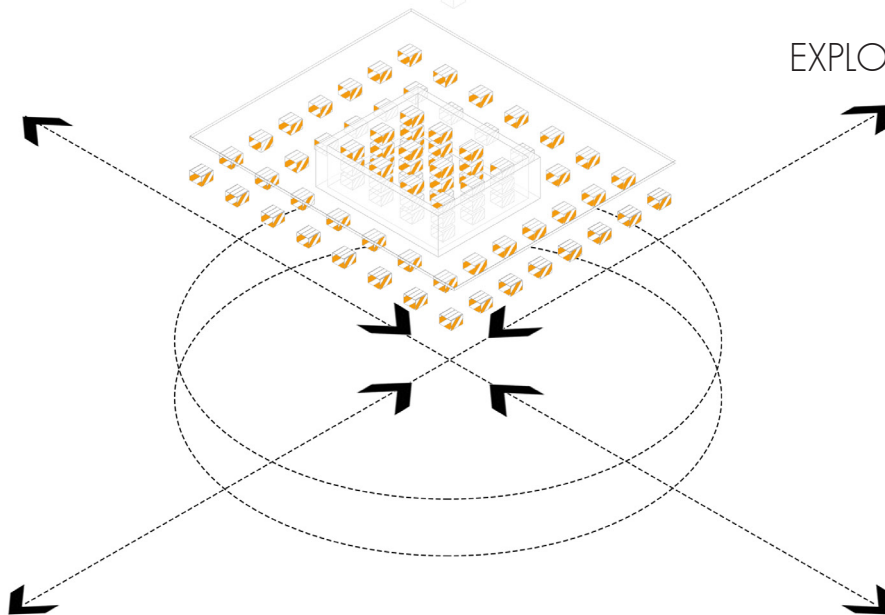


Figure 6.4. The Imploder (Author)



## 6.2

### 6.2.4 THE INTERNALIST:

As explained in earlier chapters, the original mall designed by Victor Gruen, was situated in Minnesota, where the climatic conditions required an internalised space that will shelter people from the extreme cold weather. The arrival of the air-conditioning allowed this to happen. This produced a system of controlled space aimed to keep shoppers there for longer hours (Koolhaas et al. 2001: 154). Spaces that are sheltered by walls, take all social and public activities inwards as the most important space for urban events. From an economic perspective this proved to be successful and was copied across the world, including South Africa.

Turning public space inwards, provides infrastructural support as much as it is inhabited and experienced. It provides the invisible mechanism that allows shopping to smoothly operate as much as it enables the packaging of total environments. A total engagement of sense where sights, smells, sounds and feelings are engineered, refined, calculated and deployed for maximum persuasive effects (Koolhaas et al. 2001: 164).

In order to “empirically” prove the benefits of air-conditioning on the liberation of shopping, Victor Gruen designed a chart to measure how far people would be willing to walk under varying conditions (Figure 6.7). This system later influenced the requirements set to us today in determining the required use of artificial cooling systems in retail spaces.

In the South African context, especially Pretoria, this is not always required. According to Joubert(2012: 25) the climate of Pretoria is described as temperate. In this climatic conditions an entirely enclosed structure is not necessary taking into consideration that one provide summer shading and sufficient solar heating in winter (Joubert 2012:13).

When a comparison is made between the psychometric charts for human comfort (Figure 6.), the climatic conditions of Pretoria and the building requirements for it, it is safe to assume that with minimal intervention and design it is possible to satisfy retailers without having “air-controlled” spaces. Thus, to have an internalised retail space in Pretoria is invalid both from an environmental and social viewpoint.

	minutes	feet
In a highly attractive, completely weather-protected and artificially climatized environment	20	5,000
In a highly attractive environment in which the sidewalks are protected from sunshine and rain	10	2,500
In an attractive but not weather-protected area during periods of inclement weather	5	1,250
In an unattractive environment (parking lot, garage, traffic-congested streets)	2	600

Figure 6.5. The empirical formula as developed by Victor Gruen (Koolhaas et al)

