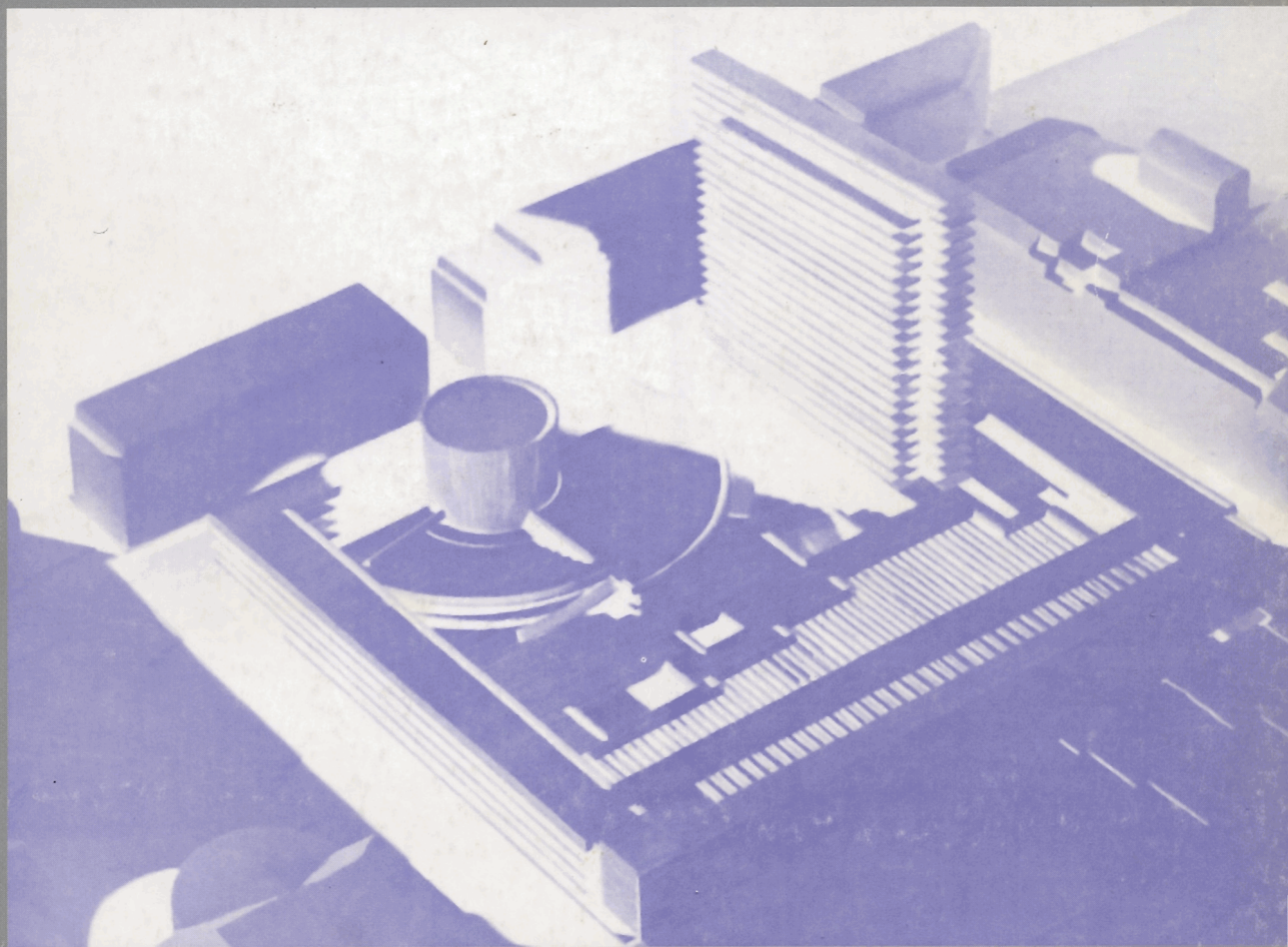


Elisabeth Tostrup

Architecture and Rhetoric



Text and Design in Architectural Competitions, Oslo 1939-90



Oslo School of Architecture

Cover: Motto '13831' Karl
Johan *kvartalet*, and *Far, far
away he saw something bright
and sparkling*, and *The Big
Troll in Karl Johan*, drawings
by Theodor Kittelsen.

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AND
RHETORIC**

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PREFACE

The idea for this study matured during my few years of teaching architectural design at the Oslo School of Architecture after a long period of professional and practical experience. On the one hand I was astonished at how rapidly the trends seemed to change, and how exclusive their conceptual horizon appeared, both as regards the visual models and the ways of talking about them. On the other hand the general pattern of relating to problems, whether architectural objectives or simply communicating, seemed very much the same. My curiosity about (inquiring into) this problem was aroused, and has persisted ever since. It was against this background that I started formulating my ideas for this project, and in 1992 I participated in the first course in theory of science that was initiated as part of the new doctorate programme at the Oslo School of Architecture.

My personal thanks are first of all due to professor Dag Østerberg, sociologist-philosopher, Oslo, for supervising my work through all its stages in a highly inspiring and challenging way. Architect and researcher Lars Jadelius in Gothenburg has made significant contributions as a co-supervisor at important stages of the work. Several other architects have also given me valuable incentives, for which I am very grateful. Among these Giancarlo De Carlo, Milan, has from the very beginning given me intellectual and moral support, and inspiring comments. Talks with Peter Smithson, London, were thought-provoking and fruitful, as were also conversations with Nils-Ole Lund, Aarhus, Thomas A. Markus, Glasgow and Henning Larsen, Copenhagen. I would also like to thank Christian Norberg-Schulz for all his good advice in the early days, and for always being willing to answer even the most simple question.

Many other colleagues in Norway have given me the benefit of their experience, Birgit Cold and Staale Sinding-Larsen in Trondheim; in Oslo, Kirsten Arge, and with particular relevance to architectural competitions, Erik Hultberg, Kjell Lund, Kristin Jarmund, Ola Mowé, and the Association competition secretary Gaute Baalsrud, who has been most helpful. I would not have thought of starting a doctoral study if it had not been for Halina Dunin-Woyseth, head of the school doctorate programme, who suggested the idea. Finally, I am most grateful to the Oslo School of Architecture and my colleagues there, for their interest and moral support, and for making it possible for me to concentrate on my project.

Several institutions have granted financial support which has been decisive for the realization of the project. I wish to thank the Research Council of Norway who granted me one year's leave of absence and travel support which enabled me to stay at the Norwegian Institute of Art History and Archeology in Rome in 1993-94. My gratitude is also due to the institute in Rome itself, not only for providing me with an invaluable study situation, but also the chance to meet visiting fellow researchers from the Faculty of Arts, University of Oslo. The County Employment Office of Oslo and Akershus financed a substitute teacher for one semester while I was on leave, and Inger R. Haldorsen's Scholarship enabled me to take a study and interview tour at an early stage. Furthermore, the Nansen Foundation provided a generous grant which covered relief of teaching duties during the last semester as well as technical assistance. All translations of the original Norwegian quotations are my own unless otherwise indicated. I wish to thank Jenny Gillott for proofreading my manuscript, and Brantenberg & Flakstad Design for the final layout.

Oslo, 1996
Elisabeth Tostrup

INTRODUCTION

This study of architectural competitions in Oslo fuses three of my professional interests and fields of experience: the interrelation of design and language in teaching architecture, architectural competitions as a professional procedure, and architecture from the point of view of public use. The interrelated fields of architectural projects and the language used to advocate them represent a challenge: below the superficial level of verbal slogans, the correspondence between the architecture itself and the words that are said about it frequently appears amazingly vague. Yet, this very language which accompanies the projects, constitutes a particularly interesting clue to the reasoning behind as well as to factors which are unuttered and implicit in the designs.¹ My objective here is to explore this dual field of architectural design and language, in an attempt to shed some light on the values or value orientations that are embodied in the designs.

Architectural competitions offer a unique opportunity to investigate the relationship between an architectural design² and a text. Two major factors account for this: firstly the significance that architectural competitions have as an institution both within the profession and in society in general, and secondly, the fact that the competition material includes descriptive and evaluative texts which are directly related to the project material i.e. drawings, models and photographs. Material from competitions expresses the hegemonic³ architectural values for that particular period of time. I have chosen architectural competitions for public building projects held in Oslo in the period 1939-90 as the subject of this study; 36 competitions altogether.

Rhetoric, or the art of oratory, is essential in architectural competitions, as all levels involve

purposive and persuasive moves in an argumentative discourse, in which the speaker (rhetor), here the author or designer, deliberately attempts to bring the others round to his way of thinking.⁴ This goes for the verbal as well as the visual competition material. 'Whenever we address other people with a view to arousing their interest in a matter which is of concern to us', says Fafner, 'we are facing an intentional or purposive situation, whether or not our listeners are initially receptive of our views.'⁵ Thus, in a wide sense, the concept of *persuasio*, which has played a central role in all rhetorical activity through the ages, covers the activity and publication of architectural competitions. The success of the project depends on the power of its appeal to the receptivity and the curiosity of the people who are to be convinced.

Rhetoric, which was developed 2,500 years ago in Greece, has suffered a stormy fate in Western culture. It has been both admired and despised. But, as Fafner says, 'it can be repressed, ignored or reprimanded but it cannot be eliminated, because it is an integral part of what it is to be human'.⁶ Rhetoric was highly estimated in the Roman Antiquity, as well as during the Renaissance. By contrast, rhetoric was disregarded in the 19th century, and the period was intellectually barren until a renewed interest in rhetorical problems emerged in the 20th century. The rediscovery of rhetoric appeared within a range of fields, such as philosophy, linguistics and communication media. Moreover, it has played a highly significant part in the direction taken by drama and music, according to Fafner. The new rhetoric centred around Perelman's work has made major contributions to the basic problems of the discipline.⁷ For the purpose of

- 1 See also Bjørn Linn, 'Arkitekturens referenser', *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, no. 3, (1992), p. 45, in which he points especially to the texts which accompany the designs, as he regards theoretical works from a particular time as insufficient in order to understand the way in which architects work, maintaining that much has been taken for granted.
- 2 'Design' (from L. *designare*, to mark out) is here understood as both the piece of architecture as it is prefigured in the design material as well as the graphic representation (drawings, photographs or models) itself. Further distinctions will be made.
- 3 A weak form of domination which consists of a group forming an alliance with others in order to exercise power in such a way that they, in Antonio Gramsci's terms, form a hegemonic block.
- 4 Rhetor from Gr. *erein*, to say, speak; rhetoric from Gr. *rhetorike*, the rhetorical art: the art and science of using words [and in visual arts, images] effectively in speaking or writing, so as to influence or persuade, *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, unabridged, second edition, (New York, 1983). p. 1555. In architectural competitions, the architect of the design proposal is usually referred to as 'the author' (*forfatteren*).
- 5 Jørgen Fafner, *Retorik: Klassisk og moderne*, (Copenhagen, 1982), p. 45.
- 6 Fafner, p. 13.

this study, however, I do not find it necessary to distinguish between the new rhetoric and rhetoric in general.

