
Isto Maartola:

**Participant-Contingent Design Decisions.
A Theory of Novice Decisions in Home Acquisition.**

Doctoral Dissertation, Faculty of Architecture, Helsinki University of Technology, FIN-02150 Espoo Finland 1998.

Recension av Jerker Lundequist

In this thesis Isto Maartola presents the results of a case study, including a pilot study, a survey, and 30 interviews with three groups of respondents (10 per group): self help builders, apartment byers, and people with abandoned building projects. His aim is to bring architectural design theory up to date by introducing a scientific view of novice action, by studying novices in design tasks, pointing out the following lacunæ in design research (page 18):

- the limits of human cognitive capacity
- the degree of expertise (ranging from novice to expert)
- inherent errors and biases
- the influence of motives and emotions

- the complexity of the task environment, and
- the user's/novice's need of controllability

The interesting part of his thesis is where he introduces concepts and theories from the emerging field of cognitive science into architectural design. He is well read in these matters (cognitive science is not a scientific discipline in the traditional sense, but a research field, that links together different but related disciplines). His approach is very interesting, even if he is overstating his case, and needs all the attention from research that it can get. His problematic thus can be defined (page 21): (i) what are the factual prerequisites of humans as participants in a design and construction process? (ii) how is the design and construction process pursued and what are the main factors affecting it?

He is certainly right in that his thesis has its greatest value as a path-finder for an applied cognitive science approach to design theories (page 138). (But, as I am going to demonstrate, he is not alone in this.) My comments are going to follow his thesis chapter by chapter for the simple reason that my only serious criticism is about the unclear structure of his thesis. This forces me

to begin by stating my own view on design research, since its key concepts have to be clarified, before I can discuss how Maartola has applied them on his empiric.

What is design theory?

My presentation below of what design research is follows Heath's Method in Architecture which was the first cognitive science based perspective on the questions of method in architecture. My points of departure therefore are the following:

- All production of artefacts presupposes an introductory phase of design (an artefact is an artificial, man-made thing, a product; the concept includes abstractions like organizations, plans and information systems).
- Design is an activity intended to determine the properties and qualities of an artefact or a system of artefacts. The term is derived from the Latin, *designare* (clearly show, point out, represent, point out ahead, be predetermined). The overall goal of design is to successively increase the degree of determination of the product.
- The process of design is a process of elimination, of gradually reducing the non-determination of a project, through the successive elimination of conceivable but in some way inferior possibilities. From this it follows that an important part of the competence of the designer is composed of being able to deal with his own insecurity, i.e. to be able to act on the basis of an incomplete and uncertain body of knowledge.
- The most important ingredient of research in the field therefore is concerned with methods and techniques for dealing with the determinations in the design process. The very questions of the art of coping with indetermination and uncertainty are constituents of the process. At each stage in the process it should be possible to specify the degree of indetermination and uncertainty that still remains.
- Many theories of design are intended to arrive at methods for the construction of models and for methods of simulation. The research sector also includes the representation of knowledge, i.e. conceptual modelling. (The development of a theory of design presupposes an interaction between theory and practice, i.e. to develop the conceptual apparatus used by both practitioners and theoreticians. Thus the question of concept development takes a central role.)

The design process includes four kinds of interconnected sub-processes:

- The artistic phase of the design process is moved forward through the designer making drawn proposals which express aesthetic viewpoints to be evaluated within the design team. The evaluations lead to making a choice of one of the proposals and to a decision on how to continue with the design task.
- During a series of negotiations product determination of the building is conducted to determine the properties of the building. In this phase people meet to weigh reasons and counter-reasons before taking decisions affecting the project. These reasons determine the project. Users, clients and public authorities cooperate in the process by drawing on reasons for and against certain decisions.
- The objectives of negotiations are: to test whether the stated reasons are valid, and to weigh the stated reasons against each other. The course of the process is sequential, since every new negotiation must be based on the decisions taken previously. The sequential order is, however, not completely inflexible, since it is often necessary to go back in the process and alter previously taken decisions. Thus it is necessary to record the process so that the grounds for previously taken decisions are clearly documented.
- The designer provides grounds for evaluation and decision-making by presenting conceivable solutions. A system of feedback is required so that these judgements can be made on a firm foundation. After a design proposal has been estimated, the result ought to lead to a revision of the proposal, new estimates, etc.
- Information processing, in which one searches for, stores and distributes such information as is relevant to the project.
- Solution of the design problems, i.e. those problems that are concerned with how artificially made things – artefacts – ought to be constructed.