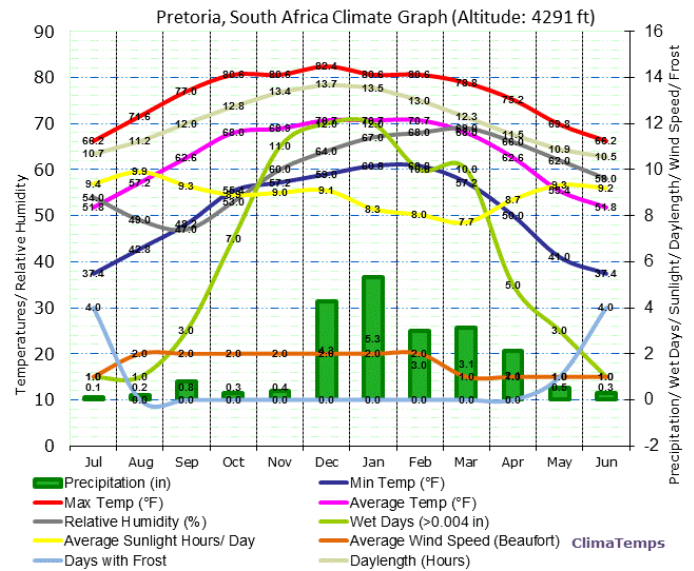


Figure 6.6. The climatic conditions of Pretoria (Pretoria Climate 2015)

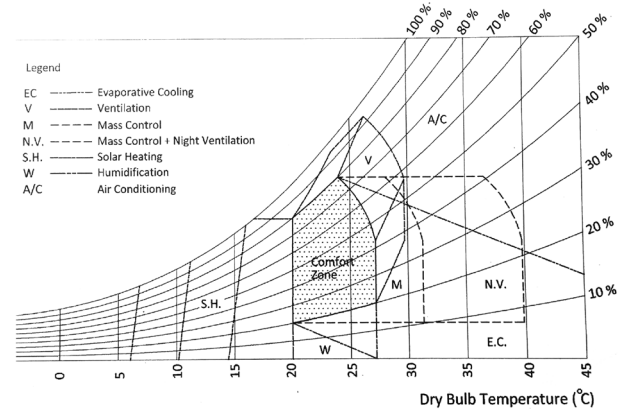
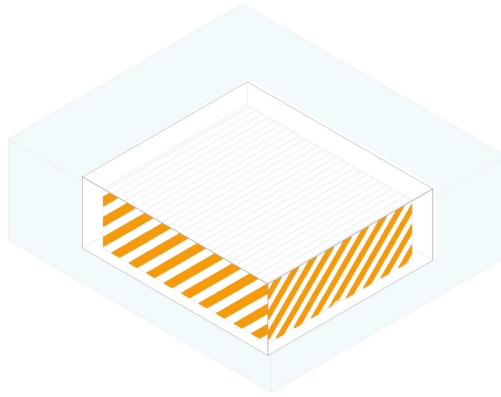
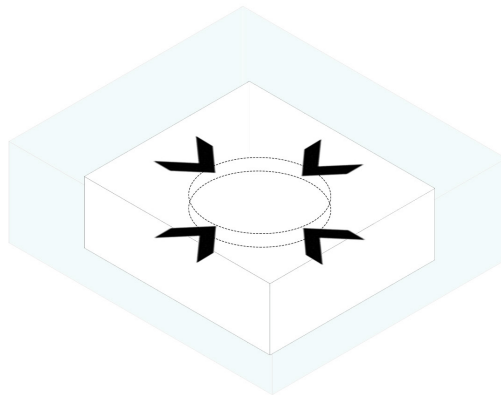


Figure 6.7. The bio-climatic chart of human comfort (Joubert 2012: 11)