The rhetorical aspect of competition material becomes particularly interesting in relation to the *audience*, which is wide and differentiated. Subjected as they are to assessment by specially appointed juries, architectural competitions not only act in persuasive advocacy of the goals and skills of the profession in relation to society, but likewise these goals and achievements are given authority in the inter-professional community of architects. This dual advocacy can be further differentiated as rhetorical argument assumes several roles of communication. The written assessment of the competition which gives the grounds for the jury's decisions aims not only at convincing the promoter of the rectitude of the result, but also to persuade an often sceptical public of the necessity and importance of the project. Moreover, in the inter-professional sphere, the participants aim at convincing the jury, and the jury seeks to convince all the participants as well as the community of architects. Finally, the rhetorical aspect is intrinsic in the design process as it is exercised in the individual architect's studio; important decisions in the process are confirmed by, and identified with, convincing arguments. As the architect does not meet the client in a competition, he is 'both the protagonist of the scheme and its main critic', as Judith Strong says.⁸

The concept of 'the audience' lies at the heart of rhetoric. Regarded as 'the ensemble of those whom the speaker wishes to influence by his argumentation',⁹ the notion includes audiences of all kinds from the more or less incompetent to the most specialized. Hence rhetorical argumentation must continually adapt to the changing circumstances, contexts and audiences. Aiming at action, the new rhetoric is a theory of argumentation for practical purposes in the continuous process of making the most reasonable decisions which might gain the maximum adherence.¹⁰

The competitive nature of architectural competitions and the particular audience involved may explain the special character of the rhetorical arguments involved; they may be different from those which are typical of architectural

publications, schools or in communicating with clients and contractors. Whilst new artistic achievements in particular stimulate the architects, the client is primarily concerned with obtaining a well-functioning solution to his need for space which moreover is not offensive to his aesthetic taste. However, these different arenas for persuasive communication all spring from a common source, the act of creating architecture, which is reflected in the competition argumentation.

The *dialectical condition* of the competitions needs a preliminary comment: the published competition material does not constitute an on-going back-and-forth process of argumentation as in a lawsuit or a continuous debate. The competition projects and the jury's statements both represent well-defined dialectical *moves*; moves which are addressed to the other competitors as well as to the jury members and an anticipated audience of architects and the general public. The moves of each competition consist of 'the question', the competing 'proposals for the answer' and 'the assessment'. Moreover, unlike contests in other arts, such as music or painting, the sum of rhetorical moves in an architectural competition is but a preliminary move in the total process of realizing a work of architecture.

A threefold rhetorical set

The specific rhetorical material in architectural competitions consists of two forms of argument, the *visual* and the *verbal*. As already mentioned, the rhetorical argumentation enters into the design process at the basic level, as the creation of architecture involves a *reflective interaction*, an inner dialogue, between images and language.¹¹ The architect begins with an idea of a form, which he continues exploring through a series of moves (drawings, models etc.), considering its consequences and implications, while attempting new moves in a constant dialogue between visual perception and verbal, conceptual affirmation.¹² It is not sufficient to say that one wants 'a big window', and expect the solution to emerge unambiguously. It is necessary to try it out in design, to 'measure' it in relation to the multifarious context of realization: its width, height and depth in the wall,

7 Fafner, pp. 5-13.

8 Judith Strong, *Participating in architectural competitions*, (London, 1976), p. 14.

9 Chaim Perelman, 'The New Rhetoric', quoted in Mieczyslaw Maneli, *Perelman's New Rhetoric as Philosophy and Methodology for the Next Century*, (Dordrecht, Boston, London, 1993), p. 22.

10 Maneli, p. 22.

11 Further pursued in Thomas A. Markus, 'Language Structure and Building Types', *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, Vol. 5, No. 4, (1992), pp. 35-36.

12 See also Lennart G. Svensson, 'Teori och praktik i professionellas vardagsarbete', in *Kampen om yrkesutövning, status och kunskap*, edited by Staffan Selander, (Lund, 1989), pp. 202-203. Moreover, Elisabeth Tostrup, 'Between Experience and Image Consumption', in *The EAAE prize: Writings in architectural education*, (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1995), pp. 35-49.

the types of detail and its fitting. The perceptual reality of the work of architecture, comprehended through its visual form or intellectually conceived through linguistics, depends on a common background of experiences and concepts, which acts as a foundation for *inter-subjective* communication. In the constant interaction between architecture, as an art and a profession, and society, this inner world functions differently according to whether it is being expressed in visual forms or in verbal language.

Verbal language possesses an immense freedom with respect to the concrete conditions of architecture, such as materials and constructions. Owing to this freedom the verbal language may on the one hand be an active force in the process of generating new ideas and formal possibilities, it may act as a link in the constant efforts of man to raise his immediate experience of the world to a level with his intellectual reflections. On the other hand, this very linguistic freedom may create an incomplete, and possibly misleading, impression of agreement due to the implicit understanding that the *visual* references are not perceived with a similar degree of inter-subjectivity.¹³ In this respect, architects have an advantage over the general public, as their occupation in essence consists of visually exploring the outer as well as the inner spatial world. This architectural exploration vibrates in the field of tension between two poles of visualization: namely the artistic vision of the abstract architectural idea, and the realisation in material terms respectively. The mutual compromise of the two poles of visualization occurs in the *graphic* or *visual representation* of the architectural structure.¹⁴ The visual representation of proposed buildings is exactly the type of *visual argument* that this study is going to explore.

Not only may the world of abstract architectural visualization contain different implications for people with different backgrounds, but consequently the common terms of verbal language, may be loaded with different architectural references. It is in this wide and ambiguous sphere of communication that architectural competitions aim at manifesting their results with persuasive conviction, in order thereby to gain maximum support from a public divided

by various controversies and expectations. An objective of this study is to uncover the extent to which the rhetorical rendering of prize-winning, or premiated, architecture represents a plausible unification of contradictions or irreconcilable divergences.

A further distinction is needed with regard to the *visual rhetoric* of competition material. Firstly, the design material of drawings and models, supplemented by verbal information, yields a prefiguration of a *concrete* architectural design. This project, or this work of architecture, is rhetorical as it emphasizes certain qualities more than others. Secondly, the design representation, that is the graphic or *visual* (since it includes models and photographs) *rendering*, is rhetorical in the sense that it implies a further selection of values, which are amplified or subdued in the presentation.

Finally, as mentioned above, the texts constitute a third rhetorical field as they mediate *verbally* a selection and articulation of the values involved.

In architectural competitions, then, the core values of the hegemonic competition architecture are expressed by a threefold *rhetorical set*; a trinity which consists of (1) the prize-winning architectural *designs*, (2) the graphic or *visual representation*, and (3) the *texts*. My aim is to study these different fields of expression and their influence on the perception of the value orientations which are prevalent in a specific period.

The approach

Not only are architectural proposals presented by three different types of rhetorical argument, but the premiated architecture covers *different aspects*, which may be stressed to a greater or lesser degree in the material according to the value preferences which are involved. Since both language and visual communication represent the taking of a position, there is always the risk of a certain blindness to implicit side effects. It has therefore been essential to find a way of using the rhetorical nature of the material to disclose not only the more explicit patterns of value orientation, but also the less obvious ones.

An attempt to discuss the designs and the

¹³ See also Donald A. Schön, 'Learning to Design and Designing to Learn', *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, 6, no. 1, (1993), pp. 55-70. Here he points to the ambiguity and multiple interpretations inherent in the design process. Referring to the so-called Silent Game, he advocates the importance of the 'reflective conversation' in the design process.

¹⁴ See also Lise Bek, *Towards Paradise on Earth*, (Odense, 1980), pp. 15-17, which treats the modern conception of space in architecture based particularly on studies of the Roman Antiquity and the Italian Renaissance.

texts separately proved in my first draft of this study to be difficult and insubstantial. The texts without the drawings can make you believe anything: they are vague, you can imagine a multitude of different architectural responses. Although the designs have been investigated independently, they serve as visual references for the texts. The drawings can be read without the texts, but the texts help explain and support the perception of the architectural qualities. Hence I decided to focus on the prize-winning projects in view of their *proposed realization*, and to proceed including the different rhetorical aspects in a *reciprocal process* of interpretation and demonstration.

The competitions deal with architecture as a *whole* in accordance with the problems that are posed; they do not concern exclusively the inner spaces or the outer appearance, nor specifically artistic or practical aspects. One possible approach would be to treat the competition architecture of the material in an all-embracing manner, investigating 'the prize-winning architecture' in general, as the projects are represented. Considering the *complexity* of the problem, and the extent and diversity of the material as well, such an approach would in my opinion entail the risk of an arbitrary subjection to the changing *foci* of the different projects or periods. The common and vague impression that 'architecture' is concerned with 'appearances' in one period, and 'use' in another, is disquieting in this respect. Regardless of whether one or the other aspect is stressed, architecture is bound to have an *appearance* and to be *used* at the same time.

Thus, I do not find a general categorization into building types or 'decades' to be the best way to discover patterns of architectural change or permanence for the purpose of this study. On the contrary, I have chosen a relatively long period of time intentionally in order to pursue *various* patterns of continuity and change, which may occur simultaneously, and into which the rhetorical nature of the material may offer new insight.

The problem calls for a *structuring* of this monograph which is sufficiently differentiated and sufficiently comprehensive to ensure that

the selected competitions can be subjected to an inquiry which covers *key aspects* that are necessarily present in any architectural project. Conversely, a few different and equally important architectural aspects, which in principle can be seen as both dependent on and independent of each other, can be investigated specifically and demonstrated by references from a broad selection of competitions. My choice in defining and delimiting these key aspects, as well as determining the succession of their presentation, is the result of thorough deliberation.

One line of procedure could be to imagine the buildings from the outside, approaching them as a passer-by, a visitor or an inhabitant: the first impression of the façade as one places oneself in the street, enters the building and continues gradually to discover the inner structures, starting with a rather art-historian point of view as one views the surfaces. Such an approach could constitute an interesting corrective to the possible precedence of 'the making' before the perception of the realized product in architectural design.

But the art historian (and the social scientist too) normally deals with the full-scale reality and its representation in retrospect, whereas we are dealing with prefigurations in miniature; with simplified and abstract, visual proposals for full-scale realities which have not yet been made concrete. This is an important distinction, since any *pre-interpreted* perception of architecture relies on the rhetorical argumentation of the *idea* and not the *real* building. The nature of the representation, and the information it yields, then, are decisive for the interpretation.

