Architecture – an Adaption Process
A Mosque in Copenhagen

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LIVING IN THE NORTH

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>
> Kenneth Frampton 1992: 315

Working consciously on the basis of the conditions set by the increasing mobility of people, a more diverse understanding of frontiers, and the possibilities of communication, is it possible to influence the meeting of cultures by the means of architecture?

Issues related to ghetto settlements and questions concerning cultural (and national) identity continue to be main themes in the on-going discussion of cultural integration in the public debate in Denmark. Many aspects of both ghetto settlements and cultural identity have been studied in relation to the process of cultural integration. Thus, the lack of investigation and discussion of the actual physical surroundings in relation to cultural integration strikes one as peculiar when related to the long known fact that the individual depends on her/his surroundings in order to prosper. Might it be that this well-known connection between man and architecture seems too banal or too obvious to bring forward in discussions on the complex matter that is cultural integration? Whatever the reason for this, hopefully this article can be an argument for bringing architecture into the discussions of cultural integration. This should be done in order to benefit from the potential, which I find is being offered by architecture in relation to attempts to come up with solutions for the problems involved with cultural integration.

The fact that in Denmark, along with many other countries, we have had the public and political debate dominated by the issues of national identity for several years, clearly shows that the claim that the importance of geography is diminishing along with the increasing globalisation and technological development is but a popular simplification. In fact, we still regard the individual's attachment to her/his surroundings in the form of cultural and physical environment, as a crucial factor for the individual's ability to get on in the culture concerned, to understand it, and especially to become a part of it.

Architectural as cultural framework

So, stating the obvious and seemingly banal importance of architecture and site specifics for our development as human beings, the next step is to acknowledge the role of architecture as cultural framework and try to use it as a positive force instead of a constraint. Architecture holds a great potential as a tool to visualize the indescribable by transforming ideas, symbols and patterns of habits into concrete form, and thus architecture seems to be a key to progress in the process of cultural integration. For in this process, expressions originating from different cultures may be adapted one to the other and organized within the same structure in ways that by-pass the limits that dominate the general immaterial integration process. Or, said in other words, architecture may express the meeting of different cultures by integrating foreign elements into an existing culture.

This view of architecture as a cultural meeting point draws on the ideas of *critical regionalism*, a polemic manifest formulated by the American architectural theorist Kenneth Frampton during the 1980s. During a long process of formulation and reformulation Frampton developed his original concept of *critical regionalism* from being a dialectically formulated critical strategy for the creation of architecture to being more of a *"critical category"* ("kritisk kategori").[2] A specification of the understanding and use of *critical regionalism* in this analysis is needed, and the following therefore refers to the formulation of Frampton's original idea of a strategy as formulated by fil. dr. Gerd Bloxham Zettersten in *Nordiskt perspektiv på arkitektur – kritisk regionalisering i nordiska stadshus 1900–1955* (Arkitektur Förlag 2000).

Frampton was partly inspired by the French philosopher Paul Ricœur joining his rather pessimistic view on the consequences of a universal civilization developing on a global scale.[3] By *critical regionalism* Frampton formulated a strategy to meet the negative consequences of such universal civilization since he regarded the ability to adapt the incoming universal tendencies as crucial for the survival of any regionally or nationally founded culture (cf. quotation above). This should be obtained trough a critical and self-conscious working process aiming at visualizing the meeting of these, as it may seem, conflicting expressions culminating in the creation of what Frampton called *new vital forms* or *regional inflections* – dynamic syntheses anchored in site-specificity. As emphasized by Bloxham Zettersten this is the import point.[4]

The site-specificity he related to both place and form, requiring of the architect that he/she should relate the building to both topography and climate (place), *and* the materials and methods of the local building tradition (form). This demand should be seen in connection with Frampton's understanding of the creation of architecture as an artefact being informed by artistic self-consciousness. This brings the critical sense and self-consciousness of the architect forward as a key parameter in *critical regionalism*.[5]

In regard to the architectural object to be discussed – in this case a project to build a mosque – the analysis will consist in, first of all, pointing out concrete elements of the architectural solution where characteristics may or may not be seen as in accordance with a *critical regionalist* approach. Secondly, my intention is to present arguments for the consequences of, or the potentials in using such elements while suggesting alternatives. Finally, and not least, to consider the architects' ability to meet the challenge contained in a *critical regionalist* approach.