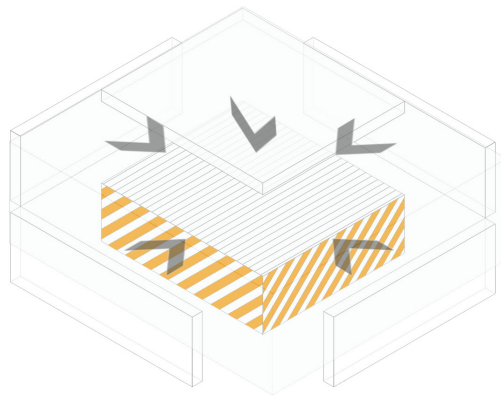
SHELTER FROM CLIMATE



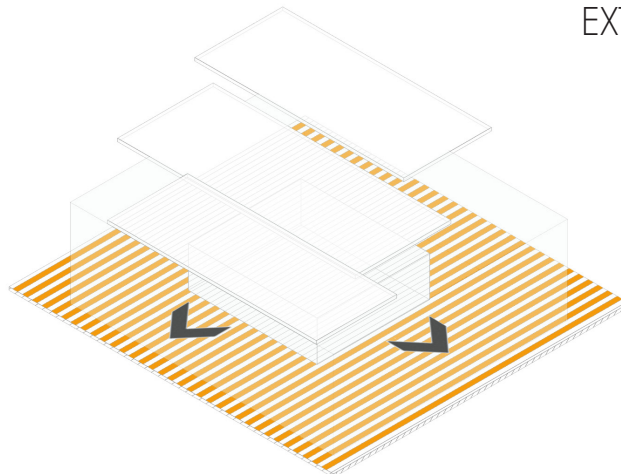
INTERNALISE



EMBRACE CLIMATE OF PRETORIA



EXTERNALISE



## 6.3 RESPOND

This section will primarily focus on three narratives that explain the contemporary changing retail environment. The first narrative will be the disappearance of anchor stores as a mechanism to lure people to retail spaces and how that is being replaced by smaller community-inclusive retail spaces. The second narrative portrays the integration and collaboration that needs to take place between the product, the merchant and the consumer. And thirdly the experience of the third space where the social experience these spaces provide becomes the major design factor.

### 3.3.1 NO MORE ANCHOR STORE

Traditionally, retail floor plans are defined by the location of the anchor store. With specialty shops placed between the big stores where the number of large department stores determine the classification of malls. There are usually at least two big department stores which orient the malls path on a liner axis and allow designers to “anchor down” the mall (Crawford 1992: 13). But this is not the case anymore, according to Michael Beyard (Beyard et al. 2006: 10), he argues that the idea of the department store as anchor to attract customers is no longer valid: “The first and fundamental approach for the new retail is the fact that the future of retail does no longer rely on anchor stores.”

Carusso (2015) states that this disappearance can be attributed to the rise of e-commerce. People now buy homogenous goods online, goods that they previously would have bought at the department stores. Nonetheless, he then states that this will have no influence on the number of people visiting retail spaces as an entity. People still go to malls for the social experience and to buy products that are from distinctive small retailers that are not necessarily available online. Thus, the space itself as a collective of small retailers becomes the anchor.

The disappearance of the department store anchor, and the reluctance or inability of surviving chains to expand has limited new construction opportunities for traditional malls. As a result, the addition of new anchors should be underway. According to (Nielsen 2014: 5) the answer is to think small. The future of retail lies in small “pop-up” like stores that function as a collective. Nielsen (2015: 5) also states that even formerly big department stores such as Wal-Mart are now reducing their size in order to stay competitive

According to (Smiley 2002: 21), retail spaces are mostly classified as a building type based on a rigid and highly inflexible format, largely determined by real estate economies, market research, and architectural behaviourism. But Plotzl (2001: 2) argues that this is not the future for retail. He argues that previously stores had a lifespan of 12 years, but now it is only six years. He states that retail spaces need to be flexible. If retail spaces are built smartly and intelligently it should be able to respond quickly to changes. This will not only have an impact on the economic stability of these spaces, but also from an environmental perspective where retail spaces need to go through revamps every six years, where new materials will be required, in order to stay relevant.

