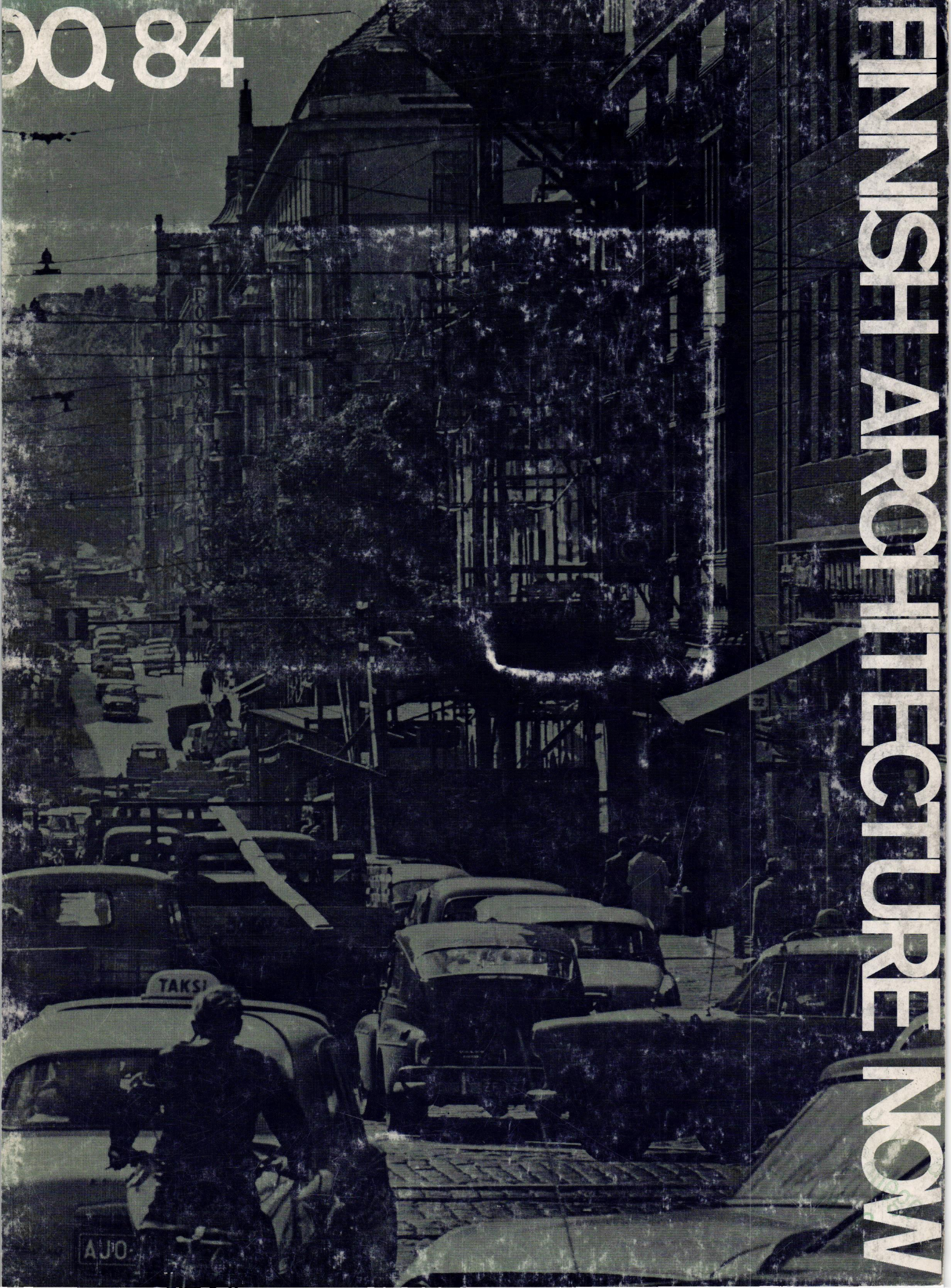


00 84

FINNISH ARCHITECTURE NOW





Islands of the southwestern archipelago of Finland

DQ 84

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FINNISH ARCHITECTURE NOW

The current state of architecture and planning in Finland reflects a new awareness, among younger architects, of the global rejection of architecture for art's sake. Because this small country (population about 4,000,000) has, in the past 20 years, developed aspects of the urban malaises—inhuman scale, inadequate housing, automobile congestion—felt earlier in western Europe and the United States, new motivations and philosophies in regard to architecture and planning are emerging in this northern land.

Geographical remoteness and a bleak, severe climate much of the year have caused the people of Finland to look upon the natural environment in a unique, almost mystical way. Preservation of nature has always been a Finnish compulsion, reflected in the best of its planning projects. The endless, dark winters are to some degree compensated for by two spectacular summer months of the midnight sun. In summer the countryside becomes a haven for recreation and for a kind of freedom that cannot be fully understood by people who live outside the polar region.

The giants of 20th century architecture in Finland, Eliel Saarinen (1873–1950) and Alvar Aalto (b. 1898), have been individualists with incredibly strong powers of personal expression that go beyond the boundaries of any school or formal style. Often, the Functionalists, Constructivists and systems designers of more recent times seem to be less inventive than their famous elders, but this characteristic is not peculiarly Finnish. As the emphasis in architecture has shifted from formal to social and human concerns throughout the world, solutions have tended, surprisingly, to be less individualistic and less expressionistic. Yet it seems apparent that the impersonality of much current work is the result of a search for clarity and reason that will, in time, lead to true innovation of a new order.

Design Quarterly is indebted to the staff of the Finnish Embassy in Washington, D. C., for translation of the articles. Special thanks are due Per-Erik Lönnfors, press attaché for the Embassy, who coordinated the handling of materials and correspondence with the authors, and to his predecessor, Pauli Opas, with whom initial arrangements for this issue were made.

We wish to thank Jarmo Maunula and Kari Nissinen who collaborated in the original selection of authors and photographers used here. Finally, our thanks to the authors and to the Museum of Finnish Architecture for providing all photographs reproduced in *Design Quarterly 84*.

INTRODUCTION

Jarmo Maunula

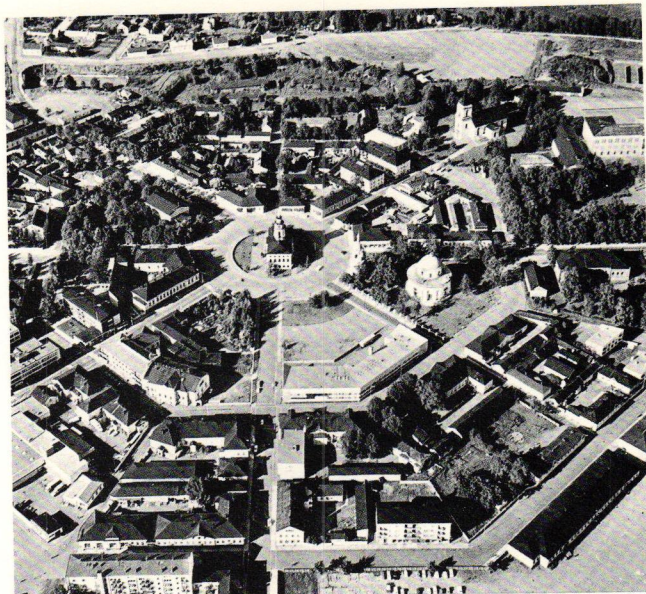
The old truth that architecture is total environment made visible has a tangible, political form in Finland. Architecture, as we know it, is dependent upon the power structure for survival; it brings comfort and happiness to certain elements of society but provides inadequate, expensive dwellings and a contaminated environment for a much greater number.

Current discussion in Finland is most lively in the domain of urban planning, as planning clearly reflects existing social pressures. Architecture may appear, at times, to have been almost forgotten. New problems have been effectively presented in numerous pamphlets written by young planners and other professionals, and in demands made by students of architecture concerning their training. Some community pressure groups have also become visible; however, the debate has generally not affected practical planning to any appreciable extent. It has led, with regrettable frequency, to frustration and withdrawal or to fruitless technical utopianism and iconography. Contrary but equally superficial interpretations of the situation are encountered among many undergraduates. An awakening to social issues and a rejection of architecture, felt to be an elite aspect of our culture, has created a desire to plan with the people, particularly those of small means. The result is low-cost housing and, unfortunately, corresponding low-cost solutions and forms have often been resorted to. It is imagined that these forms concur with the environmental needs of man, i.e. that they function as symbols of current culture; they are frequently manifestations of a technical-economic viewpoint that, in Finland, emphasizes the profit motive.

It is hoped that the repressive forces regulating our environment will not lead us simply to useless technological or romantic escapism. Conditions should be created, by political means, for a milieu in which forms are no longer dictated by exploitation or technology, in order to build a more democratic environment consistent with our social and cultural needs.

Architecture and planning capable of providing answers to emerging questions have not yet been born. In this issue of *Design Quarterly* we are seeking primarily to review the conditions and philosophies that constitute a background for the current transitional situation. In the first article Kirmo Mikkola, architect-lecturer at the Technical University of Otaniemi, deals with the social background and esthetics of Finnish architecture of the 60s. Asko Salokorpi, M.A., art historian at the Museum of Finnish Architecture, writes on how changing ideals are reflected in ecclesiastical architecture. Finally, Reijo Jallinoja, planner in the Helsinki Town Planning Office, compares four different solutions for town centers in the light of the changing emphases in town planning ideology.

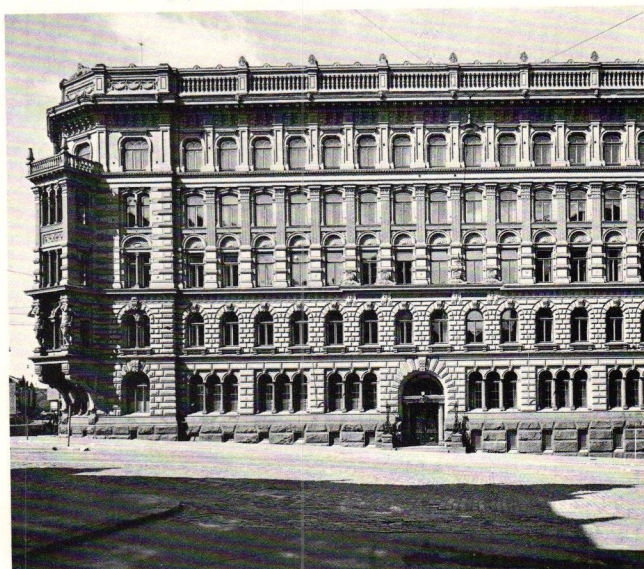
BACKGROUND IMAGES



Hamina, 18th century, late application of Renaissance town ideal



Engel, the Senate Square and Government Palace, Helsinki, early 19th century neoclassic design, remains one of the most coherently planned public spaces in Europe



Höijer, office building, Helsinki, 1891, with neo-Renaissance facade



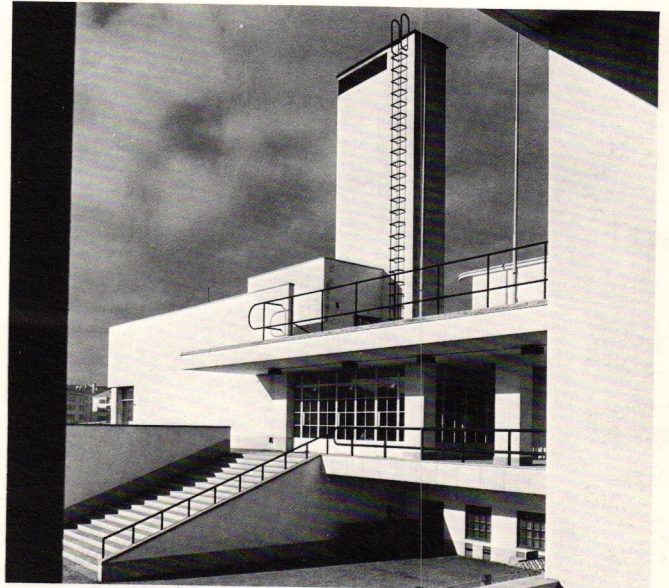
Gesellius, Lindgren, Saarinen, Pohjola Insurance Company, Helsinki, 1899, National-Romanticism



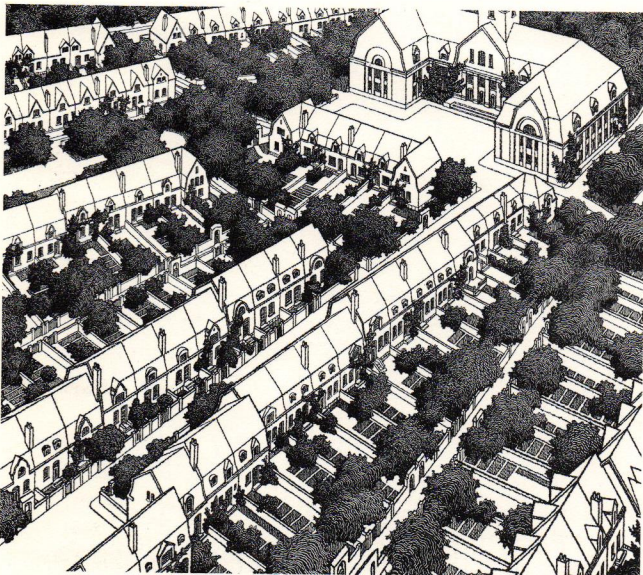
Frosterus, Stockmann's Department Store, Helsinki, 1930, eclectic facade hides rational plan



Saarinen, railway station, Helsinki, 1904–14, Saarinen as "national-monumentalist"



Lindgren, Jäntti, Olympic Stadium, Helsinki, 1934–52, symbol of Functionalism



Saarinen, Munkkiniemi-Haaga, 1910–15, illustration of workers' housing for pioneering community plan

THE 60s

Kirmo Mikkola

Finland is a young state. After Swedish and Czarist-Russian rule and two devastating wars, world recognition and independence were difficult to attain. The hero-myth played an important role in creating a national identity for Finland. The first hero as architect, Eliel Saarinen, won international fame at the turn of the century. His successors into the 60s were Alvar Aalto, Viljo Revell (1910–1964) and Reima Pietilä. In the 50s Tapiola was heralded as the "world's best new town," and its builders became hero figures in the planning field.