The process of designing consists mainly of information processing (searching, revision, storage and distribution of data). The degree of problem-solving is quantitatively relatively small in relation to the processing of information. Nevertheless, problem-solving is of crucial importance to the final result. Some of the most important aspects on problem-solving are listed below:

- In questions of design, problem-solving entails both identifying the right means and the reasonable ends. The problem-solving phase of the design process is incremental, by which is meant that the process encompasses a step-wise searching in the direction of a vaguely hinted-at final goal.
- What differentiates problem-solving from other intellectual activities is, says Newell and Simon (see also Waern & Waern 1984, and Heath 1984): that the process is goal-directed; and occurs in several steps (i.e. as a series of thought operations). The goals are diffuse and this complicates the designer's search for a method. Thus the methodology applied in most cases is based on heuristic rules, i.e. on rules-of-thumb based on experience and conventions for the search of information and for problem-solving based on the information derived in this way. With the assistance of heuristics it is possible to describe and limit the problem space; as well as determine the means required to achieve certain goals.
- Design is a way of successively reducing a problem space (i.e. the total number of possible solutions, the initial positions and the means for defining and arriving at the goals). According to Newell & Simon (Waern & Waern 1984, Heath 1984) this is the central feature of problem-solving: A problem space can be described by the formula ATB where A describes the initial state, B the end state and T the transformation, i.e. the means and their application. For organized problems, A and B are known and the problem-solving operation consists of finding a logical sequence of operations or an algorithm that corresponds to the T in the formula. But design problems are seldom well-defined, and B is not known at the start of

the work other than as a vaguely shaped vision. The design process therefore involves the successive determination of A, B and T. Solving a design problem entails: (i) successive delimitation, (ii) simultaneous definition of a problem space which is initially not clearly defined. The dimension that refers to the degree of uncertainty is a constituent of the design process, since it deals with the uncertainty about means, and initial and end states, that characterizes the design process.

- The designer reduces the problem space to the point where one and only one solution is possible. This reduction is achieved by successively assigning to the problem space rules that exclude all but one proposed solution.

My position is not different from Maarttola's, who in fact has followed an established pattern of research. So, one problem with his thesis is that he sometimes feels obliged to kick in open doors and to re-invent the wheel. But, this is maybe all for the best, since it shows that he has a talent for original thinking. But the fact remains that he has spent too much effort on re-establishing issues that others already have dealt with.

Chapter one – Modern design theory

In the first chapter Maarttola discusses the state of the art of modern design theory (page 1):

Modern design theory is founded on the ideals of enlightenment. The adverse side of this is that enlightenment's assumptions of people's capabilities have been transformed to regard people as innately skilled optimizers with an economically based view on rationality and utilitarianism ...

These biased assumptions of central human characteristics have been carried over to design as givens with little corroboration from facts. This becomes especially apparent in design which is not implicitly economically dominated such as small house design.

He then defines his research problem:

The research problem of this study arises from the fact that architectural design theories have not been able to free themselves from the distorted enlightenment tradi-

tion enough to address the question of what the human actor is really like. A novice participant, especially, has not been studied in a scientific manner in the context of architectural design and management despite attempts at participatory design.

But, on the contrary an impressive part of design research deals with problems about how to create reliable user models, how to analyse user requirements and values, and how to promote user participation (see Thackara 1988).

Maartola's survey of the state-of-the-art of design theory is rather thin. Important references are not included, and therefore his survey does not give him the authority to make universal statements on the state of the art of design research. Researchers like Hillier, Lawson, Cross, Jones, Archer, Rittel and others have to be reviewed before global statements like these are made. Seminal books like Jones' *Design Methods* and Cross' *Developments* are not even mentioned.

But, once Maartola concentrates on his study of novice action his thesis becomes very interesting and he has a lot of valuable things to say. "Everyone designs", he writes and refers to Simon who has pointed out that methods of design are utilized by all who plan changes from existing to future situations. He then classifies design theories in the following way (page 2):

- Design theories are oriented towards rational action, and these rationality and action-oriented theories can be sub-divided into two classes, normative and descriptive (positive, see Lang) theories.
- The descriptive/positive theories are sub-divided into those that provide knowledge about the object of a certain activity (substantive theories, see Lang) and those that provide knowledge about the action itself (procedural theories, see Lang).
- Theories about characteristics, like the durability of a certain material, are included in the former class. A theory of the latter type would give guidance on how an actor ought to act. Typical of such a theory is that it often does not refer to a particular part of reality, but to a model of an aspect of that reality.

In page 3 I have found what I suspect is a misunderstanding of function. The way it is discussed here the

reader might think that functional explanations as they are used in systems thinking and related theories have anything to do with the functionalist style in architecture (they have not). "Later", Maartola then writes, "the style has been called modernism". Here he refers to the International Style of the 50ies, not Modernism as a whole, but it does not really matter if he is right or wrong. My point is that statements either should be supported by references or excluded. Also I don't think functionalism or modernism in architecture should be labelled as theories (page 3). They are ideological constructs. As theories, they are, at their best, pre-scientific, not scientific.

He then discusses the perceptual theories by Lynch and Cullen and the phenomenology of Norberg-Schulz and Pallasmaa (pages 4 to 6). He writes: "The phenomenological approach to architecture is a problematic one as it is by definition subjective". But, the key questions of phenomenology deal with the problems of a priori descriptions which, of course, can not be treated subjectively. And, there is nothing that stops research from treating the problems of subjectivity objectively.