Copenhagen as architectural and cultural setting

In 1991 the presentation by a local community of Muslims of a sketch for the construction of a mosque in Copenhagen created an evident occasion to discuss cultural integration in connection with architecture.[6] In a country hitherto considered as being fairly culturally homogenous in comparison with multi-cultural societies such as the French and the English, a passionate public debate was generated by the

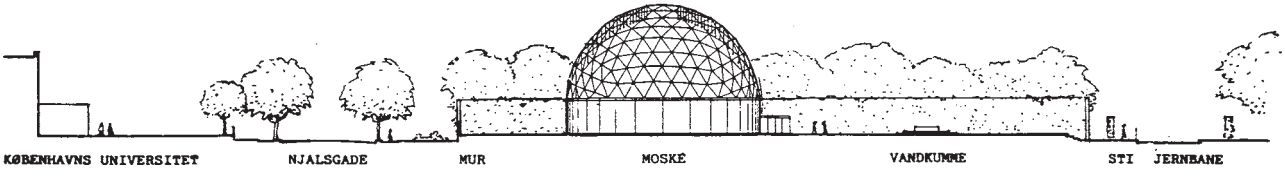

Fig. 1: Cross section of mosque by Buhuc & Heger (from: PLANORIENTERING 1991)

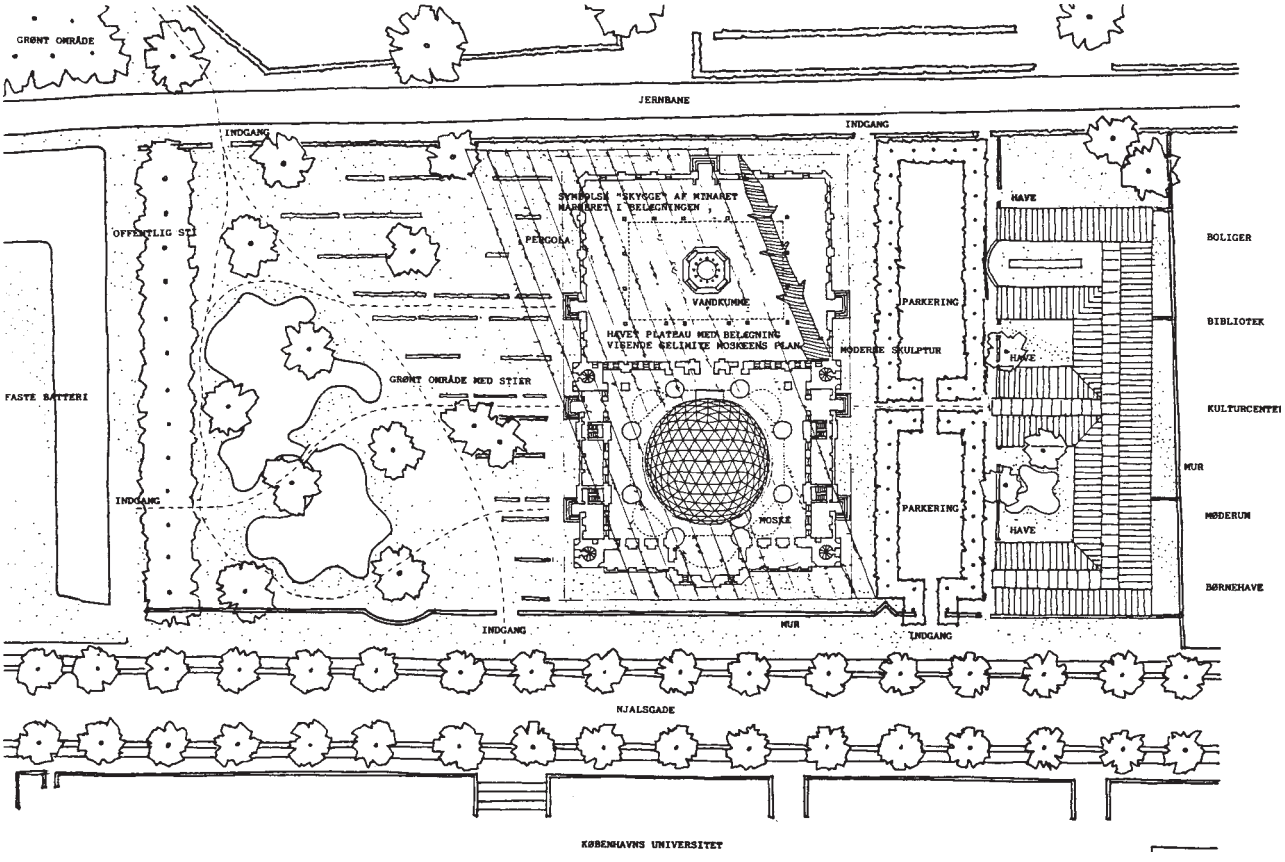

Fig. 2: Plan of mosque by Buhuc & Heger (from: PLANORIENTERING 1991)