In recent years young Finnish architects have been accused of destroying the hero-myth (and consequently Finland's international standing in architecture) because their work lacks the "national" character that gave Finland status in the international culture market. Young planners and architects, in dealing with vital social problems, no longer feel the need to extend this national image either at home or abroad, as the National-Romanticism that characterized Finnish architecture into the 60s delayed an awareness of technical and philosophical developments in architecture and planning outside Finland.

The bases of town planning and housing have been historically non-urban. However, with post-war reparations due the Soviet Union, Finland was forced to build up its heavy industry and the emphasis in the economy shifted, in a few years, from agriculture to industry.

After World War II, industrialization and increased population caused a rush for survival to the towns. The migrants expected little of the urban milieu. There was a continued longing for places "back home" in the country and many of the patterns of post-war planning, as typified by Tapiola and other "back to nature" neighborhoods, were formed in the image of a nation that can offer the chance for an individualistic life in intimate contact with nature on the one hand and, on the other, that of a nation willing to sacrifice any amount of resources to magnificent civic buildings produced by its hero-architects. What has been lacking in this area of middle-class life is controlled, long-range town planning, large-scale industrial production, the utilization of technical advances in building and environmental research.

In addition to the non-urban tradition, a fear of collectivity is connected to an atavistic chain of associations. Collectivity is linked with communism, feared as an eternal threat and instrument of familiar Russian imperialism. Finnish architects, in identifying with the present system of capitalism, have neglected the obligation of architecture to act as a buffer in the clash between private and public aims.

Young architects have instinctively reacted against this neglect in the 60s. The first reaction was at the esthetic level at the beginning of the decade, when the present Constructivism began to take shape. The second stage was in the direction of

interests relevant to the society: housing, industrialized building, community planning and its decision-making process. The primary element of the new social awareness was the movement of young architects into municipal posts. At the moment, young architects also consider joining a political party essential to their professional life. Unlike a change in formal tendencies, which is clearly cyclic and internal to architecture, an ideological change seems to progress linearly and to follow changes in society.

The ideological crises in Finnish architecture show that architecture has gradually become socialized. When Art Nouveau overthrew eclecticism at the turn of the century, the question was one of the internal ethics of architecture, of the relationship of artistic expression to the purpose of the building and to the means used. Functionalism took social problems as its starting point in its concentration on the housing issue. The present crisis has gone one stage further, demanding that architects clarify the social motivation of their activity in the widest sense and take a stand on social issues. The true dimensions of the question are not revealed until one thinks of the architect as a power figure or as an instrument of power.

Architects operate in economic, physical and symbolic products which are among the most substantial and political in our social system. This is particularly true of town planning. Architectural



Porvoo, typical medieval town, dates back to the 14th century

students, especially, have recently emphasized this fact—one which may seem obvious enough. The question “architects for whom?” has been a central issue. The same kind of question has been asked in the Association of Finnish Architects. Is the architect today primarily his client’s trusted representative, as the Association’s rules prescribe, or a representative of society? The contradiction is obvious. The reactions of middle-generation architects, particularly in this debate, have revealed a strong identification with the existing system.

Demands for social awareness have been seen as a threat to the respect enjoyed by the profession and to architects’ employment. It has not been understood that architects have already stamped themselves so clearly as instruments of the present power system that candid self-criticism alone can restore the confidence of the profession.

Political epithets often sound unfashionable; however, the polarity of the terms “right” and “left” correspond strongly today in Finland with practical attempts to conserve or to change. Radical renewal is possible within the present establishment. Young intellectuals and radicals have applied this method with success, in spite of the furious resistance of conservatives. I’ll mention three examples closely connected to architecture and planning.



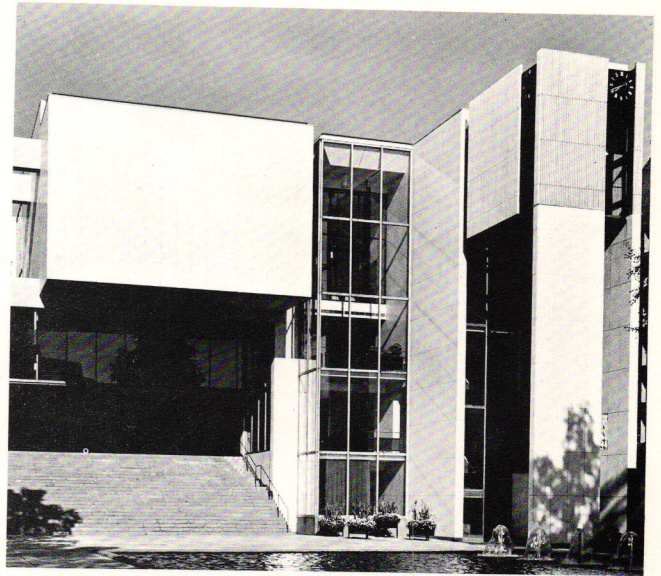
Aleksanterinkatu, Helsinki, 1971, business street converted to pedestrian use through pressure from the Association of Pedestrians

Yhdistys 9 (Society 9) consists of radical young sociologists, authors and architects and works for equality of the sexes, of different "classes" in society and of different generations. It has stated that existing communities reflect an unequal, established society and therefore town structure must be altered. Society 9 has formed working groups of planning specialists whose goal is to produce new practical norms for planners.

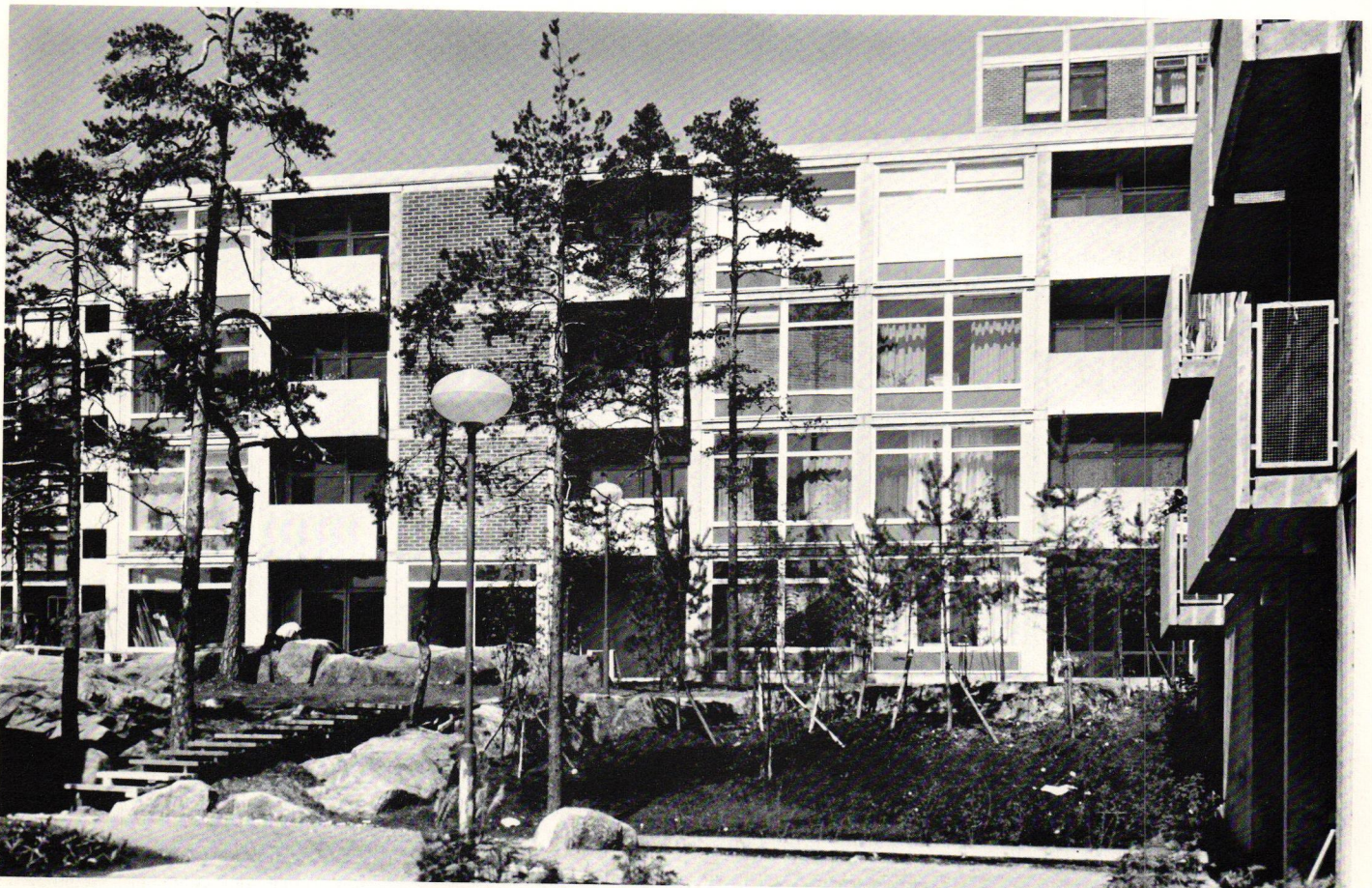
One year ago an Association of Pedestrians was founded in Helsinki. At the same time a traffic plan for Helsinki was made under the direction of a large American engineering firm. The Association was originally estimated to be a group of day-dreamers but it has since won a very strong position. Its stands in regard to pedestrian street plans, opposition to milieu-destroying traffic plans and defense of the legal rights of pedestrians, have shown people better options than the solutions of today's technocrats.

Last year the architecture students declined to follow an educational system they found ineffective, undemocratic and estranged from the needs of society. By using pressure and creating their own methods they succeeded in revising the educational system to make its goals pertinent to the problems of society.

Finnish architecture has not, on the whole, been



Saarnio, Leiviska, Jarvinen, Town Hall, Kouvola, 1968, typical 60s civic architecture

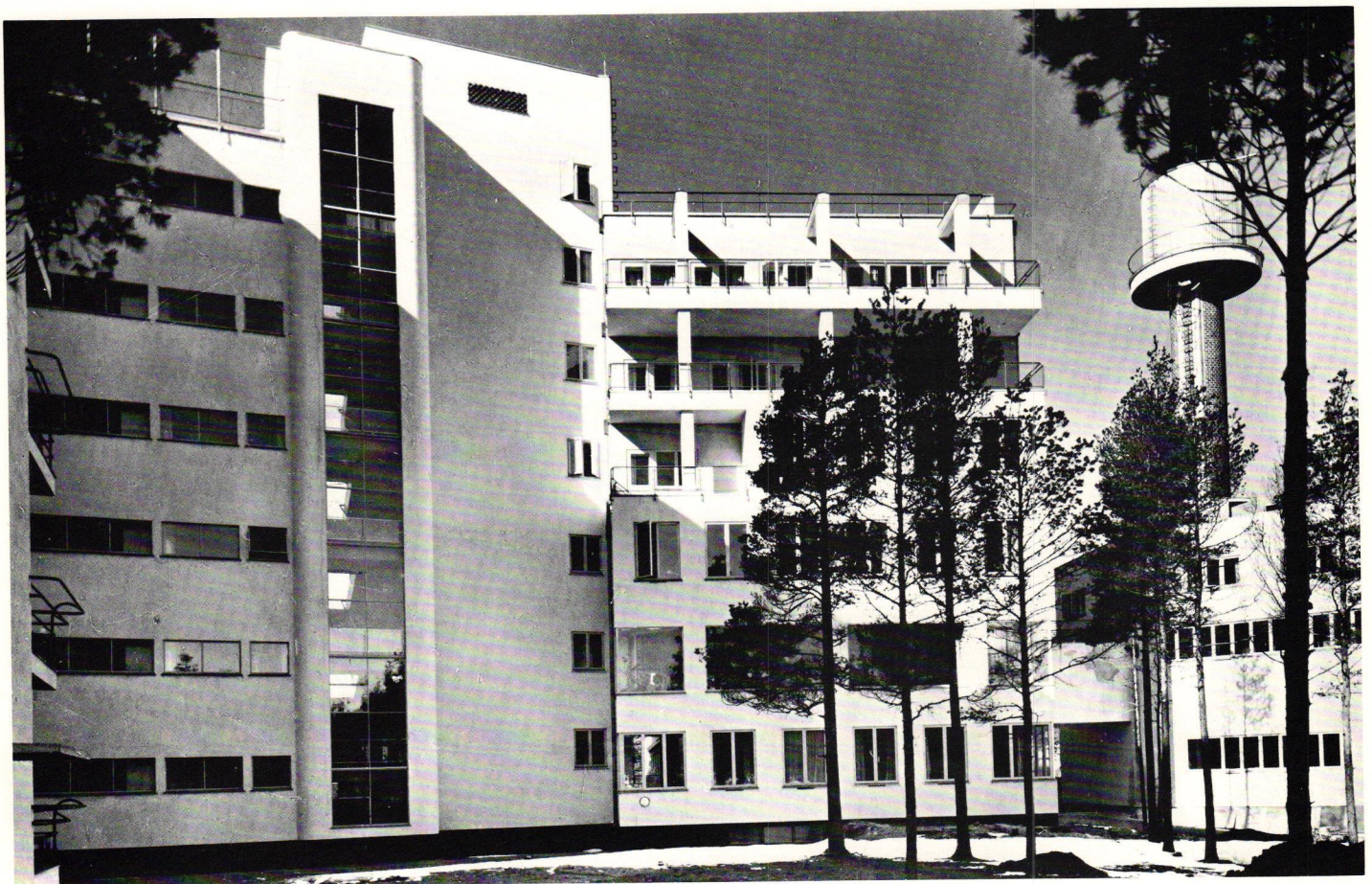


Jarvinen, Valjakka, apartment houses, Olari urban development, Espoo, 1969, Constructivist approach, multi-story housing

particularly revolutionary. Compared to the other arts, however, trends in modern architecture have reached Finland quite rapidly; e.g. the time lag between Finland and Europe was about five years for both Art Nouveau and Functionalism. The adoption of new architectural trends here has, on the other hand, been fast and complete, a reflection of the slender academic tradition. Thus, international comparison shows the general level of Finnish architecture to be quite advanced.