Maartola then continues with a discussion of procedural theories (pages 6 and 7), but restricts himself to only one theory, Alexander's *Pattern Language*. He does not recapitulate the multitude of criticisms that has been launched at this theory, even by Alexander himself. Later consultation aspects are mentioned. It might have been a good idea to use some space here to discuss Schön's reflective practitioner, since this concept is very relevant for the problems that are treated by Maartola. This part of the chapter ends with an interesting but much too short discussion of Stenros' holistic, interactional ideas about man and environment (pages 8 and 9).

Then follows a short description of construction theories (pages 10 – 12), followed by the only really relevant part of the introduction, on design as goal-oriented problem solving (pages 12 – 16). The theories presented here form the basis for the remaining thesis, which entails the question if the preceding part of the chapter really is needed.

In the second part of chapter one Maartola pre-

sents his key-concepts: search tree, mesh, problem solving, task environment, problem space, search space, heuristics and algorithms. He also links decision making to problem solving, and touches on pattern recognition. This part of the introduction chapter might have been more developed, since it is of crucial importance to his thesis. But, it is well done.

In pages 16 and 17 he presents his key concept novice designer – a concept that he has borrowed from Dreyfus's five level distinction of expertise: Novice, Advanced Beginner, Competent, Proficient, Expert. The Novice is distinguished by his reliance on interpretation-free rules, he writes (I don't understand what he means by this, since I don't think interpretation-free rules exist).

He also points out the factors that set limits to people's expertise, first of all their limited short-term memory. Now, this is a very interesting idea, with many implications for design research. A common error is to load too many tasks onto a designer and to give him too much information to deal with at the same time in the same context. Cognitive science has shown that an individual seldom succeeds in dealing with more than 7 ± 2 bits of information at any one time, which makes it unsuitable to force a designer to deal with information which is too abbreviated or subdivided in too much detail.

But it is possible to improve one's short-term memory by recoding memory units. A chunk of information may consist of a single percept or image or it may be holistic or a gestalt, in which a number of perceptions are organized into a meaningful pattern. In our surroundings we grasp, i.e. perceive phenomena, in gestalts and patterns. When, e.g. we remember a person's appearance, we recall the whole rather than the details.

In reality, before every action, we must first decide to execute that action. This decision is based partly on perceptions gained directly from our surroundings and partly on units or chunks of memory. In searching through our memory we reconstruct the whole chunk of information that is desired. In this work we start with the small fragments which first become accessible and successively build up the whole unit of information.

This also has a bearing on what we mean with expertise. Simon means that high competence in a specific field, e.g. playing chess, is linked to an ability to retain a large number of "vocabulary patterns", i.e. subconsciously remembered patterns, in one's long term memory. A clever chess player sees and recognizes relevant patterns in the positions of the pieces on the board. He bases decisions concerning the next moves on knowledge of how to act rationally in a certain position, when a specific pattern appears. It is thus typical that an experienced professional in almost every conceivable field has a large vocabulary of typical patterns gathered and developed during a long career.

Maartola defines expertise with five characteristics: 1) hierarchism and multilayerness, 2) explicit mappings between the different layers, 3) recognition of basic patterns, 4) internal connectedness, and 5) groundedness on the task information.

The concepts hierarchism and multilayerness merit some development: Hierarchism refers to the fact that we structure our memorized knowledge, as, for instance, we learn the names of the months of the year in chronological order. (Try reciting them in alphabetical order instead!) One of the most basic human characteristics is our tendency to organize knowledge and impressions in meaningful structures. Multilayerness refers to the fact that we organize our knowledge at various levels of complexity. The structures we use in our thinking at a higher level need to be so generalized and abstract, i.e. unencumbered by details, that we can concentrate on the relevant problems (for example, the architects' traditional scale of 1:400, 1:200, 1:100, etc).

On page 16 Maartola makes a distinction between expert and novice:

A distinction between expert and novice design can, however, be made by the amount of variability in the outcomes at least on the level of sub-processes such as e.g. the designs of rooms. Thus, the more constrained the program and the higher the level of expertise, the smaller the variability will be. To sum up, variability is explained by differences in decisions taken during the course of design and is dependant on expertise as well as on the complexity of the task.

I doubt this! It might be true for the expertise of air plane pilots or heart surgeons, but not for designers. Also Simon should complain about this statement on design expertise. For him variability is the quality mark of design.

In pages 18–20 Maarttola goes deeper into the shortcomings of design theory and points out that since utility and rationality are considered as goals in itself by design theory, the goals and values of clients and users tend to be seen as givens. But, he seems to have a too narrow definition of rationality. According to Weber rationality does not have to be delimited to a relation between means and ends, also values can be treated in a rational way. And most certainly values must be clarified and developed, and the only way to achieve this is by rational discussion (there is no point in discussing facts, since they are what they are; what we must discuss are values).