controversial character of the initiative. For the following eight years the debate created enough conflict and controversy for the plan to rest at the stage of an idea.[7]

It was then, in 1999, that I began my study of this set of problems. Inspired by the research of Bloxham Zettersten in the field of *critical regionalism* with consequent analyses of the building process, I set out to explore the potential of integrating a mosque in Copenhagen. So far the project has still not been carried out. However, the idea of a mosque in Copenhagen is still of current interest as it concerns a fundamental demand of a community of increasing size in the Danish society.

So far the sketch of 1991 for a mosque in Copenhagen drawn by the Turkish architect Ragib Buhuc and the Danish architect Jarl Heger for Foreningen for Islamisk Kulturcenter (the Association for an Islamic Cultural Centre) is the most concrete attempt to respond to the demand of the city's Muslim community for a house of cult and therefore it is a natural point of departure for an enquiry into how to adjust a foreign building type into a Danish cultural and architectural context.

The plan from 1991 for a mosque in Copenhagen is concerned with a building site surrounded on its four sides by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Copenhagen University at Amager (a big complex of concrete buildings, meant to be a temporary solution but still in use and much criticized for its uninspiring aesthetics), the Serum Institute (a white painted classical brick house with tile roof), the police academy (a hutment, now demolished in favour of the city metro and a green area), and finally a parking area which at the time was used by Post Danmark (the national postal service) and today is only partly in use. A bit further away the skyline is dominated by blocks of flats and a SAS Radisson hotel in the form of a high-rise.

Fig. 3: University of Copenhagen, Amager

Fig. 4: SAS Radisson Hotel, Amager

The social and architectural character of the area is marked by a delayed urban development in comparison with the city centre. The housing surrounding the building site dates back to the 1930's and 1940's. Marked by the social differentiation of the 1960's and 1970's, the area surrounding the building site is predominantly a working-class and middle-class community. This socio-economic characteristic can be observed in the architectural character of the buildings with classical red and yellow brick walls of a rather simplistic design with tile roofing dating to the 1940's and 1950's. A period where the architectural principles were light, air and utility, later to become the incarnation of Danish architectural expression, along with simplicity and a sense of texture and detail. The institutional buildings of the University and the SAS Radisson hotel represent modernism's introduction of reinforced concrete as a mainstream building material.[8]

Fig. 5: Housing near the building site

Fig. 6: Parking area next to the building site

The mosque as a universal structure

The perspective chosen for this analysis, *critical regionalism* as a critical strategy, implies relating the concrete proposal to the challenge of creating a dynamic synthesis. This means relating it to the mosque as a universal structure on one hand and the constraints emerging from the Western architectural and cultural context in which it is to be placed. In order to do so the task is first of all to identify the characteristics of such a universal structure. Secondly, to relate it to the constraints defined by the regional context. Finally, to examine whether, and to what extent, the architects show the ability to stand up to the challenge of creating a building that reflects *regional inflection*.

In order to identify a universal structure within the tradition of mosque architecture it is necessary to understand the essence and formal idiom of the mosque as a building type. This implies acknowledging the universal structure as a set of basic elements that have attained a status of universality by repeated use over a long period of time. The mosque structure originates from the first form of the mosque, its archetype, which derives from the origin of Islam with the prophet Mohammed.

To rethink the architecture of the mosque it is important to realize that the religious practice of Islam is associated with the body's motion and orientation, independent of the specific physical surroundings. This is to say that in principle the content is independent of the surroundings. Thus, Mohammed says 'where ever you pray, this is a mosque'[9]. This independence of religious practice in relation to the architectural form has given Islam a remarkable ability to adapt in the meeting with other cultures, an important feature in the spreading, worldwide, of Islam. In spite of this flexibility and independence Islam is associated with an architectural tradition, in which special building characteristics have assumed universal status in the basic form of the mosque by repeated use.

