

Spaces and practices of consumption:
Shops, supermarkets, departmental
stores, malls; McDonaldization

Week 10, SAN266, 2019, 24th April

Spaces and practices: origin of consumer society

Slater, Don. 1997. Consumer Culture and Modernity:

- Origin of consumption today as well as origin of consumer society is related to the change of the spaces of consumption
- dependence between creation of subjectivities and identities, media, consumption of commodities and changing spaces of public life

Bowlby, Rachel. 2000. Carried Away: The Invention of Modern Shopping

- shopping as a sphere of expansion of commercial sphere into everyday life. People become consumers and through consumption they become advertising of themselves

Spaces and practices: origin of consumer society

Industrialisation:

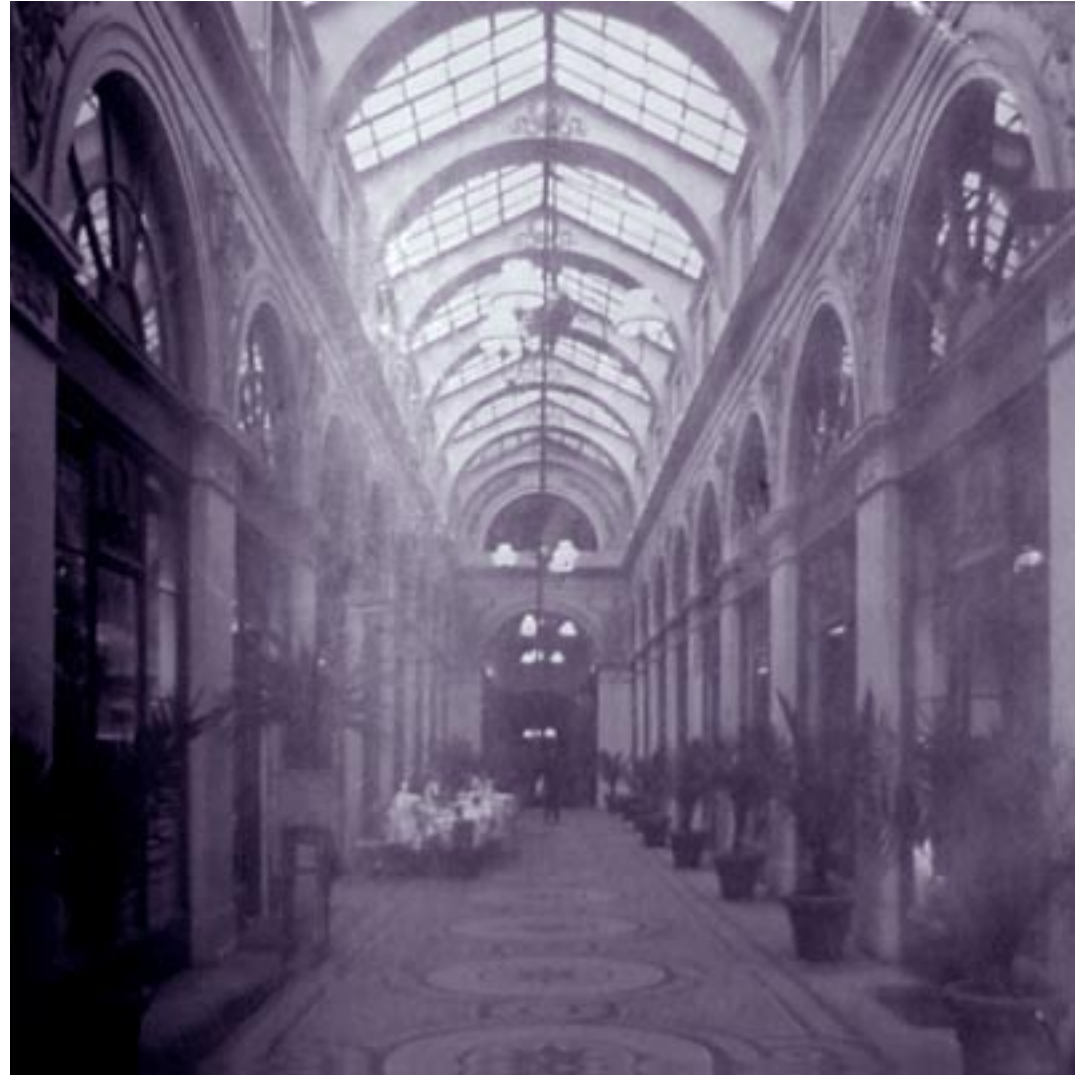
- Transfer of work from home to highly organized institutions (e.g. factory, office)
- Separation of consumption and production, work and rest, work and family, public and private, personal and economic
- Consumption as non-production – rest, leisure
- Shopping as one of scenes where commercial capitalism is played out