Chapter two – Methods

The methods used are discussed in chapter 2. Here Maarttola states that he uses both methods of logical empiricism and of phenomenology. He also refers to Wittgenstein, who is said to have taken a position between these traditions. (Maybe so, but Wittgenstein was a philosopher and not an empirical scientist.) Also, understanding and explanation are necessary elements of all research (you can't explain something that you don't understand), so Maarttola's deliberations about phenomenology and logical empiricism are not needed.

I think Maarttola's description of his choice of methods is unclear, and it does not become easier to understand when he defines his work as multi-paradigmatic. It might be that he means that his work is multi-disciplinary. Anyway, he does not use the term paradigm the way it is used by Kuhn, who, by the way, took it from Wittgenstein.

In page 23 he discusses the use of extreme cases, but I see nothing extreme about people who are buying apartments or building their own homes. If their cases are extreme, which cases are normal?

Chapter three – Empirical studies of home acquisition

This chapter has four major parts, Project Planning, De-

sign, Construction and Acceptance and Use, thus following established building practice. Each of the four major parts is sub-divided, at least in principle, into The Task Environment, The Decision Makers, The Central Decisions, The Central Problems, The Objective Approach (Decision Making under Uncertainty and Risk), The Action in Reality.

Chapter 3 has many very interesting findings to offer, especially in the interviews, which should have been given more space. What the reader is offered are shortcuts of the interviews and a comparison between formal decision and problem solving theories and the factual behaviour of the interviewees.

The first real discussion of the concept of rationality comes in page 37, and it is too easy for the reader to miss it. Key-concepts should be defined in the beginning of a thesis, not spread out like this. Since there is no register, it is quite hard to get a clear picture of what Maarttola has to say about rationality in design and decision making.

In pages 41 and 42 he writes:

Classical normative decision theories have assumed that even strategic decisions are made independently of each other. Furthermore, the optional solutions have been assumed to be split into separate parts, or attributes, and a weight and an estimate of the probability of each occurring to be given. The supposition is that the solutions have been manipulated mathematically to find the option with the highest expected utility, which has been assumed to be chosen without further ado. In reality, this is not the case. The interviewees were found incapable of producing any organized accounts of a process in connection with the strategic issues. Instead they gave accounts of intuitive action based on background factors such as e.g. a childhood dream as well as situational factors as explanations for becoming a self-help builder of a detached house.

Now, what does this prove, except that self-help builders haven't studied normative decision theory? Does it prove that those theories are useless? I think not, since these theories were not created to help self-help builders plan their building tasks. A theory has a value only within the set of questions it is supposed to

answer. Neither does this prove that self-help builders are irrational. But it shows that their rationality is value-based, that is, they have certain values, acquired during their childhood or elsewhere, and they want to live according to their values.

At the bottom of page 42 he introduces a concept, clustering, as opposed to reduction. On page 43, he links this to theories of the human Self, and writes:

The most central higher motive is the maintaining of a positive self-experience ... The maintaining of a positive self-experience includes all other motives such as e.g. the desire for privacy and the acquisition of social acceptance.

This is an interesting thought and Maartela follows it up in that he links this idea to attribution theories, and to personal needs of control, stability and controllability (page 44). He continues in the following pages with concepts like knowledge acquisition, risk avoidance, control, sociability, goal-images, and threshold factors. The concepts are further clarified in the remaining parts of the chapter, on design, construction, acceptance and use.

Chapter four **– A theory of novice decisions in home acquisition**

In page 118 Maartola writes:

...assumptions of utilitarianism cause severe shortcomings in design theories as they discuss established facts such as e.g. limits of memory, imperfect knowledge, suboptimal methods, and errata only as flaws and failures. However, in reality these are major contributions in all complex cognitive processes. The inherent suboptimality in human decisions exists prior to engaging in a building task and thrives through it. Decision research in general and some areas addressing its central issues such as e.g. the heuristics and biases approach, have been as good as completely overlooked in architectural design theories ...

Then he continues by developing a theory of novice decisions in home acquisition. He starts out by comparing ideal models of expert decisions with novice decisions and elaborates these models into real world mo-

odels. The point he makes is that experts know how to proceed in a much more organized and well structured way, as compared to novices. He writes: "Design involving novice decisions is characterized by three central issues. It is 1) data-driven, 2) local, and 3) fragmented." By this he means that the choice of a starting point of design is made more or less at random, and that the goal-images tend to be fragmented (pages 121 and 122).