The reputation of our architecture has grown around two great names—Eliel Saarinen and Alvar Aalto. Each began his career by leading the advance of European trends into Finland, but later followed more individual paths. Saarinen's importance is primarily connected with his pioneering work as a community planner; in spite of its high artistic level, time has shown most of his architecture to be rather old-fashioned, and even reactionary at the time of the Functionalist breakthrough.

When Alvar Aalto broke away from Functionalism at the end of the 30s, other Finnish architects were suffering from some kind of paralysis. In the early 50s, however, some distinctively Finnish architecture was produced which combined the rational grasp of Functionalism with the freedom of approach characteristic of Aalto and a sensitive use of materials that persists in Finland.



Aalto, Paimio Sanatorium, 1929–33, "heroic functionalism"

Standardization, industrial building output, housing and community research and many other aspects demanded by the times then became the objectives. The works of the group led by Aalto, Aulis Blomstedt, Heikki Siren and Viljo Revell implemented these goals. The international reputation of our architecture rests on the work of this period.

Unfortunately, this age of optimism in Finnish architecture did not last long. Aalto developed his present baroque-like line and was followed by a kind of Expressionist group led by Reima Pietilä and Timo Penttilä, whose work has often, justifiably been described as Neo-National-Romantic. The Rationalist school led by Revell, on the other hand, became rather formalist, largely inspired by Brazilian architecture. The "science fiction" spirit of church competitions, scaleless town plans thought of as compositions in the model scale and a shift in interest from housing problems to civic buildings increased the estrangement of architecture from social needs.

Reaction in the early 60s was strong and dogmatic. The general in place of the particular, anonymity in place of subjectivity, structure as the premise of expression in place of sculpture, urban compactness in place of closeness to nature—these are the dialectic goals of this latest movement. The ideological background is a recognition of the world's quantitative problems, architecture's



Alvar and Aino Aalto, Villa Mairea, Noormarkku, 1938–39, "heroic functionalism" left behind



Aalto, Civic Center, Säynätsalo, 1951, closed brick envelopes, Aalto's strong individualism, the 50s



Aalto, Civic Center, Alajärvi, 1966, baroque elegance, the 60s

striving to become social rather than elitist. The goals and solutions in many respects continue where Functionalism cut off; the fundamental difference lies in the vast scale of the problems. The dangers are the same. To conceive of new architecture as merely an external style may develop into a kind of design fascism, yet functional tendencies are the most successful attempt to date at meeting the needs of society in Finland.

A fundamental feature of this architecture, called Constructivism or systems architecture by those who produce it and attacked by its opponents as plagiarism of Mies van der Rohe or Japanese architecture, is its attempt to get away from the self-sufficiency of architecture by starting from the needs of society. Several small house systems based on constructivist principles were produced last year, and an apartment block construction system is presently taking shape.

These new systems are based on a comprehensive view of architecture, not merely on technical aspects of production, as had been the case earlier or elsewhere in Europe. The situation is promising with respect to habitability and environment.

One can assume that planners of the suburban countryside will soon adopt constructivist architecture in the same way they did the 1 1/2 story thatched house developed by the Association of Finnish Architects in the reconstruction era, much as vernacular architecture has always absorbed influences in the past. Constructivism—functionally flexible and easily industrialized—is a healthy starting point for building.

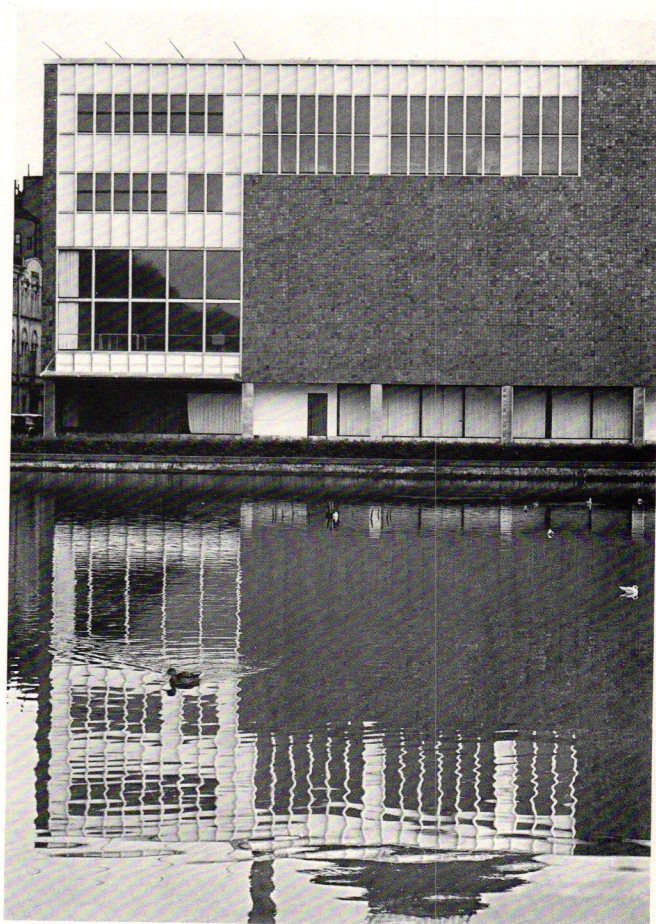
In the esthetic sense Constructivism aims at anonymous architecture which can be developed by the user into a personal environment. An assessment of the achievements of Constructivism thus far must take into account the fact that the breakthrough stage is often dogmatic and artistic maturity comes later.

I have dealt at some length with one trend in Finnish architecture and should stress that the most vital thing about the present situation is a change in basic ways of thinking, rather than where this thought has initially led. Without doubt, architectural systems can be developed which will take the potential of modern building techniques more effectively into account than Constructivism does at present—for example the pneumatic dome, which has made most vast spatial constructions planned by architects technically obsolete.

Where, then, do architects like Reima Pietilä or Alvar Aalto fit into the pattern of Finnish architecture? If one looks at history and understands how fateful one-sided thinking has been, it is clear that architecture would lose a great deal if artists and theorists like Aalto and Pietilä stopped being deliberately individualistic. In spite of great efforts to adapt the scientific method to architecture, its essence will continue to be inexact and essentially intuitive.



Blomstedt, apartment houses, Tapiola, 1961



Kaija and Heikki Siren, small stage, Finnish National Theater, Helsinki, 1954, straightforward 50s civic architecture



Penttilä, The City Theater, Helsinki, 1967, emphasis on articulation and plasticity, the 60s



Raili and Reima Pietilä, Students' Union, Dipoli, Otaniemi, 1966, resurrection of National-Romanticism



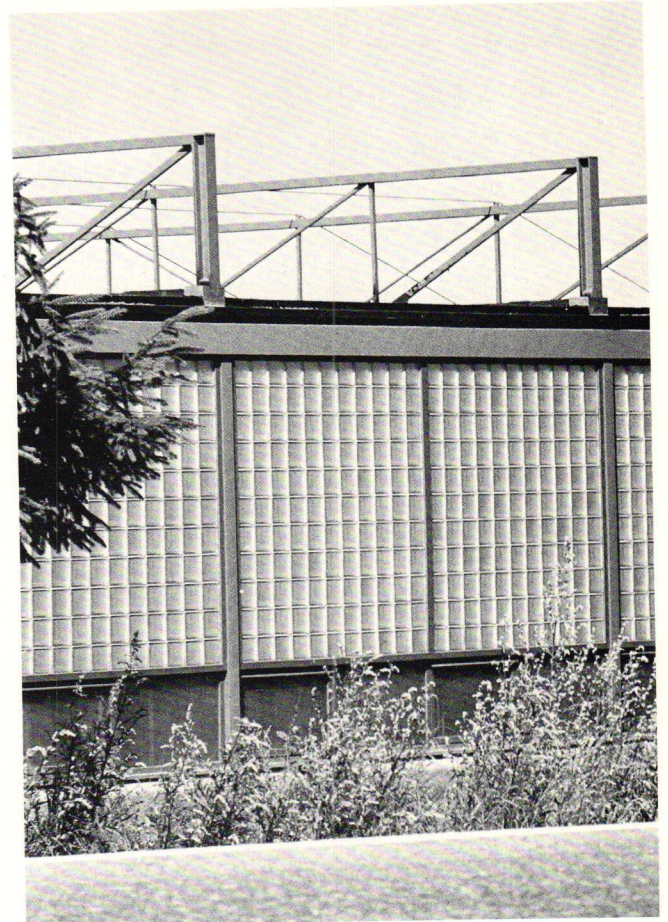
Laiho, extension, outdoor dance hall, Yläne, 1968



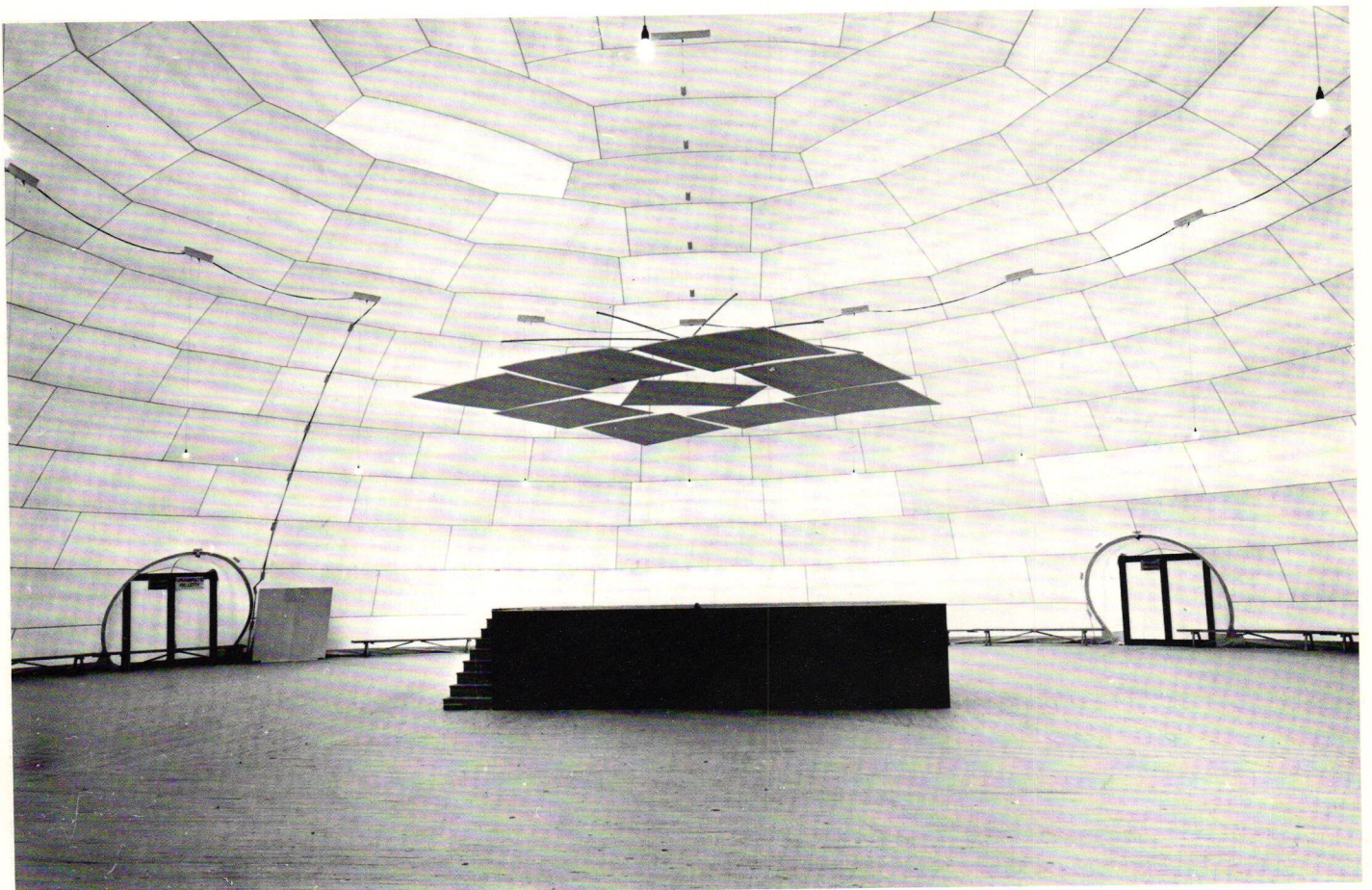
Gullichsen, Pallasmaa, pre-fabrication system, wood summer houses, 1969



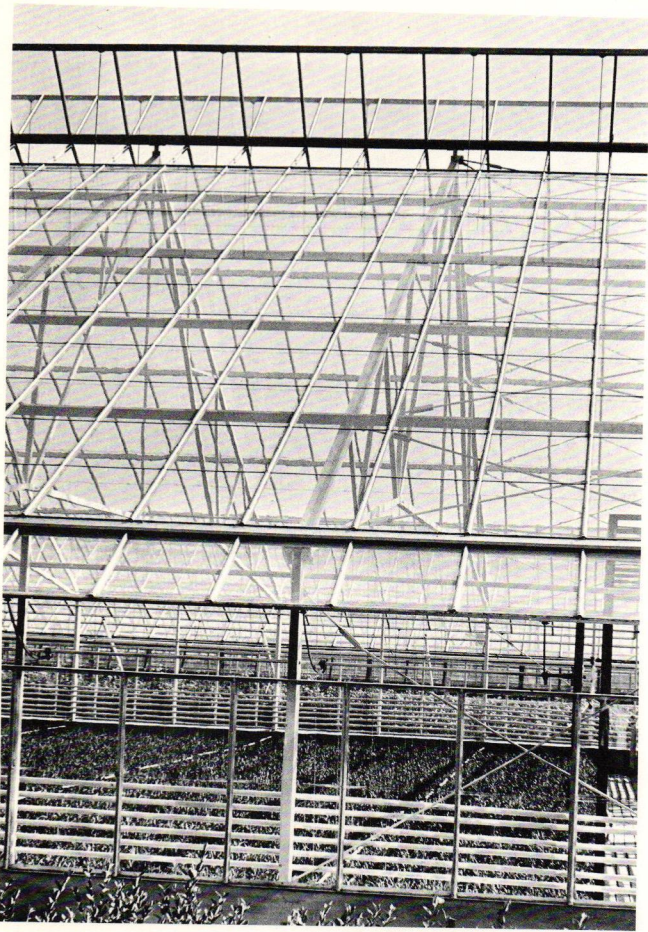
Lundsten, Kahri, Kortepohja residential area, Jyväskylä, 1964–68, urban-compactness in new housing