The competition material illustrates the approach of the competing architects, the way they have gone about formulating and shaping a design proposal. Starting within a general ideological framework for their work, architects are concerned with the *creation* of *spatial* constructions meant to act as places for human activities. This entails that the problem of how the tectonic structure is going to be shaped, and how it can support itself, soon becomes urgent. To the architect-creator the main structure of spatial organization is as important to the three-dimensional arrangement as the skeleton

and muscles in the human body, or the supporting system of an animal. This structure, this form, he shapes in a reciprocal process between conceiving the tectonic *materiality* and the spaces or *voids* in order to make the building function as required. The material surfaces and their figurations constitute but one aspect of this architectural synthesis, an aspect which is to a greater or lesser degree identical with or independent of the main structures. Many shortcomings, aesthetic, practical and financial, may have to be tolerated, but not that the building collapses.

Theoretically it is possible to imagine a procedure similar to the one mentioned first, if it was based on a design material in which the spatial structure could be mentally pre-constructed by pursuing the proposed arrangement of surfaces. This might have been more appropriate in the 19th century when 'style' was a major issue and architectural spaces were more explicitly defined. The fact that the competitions from the previous century presented by de Haan and Haagsma¹⁵ as well as Lipstadt,¹⁶ are almost exclusively shown by exterior drawings, is interesting in this respect.

Since a chief concern of this study is the *creation* of architecture, all considerations about the use, perception and experience of the proposed architecture, should in the end be optimally applicable to the problem of designing architecture. This, in my opinion, is best achieved if this monograph can succeed in recognizing core issues in the material rather promptly, and thus mentally outlining for the reader the main tectonic principles of the buildings, onto which further interpretations can be added. The competitions here belong to a period dominated by Le Corbusier's view: 'The plan is the generator'.¹⁷ Given the chosen material and the nature of its visual and verbal documentation, I have found it most fruitful to proceed from an overall framework, through an interpretation of the three-dimensional structure in order to acquire a substantial perception of the principal architectural features and their inherent possibilities.

Thus, the prize-winning designs and their verbal and visual rhetorical argumentation are approached through the three key aspects in the following order: (1) the overall problem of the *new* versus the *old* environment, (2) the

spatial aspect including conceptions of *use*, and (3) *façades* and *interfaces*. Each chapter is followed by an *excursion* elaborating some typical features of the value orientation as it appears in the preceding competition rhetoric.

The first aspect involves the *overall* problem of the new in relation to the existing environment. Moreover, the pattern of building shapes as perceived from a bird's eye view provides introductory information about the tectonic structure, internal as well as external, of the premiated proposals.

The second aspect embraces the *spatial structure* or system of places for action and rest. Transforming the miniature designs into three-dimensional constructions in our minds, we are able to preconceive the corresponding full-scale spatial structures; it is as if we penetrate the structure like X-rays, gradually filling out our perception of the details, as we 'place' ourselves on the floors, 'move' through the voids and 'inhabit' the proposed building.

The third aspect includes the *façades* and the *interfaces* between the inner and outer spaces. We can 'step back' from the building, which we at present know from the preceding demonstrations, and study the design of the façade walls, the communication between the inside and the outside, as well as the appearance of the building to a beholder.

This structuring of three main topics means that it is hard to avoid the repetition of arguments and references. A work of architecture is a complex totality, and the distinctions between each type of aspect are not absolute and exclusive: a wall is at the same time both a wall as well as being the surfaces perceived as a spatial boundary from the two different sides of the wall. Treating the same competition architecture from three different points of view should however allow a deepening of the discussion, since the structure of the study in principle involves an argumentative dialogue between the respective aspects.

The topic of this study is wide in that it embraces the common world of value orientations with respect to architecture in the public sphere. Moreover it involves rhetorical arguments oscillating from the common verbal

15 Hilde de Haan and Ids Haagsma, editors, *Architects in Competition: International Architectural Competitions of the last 200 years*, (London, New York, 1988). The competition for Chicago Tribune Tower in 1922 seems to represent the peak of emphasis on external 'style' with references to historical periods such as Gothicism and Renaissance. The concept of 'style' is not essential in my study; the term will therefore be used in the common, conventional sense unless otherwise indicated.

16 Hélène Lipstadt, editor, *The Experimental Tradition: Essays on Competitions in Architecture*, (New York, 1989a).

17 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, translated from the 13th French edition by Frederick Etchells, (New York, 1986 (first edition 1931; first French edition 1923)), p. 2.

language to the abstract visualizations of architects. Several other professional fields provide relevant insight and techniques that can be applied, as the problem touches on linguistics, sociology and philosophy, as well as art history, history and political science. I have profited from literature as well as from discussing the problem with professionals within the different occupational fields. Representatives from these professions could all have treated important aspects of the problem departing from their respective traditions.

This dissertation however has its point of departure in architecture. Moreover, it is concerned with deepening and enlarging the perspectives of architecture from the point of view of practice and design teaching rather than architectural history and theoretical work. This particular background is the grounds for the reasoning and the choice of arguments which are presented here. Thus, drawing on techniques acquired through my training and practice, the prize-winning architecture and its argumentation are seen from the viewpoint of architecture as a profession.

Architecture belongs to the common world of objects. Ideas about architecture, as expressed in architectural competitions, belong to this same common world, too. While aiming at increasing awareness of the process of making architecture, this study also attempts to relate the implications and aspirations involved to a context that can be shared not only within the academic world, but also with the general public.

Literature on architectural competitions as an

area for post-graduate research is remarkably scarce. The research is predominantly American, British and French and, not surprisingly, gives considerable weight to the history of competitions in these countries.¹⁸ In Sweden a dissertation is being worked out which focuses on the history of Swedish architectural competitions with particular emphasis on the first two decades of this century.¹⁹ In Norway there is one single work: a final thesis from the Department of Architecture at the University of Trondheim (NTH) which treats six housing competitions from the period 1965-1981.²⁰

This study does not focus on the history of architectural competitions, nor on the specificity of the competition regulations. Instead, the competitions are regarded as a unique and well-defined arena for architectural activity and expression. This particular framework provides the topic for the study of architectural value orientations in the context of visual and verbal competition rhetoric.

The intersecting fields of the history of modern architecture, both international and domestic, architectural visualization and language, open infinite perspectives with respect to literature. Here, too, I have been selective, attempting to concentrate on clarifying and developing only that which is found in the material itself. The volumes of the Norwegian architectural review *Byggekunst* from the period have been indispensable. Among many writers, Christian Norberg-Schulz appears as a frequent contributor. In addition he was the editor during the years 1963-79. Norberg-Schulz' recent book on Nordic building has also been very valuable in this context.²¹ Moreover, *Nordisk arkitektur* by the Danish architect Nils-Ole Lund²² treats Norwegian architecture in

18 Hilde de Haan and Ids Haagsma, editors, *Architects in Competition*, an illustrated presentation by two journalists of 15 international competitions, supplemented with essays by Dennis Sharp and Kenneth Frampton, is mentioned above. According to Lipstadt, (1990), this book 'is more harmful than useful to the infant field of competition studies'. Whether this is true or not is however not important to

this study. Hélène Lipstadt, editor, *The Experimental Tradition*, (New York, 1989a), mentioned above, is of greater interest: it is a wellmade catalogue of an exhibition at The Architectural League of New York, predominantly focusing on the American situation, and includes an essay by Barry Bergdoll on European competitions 1401-1927. Hélène Lipstadt, 'Architecture and its Image: Notes

Towards the Definition of Architectural Publication', *Architectural Design*, no. 3/4, (1989b), pp. 13-24. Hélène Lipstadt, 'The treasurehouse of competitions. Review', *Progressive Architecture*, no. 1, (1990), pp.139-140. Hélène Lipstadt, 'Architects in competition. Review', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, no. 3, (1991), pp. 340-342. Constantin Spiridonidis, 'Between Words and

Forms: the design project in search for the possible', translated from French by Sten Gromark, *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, 6, no. 4, (1993), 91-99, based on a study of texts from a selection of architectural competitions during the last four decades. Paul D. Spreiregen, *Design Competitions*, (New York, 1979). A number of competitions are presented, predominantly 20th century

American. Short supplementary texts function as propaganda for competitions. Judith Strong, *Participating in Architectural Competitions*, (London, 1976), discusses the regulations of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Richard Guy Wilson, 'The Experimental Tradition. Review', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, no. 3, (1991),

relation to that of the other Nordic countries and the international influence.

Not only is this study conducted from within the architectural profession, but also from within the context of a particular place, namely Oslo. I am a native of the town, and my life runs parallel with the postwar period in which the majority of competitions played a part in forming the history of the town. *The History of Oslo*, especially the two volumes covering the period from 1900-1986 have been of great value with respect to substantiating the societal background for the competitions.²³

pp. 339-340. Architectural competitions as an institution are commented on in a few works on the history of the architectural profession: in Spiro Kostof, editor, *The Architect, Chapters in the History of the Profession*, (New York, 1977), Peter Collins, *Architectural Judgement*, (London, 1971), and Anna Östnäs, *Arkitekterna och deras yrkesutveckling i Sverige*, (Gothenburg, 1984). Moreover, the architectural

competition for Helsingborg Concert Hall is treated as part of the case study in Lars Jadelius, *Folk, Form & Funktionalism*, (Gothenburg, 1987).
19 Rasmus Wærn, *Arkitekt-tävlingar i borgerlighetens Sverige* (preliminary title), (Gothenburg, 1995-96); I received a draft in September 1995. Wærn moreover mentions a British survey, Roger Harper, *The Victorian Architectural Competitions*.

An Index to British and Irish Architectural Competitions in The Builder 1843-1900, (1983), and a French book, Werner Szambien, *Les Projets de L'An II. Concours d'architecture de la révolutionnaire*, (Paris, 1986). Frank Jenkins, *Architect and Patron*, (London, 1961), deals specifically with competitions in the Victorian England.
20 Mari Hvattum, *Eget hus og hage - idealer i norske arkitektkonkurranser 1965-*

1981, (Trondheim, 1993).
21 Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Nattlandene: om byggekunst i Norden*, (Oslo, 1993) in the process of publication by MIT press in 1995.
22 Nils-Ole Lund, *Nordisk arkitektur*, (Copenhagen, 1991).
23 Knut Kjeldstadli, *Den delte byen, fra 1900-1948, Oslo bys historie*, 4 (Oslo, 1990), and Edgeir Benum, *Byråkratenes by, fra 1948 til våre dager, Oslo bys historie*, 5 (Oslo, 1994).