The chapter ends with a short summary (page 130):

People are incapable of living up to the enlightenment ideal of a rational homo economicus implicit in design theories vis-a-vis ecologically valid situations. Humans are not infallible nor optimizing decision makers and use various sub-optimal approaches both in decisions as well as choices. There are several factors affecting the decision process towards sub-optimal outcomes. Demographic factors such as wealth and age provide only a part of these. Theories describing and explaining sub-optimal decisions are available and the errors, heuristics and biases they predict can be recognized in an ecologically valid, deeply meaningful situation such as the acquisition of a home. Additionally, differences between the different forms of housing in the respects mentioned above can be found. Modern architectural design theories have not been able to live up to this reality. Furthermore, people do not want to remain passive and resort to design and designers in a prosthetic manner. Instead, they want to experience themselves as competent practitioners in control of the task. The sub-optimal approach, among other experiential issues related to the design as a process, has been ignored in the artifact-oriented discussion that has been the hallmark of architectural design theory. These considerations should be recognized and implemented in the training of designers by including simulations of and/or actual novice participation in academic curricula.

But, the most well known critique of the ideal of homo economicus was formulated by Simon in Administrative behaviour, some forty years ago, forwarding a theory of non-optimizing, but satisficing solutions. This book is of some importance, since he was awarded the Nobel Prize for it. It is mentioned in the list of references but

not discussed, which is a pity, since it might have clarified the issues.

Chapter five – Discussion

In chapter 5 suggestions are made for the implementation of this theory and its possible impact. Some issues concerning the research approach and its connection to cognitive science are also discussed. Maartola writes (page 132): "research on design falls short in setting its aims if they are not set at achieving optimal solutions." This statement is somewhat astonishing since most of his thesis show that the ambition of arriving at optimal solution is unrealistic. At the same page Maartola writes that Decision Field Theory can be criticised on the

Design procedures can be improved by implementing a more scientific view of human action in design. In operationalizing this, the following considerations are central:

- (i) limitations of human short-term memory,
- (ii) desire of personal control,
- (iii) quality of information transfer.

The third point merits some comments. At present the dominant topic of design theory is about the questions of information, thanks to the break-through of CAD in the early eighties. But Maartola has not dealt with this part of modern design theory earlier in his thesis, until now, at the end of the thesis. But, he is cer-

grounds that it only deals with deliberate, rational decision making, leaving automated or irrational forms of decisions out of the discussion. I can't see the logic that unites the two statements.

In the next page he writes:

The study demonstrates various ways in which phenomena discussed in decision theories affect design. It has been shown that actions resulting in suboptimal results often find a sound interpretation from the heuristics and biases domain. ... The claims of heuristics and biases only existing in laboratory environments have, to an extent, been disputed.

But, the whole idea of heuristics is that they are used in every day life, by everybody. Who said this about heuristics and biases only existing in laboratory environments?

Then he writes (page 134):

tainly right in that the questions of information transfer are crucial.

Some final remarks

Finally, some words about the editing of the thesis. It has 137 pages and 48 pages of appendices. The list of references is extensive, but many of the books mentioned in it are not discussed. Worse, some seminal books on design are not even mentioned.

There is no register, which is a draw-back, especially

Hans Ovesen:

Den forvandlede by.

ISBN: 87 7407 193 9, Arkitektens Forlag,
Köpenhamn 1997

Recension av Gunila Jivén



Louvren-axeln med Napoleons Triumfbåge, sedd från La Défense.
Ur Ovesen, sid 97

Våra bilder av staden blir allt mer mångtydiga och det är till och med svårt att slå fast vad vi begreppsligt menar med staden. Hans Ovesen försöker definiera storstadens speciella problematik och fånga väsentliga drag i den moderna europeiska storstadens ständiga förvandling.

Den forvandlede by är en essäsamling omfattande tolv delvis mycket fristående kapitel av Hans Ovesen, arkitekt och lektor vid Konstakademiets Institut for By- og Landskabsplanlaegning i Köpenhamn. Ovesen vill med essäsamlingen gå in i den debatt kring stadsförnyelse som pågår så väl överstatligt inom den europeiska unionen som mer nationellt, inte minst inom

de olika ländernas forskningsinstitutioner. Han har genomfört detta arbete som forskningsprojekt under åren 1993–1995 vid sidan om sin verksamhet vid Konstakademiet.

Främst är det två kärnfrågor rörande samtidens arkitektoniska uttryck och tidens problematik, som Ovesen vill diskutera. Den första frågan rör, vad han betecknar som det samtida kontra det osamtida i stadens arkitektur. Den rör i vilket avseende befintliga eller nya projekt kan sägas vara anakronistiska i relation till estetiska och processuella aspekter i den nutida urbaniseringen. Vi befinner oss i skärningspunkten mellan ett ännu inte avslutat förflutet och en alltid redan påbörjad framtid. Vi strävar efter att analysera och förstå vår egen tids uttryck genom en lång tidsaxel, där också modernismens utveckling avtecknar sig i relation till vad som kan vara en postmodern tolkning. Denna tidsaxel rör samtidigt föränderligheten kontra stabiliteten, dynamiken kontra det kvalitativa i stadsbygden.