In the absence of specific requirements it was natural that the architecture of the mosque drew upon the practice of the prophet himself. Thus, the earliest form of the mosque corresponded to the prophet's own house, and the basic form thereby became related to the secular building tradition of the Middle East at that time. Typically a mosque consists of a rectangular area enclosed by walls and partly roofed, due to the local climate. The hall for praying is often covered by a cupola and has the end wall, the *quibla*, oriented towards Mecca. The size of the mosque depends on its practical and symbolic function as well as on regional traditions and climatic conditions.[10]

The architecture of the mosque is characterized by being introvert with rather sparse exterior ornamentation. This derives partially from the ascetic tradition of the prophet and partially from the secular building tradition of the Middle East, where climate, military concerns and cultural tradition dictated narrow streets and buildings facing inwards, with low priority on external ornamentation. The entrance portal therefore stands as a paradox with its often rich ornamentation. The opulence of the entrance portal is justified by being a symbol of the reign of God as represented by Islam. The entrance has a transcendental meaning for the believer, also justifying its ornamental form. Another contributing factor may have been that traditionally the mosques were financed by local dignitaries, who in this way could exhibit their wealth and influence.[11]

The minaret is an element, which many consider a fundamental part of a mosque, and to many non-Muslims it stands as the incarnation of the exterior form of a mosque. It may therefore be surprising that it was not until the 14th and 15th centuries that the minaret became so common that it now constitutes one of the universal elements of a mosque. Its original functions are similar to those of a church tower: a place for calling to prayer, *adhan*, serving as a religious symbol, and constituting a visible point in the local community. However, these functions have changed with the development of the surrounding society. Today the imam's *adhan* from the top of the minaret is replaced by loudspeakers in many places in the Muslim world, and has been abandoned in several places in the West. Remaining is the symbol and the aesthetic effect.[12]

Finally, the fountain is an element that is interesting to touch upon here, as it contains potential for further development of the form of the mosque via its symbolic role and practical function. In most mosques the original function of ritual cleansing has been moved to other parts of the building for practical reasons, and the fountain therefore mainly serves as a symbol and aesthetic ornament.

Regional modifications

It is important to remember that the building elements mentioned here as universal in the mosque are not compulsory,