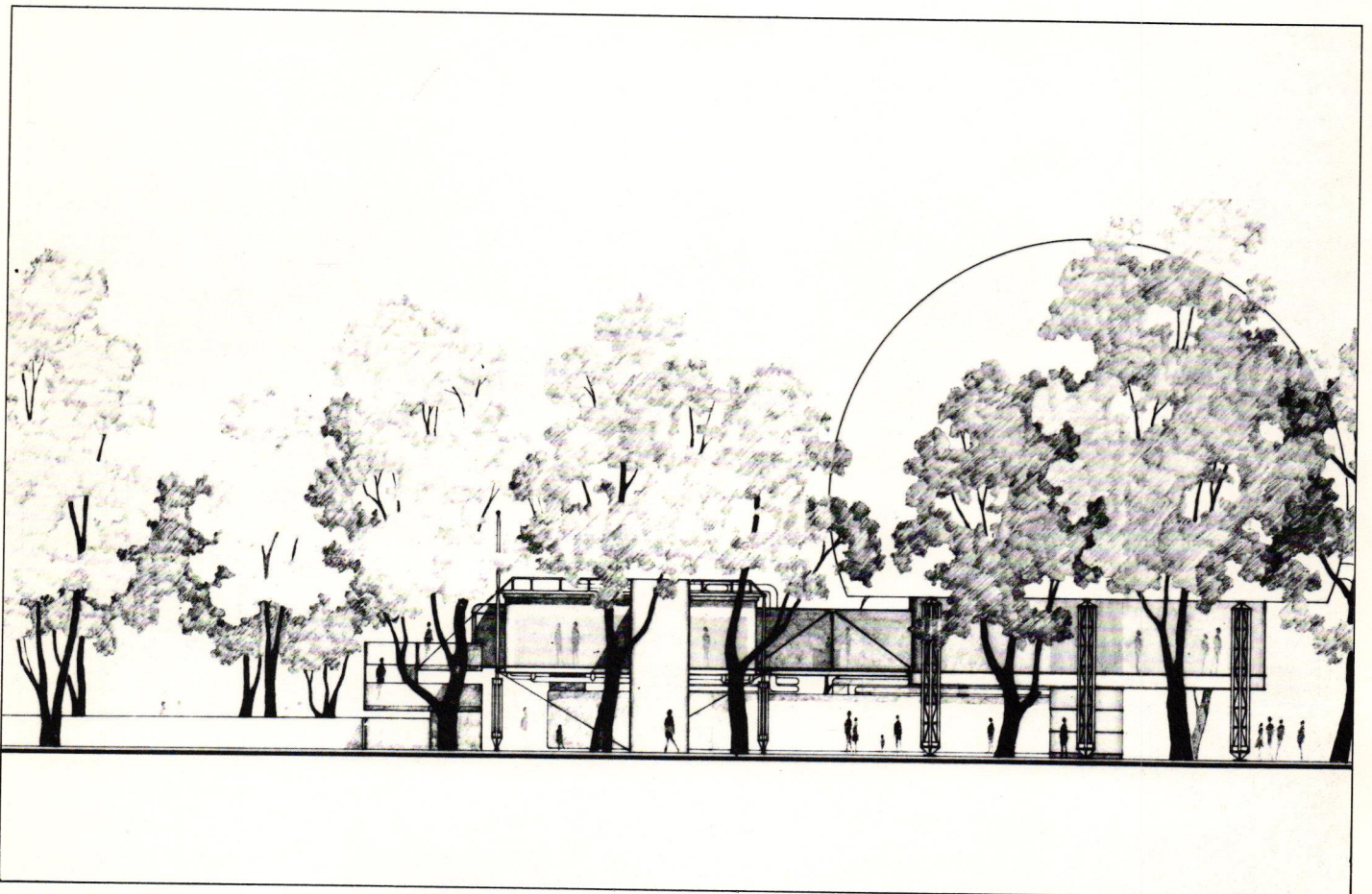
Mikkola, Pallasmaa, parish center, Hyrylä, 1967, 60s Constructivism



Witting, pneumatic dome, dance hall, Turku, 1969



Anonymous, aluminum greenhouse, 1969



Hokkanen, Mikkila, student project for planetarium, Technical University, 1970

THE MOVABLE CHURCH

Asko Salokorpi

The state church of Finland has consistently built monuments which in size as well as in form differ from surrounding "boring" apartment buildings by astounding the parishioner with an expressiveness singular to a church space. Many parishioners belong to the church because they do not have the courage to withdraw from it, though they complain about high compulsory church taxes (the complaints prove that a great many of the members do not feel they receive sufficient spiritual compensation for their money). A catastrophe is threatening the present status of the church unless it succeeds in creating an image of a strong organization from which one does not withdraw.

The expansive, breathtaking church architecture which the Central Building Committee has, in spite of passing criticism, favored since the end of the 50s, is part of a skillfully developed suggestive environment. The churches of Alvar Aalto, Reima Pietilä and Aarno Ruusuvuori created a good deal of controversy with forms that departed from the "traditional," yet those churches met the traditional requirement of monumentality.

Recent criticism of monumental church architecture is based on the view that in the church, spirit should be more important than matter and that social development is an essential church function. When the newest traditional church in Helsinki—the church built in the rock of Temppeliaukio—was under construction, young people painted the word BIAFRA on the rock walls. They had to pay for removal of the word, and no money was transferred from the construction fund to assist Biafra. The building of that church engendered a considerable amount of disaffection both inside and outside the church.

At the same time that parishes of the capitol sell land for use as residential lots, in order to obtain more money for new traditional buildings, they construct temporary churches to meet immediate needs. If we do not consider building costs, how then does a temporary church differ from "canonized" church architecture?

An expressive church building gives a transcendent sound to any minister's sermon. In a modest temporary church the word has to have more meaning. Thus, the designer's contribution becomes decisive with regard to the spiritual message. Critics within the church maintain that architects are no longer religious enough and have made new churches more like "architectonic confessions." The truth is that every architectonically good building, be it a monumental church or a modest temporary church, helps to prolong the power of the church on earth. Thus, designers, many of whom do not belong to any church, do have an ideological responsibility which they have been, to some degree, unwilling to recognize.

Compared to monumental church structure, a little, movable element-built church, such as the one in Vuosaari, is entirely profane, it could serve



Aalto, Vuoksenniska Church, Imatra, 1958

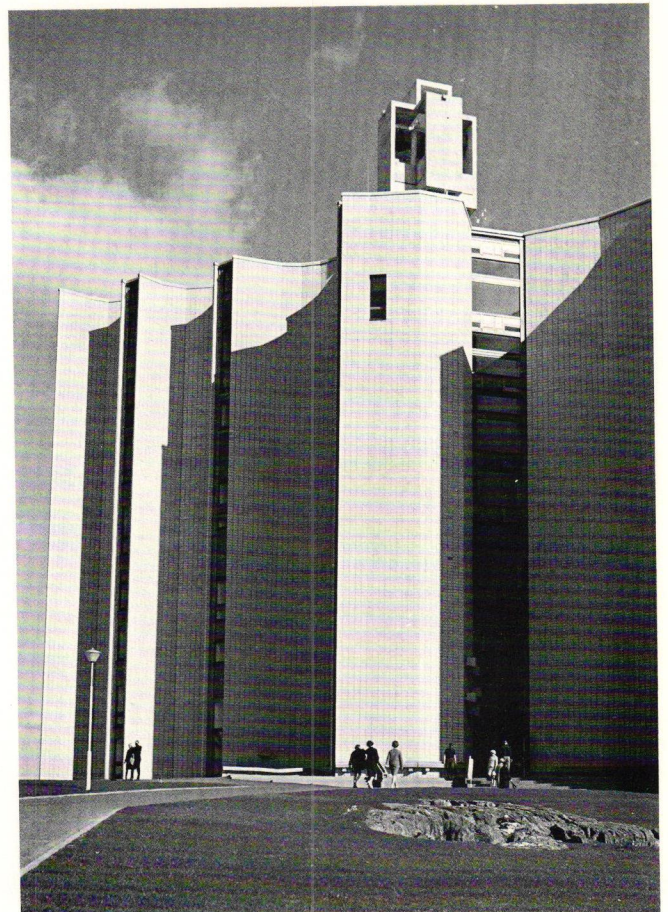
any purpose, and can "elevate the mind" only through its simplicity and clarity.

This temporary church substantiates the ideals of the younger generation of Finnish architects: structural clarity, systematization, use of simplified elements, general "impersonality" of expression. Superficial similarities in appearance to the architecture of Mies van der Rohe are not a coincidence. In spite of the Archigram-like influences of the past years, the younger generation, the ones who have been able to start their own work, still represent disciplined classicism. Inner flexibility is demonstrated in the possibility of transferring the entire building to another location, for it is as easily taken apart as it is erected. This type of building represents a system by which houses, too, can be erected quickly at low cost.

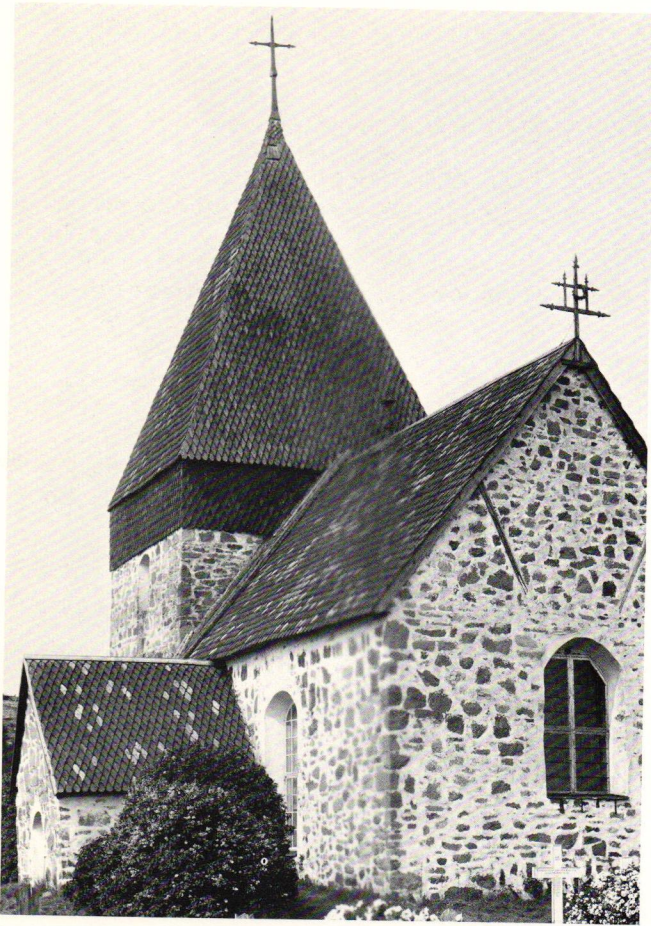
The question of whether this kind of structure fills the requirements for what the church hierarchy and the public recognize as "church architecture" will demonstrate not the strength of any particular building form, but the fundamental applicability of church philosophy to Finnish life today.



Ruusuvuori, church, Hyvinkää, 1961



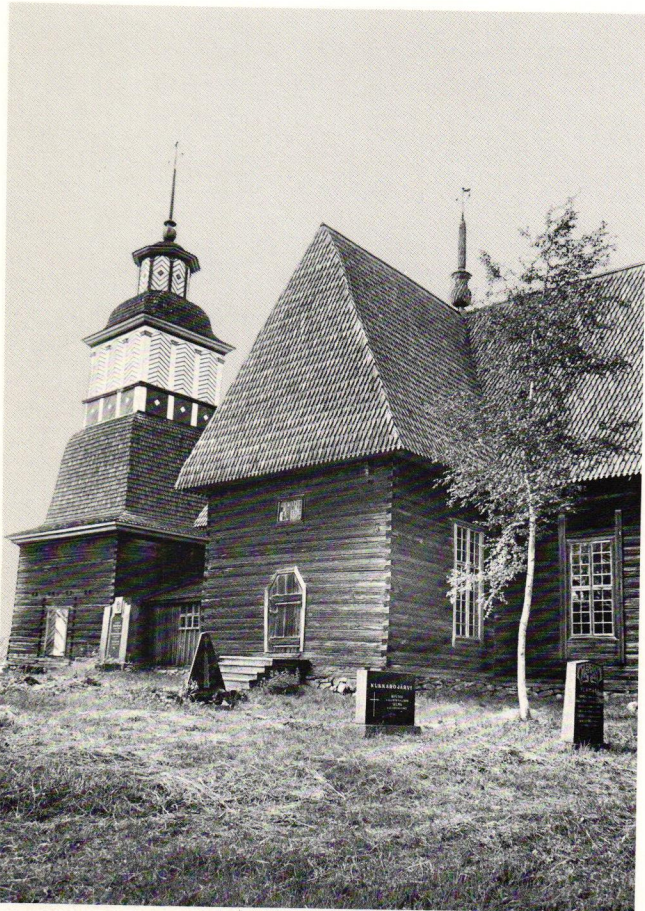
Raili and Reima Pietilä, Kaleva Church, Tampere, 1966