Den andra frågan rör förhållandet mellan ordning och kaos. Ovesen diskuterar frågan i relation till frihet och ofrihet, i relation till komplexitet och endimensionality samt i relation till former för ändamålsenlighet och det estetiskt meningsfulla.

För att exemplifiera sina ståndpunkter refererar Ovesen till stadsutveckling, förändringar och tendenser i ett flertal av Europas gamla kulturstäder. Jag vill speciellt peka på hans beskrivningar av den historiska utvecklingen i Edinburgh och Amsterdam och de mer samtida utvecklingsskeden han beskriver från Köpenhamn, Paris och London. Vi får inga heltäckande beskrivningar, utan i enlighet med den frihet essäisten kan ta sig, väljer Ovesen mycket godtyckligt de aspekter han vill reflektera kring.

Förvandlingen

Det genomgående temat är förvandlingen av staden och vilken förvandling är det då Ovesen urskiljer? Den första förvandlingen är numera av snarast historisk karaktär. Den rör hur de två motpolerna land och stad utvecklas till tre enheter genom tillkomsten av förstaden. Redan här finns embryot till upplösningen av stadsbegreppet.

Städerna var en gång klart avgränsade från landet, men med industrialismens expanderande städer i Europa under senare delen av 1800-talet uppstod en mer flytande gräns mellan stad och land. Staden utvecklades geografiskt med den tredelning i stad – förstad – land, som vi ännu har en relation till.

Ovesen tar Johan Otto von Spreckelsens La Grand Arche i Paris som utgångspunkt för att diskutera förstadens speciella problematik. Den monumentala arkadbågen avtecknar sig från Champs Elysées axiellt västerut mot någon form av buffertzona, en vitt utbredd förstads-urbanitet mellan staden och det riktiga landet. Samtidigt understryker Ovesen att även begreppet förstad i denna allt vidare urbanitet mist sin mening på samma sätt som det blivit allt svårare att begreppsligt tala om det urbana i kontrast till det rurala.

Nästa steg av förvandlingen sker i vår tid och förväntas ytterligare accentueras i framtiden. Ovesen diskuterar samtidens teorier om hur stadens utveckling tenderar att polariseras. Vi har lärt oss att förstå och acceptera den historiska industristadens uppbyggnad med de ekonomiska och sociala uttryck, som utvecklats under mer än två seklar. Idag sker förändringen utifrån en världsomspännande informationsutveckling, som leder till en ny form av nyttoinriktad urbanisering med världsstäder och globala regioner.

Från en arkitekturhistoriskt grundad beskrivning övergår Ovesen till att i framtidsvisionen se hur de ekonomiska faktorerna tenderar att leda till en koncentration av t ex de globala företagen och därmed en tillväxt i storstadsområden. En övergripande tillväxtfilosofi styr helheten i förverkligandet av en optimal och global marknadsstrategi. Samtidigt leder denna nya urbanisering till allvarliga konsekvenser i redan befintliga storstäder. Övriga städer urholkas funktionellt och tvingas bygga ut sina kulturella och kommersiella aktiviteter för att behålla sin attraktivitet. En polarisering sker också i städernas sociala liv genom skärpta motsättningar mellan fattig och rik och därmed mellan förfall och nya initiativ.

Men vad är då staden, storstaden eller dessa global cities? Ovesen frågar: kan vi överhuvudtaget tala om staden utan att genast tala om något annat – om bostadsförhållanden, historia, sociala processer eller

arkitektur till exempel?

Någonstans övergår Ovesen från beskrivningen av den fysiska miljön som stad till stads-visioner av mer imaginär karaktär. Vi tycks vara på väg mot ett decentraliserat urbant fält i ett informationsbaserat samhälle. Ovesen ger oss genom Per Stounbjerg en vision av oss alla sammanbundna i en urban helhetsväv, en urbaniserad civilisation utan egentliga städer. Kanske är detta hans förvandlade stad?

Nej, med Saskia Sassen kommer han till ett annat resultat och ser istället utvalda världsstäder, global cities, New York, London och Tokyo som centrum för både ekonomiskt och socialt liv. Staden blir något mycket relativt och utmärks i fysisk bemärkelse bara genom en gradskillnad av förtätning. Han refererar här till Jürgen Habermas som också framhållit att den livsform, som vi förenat med begreppet stad, redan är så förändrad att den inte motsvarar staden längre.

Det tredje förändringssteget rör alltså hur den hierarkiskt uppbyggda staden övergår till ett horisontellt oändligt utbredd mönster, sammansatt av varierande collage utan inbördes eller övergripande hierarki. Begreppsligt är då staden sedan länge obsolet. Med referens till Stounbjerg ser Ovesen hur stadens hierarkiska uppbyggnad fysiskt och meningsbärande är borta och att vi istället var och en omfattar en serie utbytbara bilder av staden. Från den ideala bilden av staden med historiskt framvuxen ordning som i stadskärnan och de tidiga förorterna i Amsterdam rör vi oss till en form av icke-stad präglad just av att klarheten har försvunnit och att staden har anonymiserats. Dess varierande enheter i form av collage ingår varken i en hierarkisk eller historisk ordning. Samtidigt finns en ordning i det som kan synas kaotiskt. Men det är en ny ordning, som det synes vara Ovesens yttersta strävan att efterhand nå insikt om genom vidgad förståelse om vår tids uttryck.

