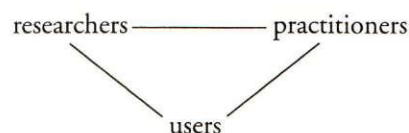


Building Bridges

Cultural and social studies produce an ever increasing amount of research on aspects of modern society founding their knowledge in theories and abstract concepts. In humanist and social disciplines, however, there are few researchers that relate their findings in terms of physical space, and even fewer that take the step of making normative suggestions and proposals. At the schools of architecture, on the other hand, there is a strong tradition of solving problems directly with the aid of a repertoire of design solutions. Knowledge is to a large extent tacit and founded in practise. We believe there is a strong need to develop dialogues between those concerned with cultural studies, analysis of space and the design of the built environment.

This issue of the Nordic Journal of Architectural Research is a documentation and summary of a symposium called Building Bridges. It took place at Chalmers School of Architecture in November 1995, and was sponsored by the Swedish Tercentenary Foundation. Invited to this conference were researchers and practitioners interested in the interpretation and design of the built environment from cultural and democratic aspects, and also interested in exchanging experience and perspectives on how to build bridges within this field:



Most of the lectures given at the symposium are published here. Ulf Hannerz gives an introduction to the notion of culture by describing the complex network of cultural perspectives in a society with an increased division of labour and knowledge. "It is in having perspectives toward other perspectives that we are really building bridges", he sums up. – Oddrun Saeter describes a case study about the dramatic encounter between "site specific sculpture" and local culture in a number of villages in Northern Norway. Her study shows how art

is able to throw light on local symbols and cultures, often in an indirect or non-intentional way. – Michel Conan presents a study of a renewal process within the French youth housing organization, Foyer, where both the inhabitants and the staff members took part in the design process. He emphasizes the crucial position of the architect, who has to be tentative and pedagogic, at the same time as relying on professional knowledge. – Roderick Lawrence's article is a summary of a broad housing study in Geneva. It points out how many different aspects and perspectives you have to consider to obtain a reliable evaluation of housing quality. – The final article is more programmatic. Three members from the institution behind the symposium, the Department of Building Design at Chalmers, describe three different research traditions which in different ways try to emphasize the cultural dimensions of architecture. This article also declares the intentions of building bridges between these traditions and other disciplines.

Professor Thomas Markus, who by the way coined the uniting title 'Building Bridges', acted as chairman during the final discussion at the symposium. He emphasized the many stimulating presentations and discussions of cultural perspectives on architecture, but also declared that we might have underestimated the effects of power structures in society. He also laid stress on the need for general theories.

In Sweden we have a long tradition of cooperation, which has given us experience of the positive opportunities of bridge building. On the other hand, we might have a tendency in many cases to underestimate power structures. We hope that further international exchange will give us, and others, perspectives towards other perspectives. We also believe that by building bridges between different cultural perspectives on architecture – which in turn need their theories – we can challenge the interests of power.

The editorial board of this issue hereby expresses its gratitude to Professor Thomas Markus for his valuable contributions to the symposium, to the authors of the different papers and to the Swedish Tercentenary Foundation, that made this conference possible.

Building Bridges

Lisbeth Birgersson, Claes Caldenby, Birgitta Holmdahl

Two lectures at the symposium are not published here.

– Professor Patsy Healy developed the story of conflicts between power cultures and the lifestyles of ordinary people in a decaying housing district, where efforts were made to integrate the inhabitants in the renewal process. This study is published in *Cities in Transformation – Transformation in Cities. Social and symbolic change of urban space*. Edited by O. Källtorp, Uppsala University, I. Elander, University of Örebro, O. Ericsson and M. Franzén, Uppsala University..

– Dr Franco Bianchini talked about cultural planning and multi-ethnic cultural production. Parts of the lecture are published in Landry, Charles and Bianchini, Franco in *The Creative City*. Demos. London 1995.