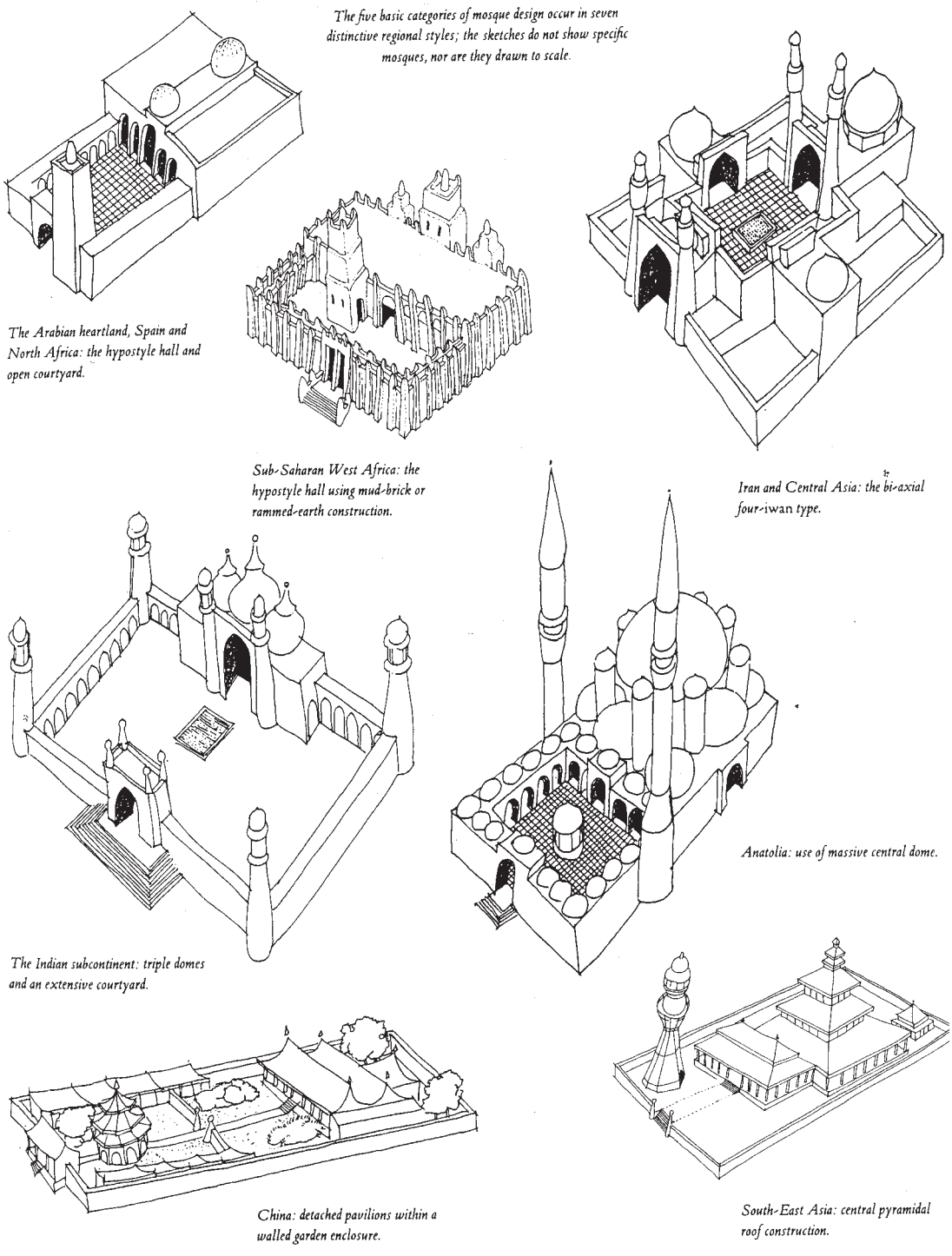

Fig. 7: The seven main regional mosque types (from: Frishman 1994: 13)

nor is their form unchangeable. They have attained their universality by repeated use that in turn has evolved as a tradition. The basic form and the associated universal elements are in reality modified through continuous exchange with regional tendencies and interpretations, as illustrated by the special features introduced via local building traditions. Today a consensus reigns among historians to classify the mosque architecture in seven principal regional types of which three in particular are considered of prime importance: the Iranian, the Arabic, and the Ottoman.[13]

When considering the building of a mosque in a western context within a distinctly different architectural framework it is crucial to remember that basically all mosque constructions represent an expression of a regional interpretation of the universal form related to a local building tradition and a specific cultural framework. Thus, in the case of the mosque, the universal form is fundamentally a dynamic concept. This characteristic is of absolute importance to keep in mind when considering how to meet the needs and demands of the Muslim community since every member of the community may have an individual understanding of the universal form of a mosque and its expression as a result of divergent regional backgrounds.

The universal structure adapted to a Danish context

So having identified some of the prime features of what can be considered the universal structure of a mosque, the next step is to see how the architects Jarl Heger and Ragib Buhuc have approached the challenge of adapting it into the regional setting in question?

At first glance the plan and cross section of the proposal may appear traditional choices in accordance with the universal structure sketched out above. Along with the project description the plan shows that Heger and Buhuc have chosen the monumental classic Sulimei Mosque in Edirne in Turkey as a model for the size of the cupola and the outline of the plan (shown in the floor decoration of the court yard).[14] This choice, which at first glance appears to be a sign of respect for tradition, turns out to be problematic from the perspective of *critical regionalism*. The problem is that although the architects' reference can be considered an interpretation, they do not seem to deal with the problematic aspects contained in a direct reference to a very specific regional (Ottoman) interpretation that originates from a completely different cultural and temporal context.

A cupola of a simplistic modernist design modelled as a shell structure dominates the building. This refined reference to Danish building tradition, together with the surrounding outer wall and the discrete placement of the building in the surrounding area, create an expression of introversion and asceticism, well in keeping with the universal characteristics. However, taking the analysis of the proposed solution further and relating it to cultural integration, one asks what the possible consequences are of such a discrete appearance? Is it likely to make the introduction of this new building type, and the activity it generates, in a Danish context smoother? Or will it rather add to the creation of myths and prejudice towards Islam? Although such questions have no certain answers, there should be no doubt that they represent an important part of the preliminary studies for creating a mosque.