13th century church, Eckero, one of the oldest stone churches in Finland



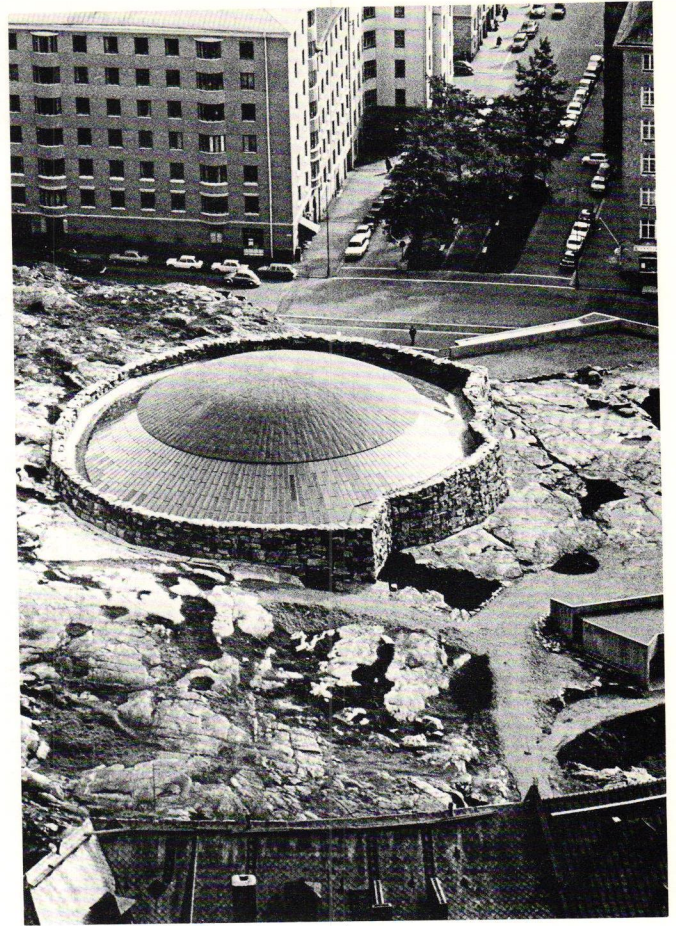
14th century church, Hattula, only remaining one of 70 medieval red brick structures of this kind



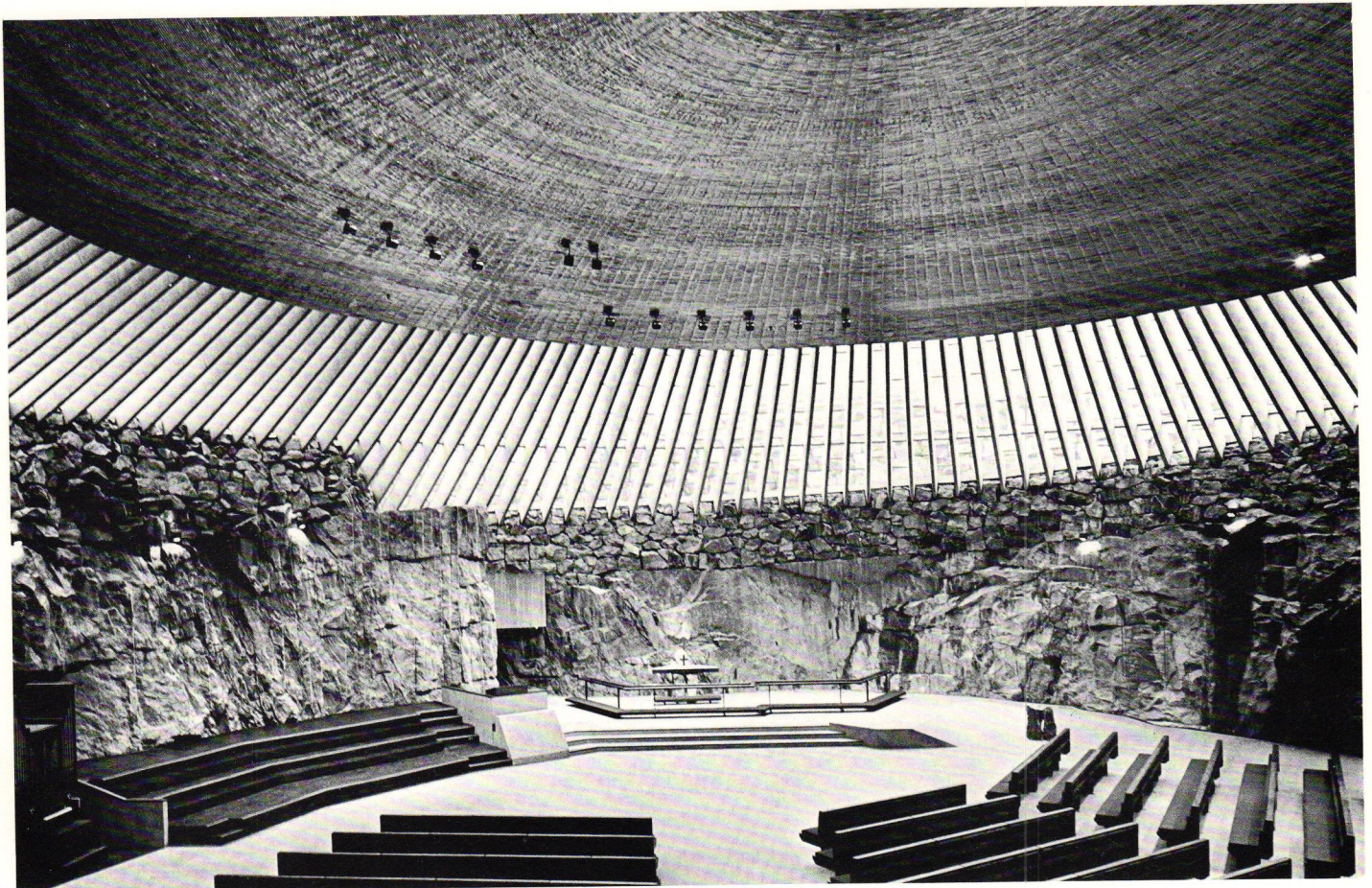
Leppänen, the elder, church, Petäjavesi, 1764 (belfry, 1821)
typical rural wood church, 18th century



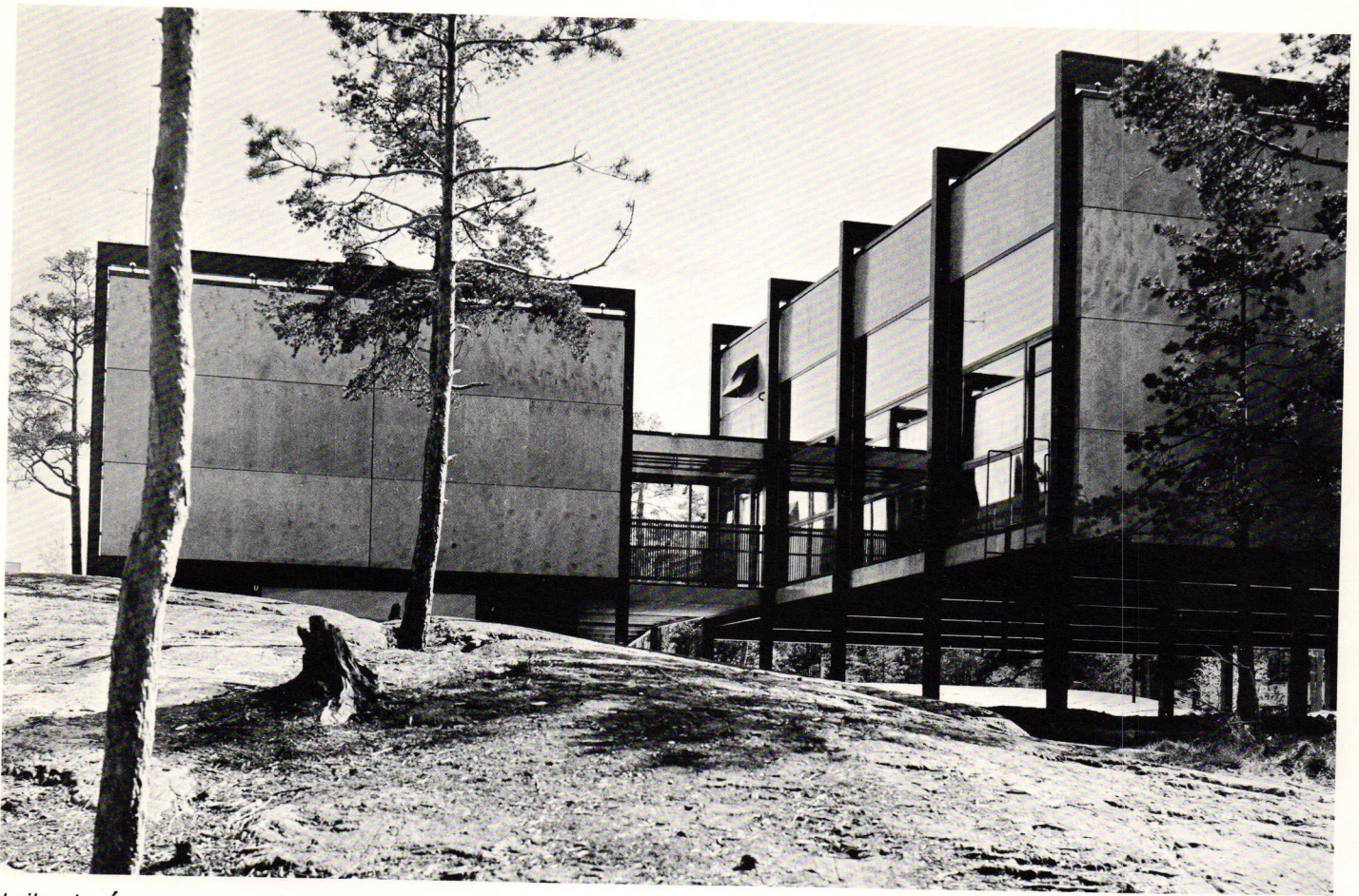
Leppänen, the elder, church, Petäjavesi, 1764, interior



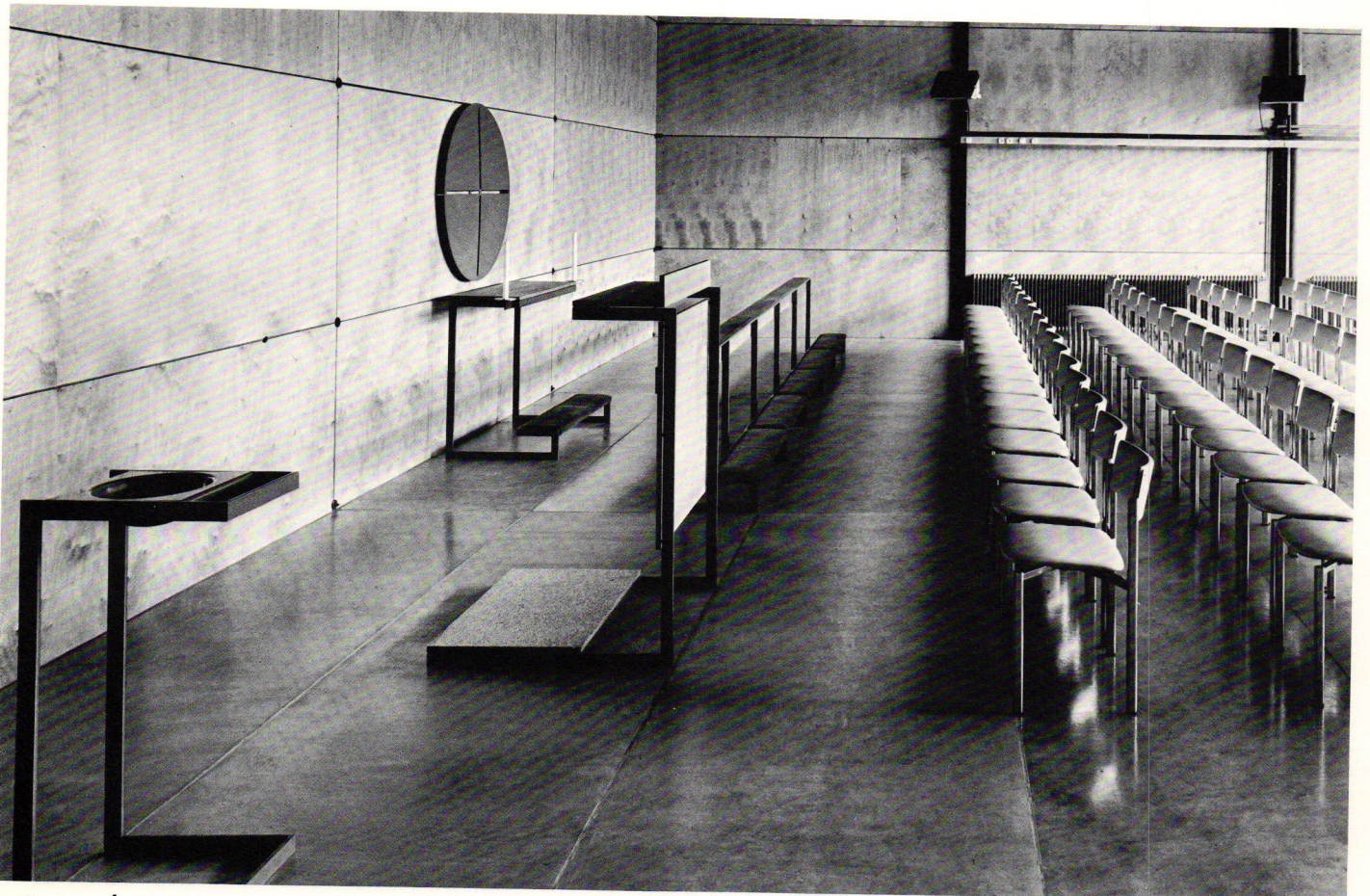
Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen, Tempeliahukio Church, Helsinki, 1969



Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen, Tempeliahukio Church, Helsinki, 1969, interior



Laiho, Levón, temporary church, Vuosaari, 1969



Laiho, Levón, temporary church, Vuosaari, 1969, interior

CITY CENTERS

Reijo Jallinoja

A city center is above all a place of social contact and activity. Social interaction can be encouraged through the creation of a favorable physical environment, which in Finland means, above all, construction of centers impervious to severe weather. Physical planning should be based on the objectives of activity planning. However, in Finland the situation has frequently been reversed—architects have designed urban centers in accordance with their personal esthetic values and have given little consideration to planning for social interaction.