Origin of consumer society – malls and departmental stores

- Changes in production require more effective sale – bigger amount of affordable commodities, fast turnover, fixed prices -> leads to increase in profit
- 2 types of new consumption spaces: luxurious arcades and departmental stores with higher amount of affordable goods
- Half of the 19th century – origin of departmental stores – an important moment in the origin of consumer society
- „the early department stores pioneered transformation of traditional customers into modern consumers and of „just merchandise“ into spectacular „commodity signs“ or „symbolic goods“. Thus they laid the cornerstones of culture we still inhabit.“ (Larmans 1993:94)

Arcades

- Benjamin, W.1999. *Passagenwerk* (The Arcade Project):
„The arcades and interiors are residues of a dream world “
- Buck-Morss, S. 1989. *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and Arcades Project.*



Bon Marché – 1838, Paris

- First departmental store in history
- E. Zola, *Au Bonheur des Dames* (U štěstí dam; (Ladies'paradise) – novel about its development



Malls and departmental stores: places of enchantment

- Industrially produced commodities are cheap, but association with cheapness is not positive – spaces are constructed as luxurious
- Victorian ideas of progress and industrialisation – railway stations, factories and departmental stores as cathedrals
- New type of architecture: spacious, glass, marble, cast iron
- big buildings (suggests you can find everything you need there)
- Display of huge amounts of various goods - connection with power – rulers who provide everything, create debt.
- Change of cities, relation to transport (also nowadays)
- Employees: disciplined, nice, cultivated, increasingly female

Malls and departmental stores: places of enchantment

- Advertising makes commodities objects of desire – objects of need change into objects of desire
- Shopping as attraction, spectacle, display and exhibition
- „The early department stores were theatres as much as art galleries, where everything was put in a magical context“ Corrigan
- For Benjamin, The arcade was the *Ur-form*, the originary form, of modernity, for it incubated modes of behaviour – distraction, seduction by the commodity spectacle, shopping as leisure activity, self-display

Malls and departmental stores: places of enchantment

New experience with shopping:

- Fixed prices (no haggling)
- Goods are displayed you can see what you need
- Free entry: everybody can enter, even if s/he does not buy anything – entry is not absolutely free (prescribed patterns of behavior, excluded parts of population)
- Targeted to middle classes, democratisation of luxury
- Laermans (1993): attractive, because they create a feminine public space –Important for emancipation

Malls and departmental stores: consumption as passive

Richard Sennet, 1976. The Fall of Public Man:

- Free entry and fixed prices – passivity becomes a norm – consumer does not have to haggle
- Departmental stores are explicit expression of public-private divide: private even secret pleasures at home, silent public watching in departmental stores
- With commodities and sale becoming more spectacular, consumers become only audience in the comedy of commercial spaces of modernity

Malls and departmental stores: consumption as active

- On the other hand – pleasure and fun require work: creation and learning of meanings and new lifestyles

John Fiske *Understanding Popular Culture* (1989)

- mall is potential place of resistance – social life of women, tactics of resistance of marginal groups

Malls and departmental stores

- **Places where capitalism is reproduced**
- **Places of mobilisation and resistance** (women, minorities)
- **Places of homogeneous view on identities** (Figurine – the body is subordinated to the abstract model created by marketing and commerce, it should have form corresponding to the dress)
- **Places enabling various identities**
- **Places of enchantment**

Group work 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fdy1AgO6Fp4>

From 40.s.

Watch the video.

In the group :

1. Define what is macdonalization
2. List 5 aspects of Macdonalization

Supermarket as an example of macdonalization

Ritzer, 1993. G. *The McDonaldization of Society*

- Fast-food restaurant – organizing force representing process of rationalization of society

Macdonalization:

- “the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world. “(Ritzer 1993:1)
- Increase of chain mentality

5 aspects of macdonaldization

- Efficiency – the optimal method for accomplishing a task (self-serve gasoline, self-serve soda fountains)
- Predictability – the attempt to structure our environment so that people know what to expect.
- Calculability - objective should be quantifiable (large amount of product delivered to the customer in a short amount of time, e.g. the Big Mac, food sold by it's weight)
- increased control and the replacement of human by non-human technology.
- **Irrationality of rationality** – dehumanization of both employees and consumers