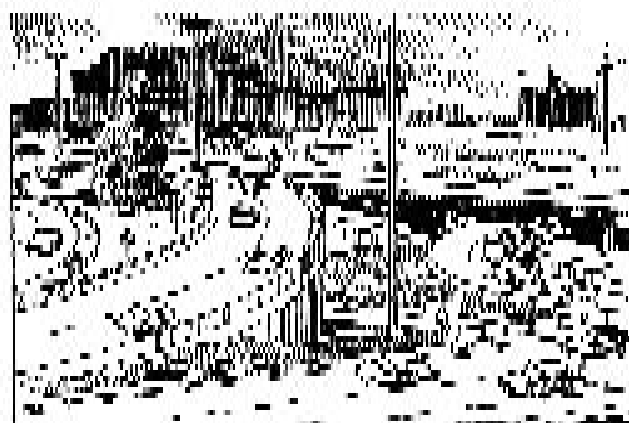
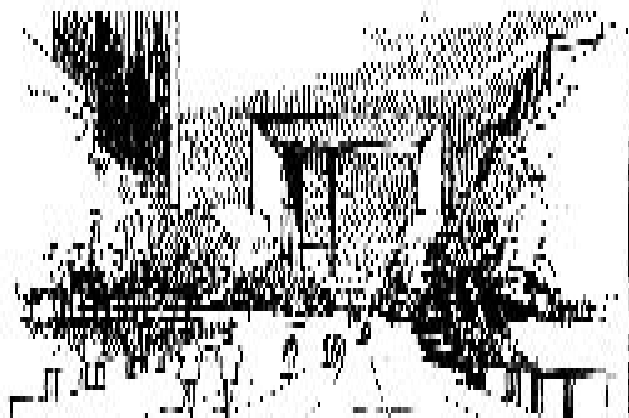
Tidsaxel kontra ordning – kaos

För att beskriva denna förvandlingsprocess återkommer Ovesen till de två huvudfrågorna rörande tidsperspektiven respektive ordning-kaos. Vi förutsätts tidsmässigt befinna oss i en skärningspunkt mellan det ännu inte avslutade förflutna och den alltid redan påbör-

jade framtiden. Staden är på en gång både föränderlig och stabil. Det är och har alltid varit en del av stadens väsen att vara kroniskt instabil. Det nya är enligt Ovesen att vi nu betraktar dualismen mellan förändringen och överlagringarna som ett problem. Med aktuella exempel från Köpenhamn lyfter han fram dilemmat mellan vilket tidsskede, som skall ha tolkningsföreträde och få ange formuttrycket inför framtiden. Varje strävan att bibehålla vissa kvaliteter innebär oftast samtidigt en konflikt med stadens dynamik. Han ser hur de historiska avtrycken trots de ständiga förändringarna är utomordentligt seglivade. Ändå medför stadens dynamiska föränderlighet att dess kvaliteter ändras hela tiden. Men varje lokal förändring på ett ställe medför ständigt konsekvenser på andra ställen – och inte minst för andra människor. Ovesen tecknar redan inledningsvis, vad han menar vara ett av stadens stora moraliska dilemma; hur stora sociala och arkitektoniska konsekvenser får enskilda projekt medföra i andra delar av staden? För vem skall friheten gälla och på vems bekostnad?

Denna fråga om dynamik – kvalitet ses som en axel, som korsas av problemställningen i axeln ordning – kaos. Från en äldre form av ordningsskapande stadsplanering ser Ovesen hur den moderna stadsplaneringens "paradigm" utgörs av en fri, dvs icke-reglerande kapitalism, som leder till individuella dispositioner och sammantaget skapar en kaotisk situation i staden. Han ser stadsplaneringens grund berättigad just genom dess förmåga att tillvarata helhetsaspekter och därigenom samtidigt tillgodose många individuella intressen. Detta moraliska dilemma får en ideologisk uttolkning, som efterhand blir mycket tydlig i beskrivningen av Londons Docklands.

En annan aspekt av ordning – kaos finner vi i det nya stadsområdets endimensionalitet kontra den traditionella stadens mångdimensionella komplexitet. Den nya urbanitetens uppsplittrade eller fragmentariska karaktär har en horisontell ordning av likvärdiga och separerade element, som karaktäriseras av att sakna komplexitet och inte heller ingår i någon relation till intilliggande enheter. Det kan ses som utslag av den nya endimensionella ordning, som präglar den nya staden. Den byggs alltså inte vidare från någon inre central punkt i en uppfattbar kronologi. Den breder ut sig som ett



Tre vyer från Triumfbågen till von Spreckelsens "stora kub", Grande Arche och därefter ut på andra sidan. Ur Ovesen, sid 98

collage av bebyggelse-öar i en infrastrukturell väv, som i varierande grad sträcker ut sig i landskapet. Vi tycks nu framme vid Italo Calvins vision av storstäder, som genom århundradena "breder ut sig som förtunnad soppa över hela slätten".