The four Finnish city centers of the 60s shown here are discussed primarily from the viewpoint of social activity. The plans reflect quite clearly a gradual change in planning objectives, from purely esthetic goals to designs that encompass functional values.

1 Seinäjoki

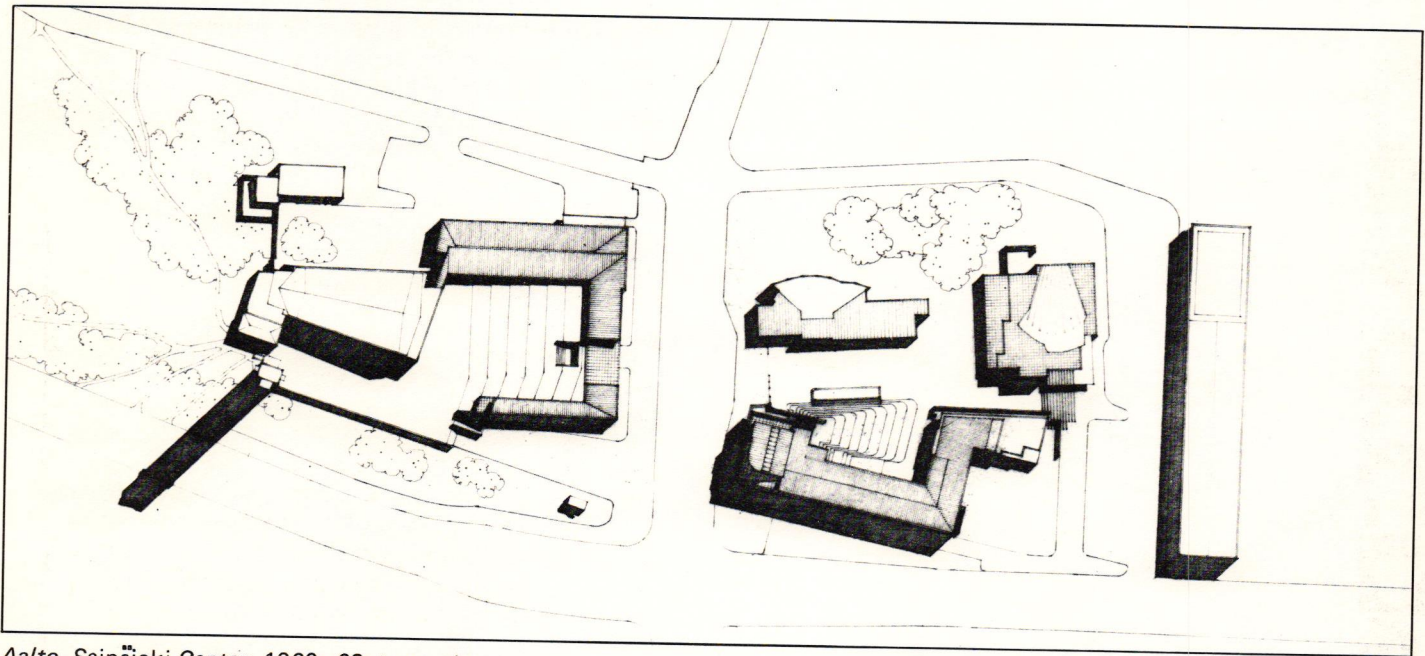
Architect: Alvar Aalto, 1960–62

The architecture of the center of Seinäjoki is a typical example of the characteristics on which Aalto's reputation is based. The principle merits of the plan are in its architectural beauty and harmony. The plan is formed by a series of three squares that function as closed gardens undisturbed by street traffic. Two of the squares are intended as gathering places for the residents (one for religious gatherings and the other for mundane festivities) and the third square was planned for

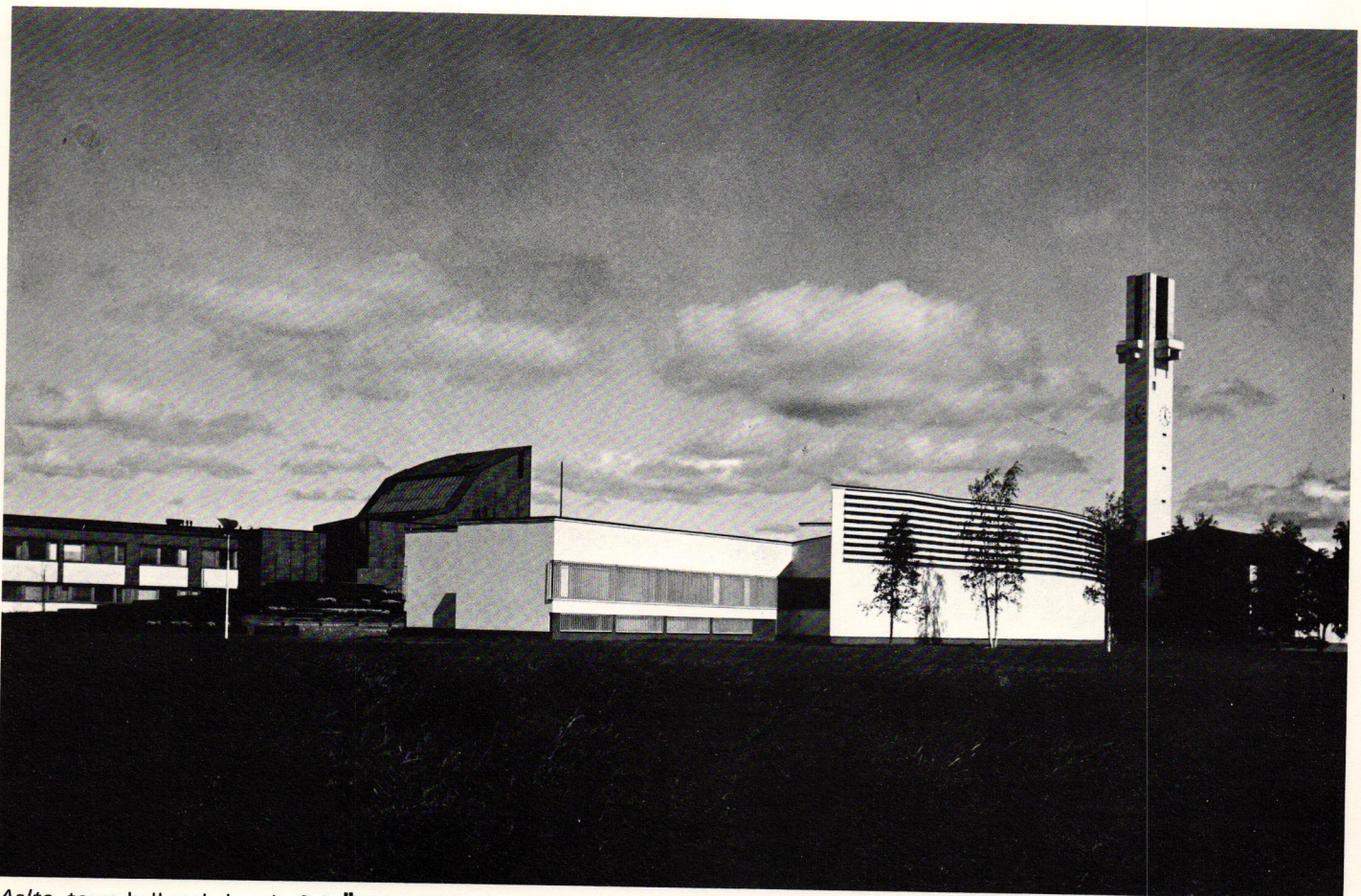


Aalto, town hall, library, church, Seinäjoki, 1962

traffic, primarily for parking. The plan has taken into consideration the needs of the residents, but they have been treated arbitrarily and ideally. This solution would be suitable for the climate of Italy and for a community similar to the city states of the Renaissance, but not to the physical or social circumstances of Finland.



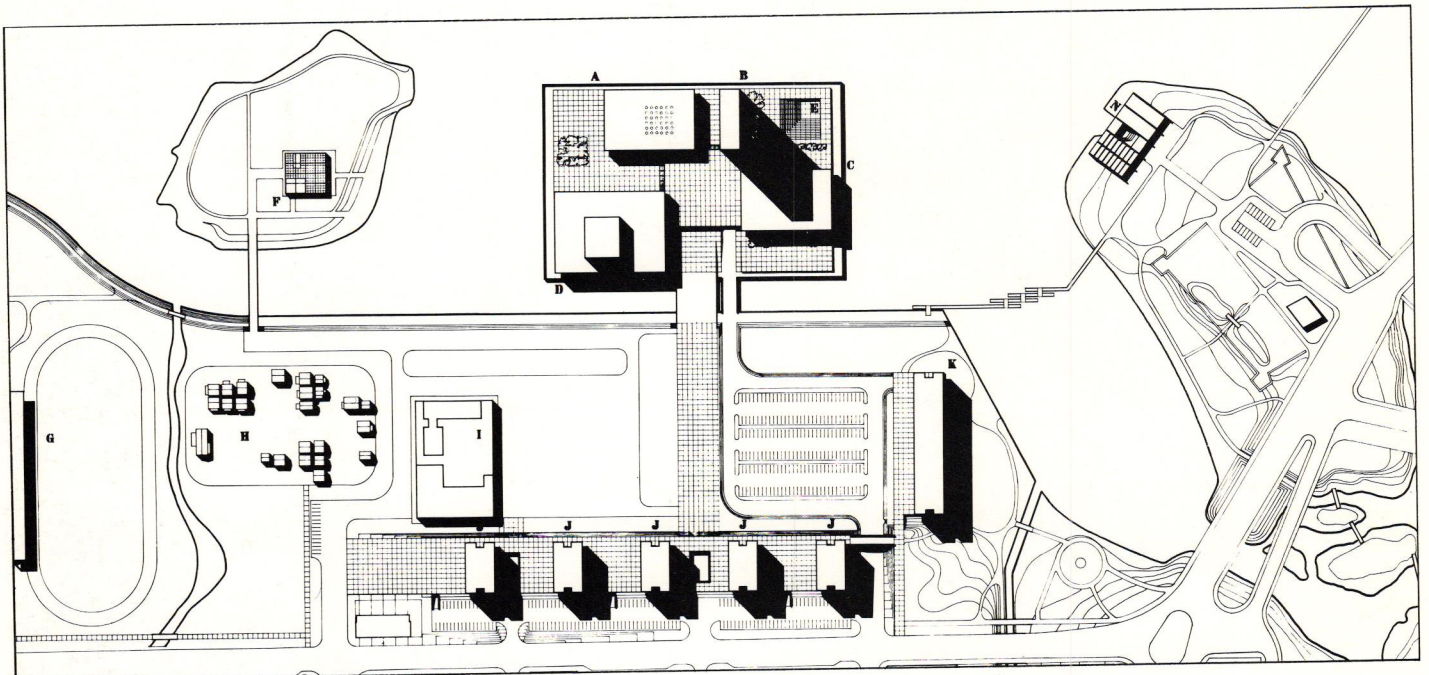
Aalto, Seinäjoki Center, 1960–62, town plan



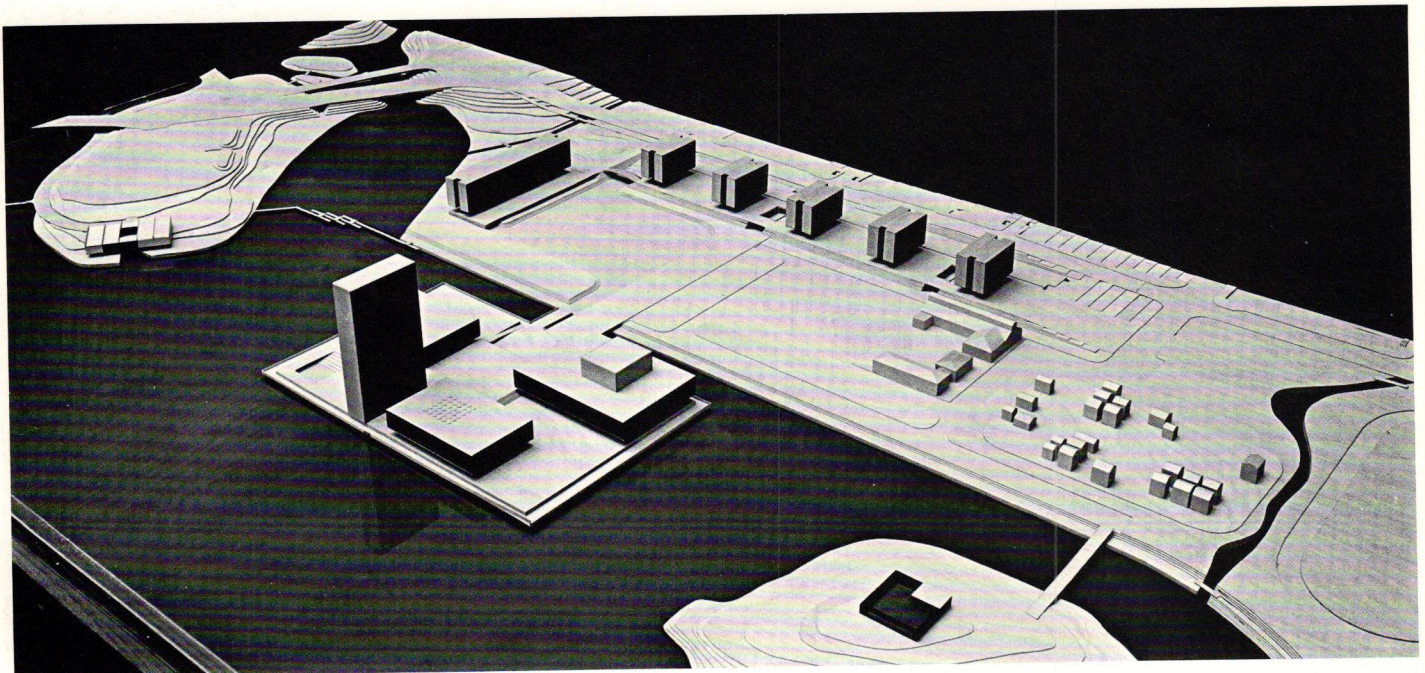
Aalto, town hall and church, Seinäjoki, 1962

2 Oulu
Architect: Martti Jaatinen, 1963

This proposal for the cultural and administrative center of Oulu abandons the complicated formal expression of Alvar Aalto and the plan can be regarded as rational in a certain sense. However, in respect to social considerations no progress can be found beyond the center of Seinäjoki—rather the contrary. The basis for the plan—the location of the center far from other city structures—is the wrong solution with regard to social activities. Construction of a Brasilia-type open-air center in the climatic conditions of Finland cannot be based on anything but esthetic values.