The minaret

The most radical choice of Heger and Buhuc is the introduction of a modern sculpture in place of a minaret. Hereby they take a critical stand in relation to the minaret as a universal element. The sculpture can be considered an attempt of appeasement of prejudiced criticism, reducing the sculpture to a mere tool in order to accomplish this. Such criticism might be too rash, depriving modern sculpture of its value as a reinterpretation of the universal structure. Leaving out a minaret does not in itself lead to integration of the building into a Danish context, even when such an intention is lacking.

As an alternative a minaret, a highly characteristic building element, could be used to create a reference to the spires and towers that contribute so significantly to mark the unique, low, Copenhagen skyline. By careful non-traditional design a minaret could create a dialogue with the buildings of the historic city and create a new landmark for a part of the city that often takes second place to the historic city centre. Besides, emphasizing height by this characteristic vertical element complies with man's desire to reach the sky, which can be traced back to the beginning of architectural history.

To retain the minaret as an element of reforming the mosque may appear provocative in a country where the position of religion in the national culture and in society is

declining. However, this can hardly be a sufficient argument against a symbolic religious landmark. One may even speculate, whether a religious landmark such as the minaret can contribute to creating awareness among Christians as well as non-Christians of our own identity and the historical role of Protestantism in our culture.

In an architecture oriented towards dialogue it will therefore be interesting to seek relations to the protestant churches of Copenhagen that in addition to their symbolic value also represent Danish architectural history and cultural heritage. Laurids de Thurah's Our Saviour's church with its spiral spire can serve as an example of how a religious tower can be extremely controversial when built, only later to become one of the most beloved landmarks of the city.

There are, however, among the spires of Copenhagen other more important landmarks than the religious symbols, namely those that symbolize our democratic and financial institutions. The spire of Christiansborg, Martin Nyrop's city hall tower and the intertwined dragon tails of the stock exchange are symbols of some of the most important institutions in Danish society. An architectural reference to these institutions may therefore be interpreted, if not as a recognition and approval of our society and its values, at any rate as a reference to be viewed as an opening towards the surroundings and an acceptance of the conditions given.

Materials

Another area where a relation to a Danish building tradition can be established is through the materials. The awareness of the aesthetic effect of the materials, their texture, and the sense of detail are characteristic of Danish architecture. Traditional mosque architecture demonstrates the emphasis put on materials and aesthetics, and it is therefore natural to work with these elements in the meeting with the Danish building tradition that a Danish mosque will represent.

Copper can serve as an example of a material, which can inspire creative use. This favoured material of the Danish building tradition, well suited to the Danish climate, adorns the old city's towers and roofs with its characteristic verdigris colour. In a country with many grey days copper gives form to the light and gives the buildings character. This may have contributed to its recent renaissance in prestigious buildings, such as Henning Larsen's Nordea headquarters and NCC's use of copper cladding on the new headquarters of the law firm Plesner in the northern harbour. Bricks and tiles are other traditional Danish building materials suitable as reference, but there are of course many other possibilities.

Water

As already mentioned, the fountain holds potential as an element of renewal of the mosque building, beyond what is contained in the project by Heger and Buhuc. Water has great symbolic and ritual meaning in Islam, and when a mosque is to be integrated in a city like Copenhagen, whose existence and identity is based on the relation to water, it seems natural to use water actively in the expression of the building. As a major port and capital Copenhagen is connected with water in every respect, and this fact has formed the society, its culture and mentality to an extent where it emerges as a basic element.

To create a visible dialogue with water one can imagine the traditional fountain placed in the centre of the courtyard that has been elaborated into a more creative structure. As an example of an alternative structure water can be used in association with the exterior of the building. Architectural history contains numerous examples of how this may be achieved, one of these being the pool – a shallow water basin close to the exterior wall. An element favoured by many of the great modernists, such as Mies van der Rohe in his Barcelona Pavilion, where the pool reflects the sky and the characteristic marble texture of the building in a refined and aesthetically stimulating way. In Denmark the combination of wind-generated ripples and the changing cloud formations can further add to the mirror effect.

Through history the mosque has been a focal point of the local community, an institution housing a range of social functions in addition to the religious ones. Schools, libraries, local trade and *hammam*s (public baths typical of the cultural traditions of the Middle East) have traditionally been located in the mosque proper or in an adjoining building. It is therefore only natural that the plan from 1991 included a cultural centre. However, more could be done in the attempt to adapt a mosque to the local Danish context by the functional program of the building.