Ytterligare centrala motiv följer Ovesen upp genom essäernas olika exempel. Med utgångspunkt från en karta över Newcastle, vars syfte är att skapa optimal överblick över utvalda kvantitativa faktorer, går han vidare och diskuterar metoder för att analysera den fysiska miljön kvalitativt. Han beskriver och värderar ett antal analysmodeller, som avslutningsvis presenteras i ett appendix. Gordon Cullens och Kevin Lynchs systematiska arbete för att analysera stadens form ställs bl a mot arbeten av senare arkitekturteoretiker som Karl Otto Ellefsen och Dag Tvilde, Carsten Juel-Christiansen och det danska SAVE-systemet.

Genom de olika essäerna återkommer också en diskussion kring några aktuella teorier ur modern arkitekturforskning. Den moderna stadens utveckling diskuteras som motsättningar mellan ställningstaganden hos modernismens urbanister och anti-urbanister. Tönnies begreppsvärld kring Gesellschaft och Gemeinschaft diskuteras både utifrån historiska och samtida befolkningsgruppers liv i staden. Ovesen ser hur den tidigare spänningen mellan urbanister t ex i form av modernister och anti-urbanister i form av trädgårdsstadens förespråkare ersätts av nya motpoler.

Och vilka visioner ger då Ovesen för den framtida staden? Han urskiljer inga samlade visioner om staden som process och arkitektur, men framhåller ändå den kompakta staden som vision inför framtiden. Den kompakta staden exemplifieras genom utbyggnaden av det tidiga 1900-talets förstäder i Amsterdam. Tillsammans med Rotterdam framhålls de som både realistiska och visionära strategier för stadsutveckling i ett tätt befolkat land.

Formtolerans med ideologisk tydlighet

Jag finner hos Ovesen en välgörande vidsyn och acceptans för olika formuttryck och teoribildningar. Han intar en arkitekturhistorisk utgångspunkt avseende både modernismens olika faser och det post-moderna. Han tolkar och klargör skillnader mellan teoribildningar – inte för att värdera utan för att nå förståelse om vår samtid. Han urskiljer hur det redan begreppsligt ligger konflikter inbyggda i den traditionella modernismkritiken och exemplifierar genom att följa utvecklingen kring zonerings. Det synes vara samma faktorer som bedöms i stadens form och utveckling genom historien.

I beskrivningen av vår tids samtida myter exemplifierar Ovesen myterna med bl a berättelsen om miljöhoten, välfärdssamhällets död och vad han betecknar som konkursboet efter Thatchers experiment i Londons Dockland. Han förkastar denna utbyggnad, som kommit att ske helt på kapitalismens villkor. Han är istället övertygad om nödvändigheten av statens påverkan på samhällets vitala delar.

Vemärdet då han kritiserar? Arkitekter och stadsplanerare har misslyckats och anses vara besatta av etisk och estetisk förvirring. Ovesen är mycket tydlig i beskrivningen av hur exploitören, "the developer" träder in och ber om uppdrag, där såväl objektens användning, placering som berättigande är oklar. Entreprenören tecknas med referens till Goethes Faust som en samvetslös och patologisk människa, som utvecklar staden endast för utvecklingens egenvärde. Det blir denne utvecklade entreprenör, som ytterst får stå som representant för traditionsbrottet och strävan efter nyskapande till varje pris, när varken politiker eller arkitekter tar sitt ansvar.

Spännande kalejdoskop

Ovesen har skrivit en krävande, men också utvecklande bok. Essäerna omfattar delvis faktiska upplysningar och arkitekturhistoriska beskrivningar, men domineras av personliga reflexioner. I diskussionerna kring exemplen är författarens värderingar delvis svåra att följa genom att bakgrundsfakta inte alltid är tydligt redovisade. Essäformen kan passa en författande arkitekt, men jag ser den samtidigt som möjligen förrädisk i den mening att den litterära formen inte tvingar sin författare till förtydligande logisk argumentation. Ovesens syfte att utforska vår tids tankemönster leder möjligen till framställningens delvis kalejdoskopiska form; texterna glimtar till, men författaren avslutar ibland inte de diskussioner, som ständigt förs vidare.

Ändå förmår Ovesen formulera mycket väsentliga frågor kring stadsform och modern stadsutveckling. Han har en så stark strävan att bejaka och förstå den moderna stadens fornuttryck att jag gärna hade följt med honom längre in i hans tankevärld!