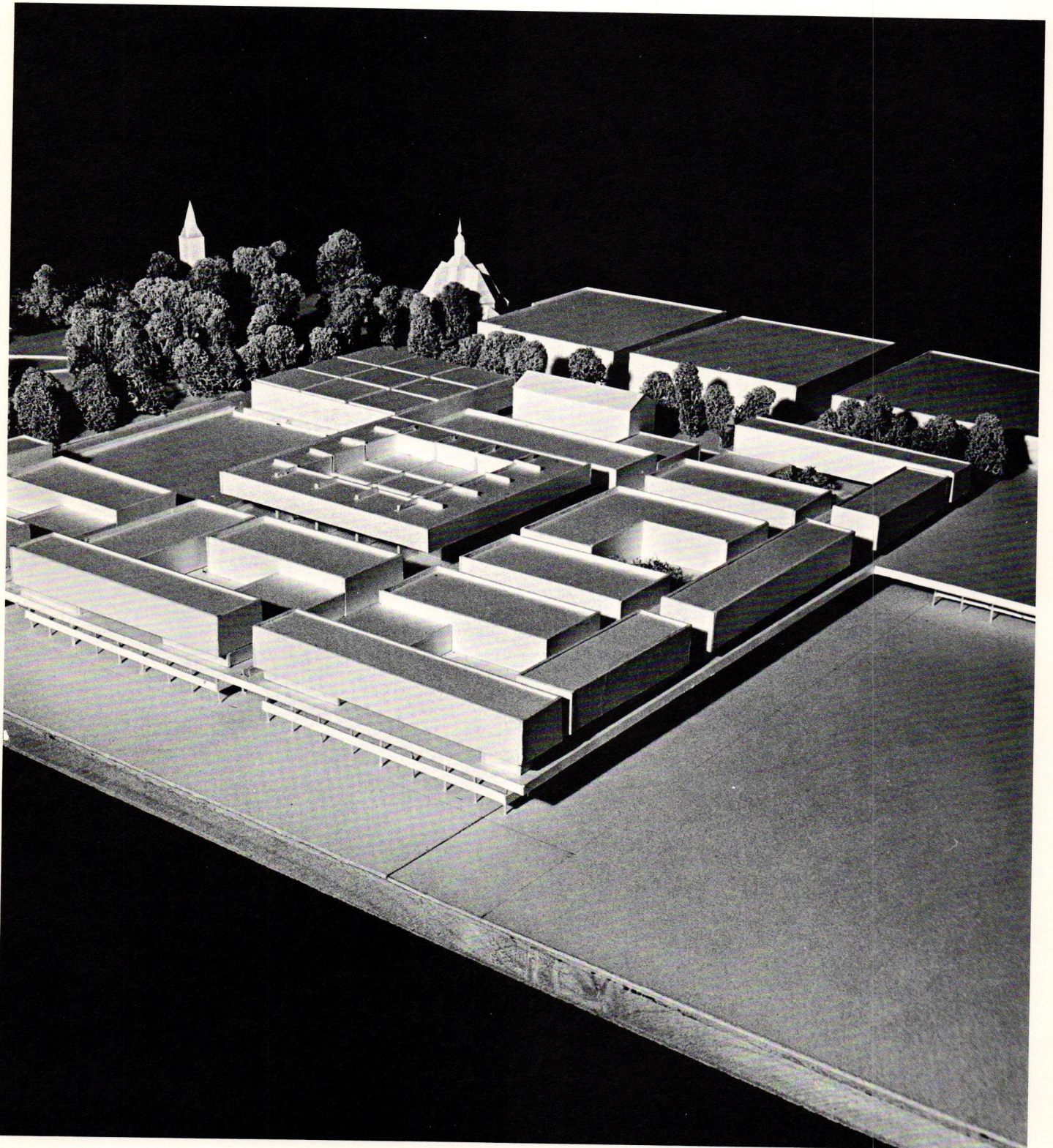
Marjatta and Martti Jaatinen, plan, Oulu Center, 1963



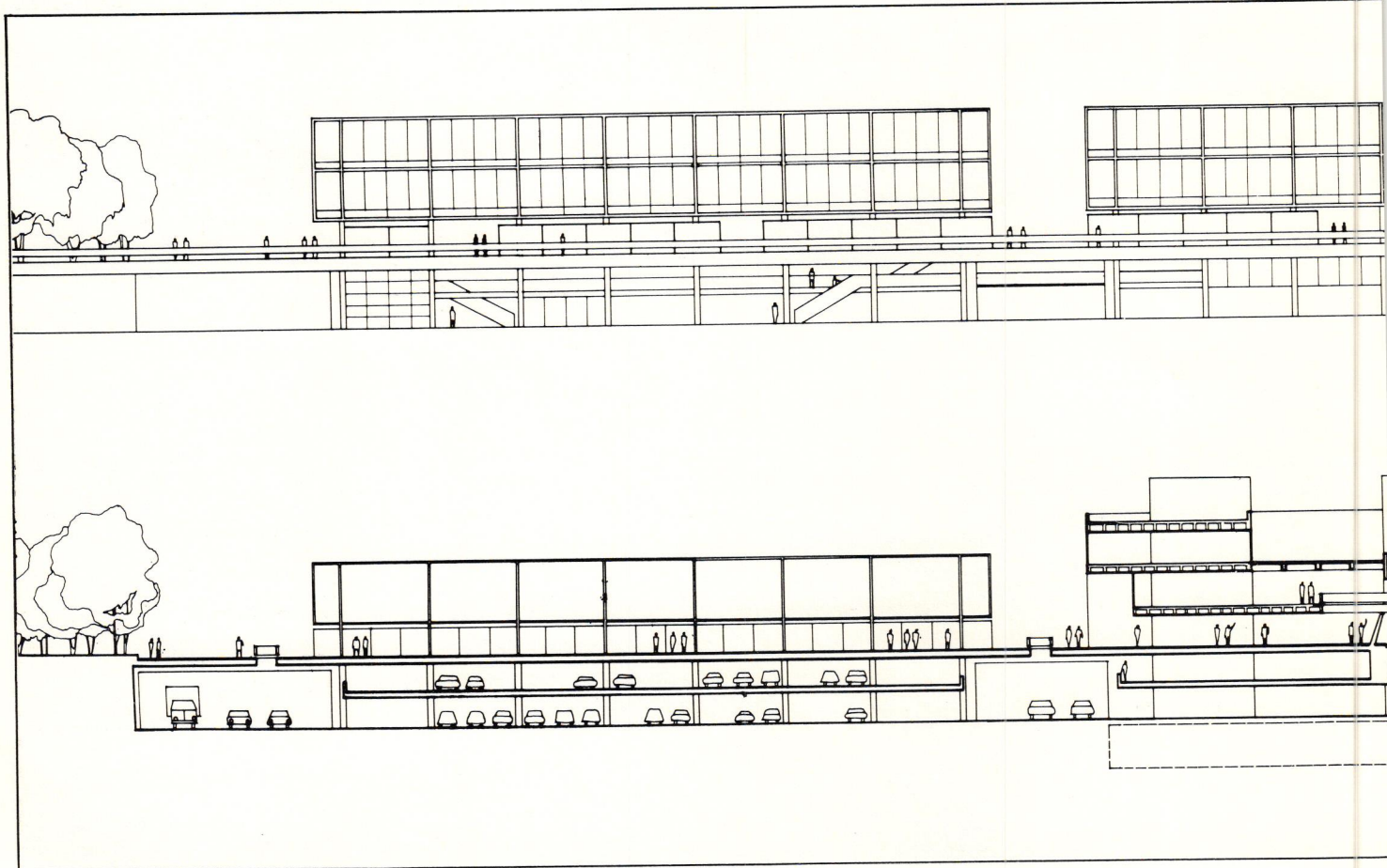
Marjatta and Martti Jaatinen, model, Oulu Center, 1963

3 Lappeenranta, renewal
Architect: Erkki Juutilainen, 1967

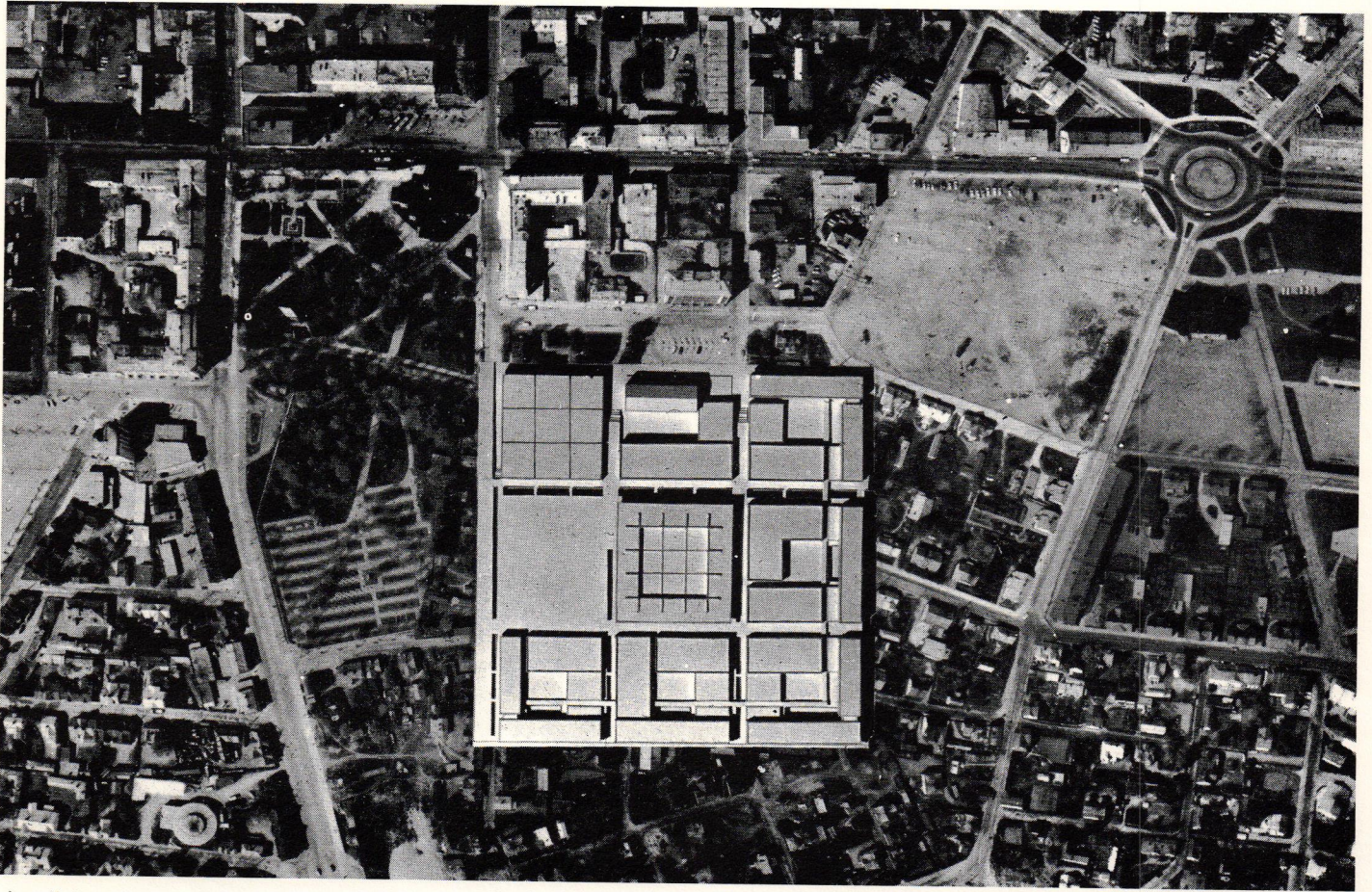
The plan for renewal of the center of Lappeenranta represents a transitional phase from purely esthetic principles to planning which considers the need for activities. The renewed area is closely linked to the existing city structure and it is possible to make the pedestrian milieu both visually and functionally versatile.