PART ONE:
PRELIMINARIES

I

THE TRADITION OF ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS

History

Architectural competitions have been employed to select one architect or one design from among many for at least 2,500 years. A frequently mentioned example of an early architectural competition is that of a war memorial on Acropolis in 448 BC, in which the Boule (senate or council) prescribed the scale for the designs in order to ensure fair competition conditions. It so happens that the tradition of competitions is roughly the same age as rhetoric. This concurrence will not, however, be pursued here; I would merely like to note the coincidence of cultural circumstances at important stages in the history of the two traditions. As is also the case with rhetoric, the principle of architectural competitions that we know today is in essence still the ancient one that was revived during the early Renaissance in Florence.¹

Although the solicitation of solutions to difficult design problems by means of competitions was more frequent in the Middle Ages than is commonly recognized, according to Bergdoll,² it is the two celebrated competitions in connection with the Florence Cathedral that mark the first step in a series of historic competitions. The competition for the second set of bronze doors to the Florence Baptistery in 1401, was proclaimed by Vasari to denote the threshold of the Renaissance itself. The event not only marked the revival of antique forms, but also the antique love of the individual. The competition was the breakthrough for both the young Lorenzo Ghiberti and Filippo Brunelleschi; the same two artists who competed again in 1418 to solve the intricate problem of spanning the cathedral's crossing. The mythical status that these two competitions have acquired, originates in part in the

new claims that competitions function as a means of *discovery of youthful talent* whose proposals are destined to effect major influence.

Architectural competitions developed in the Italian and French academies throughout the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Often organized in two stages from the sketch, *l'esquisse*, to the fully developed *rendu*, they were a fundamental part in the education of architects. As one of the chief means to guarantee competence in the liberal art of architecture, competitions perpetuated an ideal of the 'artist-architect' and 'idealized the very act of design, codifying and teaching the intellectual conception of architectural composition as an artistic act of reason.'³

In the wake of the French Revolution and in response to the vast economic changes during the Industrial Revolution, the competition procedure was adapted to meet the requirements for the competition as a *democratic* institution and a natural extension of market economy. A new attention to utilitarian programmes as legitimate concerns for architecture became important when competitions could be celebrated as a procedure that for the first time addressed the needs of a broader public. As architects felt their power to exercise a specific competence contested by sponsors and other actors on the *open market*, the inherent contradictions of competitions as a regular public procedure became increasingly vexing during the 19th century.

In England, where no centralizing bureaucracy or academy had succeeded in institutionalizing an architectural elite, competitions emerged as a widespread practice for projects on every scale in the 19th century. A whole new class of middle-class clients adhered to the competitive system as 'sound business', and competitions were legitimated by faith in the advantages to

1 Lipstadt, (1989a), p. 9, with respect to architectural competitions. However, while rhetoric was dormant in the 19th century, architectural competitions flourished.
2 Barry Bergdoll, 'Competing in the Academy and the Marketplace: European Architecture Competitions 1401-1927', in Lipstadt, *The Experimental Tradition*, (1989a), p. 24.
3 Bergdoll, p. 25.

society and progress, and in the 'natural' character of competitions *per se*. As an element of the expanding Victorian market liberalism, competitions became nearly daily affairs from the 1840s onwards; the rate of at least one per week at that time had doubled by the end of the century. The competition for the Houses of Parliament after the fire in 1834 is notorious for the roles played by the national press and public opinion: backed by the daily press, the decision was to rely entirely on the judgement of laymen in an extremely complex and prestigious project. The competition, including its importance for the sanctioning of either Gothic or Elizabethan as the style representative of English institutions, gave rise to a debate of unprecedented intensity. A pamphlet warfare of indignation and complaint involving the role of professionals in 'the marketplace of facile fashion' would be waged with increasing ferocity for the rest of the century.⁴

The intensity of the complaints about the way that competitions were run troubled the Institute of British Architects (RIBA). The dignity and autonomy that they hoped to maintain for the profession was at stake. During the following decades, specially appointed committees would work to make recommendations for reforming the 'system' so that it might more justly serve both architects and promoters. Problems such as lack of clarity in the brief, 'misleading perspective views, false estimates, or other common gimmicks', were reported according to Bergdoll, as well as 'inexperienced jurors' who 'were often led "to select a design without suspecting in the slightest degree that they may have been captivated by the meretricious allurements of the artist"'.⁵

By 1872 a committee had drawn up regulations asking for qualified assessors, a reasonable prize fund and a commitment to the winner on behalf of the promoter.⁶ The remarkable thing about these recommendations is the degree to which they reconstitute the fundamental conditions and methods of academic competition in an open public competition. The English regulations, which coincided with parallel efforts in French, German, Austrian and American professional associations, outline the principal features of the *modern competition* of the 20th century: an open, anonymous compe-

tion based on a programme, or brief, which relates to a specific site and purpose, and which lists the jury members as well as the prize funds and the deadline for submission.

Competitions in Norway

In view of the interdependence between architectural education and competitions, a brief outline of the situation faced by Norwegian architects with regard to education may be useful at this point. When the Nordic art academies were established in Copenhagen and Stockholm in the mid 18th century, education in architecture was modelled on the French *École des Beaux Arts* system. As in the French academy, the schooling had its point of reference in design competitions.

Norway did not become an independent nation until 1905, and so the first Norwegian architects were educated in Copenhagen. However, from around 1820 the German Technical Colleges (*Technische Hochschule*) were considered more attractive. Technical schools in Kristiania,⁷ Bergen and Trondheim provided the elementary training which was then completed abroad. Another preparatory possibility was the 'building course' (*bygningsskolen*) at *Tegneskolen*, the Drawing School in Kristiania.⁸ The German influence was dominant in Norway in this period, but from 1900 onwards a few Norwegian students of architecture chose to travel to Great Britain (Glasgow and London) for their education. Quite a few students sought their education at the academy in Stockholm as well. Not until the Norwegian Institute of Technology was established in Trondheim, and could welcome the first class of students in 1910, did Norway have an institution for training her own architects.⁹ There were intense debates about whether architectural education ought to be combined with engineering in a polytechnic institution, or based on the arts and crafts tradition in *Tegneskolen* in Kristiania. A meeting of the association of young architects in 1900 concluded that 'the environment at a technical college would be fatal for the artistic and creative skills of the students of architecture'. This local controversy about the principle of where architecture as a discipline belongs, with engineering subjects or the *Beaux Arts*, started in the 19th century and continued long into the 20th.¹⁰

- 4 Bergdoll, p. 39.
- 5 Bergdoll, p. 40, from the RIBA report of 1939.
- 6 Bergdoll later refers to the 1880 recommendations in contrast to Judith Strong, (1972), p. 3., who dates their implementation as 1907.
- 7 *Christiania* (after Christian IV of Denmark-Norway) was the name given to Oslo in 1624; spelled *Kristiania* from 1877. During this period *Gamlebyen*, the old town, was called Oslo. In 1924 the Norwegian Parliament changed the name of the city back to Oslo, with effect from 1 January 1925.
- 8 The name of *Tegneskolen* was later changed to *Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole*. This 'building course' would later form the basis for the independent School of Architecture in Oslo which was founded in 1945.
- 9 The intake of students per year was 10-12 until 1930.
- 10 Odd Brochmann, - *disse arkitektene*, (Oslo, 1986), pp. 6,14-16, 43-46.

In Norway, as in Sweden, the use of architectural competitions soared from the mid-19th century. The Swedish sociologist Anna Östnäs points out the fundamental significance of competitions in the new relationship between patrons and architects in society since the late 18th century: competitions were necessary to establish a profession which was free from direct, personal connections with its patrons.¹¹ Throughout the 20th century this pattern has adapted alongside the development of the Scandinavian democracies, in which state and municipal sponsorship occupy the leading roles of patronage. Every time a discussion arises about a major building task (for example the New Opera House in Oslo in the 1990s), architects promptly and unanimously demand that the problem be solved by means of a competition.¹²

Many of the old public buildings we know today are the result of competitions: churches and schools, the old Parliament Building (1856) and the old Government Office Building (1891), theatres and museums, and the Oslo City Hall (second stage competition, 1918). According to Dag Rognlien, former editor of the association news journal *Arkitektnytt*, around 50 competitions were published in *Teknisk Ugeblad* in the 1880s and 90s.¹³ To gain an idea of the Norwegian situation, it can be noted that when the review *Byggekunst* was established in 1919 by the fledgling Association of Norwegian Architects (NAL), the association numbered only 200 members. Twenty years later the membership was around 300. Thus, when 49 proposals were submitted in the competition for the New Government Building in 1939, and considering that each design team included two to four architects, it must be conceded that the participation rate among the architects was remarkably high.

The Norwegian competition regulations, which in principle are parallel to international regulations (UIA) and have also been adapted to those in the other Nordic countries, prescribe three forms of competition: open, closed and a combination of the two.

An *open competition* is publicly announced and in principle open to all architects in Norway. Proposals are submitted anonymously

with a secret 'motto'. In a *closed competition* only architects who are personally invited may participate. The participants are usually named in the brief but the entries are anonymous, and the participants receive a fee. *Combined competitions* are open to any architects who meet the requirements of an open competition, but include specially invited architects as well.¹⁴

A crucial aspect of competitions is the question of whether the promoter is obliged to commission the architect of the proposal which is selected by the jury as the best suited for realization. One measure to overcome this problem is the distinction between two types of competition: a *project competition*, the purpose of which is to solve a concrete building task with the author of the selected proposal as architect, and an *ideas competition*, which is used to explore situations, to search for alternative solutions to existing problems and to stimulate the discussion of new ideas. An ideas competition does not commit the promoter beyond paying the prizes offered in accordance with the jury's awards. Competitions may also be organized in *two stages*, in which a limited number of proposals from the first stage are selected for further elaboration in a second stage.

Moreover, competitions may be restricted to participants belonging to a certain region, thus making the competition part of a *local* scheme. The opposite is an *international competition*, which in principle is open to architects from all countries, or more common in Norway, a variant open to all architects in the Nordic countries.¹⁵

Another major issue is the *jury* which normally counts either five or seven members including the promoter's representatives. The general principle is that the *majority* of assessors are professional architects or planners. As a rule the Association of Norwegian Architects (NAL) will appoint two of the architect members of the jury, usually selected from among successful competitors from previous competitions for projects on the same level, and the promoter will appoint the others. Since professional patrons, such as *Statsbygg*,¹⁶ which plays a leading role in promoting competitions, have several architects on their staff, the Association and the promoter usually come to an agreement about the

11 Anna Östnäs, *Arkitekterna och deras yrkesutveckling i Sverige*, (Gothenburg, 1984), p. 150.

12 This is not the forum for a thorough international comparison. However, Spreiregen states that 'of all the countries employing competitions, the Scandinavian countries have enjoyed most success with them'. His typical 'competition architects' however are Finnish and Danish, and not Norwegian. Paul D. Spreiregen, *Design Competitions*, (New York, 1979), p. 79.