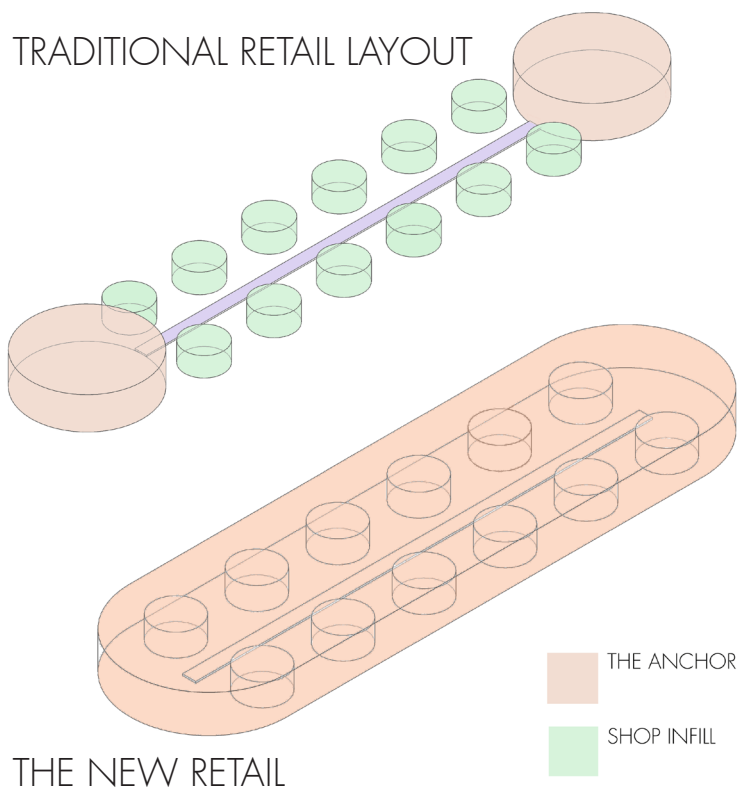


Figure 6.9. The new retail that don't require an anchor store. (Author)

3.3.2 COLLABORATE- INTEGRATE – EXPOSE

”The commercial typology for South Africa going forward is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect that seeks justice in production and trade processes, facilitating the empowerment of small-scale farmers and farm workers enabling community upliftment.”

Jonathan Katz (*The Marketing Site 2015*)

According to Dough Stephens (Stephens 2013) retail stores will increasingly become places that we visit, not only to buy, but to also co- design and produce the products that we need with the assistance of experts. Stores will be the point of collaboration and customisation. According to Jonathan Katz (The Marketing Site 2013) retail spaces in the South African context’s primary aim should be to generate a relationship between product and person. This will need to happen through creating spaces of collaboration. Where the customer can have individual input in the making of the product.

He also argues that the contemporary South African consumer is becoming more conscious about the history of the product. Thus, retailing should focus on exposing the entire process of product to the customer by providing spaces where production and retail can take place in close proximity. This creates the need for a new retail typology where material, production, merchant and consumer are no longer seen as separate entities but as a collective interlinked process (Figure 6.9).