The ritual role of water lends itself to non-religious understanding. The bath as an everyday ritual that may be secular or religious in character, is a common element in many cultures. Copenhagen has a long tradition for public baths

though in a different form from that of the *hammam*. This tradition can be seen revived with new facilities along the quays of the harbour. The local community has long wished for a swimming bath. To include such a facility as part of the new cultural centre in Njalsgade could therefore be an evident way to create a point of contact between the Islamic and non-Islamic community, attracting the local Danish community by complying with their needs.

Challenging tradition

The way I have pointed to several elements related to the form and function of the mosque as a building type has hopefully revealed possibilities of how to seize hold of the potential that lies in creating a new architectural form, a modern mosque set in a Danish context.

In accordance with *critical regionalism* seen and used as a critical strategy, the architects are assigned the responsibility of developing this potential through a critical and self-conscious approach. In this perspective the cooperation of two architects with seemingly different backgrounds as is the case here, one being Danish and the other one Turkish, might hold a potential. Difference in cultural roots might multiply the perspectives on architecture, religion, and culture in general. These reflections being based on speculations alone cannot lead to conclusions. However, the cultural origins of the creators is an interesting and important point to consider in regard to a post-colonial perspective involving the interpretation of a traditional, non-Western building type and placing it in a Western context.

It should be underlined that though the suggestions put forward in this article imply a criticism of the original project proposal by Ragib Buhuc and Jarl Heger, this has not been the intention. Rather, the sketch has served as a tool in the process of developing ideas on how to adapt a universal building type to a regional situation with the object of housing a Danish Islamic congregation. I thereby recognize my privileged position not having to work on a practical level and knowing that conclusions have not yet been made in regard to the construction of a mosque in Copenhagen.

However, though no realization of a construction of a mosque in Copenhagen is currently within sight, there can be no question of the importance of such a construction let alone the need of a house of cult for a community of increasing size. Furthermore, the demand for cultural integration in all parts, and on all levels, of our society increases as the consequences of globalisation become ever more visible. The increasing mobility of people and faster and more efficient ways of communication connect people in new ways on a global scale. This has modified our sensibility as individuals and resulted in a more diverse understanding of frontiers. Thus, as mentioned at the outset, although global networks contest the importance of geographical location in some respects, geography continues to be an important factor for the development of our cultural identity.

The building of a mosque in Copenhagen is a process with important cultural as well as architectural ingredients. As exemplified in this article, the construction of a mosque in Copenhagen is an integration process where a universal building structure is to be adapted to a culturally and architecturally, new, setting. At the same time the construction of a mosque concerns cultural patterns and characteristics of society as a whole. Thus, the creation of this new building type has to comply both with the local conditions as well as with the conditions of society. In this working process the analytical view of *critical regionalism* can be an inspiration to how to create architecture, which can contain the meeting of cultures and be a basis for cultural integration. Or put in other words, how to create new vital forms that challenge tradition.

The historian Martin Fisher raises two questions in his book *The Mosque – History, Architectural Development & Regional Diversity* (Thames & Hudson 1994), which has to do with this need to challenge tradition. The first question concerns the necessity of considering the theological traditionalism within Islam that opposes innovation and the introduction of new elements because this is interpreted as *bid'a* (a deviation from orthodox tradition, and therefore undesirable). In architecture a consequence of this can be that the architect is forced into historic 'revivalism' leading to stagnation in the development of new building forms. The second question concerns the need of finding a balance between the tendency of increasing uniformity of the architectural styles as a consequence of internationalism and the need for a regional expression of identity.[15] Does such a balance require a conscious effort to incorporate regional characteristics in an otherwise neutral and technologically standardized international building style?

It should be noted that the idea here is not to deprive the mosque of its characteristics and thereby diminishing its value as a bearer of tradition and identity. The aim is not to suppress cultural expression, but rather the contrary. The idea is to use the Danish building tradition as a means to create a variation of a building type still very foreign in a Danish architectural and cultural context with the goal to form a wholly new architectural expression. By avoiding a direct 'import' of the traditional mosque of the Middle East in favour of a Danish variation, the Danish Muslim community as well as Muslims with a relation to Denmark are challenged to consider the position and function of their religion in the Danish society. This is a crucial task for society if we want to avoid a dogmatic and potentially hostile notion of Islam and must be seen as an important step towards developing Islamic traditions within a Danish context.