13 Dag Rognlien, 'Byggekunst 1919-1994', *Byggekunst*, 76, no. 1, (1994), p. 25. Rognlien also informs me that the competition material from this time does not exist in the archives; printed as part of the advertisement section of the reviews, it was not deemed worth filing and was destroyed.

14 Norske arkitekters landsforbund, *NAL's konkurranse-regler*, (Oslo, 1967). Moreover, *NAL's konkurranse-regler*, (Oslo, 1981), and NAL, *Når arkitekter konkurrerer*, (Oslo, 1986).

15 Since the period studied in this survey, Norway has joined the EEA (European Economic Area) which requires that all competitions over a certain cost are open to participants from all the countries within the EEA.

appointment of architect assessors.

Since the jury is known to the participants, the question of whether the competitor addresses his submission, or adapts its presentation rhetorically, to a particular architect on the jury is frequently raised. Opinions on this point vary: some claim that this must surely be the case, whilst others say that if there is a jury member they feel is definitely opposed to their ideas of architecture, they refrain from participating in the competition. Bergdoll mentions the competition for a new Royal Exchange 'in a Grecian, Roman, or Italian style' in 1839 when the jury was selected after the designs had been submitted in order to prevent contestants from designing projects in anticipation of the jury's taste. 'The competition proved an unprecedented fiasco', not however, necessarily for that reason.¹⁷ The question has not been subject to systematic study. Although the competitors try to anticipate the jurors' preferences, my impression is that they primarily strive to come up with what they believe is the best solution.

The general policy with respect to the *programme* or brief is that the mandatory requirements are kept to a minimum so as not to bind the solutions to conditions which prove to be too limiting when the proposals arrive. 'It is of the utmost importance that the brief is as *open* as possible', said the Association secretary, but added that 'many juries are over-cautious on this point'.¹⁸

The question of whether 'to find the best solution or to find the best architect' sometimes emerges as a problem of contradictory options. In my opinion this reflects the inherent contradiction in architecture, namely the perpetual duality of architecture as an ideal art and a pragmatic practice. The problem of separating the best architect from the best project seems to me to be rhetorical; a way of arguing and of compromising between diverse qualities which might be 'best' in different respects, thus employing different standards of 'good' architecture. An idea or a striking design may be best from an idealistic point of view. From this angle, would not the author be the best architect if he could produce the best design? But the best architect must also be one who is best able to carry out the project to the satisfaction of the

promoter and the public. This lends weight to the pragmatic side of the argument about what makes the best architect, whilst a contribution towards the best ideal architecture can be revered and accepted in the public collection of canonical architectural ideas. Since competition proposals are not finished designs, the goal is to find the solution with the best potential. Current competition policy expresses this compromise as follows: 'the best project reveals the best architect in the manner in which the idea is worked out'.¹⁹ This statement by the Association competition secretary is relative, too, but indicates a tendency towards greater responsibility of the juries towards the promoter.

This study covers 51 years of competitions; 51 years of immense changes in society, and changes with respect to architectural competitions, too. Some overall features are noteworthy: firstly, the frequency of invitations has not changed significantly, and secondly, the number of submissions in open competitions has not changed over the 51 year span. This is remarkable as the membership of the Association of Norwegian Architects has increased from 300 in 1939 to 2,800 in 1990 (1,400 in 1969), whilst the number of submissions in the study material varies from 15 to 95 in open competitions rather evenly over the period (see appendix I). The number of proposals which were submitted in the new competition for Tullinløkka in October 1995, is 60 (unexpectedly high, according to the competition secretary) compared with the 50 proposals which were entered in the 'same' competition in 1972.²⁰

There are no conclusive explanations at hand for this dramatic, relative decrease in participation in open competitions, but there are indications that it may be related to economy and the demands for increased efficiency in the construction market.²¹ There are however a considerable number of closed competitions which involve a certain group of firms. While the requirements for documentation and realism in the submission material have become much stricter, the cost of participating in open competitions has far exceeded what the majority of architects are willing to risk. 'Competitions have become more an exercise for the mainstream architects, a marketing ploy

16 In Norway *Statsbygg*, (the central office of state buildings) is the leading promoter in the market of architectural competitions, according to Gaute Baalsrud, who is the competition secretary at the Association of Norwegian Architects (personal communication 1995).

17 Bergdoll, p. 41.

18 Baalsrud, personal communication. An example is the Oslo Concert Hall, in which the brief presupposed entrance from *Munkedamsveien*. The winner made two alternatives: the one with the entrance on *Ruseløkkveien*, which owing to the brief could not be accepted, proved to be the best.

19 Baalsrud, personal communication.

20 *Arkitektmytt*, no. 17, (1995), p. 353. In comparison, 1,500 participants are registered for the competition for the Extension of the Prado Museum in Madrid, (*Arkitektmytt*, no. 12, 1995, p. 229); a number which dramatically alters the conditions for fair assessment.

21 Baalsrud, personal communication. The size of offices has not increased parallel to the increase in membership, and although some extraordinary competitions, as for instance the new Oslo airport, necessitate cooperation between several studios, the majority of competition tasks are not more extensive than previously. Moreover Baalsrud says that the prizes in Norwegian competitions are relatively high compared with international standards.

aimed at gaining commissions, rather than an arena for ideas and experimentation', said the competition secretary, and added that 'outsiders do not stand a chance'.²² If this statement indicates a tendency, perhaps more acutely distinct in the 90s, it is not entirely valid for the material covered in this study; in the competition for the Aker Brygge Aqua-Leisure Centre in 1987, for instance, young architects as well as outsiders were awarded.

Complaints about the cost of competitions in relation to their value are not new. Competitions are described as 'heartbreaking. . . a vampire stifling the breath of professional life and draining its blood',²³ and Frank Lloyd Wright said that competitions represent 'an average upon an average on behalf of an average'.²⁴ Richard G. Wilson, in his review of Lipstadt's book, inquires whether competitions encourage experimentation, or whether they result in conformity.²⁵ In this study the issue of competition experimentation and ideas is primarily treated in relation to the context of their proposed realization. It should, however, be possible to shed some light on the question of conformity.

Nonetheless, in his book for the 75th anniversary of NAL in 1986, Odd Brochmann writes that 'Finally, we can confirm that there has never been so much as a shadow of a doubt among architects about the legitimacy and importance of the competition system'.²⁶ The competition secretary, too, claims that the prestige of competitions has not been lowered. The use of open competitions is part of a governmental policy which aims at improving the quality of architecture and the built environment. Although the competition procedure has become an event primarily for a more exclusive set of 'professionalized competition architects', the competition as an institution still enjoys a good reputation among architects.

As a marketplace for commissions, architectural competitions reward only very few architects as a direct result of victory, but the function of competitions on the market is much wider, as the effect of the exhibition and publications benefits more architects than the 1st prize winner alone. Furthermore, the appeal of competitions is even more complex, as it embodies the fundamental conditions of the profession which are intrinsic in the competitive mentality that permeates pro-

fessional life. The collective illusion of equal opportunities consolidates competitions as a broad and inclusive institution within the profession; they constitute as much a unique opportunity to the aspiring young talent as a stimulation to the experienced practitioner to air their talents. Competitions afford opportunities for experimentation with real projects on real sites, in the autonomy of design which is free from the give-and-take exchange of the client relationship and the restrictions of a real building process. Thus competition architecture is at once autonomous and socially legitimated as a part of the practice of architects. The autonomous architectural design, favoured since the Renaissance in the principle of emulation in the academies, and still fundamental in schools of architecture, is via competitions institutionalized on the highest level of the profession in society. Thus, competitions are highly meritorious to those who are awarded or honoured, and the prize-winning architecture is hegemonic in that it represents the continuous selection of designs from a wide selection on the part of the architectural profession.

22 Baalsrud, personal communication.

23 William Robert Ware quoted in Richard Guy Wilson, p. 339.

24 Quoted by Frances Halsbrand, 'Foreword', in Lipstadt, (1989a), p. 6.

25 Wilson, p. 340.

26 Brochmann, p. 68.



II

VISUAL REPRESENTATION IN ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS

Prefigurations of buildings and artistic objects

One type of competition material is the visual representation of the architectural designs. The visual representation plays a unique role in architectural competitions: on the one hand the representation should be intelligible to the jury and a broad public audience in a manner that permits comparison with the brief as well as with the site, while on the other hand the competition drawings are self-sufficient cultural objects of particular interest to the community of architects and connoisseurs.

The concept of 'figuration', used to differentiate representations by architects from other representations of architecture, is specific to the architect, since it signifies that the 'figurator' interposes himself as a scaling device between the three-dimensional, full-scale building and the image thereof. Figuration is a psycho-social activity which encapsulates the process and the object: that training of hand, eye and mind that makes the architect, inculcates the reference to the building as the defining characteristic of the figuration.¹ Not only do the competition drawings illustrate the process of making or the prefiguration of a building, but they are also worked out for transmission of information to a particular audience as well.

From the angle of the competition as a stage in the *realization* of a building, the relationship between the visual representation and the full-scale, three-dimensional, inhabitable materiality of the projected building, is crucial. An important purpose of the drawings is to explain what is intended in the proposed architecture. Competition projects are not working drawings but simplified provisional proposals intended to outline a credible figuration; a credible potential for further development. However, the laymen in the jury frequently tend to judge

the projects as finished designs, eagerly scrutinizing the drawings for particular details which normally are not determined at that stage. Obligated to defend their choice to the promoter and the users, they search for guarantees that their requirements and wishes will be satisfied. The obsession with the changing rooms and wardrobe lockers, argued as one of the most important factors in the competition for the State College of Sport and Physical Education, is such an example.²

Excessive preoccupation on the part of the competitor with design specificities such as these, it is often maintained, can be detrimental to the architectural totality. It is the responsibility of the architects in the jury to influence the brief as well as the process of assessing in order to achieve a sensible balance of common sense and conceptual strength. Not only is this balance crucial for the quality of the project but also for the comprehension of the implications of the design, and thus for the fate of the project³ in the prospective co-operation between architect and client.