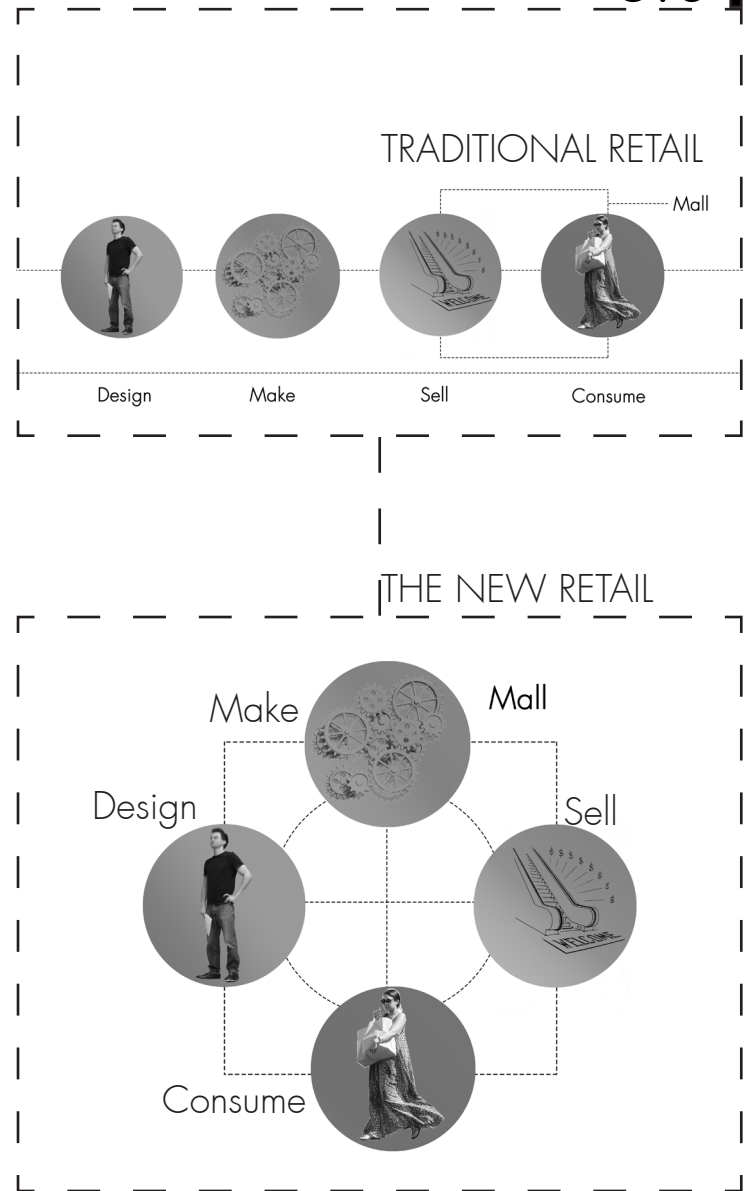


Figure 6.10 The New Retail (Author)



## 6.3

### 3.3.3 DESIGN THE THIRD SPACE

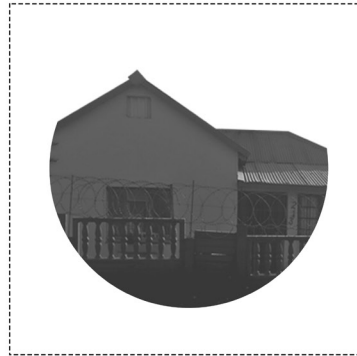
*“In fact, we often shop to fulfil other deeper needs as well – the need to disconnect, to socialize and to commune – and at times to simply be out in public.”*  
Dough Stephens (Stephens 2013)

As mentioned in the previous chapter, shopping malls are increasingly becoming the “Third Space”. But if we go to the mall in search of the third space we are seduced into privatised shopping behaviour. According to (Smile 2002: 9), we need to confront and transform the mall. The aim should be to create spaces that will encourage people to be civic and cultural. The importance should not be to close the malls or lure people out of them but to make them more like the multiuse public spaces they have displaced. Margaret Crawford (Smiley 2002: 21) argues that privatising ideology and consumerist culture have turned citizens into consumers. The goal for architects of these spaces is that we need to go to where the consumers are and try to turn them back into citizens.

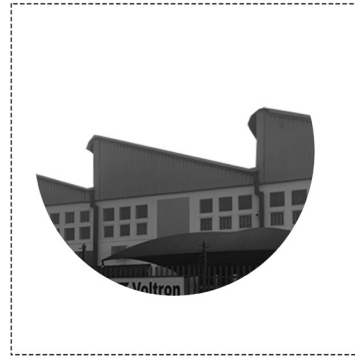
Despite the ascendancy of these single minded spaces, architects have the opportunity to create public spaces in the suburbs throughout the country. The product should thus be one of “multi-functionality”. Where more activities that both reflect civic life and the cultural requirements of the surrounding areas need to be incorporated. To instigate programmes such as community halls, libraries, performance stages, art galleries and outdoor space may give new hope to retailers as it will allow customers to think of themselves as citizens and not consumers (Smiley 2002: 3). Today, it is about going out and getting an experience, about collecting different aspects of a lifestyle and not just buying a commodity. Through this the shopping environment should establish a sense of place and create a local identity, a civic space (Sebherwal 2013: 22).