Due to the fact that fanaticism and terror are associated closely with Islam, mosques are not favoured in a Western context. This situation creates a dilemma in regard to the need of recognizing and meeting the demand for a mosque in Copenhagen. Acknowledging the complexity and delicacy of the matter, one may conclude that the timing for the realisation might not be right, however, it does not change its importance or its relevance as a subject for continuing debate.

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Notes

1. FRAMPTON, Kenneth (1992): *Modern Architecture – a critical history*. London: Thames & Hudson (orig. edition 1980, in 1985 another chapter was added which contains the quotation above), 315
2. ZETTERSTEN, Gerd Bloxham (2000) : *Nordiskt perspektiv på arkitektur – kritisk regionalisering i nordiska stadshus 1900–1955*. Stockholm : Arkitektur Förlag, 20–23
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4. FRAMPTON, op.cit., 315; ZETTERSTEN, op.cit., 23–24
5. ZETTERSTEN, op.cit., 21
6. PLANORIENTERING (1991) : *Forslag til lokalplan – Park og islamisk kulturcenter ved Njalsgade*. København : Københavns Rådhus
7. Københavns Borgerrepræsentations Forhandlinger 29.marts 1990. Copenhagen: Københavns Kommune.
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11. HILLENBRAND, op.cit., 125–127. FRISHMAN, op.cit., 41
12. FRISHMAN, op.cit., 41
13. FRISHMAN, op.cit., 12–13. HILLENBRAND, op.cit., 64–92, 100–123
14. The project description can be found in PLANORIENTERING (1991) : *Forslag til lokalplan – Park og islamisk kulturcenter ved Njalsgade*. København : Københavns Rådhus.
    The very famous Sulimei Mosque in Edirne is considered a masterpiece of the Ottoman style, one of the three most influential regional styles within mosque architecture. Though it is not to be discussed in depth it is worth remarking that references to regional characteristics such as this can have a strong symbolic impact for the users of the mosque. One can therefore question this as appropriate for a mosque that is to function as gathering institution for Muslims with different national and regional backgrounds. One can also add that the attempt to fit a mosque into a foreign cultural context loses its impact when using elements connected with a specific regional style from a Middle Eastern country.
15. FRISHMAN, op.cit., 41

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ABSTRACT

…we have to regard regional culture not as something given and relatively immutable but rather as something which has, at least today, to be self-consciously cultivated. Ricœur suggests that sustaining any kind of authentic culture in the future will depend ultimately on our capacity to generate vital forms of regional culture while appropriating alien influences at the level of both culture and civilization.

Kenneth Frampton 1992: 315

Working consciously on the basis of the conditions set by the increasing mobility of people, a more diverse understanding of frontiers, and the possibilities of communication, is it possible to influence the meeting of cultures by the means of architecture?

Issues related to ghetto settlements and questions concer-

ning cultural (and national) identity continue to be main themes in the on-going discussion of cultural integration in the public debate in Denmark. Many aspects of both ghetto settlements and cultural identity have been studied in relation to the process of cultural integration. Thus, the lack of investigation and discussion of the actual physical surroundings in relation to cultural integration strikes one as peculiar when related to the long known fact that the individual depends on her/his surroundings in order to prosper. Might it be that this well-known connection between man and architecture seems too banal or too obvious to bring forward in discussions on the complex matter that is cultural integration? Whatever the reason for this, hopefully this article can be an argument for bringing architecture into the discussions of cultural integration. This should be done in order to benefit from the potential, which I find offered by architecture in relation to attempts to come up with solutions for the problems involved with cultural integration.

The fact that in Denmark, along with many other countries, we have had the public and political debate dominated by the issues of national identity for several years, clearly shows that the claim that the importance of geography is diminishing along with the increasing globalisation and technological development is but a popular simplification. In fact, we still regard the individual's attachment to her/his surroundings in the form of cultural and physical environment, as a crucial factor for the individual's ability to get on in the culture concerned, to understand it, and especially to become a part of it.

Though no realization of a construction of a mosque in Copenhagen is currently within sight, there can be no question of the importance of such a construction. The demand for cultural integration in all parts of, and on all levels of, our society increases as the consequences of globalisation become ever more visible. The creation of this new building type has to comply both with the local conditions as well as with the conditions of society. In this working process the analytical view of critical regionalism can be an inspiration to how to create architecture, which can contain the meeting of cultures and be a basis for cultural integration through new vital forms that challenge tradition.