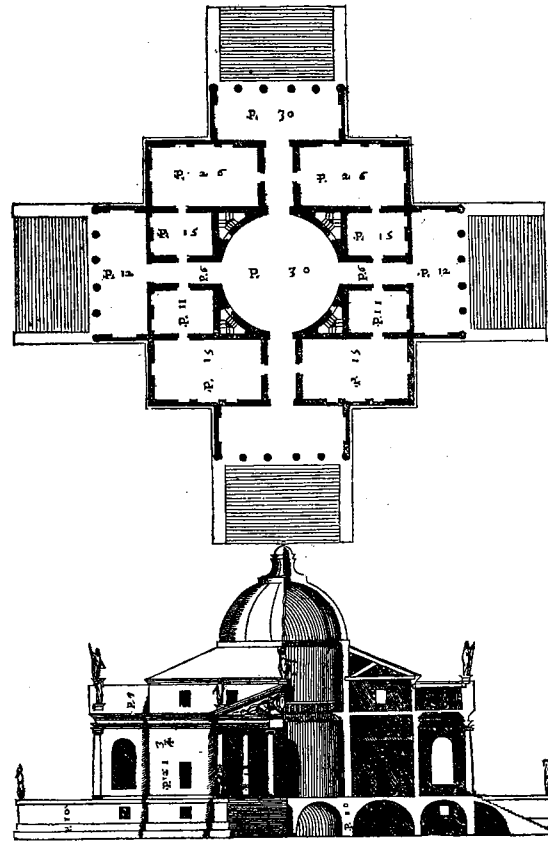
By contrast, competition drawings play a specific role as *objects of art* which are exhibited publicly within the institution of architectural competitions. 'It is thanks precisely to the pre-eminent role of drawing in architectural conception that architecture, through the concept of *disegno*', says Lipstadt, 'began to separate itself from its origin in building during the Renaissance, and to be received as an acceptable companion to the other arts - as an autonomous and abstract creation'.⁴ The 'fine art' of architectural rendering has been further cultivated and elaborated in European academies and schools right up until the present time.⁵

Inherent in the process of visualization and publication is the opportunity to alter, to

- 1 Hélène Lipstadt, 'Architecture and its Image - Notes Towards the Definition of Architectural Publication', *Architectural Design* 3/4, (1989b), p.13.
- 2 *NAK*, no. 40, (1957), pp. 5-7. Among other aspects, the argument made the need for lockers dependent upon where the students would live; a case which is totally unpredictable in Oslo which is not a typical college 'campus' town.
- 3 'Project' is used both with respect to the competition representation (drawings, models, photographs) and the 'real' project as prefigured. A distinction here would impoverish the use of this and other terms: for instance in both cases 'project' is wider than 'design', and different from 'proposal'.
- 4 Lipstadt, (1989b), p. 13. *Disegno*, takes in the 16th century over the meaning of *idea, esemplare, lineamentum*, or 'conceived idea' (*konsipert idé*), as used by for example Varchi and Vasari (Roy Tommy Eriksen, personal communication). In the case of architecture *disegno* thus means the drawing, the draft, the plan, and not the realized form or objects as the English 'design' now includes.
- 5 Bergdoll, pp. 25-45.

amplify or obscure the reality which is being represented. When an image is altered or enhanced in a modern publication, for instance, the authority of photo-mechanical techniques as a supposedly faithful and accurate medium lends additional persuasiveness to the act of representation. Lipstadt cites the well-known example of Le Corbusier who through airbrushing purified a photograph, erased all the particularities of the house and the surrounding topography of the site, thus making it an ideal object on an ideal site:

Le Corbusier felt. . . that realization was secondary to the conceptualization of a building. Therefore, the specificity of a building-as-built could be simplified, amplified and denied in print, in the interest of the transmission of an idea. The published image of the realized building, idealized to resemble the original conception, became the permanent and substantial reality preserved in the *Oeuvre complète*.⁶



Moreover, in a discussion related to the League of Nations competition in 1927, Lipstadt points out the role of architectural competitions as an *artistic* competition. The controversy of the competition result, which continued independently of the realization of the building by Henri-Paul Nénot, and finally allowed Le Corbusier's much-debated project to emerge victorious in the historical records, is a sign of the autonomy of the competition and competition drawings.⁷ As creations of architecture with statistically only a very slight chance of being realized, a reasonable goal for competition drawings is to attract attention in the arena of professional publications; as creations of architecture for its own sake.

Different principles, different versions

Any architectural drawing or figuration implies a deviation from the real object, but the various principles of representation imply different types of deviation. The most 'objective' representation is the *orthogonal projection* (horizontal and vertical sections, elevations) which reproduces the actual proportional relations of the object.⁸ Orthogonal projections are rudimentary in an architect's training. A plan drawing,

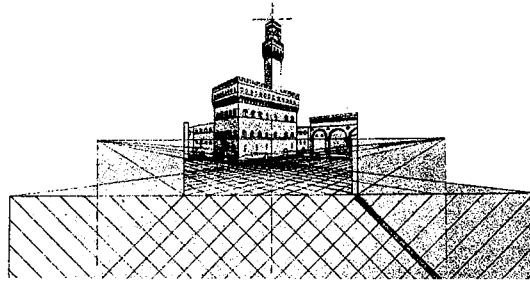
thus, depicts the different elements in space projected on a horizontal level, and the observer can 'read' the plan in principle in the same manner as a tourist may use a map to imagine a walk in an unknown town.

But the projection on one plane is insufficient to depict the object as a whole in space; one must find the (prefigured) architectural perception on 'the interrelated experience of several imagined projections'.⁹ As mentioned above the figuration implies a specific level of thinking that relates to objects in space, and which encapsulates the visual experience in order to organize the different imagined projections into a coherent conception of the building. The way in which Palladio combined vertical section with elevation in a single drawing, showing simultaneously construction layers and the elevation of a wall, shows one way to facilitate the communication of this kind of spatial thinking to a beholder. In his case the simple symmetry of the building made this kind of drawing particularly appropriate (fig. 1).

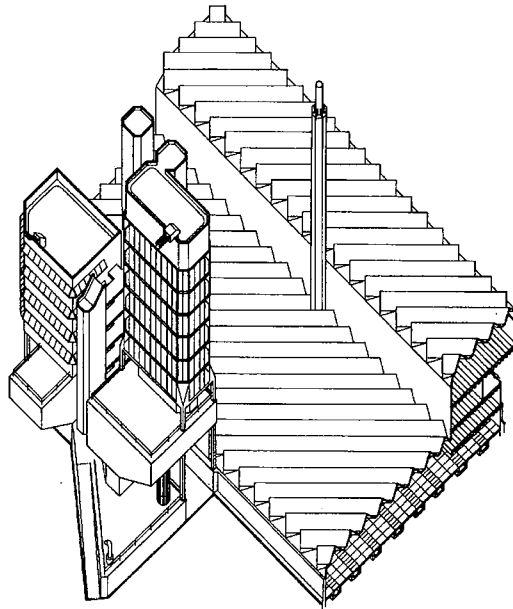
No one has ever seen an object in its orthogonal projection; it is an abstract construction made as if the eye was stretched out into infinite eyes on a plane above the projection plane

6 Lipstadt, (1989b), p. 17.
 7 Lipstadt, (1989b), p. 18.
 8 This is among others treated by Branko Mitrovic, 'Objectively speaking', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, no. 1, (March, 1993), pp. 59-67.
 9 Mitrovic, p. 64.

2. PALAZZO SIGNORIA,
BRUNELLESCHI'S PERSPECTIVE
RECONSTRUCTED BY A.
PARRONCHI



3. LEICESTER UNIVERSITY
ENGINEERING BUILDING,
JAMES STIRLING



which thus is perceived simultaneously by 'all the eyes'. The spatial relations of the object are rendered most geometrically correct with objective distances that can be measured. Orthogonal representation, thus, is 'the spatial model on which the intersubjective mediation of space is grounded'.¹⁰ But it is also a technique which presupposes particular skills in order to conduct the 'visual thinking' that is necessary to comprehend more completely the objects in space. (Because of its abstract nature and dependence on training, an 'objective' orthogonal rendering may cause greater 'subjectivity' of perception.)

The *perspective* drawing is aimed at representing objects in space in such a way that they resemble what we actually would see from a given point. Although it is the drawing technique that comes closest to the actual visual experience, the perspective drawing is the least accurate with respect to geometric relations. The inventiveness that has been shown in the field of perfecting the perspective, such as Brunelleschi's *tavoletta* (a board with a hole

through which the eye saw the reflection of the object in a mirror) employed to paint the Florence Baptistery, is impressive.¹¹

Brunelleschi's experimentation around 1415 led to discoveries which were fundamental to the *central perspective*, a technique celebrated in painting from then onwards (fig. 2). However, the attitudes of the Renaissance architects to perspective remained a point of contention. A letter from members of Raphael's circle sent to Pope Leo X claims that 'perspective is merely "apparanza" and for the use only of those who are incapable of grasping the entirety of a building on the basis of the architectural methods of representation alone'.¹² Provided the information presented is adequate, an orthogonal projection allows the observer to imagine numerous 'experiences' of the building; in a perspective the designer has selected one particular view.

Perspective drawings and sketches flourished from the Romantic period on and their popularity grew vastly with the explosion of competitions in the 19th century as a response to the whole new audience that had appeared on the market. Perspective was argued to be the kind of rendering that gave the most 'truthful' image of the prefigured building; instead of the *abstract* orthogonal representation of an idea which necessitates spatial thinking, the perspective brings a visualization of the building to the *immediate perception* of the observer within the recognizable context of the site. Nevertheless, owing to the intrinsic 'realistic' suggestiveness, perspectives can be alluring and treacherous, and the attitudes of architects towards it remained ambivalent. Thus, the 1880 recommendations for competitions in England involved an attempt to eliminate the use of perspectives. Perspective views had become a British speciality because of their appeal to jurors, but were mistrusted by the profession owing to their dubious role in the Victorian competition bonanza. At the *École des Beaux Arts* perspectives had long been forbidden as 'they were considered falsifying and unessential representations of the architectural concept'.¹³

Oblique projections (parallel projections: axonometric, isometric, dimetric etc.) do not represent the object as faithfully or directly with regard to accuracy as the orthogonal pro-

10 Mitrovic, p. 65.

11 Philippe Comar, *La perspective en jeu*, (Gallimard, 1992), pp. 32-33

12 Mitrovic, p. 63.

13 Bergdoll, p. 43.

jection, but they come closer to the visual experience. The use of axonometries became common in the 1920s when leading architects looked to the machine industry for inspiration. Axonometric perspectives, normally drawn with neat technical exactitude, are reminiscent of representations of machine parts in user manuals. Because of their three-dimensional visualization they convey the spatial relations more immediately than purely orthogonal projections, granted that the object is not too complicated. The object is perceived more from a bird's eye view, as shown for instance in the drawing of Leicester University Engineering Building (1959/63) by James Stirling (fig. 3).¹⁴ Oblique projections are idealized and abstract with respect to the actual visual experience but the three-dimensional quality yields an easily perceptible overall image of the construction.