Carr et al. (1992) regard civic space as “the common ground where people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind a community, whether in the normal routines of daily life or in periodic festivities”. He then describes the provisions to design a successful public space through the following requirements:

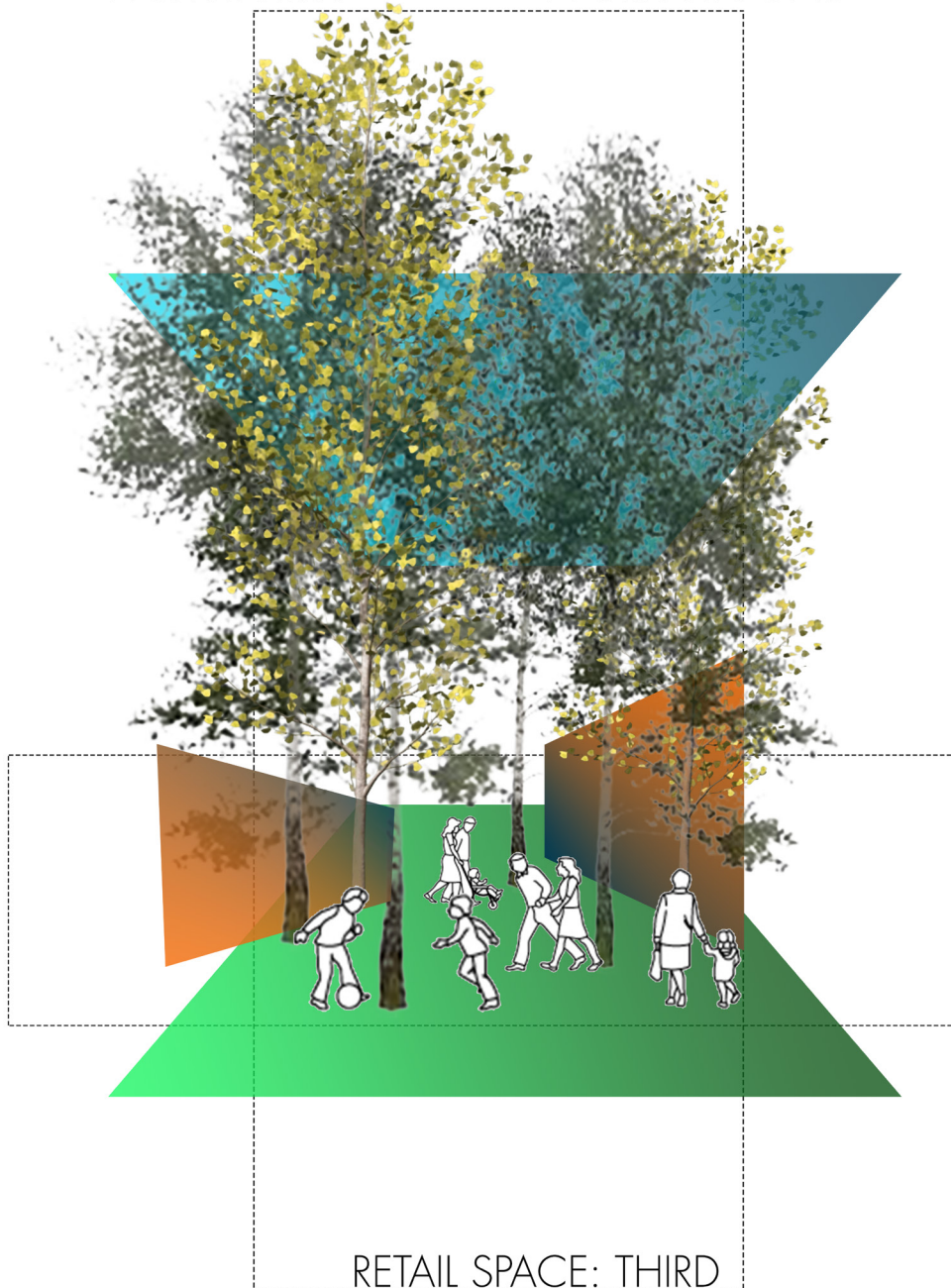
- Comfort: physical comfort which can be achieved by meeting the need for food, drink and shelter from the natural elements, or a place to rest when tired.
- Relaxation: physiological comfort which can be achieved by the use of natural elements – trees, greenery, water features and separation from vehicular traffic.
- Passive Engagement: experiencing the environment without getting involved, for example, providing sitting places that allow people to observe.
- Active Engagement: becoming involved through, for example, public art, fountains, coffee stalls, or the arrangement of benches.
- Discovery: representing desire for new spectacles and pleasure experiences, ‘discovery’ depends on variety and change.



HOME: FIRST



WORK SECOND



RETAIL SPACE: THIRD

Figure 6.11 The first, second and third Space (Author)