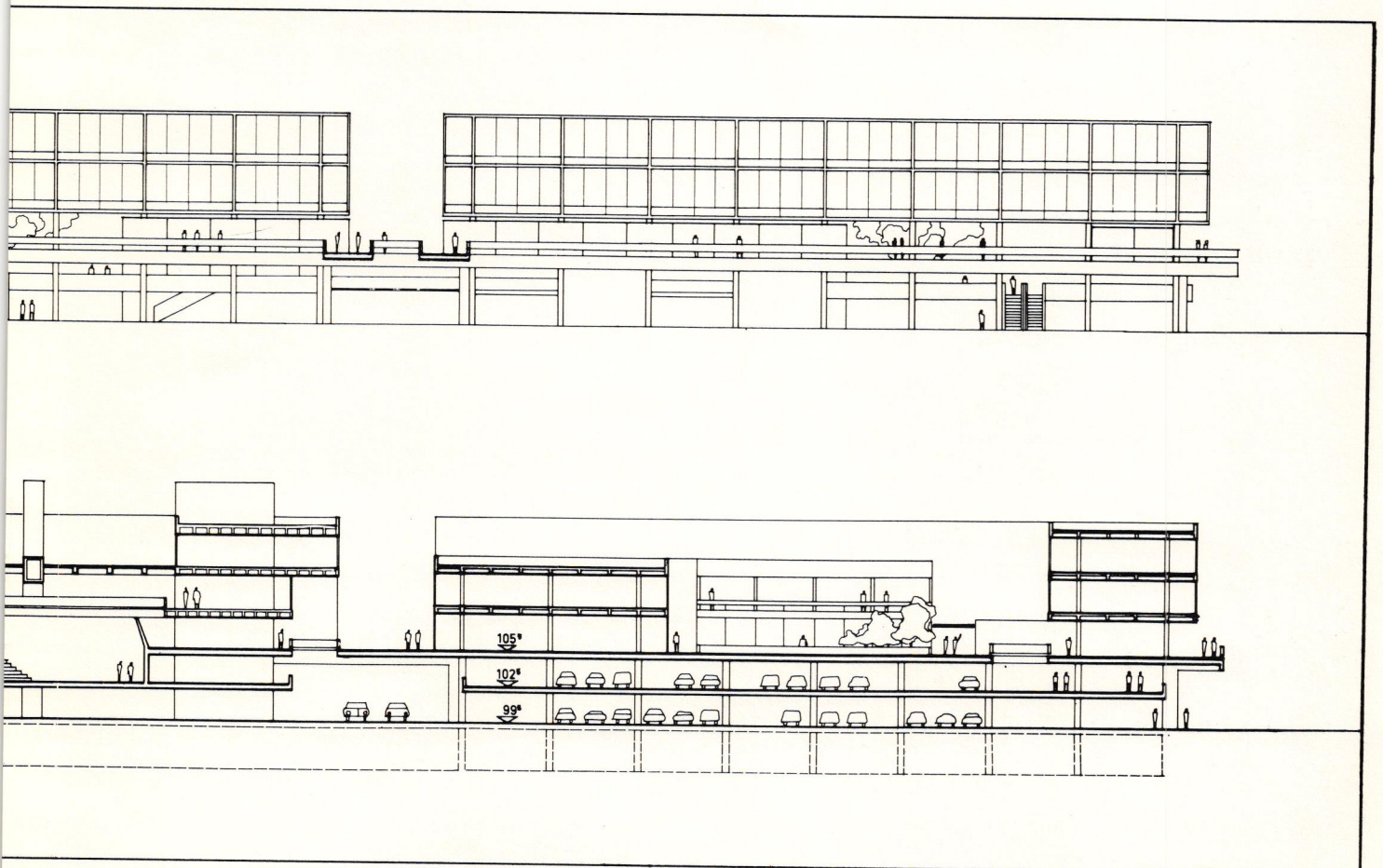
Juutilainen, Lappeenranta renewal, 1967, model of center



Juutilainen, Lappeenranta renewal, 1967, north elevation at top, section below



Juutilainen, renewal, Lappeenranta Center, 1967, first stage aerial view with model superimposed



4 Tapiola, expansion

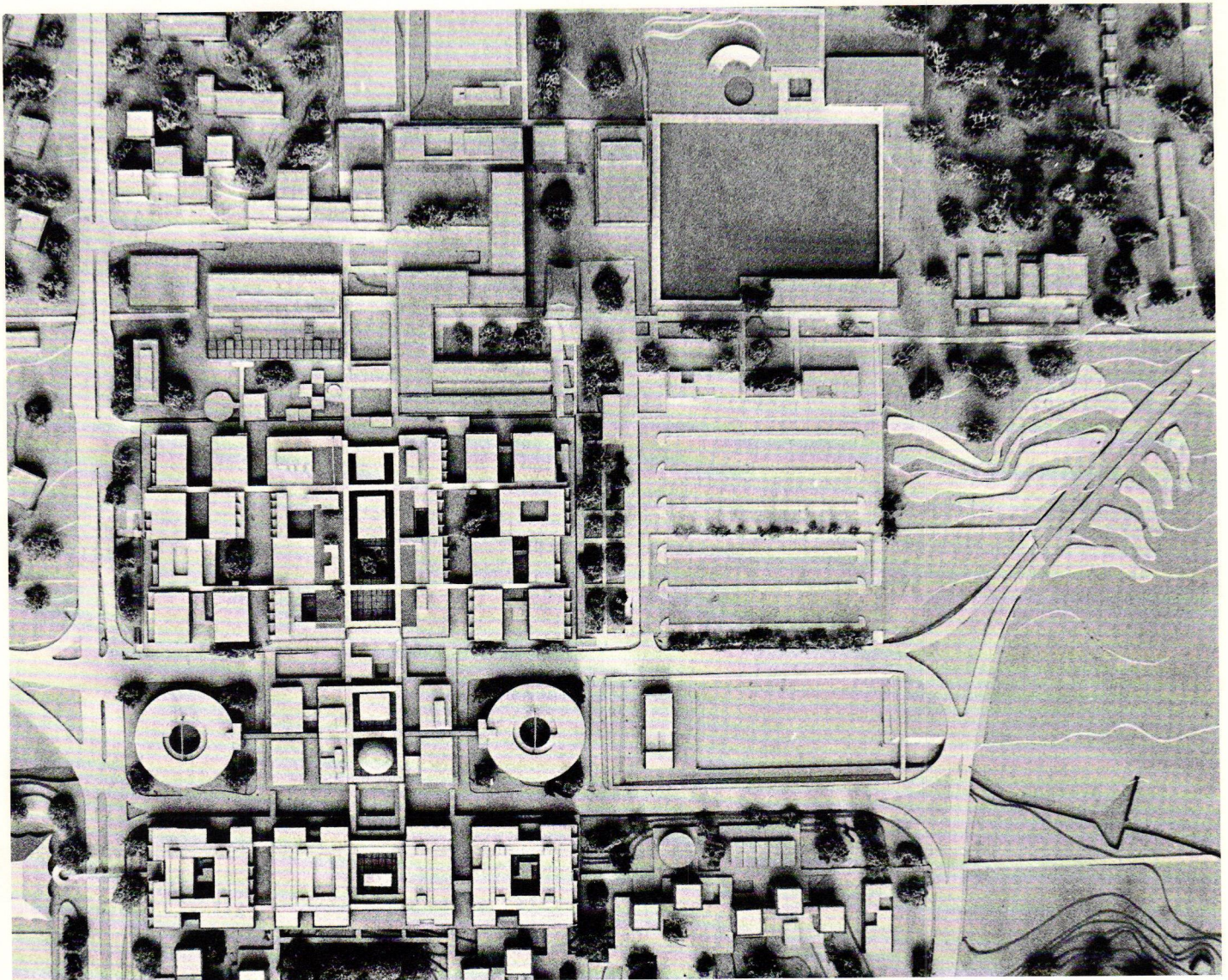
Architects: Juutilainen, Kairamo, Mikkola, Pallasmaa, 1969

In planning the expanded center for Tapiola the residents' actual social needs and the resulting requirements directed to the physical environment were deliberately taken into consideration. In regard to social activities, we can, for the first time, see real progress in connection with the expansion of the center of Tapiola.

The district center of Tapiola is located at a distance of eight kilometers from the main center of Helsinki and it is estimated that in the year 2000 there will be approximately 60,000 people living in the area. The expansion of the center covers 22 hectares (2,400 acres) with the following proposed areas:

offices	60,000 m ² *
stores and other services	42,000 m ²
residences	30,000 m ²
parking structures	115,000 m ²
service and warehouses	20,000 m ²

* square meters



Juutilainen, Kairamo, Mikkola, Pallasmaa, model, district center, Tapiola, 1969, aerial view showing existing shopping center, pond (parking lot underground) and church, upper half of photograph

The construction of these floor areas is planned for completion between 1974 and the year 2000.

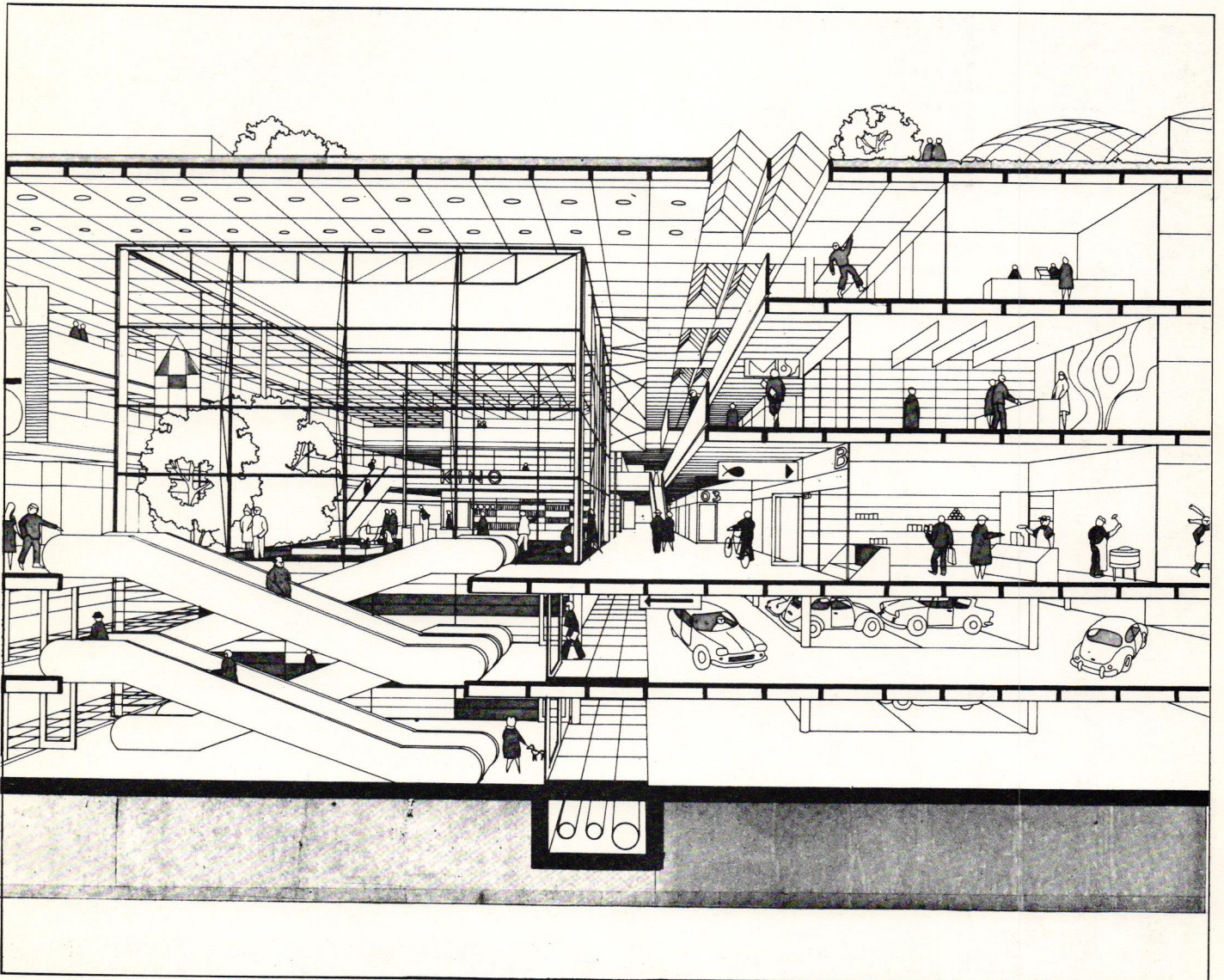
The main purpose of the planning has been to guarantee as active and versatile an environment for pedestrians as possible. The following means will be used to reach this goal:

Major passages for pedestrians will be roofed and fully air-conditioned.

The visual milieu is designed to be rich and small-scale.

Functions have been selected to guarantee movement through the center at all times, day and night.

Specific physical planning has resulted in a closed structure. Separate buildings have been abandoned and a physically continuous structural system has been used, making it possible, in the future, to change the boundaries of various activities inside the system to correspond with the needs of a particular time. The plan does not completely limit the form a building may take and detailed planning can be done freely within the blocks.



Juutilainen, Kairamo, Mikkola, Pallasmaa, perspective, section of district center, Tapiola, 1969

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Design Quarterly 84

Published by Walker Art Center
Vineland Place
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Martin Friedman, Director

Editor: Mildred S. Friedman
Graphic Design: James E. Johnson
Typesetting and Circulation: Pamela Barclay
Graphic Design Assistance: Carol Evans
Editorial Assistance: Donna Gale

Design Quarterly is listed in Art Index

Change of address: To insure receiving all copies, give the old address as well as the new one and allow five weeks for change to become effective.

Subscription rates:
4 issues \$5, 8 issues \$9.25, 12 issues \$12.50
Single issues: \$1.60
Double issues: \$3.00*
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Foreign postage: \$1.00 for 4 issues

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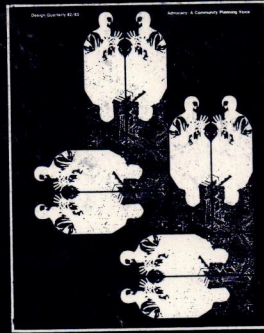
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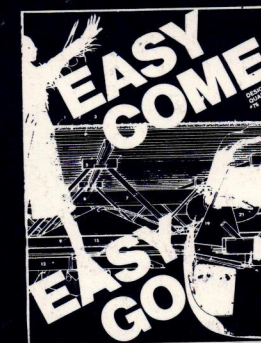
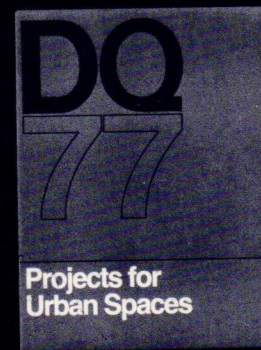


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