Thus, the different drawing principles *function differently* with regard to the audience depending upon the skills needed to 'experience' the building on the basis of the drawings. Moreover, the different versions of the design are suited for different purposes: the orthogonal projections are indispensable for the process of construction, as well as for decisions of relevance to the use, including financial, technical and psycho-social aspects. Perspectives address a wider audience and include the general public; they present the *image*, focusing on the architectural configuration, how it can be perceived, more or less inclusively with regard to its environment. Perspectives, then, can be regarded as more popularistic. Three-dimensional models act as a complement to perspectives, from the point of view of yielding a 'realistic' image of the prefigured building: models portray especially the masses and overall shapes on the site, while perspectives give further details as seen from a closer range.

During the period that is covered in this study, the use of representation techniques in competitions has changed. Perspective drawing, which had been explored through geometry and optics for centuries, was partially replaced by photographic representation of models in the 1960s. The mass production of graphic products and tools as well as the boom of inexpensive and facile copying techniques added technical sop-

histication to the traditionally hand-made presentations. More recently, information technology has radically increased the possibilities for architectural figuration and simulation, but the breakthrough of these new visualization techniques has not influenced the present material. It is however interesting here, as Hilkkka Lehtonen has pointed out, that virtual reality is taking over the role that perspective has played in traditional representations. Moreover, there is a tendency to increase the realism of presentations; 'a reality illusion which is not the same thing as correspondence with reality'.¹⁵ Owing to the familiarity with the conventional ways of presentation, however, Lehtonen says with reference to E. H. Gombrich, that the type of 'realistic' illusion rendered by virtual reality has a greater effect than for instance further addition of details.¹⁶

The *rhetorical function* of visual representation, however, is far from unambiguously defined by the kind of technique employed. The message conveyed depends on *how* the designer executes the representation: what he includes in the way of information, what he omits, what he underlines and so forth. Drawings can be machine-like, exact but abstract with respect to human activity, or they can be impressionistic, more softly communicating an atmosphere rather than depicting concrete shapes, thus mediating different qualities of the same object. An analysis of a land-use competition in Denmark, in which all seven awarded projects were redesigned with identical graphic means (colours, shading etc.), illustrates the influence of the graphic mode on the perception of an architectural design (and how uniform the total presentation becomes when even the graphic mode is objectively comparable).¹⁷

Because of the scaling process in depicting large objects in small drawings, architectural representation necessarily implies *simplification*. In his writing on caricature in drawing and painting, E. H. Gombrich points out the willingness of the public to accept simplifications because of the absence of contradictory clues: 'One effect could do the work of many, provided again there was no blatant contradiction in the work which hindered the illusion from taking place'.¹⁸ Referring to this writing, Birgit

14 James Stirling, *RIBA Drawings Collection: James Stirling*, (London, 1974).

15 Hilkkka Lehtonen, 'The Janus Face of Visualization', *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, 6, no. 1, (1993), pp. 87-98, (p. 91).

16 Lehtonen, p. 91.

17 Seth H. Seablom and Erik Hultberg, 'En analyse på grunnlag af Gullestrup-konkurransen', *Arkitekten*, no. 10, (1966), pp. 204-211.

18 E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, third edition, (London, 1968), p. 284.

Cold argues that simplification and avoidance of contradictions is essential in architectural sketching. In particular she points to the communicative, and I would add rhetorical, function of drawing as a means to activate the knowledge and imagination of the beholder; the unfinished, illusive aspect transforms the beholder into a participant as it demands his imaginative involvement.¹⁹

A similar argument can be applied to competition representation: simplification is a precondition for transmission of the essential qualities of the prefigured project. However, when it comes to the absence of contradictory clues, I would maintain that this is a different matter depending on whether the representation is perceived as an independent object of art or as a proposal for a solution to a concrete building task. Transference of ideas in the realm of artistic experimentation may well be accepted, and even served, by caricatures. As a preliminary step towards the realization of a building which is anticipated to have lasting importance for human life in a particular place, caricatured representation should be employed with caution. One should therefore pay attention to the neglected aspect or the contradicting factors that were erased or obscured in the process of creating idealized objects of art. At best, caricatured designs could be a challenge to instigate and channel the participation of the audience, as Cold mentions, into a constructive and critical dialectical process, and thus possibly prevent total rejection at a later stage or in retrospect.

The kind of graphic or visual particularities that I refer to here, depart from the graphic modes or 'codes' which are implicitly understood between members of the profession. 'We never spoke about values or the specific qualities of what we were doing. We'd just make a particular crooked line or some dots with the pencil, and the meaning was immediately understood between us collaborators',²⁰ said a prominent Norwegian architect spontaneously when I presented my first impression of the competition material. Such modes, which change with the changing *foci* of architecture over time, will be elucidated later. Thus, Lehtonen points out, typical architects of postmodernism and deconstructivism²¹ have tried not only to complicate the relations between

the representation and the contents, but moreover to emphasize the remoteness and the artificiality of the presentation. Zaha Hadid, for instance, has tried to capture the time dimension in her drawings in which the buildings seem to float freely in the air (like her famous Peak Club Building), creating the illusion of being freed from gravity. She says that for her the important thing is not realism but to bring forth new ideas.²² Both the enhanced realism and the artistic illusiveness may have their rhetorical roles to play in front of a broad audience on the market: the realism (a familiar tree, type of motor car or church spire) to connect the project to the commonly recognizable and visible world in the minds of the beholders; and, depending on their artistic force the illusive transformations may strike some hidden strings that give resonance from the shared 'soundboard' of human experience in the contemporary world.

Interpreting the design material

The competition design material in this study is in keeping with the requirements of the brief and the conventions of architectural rendering in which a site plan (1:500), plans, sections and elevations (1:200) are fundamental. Moreover, two perspective drawings, respectively exterior and interior, are normally required. A site model (1:500) is usually also required. In place of drawn perspectives, photographs of models may be accepted, in which case preferably of a larger model. Sometimes, especially in later years, more detailed sections of structural parts (1:50, 1:20) are required, too. Since the late 1960s, supplementary visual presentations such as sketches, photographs of models and diagrams have also been allowed within certain limitations.

This study presupposes the process of interpreting the visual design material, the ability to reflect upon it systematically and to *find words* to describe and discuss the character of the shapes and the way in which they have been arranged. When I look at designs, I perceive several aspects in very quick succession, in fact almost *simultaneously*: the impression of the plan, the section and perhaps an elevation enable me to form an idea of the prefigured building, of its spatial organization, its spatial characteristics and outer forms as well. A detail

19 Birgit Cold, "Cartoonizing" concepts of urban improvement - or sketches and pictograms as fascination', paper at IAPS (International Association of People and Environmental Studies) 13, (Manchester, 1994), p. 6.

20 Odd Kjeld Østbye, Dean of Oslo School of Architecture, 1991.

21 Refers to postmodernism and deconstructivism in the sense of *architectural* modes, not literary or philosophical.

22 Lehtonen, pp. 92-96.

here and a detail there substantiate the totality of perception. This first impression is comprehensive, it encompasses a more complex information load than is possible for me to demonstrate verbally in a text of a comparable 'brevity' of communication. The visual representation provides a vast amount of detailed information and conveys the whole design immediately, which can then be filled out, corrected and pursued in depth by further investigation. A text intended to explain the same project by contrast would probably appear disconnected, confusing and incomplete if it followed a similar pattern of, for instance, mentioning internal corridors and façade parts simultaneously, and jumping straight from fragments to overall views.

A verbal description following a similar 'logic' to the visual representation requires a certain *linearity* to demonstrate an object of similar complexity. This is not only due to the structure of verbal communication, but also because of the limitations of language when it comes to the task of mediating something visual in a comprehensible manner. In Michael Baxandall's example of the crudeness of language when he refers to his pencil 'as "long" . . . "shiny" . . . "green" . . . "of hexagonal section"', there is the familiar reference of a pencil to compare the terms with. The art (and architectural) historian's use of language is a 'guided act of inspection of an object' which invites the receiver to supply a degree of precision to broad categories by a reciprocal reference between the word and the available object'.²³ The task of giving words in the context of interpreting competition designs involves both reference to the visual representation, the idea, and to its imaginary realization. In other words, in contrast to 'the pencil' which implies a clear denotation of a definite object, our visual object of reference is not unambiguous with respect to its inherent realization in materiality, but it involves a *pro-tension*, vague and multi-faceted intentions of denotation, which is gradually completed.

There is a general consensus that any systematic study of designs must depart from a common-sense description, and such a process of description requires selection and reflection. The words are a sort of pointer to the essential or relevant features that the audience can

compare with the object, which in the case of competitions are the existing site and the available presented design material. In this monograph certain aspects of the whole will be treated separately and then organized in order to elucidate the whole from different perspectives. My words are in any case the result of my structuring of the visual information and my reasoning about the designs – in parts as well as a whole. I hope to impart that which I find particularly relevant to the problem, and make it perceptible and comprehensible to my audience.

23 Michael Baxandall, 'The language of art criticism', in *The Language of Art History*, edited by Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell, (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 67-68.

III

TEXTS IN ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS

Some features of an unexplored field

The other type of material I will be looking at in this study is the competition texts. Here we will face responses to the same problem I faced above of finding words for writing about competition designs. If theoretical literature is scarce on the topic of architectural competitions, it is extremely scarce and fragmented with respect to competition texts as a field of particular interest. Some thoughts however, can be traced and connected to suggest a background for the nature of the competition texts treated in the material.

In her account of 25 years of American competitions from 1960-85, Lipstadt finds that competitions constitute the common basis for analysis of buildings and documents. She mentions the texts briefly, saying that competitions had a 'preoccupation with meaning'; this preoccupation revealed itself in the competition programmes and jury reports, in the frequent use 'of such phrases as "symbolic character", "a strong civic and governmental image", "expression", and "monumentality"'. According to Lipstadt, 'competitions allow these symbolic intentions and their satisfaction through design to become public issues'.¹

The Greek architect Constantin Spiridonidis calls the architects' specific discourse accompanying their presentation of architectural and urban designs 'a discourse of legitimation'. Based on a study of competition projects, his article treats the reports that are part of the architects' submissions as 'an integral part of the projected design', in his own words.

Three of the objectives of competition texts that Spiridonidis recognizes have already been mentioned on the preceding pages: (1) the attempt to provide a better *understanding* of the design, (2) the necessity of a complementary

object for the reference (prefiguration or real work of architecture), and (3) the preoccupation with *meaning*, which he calls the 'semio-genetic' character of the architectural design. In addition, Spiridonidis points out a fourth specificity of the discourse of legitimation which is its pretensions of *truthfulness* (4). 'This discourse acts by way of transforming the voluntary to the obligatory, the arbitrary to the necessary, the ideological to the objective, the false to the truthful. This transformation', he continues, 'is nourished by the rules and models dominating contemporary architectural practice'. Furthermore, the history of the discourse of legitimation can be followed from at least the 18th century, when the oscillation between architectural form and words, between (architectural) 'expression' and 'saying', became a basic condition for the existence of architecture.² I do not follow his semiotic approach, but his general conclusions confirm my reasoning on the basis of the material of this study.

The Italian architectural review *LOTUS international* devoted the major part of an issue in 1991 to competitions, focusing on the reports written by architects to accompany their submissions. Examples were given from some recent international competition projects and included reports written by invited architects of international repute. The editorial claims that architectural writing has 'a vague status', and has wavered over the centuries between the aesthetic and the technical approach; it 'has been developed with injections from the areas of humanism, literature, and from politics, philosophy . . . the behavioural sciences. . . to the point where it embraces any subject considered relevant'.³ Moreover, owing to their official nature, it is generally assumed that these reports provide a better idea, than do

1 Lipstadt, (1989a), p. 11.

2 Spiridonidis, pp. 91-93.

3 Pierluigi Nicolini, 'Competitions', *LOTUS* 70, 23, (1991), editorial, not paginated.

essays and books, of the strategies adopted by individual architects to explain the decisions that underline the designs. Admitting to 'the aspect of caricature' involved, the editor suggests a 'provisional and haphazard' classification of the reports into ten forms of writing:

'laconic and terse' (including the architects J. Stirling, A. Rossi, R. Mayer), 'theoretical/ideological', 'historical/narrative', 'ideological/avant-garde' (R. Koolhaas, L. Krier), 'pragmatic/architectural' (V. Gregotti, G. Valle, O. Bohigas, M. Botta), 'poetic/artistic', 'philosophical/esoteric' (P. Eisenman, D. Libeskind); 'sociological/esthetic' (R. Venturi/G. De Carlo), 'technical/objective' (N. Foster/R. Piano); and 'learned/professional' (O. M. Ungers, R. Moneo).

I do not intend to pursue this disperse classification further. However, the observations are relevant and may serve as an indication of 'the multiplication of subjective choices of language' and lack of 'specific obligations or constraints' in the verbal advocacy of contemporary architecture. One common rhetorical feature, however, is pointed out: that of a certain compulsion of the writer *to repeat*.⁴

Spiridonidis' study as well as the *LOTUS* presentation are limited to the reports accompanying the individual architects' design proposals. In that kind of report the whole spectre of objectives and practice that invades the work of an architect within the given socio-cultural context is expressed within the framework of the individual design process. I have expanded the topic of competition texts to embrace *all verbal documents* included in the competition publications. Thus the focus of the discourse of legitimation is moved from the internal, individual design process to the totality of competition manifestation, in which the winning designs are given the status of an architectural reference.

Although it neither concerns a recent problem, nor architectural competitions in particular, another work on architecture has profoundly influenced the orientation of my reasoning. Christine Smith's book on Architecture in

Early Humanism elucidates several issues which are raised in the present study.⁵ Particularly interesting in this context is her writing on Leon Battista Alberti's description of Florence Cathedral as architectural criticism, which outlines some fundamental circumstances of the architectural text and its relationship to architecture and the culture of which they both are part. Alberti's description of Brunelleschi's Dome in *Profugiorum ab aerumna*, also known as *Della Tranquillità dell'animo*, is neither plain and technical, nor abstract and theoretical. Alberti is concerned not only with intellectual but also with sensual, emotional and moral judgement as he seeks to formulate the spectator's perception of the cathedral. *Profugiorum* breaks away from Western mediaeval writing in respect of its astonishing *rhetorical style*. There is a fundamental connection between the two arts, architecture and rhetoric, Smith points out, 'since the purpose of architecture, as Alberti saw it, was like that of rhetoric . . . to persuade the mind of the hearer and move his emotions.'⁶

It would go beyond the scope of this study to attempt to verify Smith's argumentation, which appears thorough and elegant. At the very least it provides an indication of a distinct threshold in architectural writing which coincides with the threshold in architectural competitions: the Florence Baptistery and the Dome.

One point from Smith's book ought to be mentioned, however, for its relevance to this text material: the rhetorical function of *exaggeration*. Alberti's panegyric description of the dome serves to clarify his argument and further testifies to the desire of the early Humanists to *understand by sight*. Alberti creates a mental image through the rhetorical device of amplification. Referring to Cicero, Smith reminds us that exaggeration is more effective than clarity as a stimulus to visualization: 'The one (clarity) helps us understand what is said, but the other (exaggeration) makes us feel that we actually see it before our eyes'.⁷ Thus, in a way comparable to exaggeration through simplification and caricature in the visual representation, verbal amplification serves to make the message clear and explicit; it magnifies and enriches the mental image that can be perceived from the visual representation.

4 Nicolin.

5 Christine Smith, *Architecture in the Culture of Early Humanism: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Eloquence, 1400-1470*, (New York, Oxford, 1992). Roy Tommy Eriksen, a Renaissance scholar and an experienced co-writer of contemporary architectural competition reports in the team of Blå Strek, Tromsø, recommended this book to me, for which I am grateful.

6 Smith, p. 82. *Profugiorum ab aerumna libri III*, in Leon Battista Alberti, *Opere volgari*, edited by Cecil Grayson, 2 vols. (Bari, 1960). Not only is *Profugiorum* a unique example of extended architectural description in his work, says Smith, but its character is strikingly different from the pieces of description elsewhere in his work, included *De Re aedificatoria* (*On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, translated by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, Robert Tavernor (Cambridge Mass., London, 1988)).

7 Cicero, *De Partitione oratoria* VI. 19-21, translated by H. Rackham, (London, 1948), p. 326, quoted in Smith, p. 43.

As the texts in this study are also pieces of architectural criticism, some of Baxandall's remarks may serve as a 'loose' reminder. He says that most art criticism is not directly descriptive, such as 'green' or 'square', but variously oblique or figurative, and he groups the types of non-specialized words used in art criticism into three rough 'divisions or moods'. (1) There are the words used of a picture (or architectural drawing) *comparatively*, often by means of metaphor, for instance 'rhythmical', 'fugal' or a 'forest of verticals'. A special class of comparative words are 'agitated', 'calm' or 'spirited' and so forth. (2) Some words characterize the artistic work in terms of the agent or action that would have produced them: 'sensitive', 'difficult' or 'skilled', this or that 'treatment' or 'development' or 'virtuosity'. (3) The third group of words characterize a work of art by describing its action or effect on the beholder: 'imposing' or 'unpleasant', 'striking' or 'disturbing', this or that 'effect' or 'feeling'.

Baxandall refers to these three kinds of moods as (1) comparative or metaphorical, (2) causal or inferential, and (3) subject or ego words. These three kinds of indirectness are but 'loosely' grouped, he stresses, since 'they are all projections of the subject, the speaking beholder, as we know perfectly well', and they are equally 'nearly all in a weak sense metaphorical'. Of these three kinds of 'moods', Baxandall says that words which are inferential about cause are the main vehicle of demonstrative precision in art criticism: 'While ego words are passive . . . to the speaker as patient, causal words involve the speaker in the activity of inferring and the hearer in the activity of reconstructing and assessing the pattern of implication'.⁸

In this chapter I have drawn attention to a few vague theses put forward by other writers, some indications as to the particularities found by them in texts which are similar or related to the kind of text material we will be confronting in this study. Firstly, with regard to the architect's report, the indications are: the purpose of yielding a better understanding and the necessity of reference to the object, the preoccupation with meaning and the pretensions of truthfulness. Moreover, a remarkable diversity of style

and the compulsion to repeat oneself seem typical of contemporary architects' writing. Secondly, of architectural texts in general, Smith's example of Alberti illustrates the role of rhetorical amplification as a device to clarify the argument and to enhance the visual understanding. Thirdly, Baxandall sheds some further light on the kind of words and verbal expressions typical of art criticism which, as we shall see, has some bearing on architectural criticism, too.

The indications above are not mentioned in order to outline a methodology for this study but to illustrate the vague status of architectural texts, as well as to point out some typical features.

The text material in this study

Architectural competitions include four kinds of verbal document: (1) the programme or brief, (2) the individual architect's or author's report, (3) the jury's general remarks and (4) the jury's criticism of the individual projects.

The programme, or the brief (1), which is drawn up by the promoter and the jury together, describes the objective of the competition and explains the rights and obligations of the promoter, the jury, the participants and the Association of Architects. It should include a clear definition of the purpose of the competition and provide a comprehensive explanation of the task and its preconditions of a practical as well as ideological nature: technical, financial and cultural. Since the very reason for the competition normally is the need for space for an organized activity, the brief is utilitarian, indicating specific spatial quantities as well as recommendations for spatial organization. Moreover in competitions for museums or colleges and university buildings, for example, different ideologies with regard to museum culture and education policies have greatly influenced the programmes. The brief also lays down the technical regulations of the competition as regards the enclosed programme material, the material required for submission, the deadline for entries, prize funds or participation fees, exhibition details and the further commission. Thus, the style of the briefs is a cocktail of dry and technical, and suggestive and evocative.

The significance of the brief for the competi-

⁸ Baxandall, p. 69.

tion project is common knowledge. I mentioned earlier that the general policy is to keep the mandatory requirements to a minimum with regard to the architectural solutions, while at the same time the factual conditions, such as the site, should be treated with appropriate exactitude. Thomas A. Markus pointed out the importance of the briefs as prescriptive for the architectural proposals.⁹ 'Building prescription and moral intention are almost one', he says in his book on buildings and power around the Enlightenment and the French and Industrial Revolutions.¹⁰ From my study of the competition texts, it quickly became clear that the texts constitute a coherent whole: the programme sets the tone, which is then echoed, toned down, elaborated or amplified in the subsequent texts of the competition documentation. Only as a rare exception is the programme contested or criticized.

The author's report (2) has already been mentioned as one kind of competition text that has been commented on by other writers. The brief commonly requests from the participants a concise report which describes the motivation for, and yields supplementary information to the visual material. As mentioned, this type of text is specifically related to the individual design as an integral part of its conception and legitimation.

In the jury's general remarks (3), the jury sums up the competition as an explanation for their choice of awards and commendations. Finally (4), the jury is obliged to write a criticism of each individual competition submission.

Thus one kind of text is prescriptive, it contains ideas and desires but has no concrete architectural reference. The second type of text is encapsulated in the individual design process, and the third and fourth kind represent the conclusion of the competition; with reference to the totality of visual proposals they are the final verbal legitimation of the competition.

I am not going to treat the different kinds of competition text separately in this dissertation, although this was the method I employed in my preliminary studies. However, it will be indicated from what kind of text the particular extracts are taken. The objective here is not so

much to investigate the individual design process or the promoters' provisional desires as it is to explore the whole of architectural design and accompanying texts which together express the hegemonic nature of competition architecture; the totality of competition documentation in which the body of texts constitutes the broader, joint 'discourse of legitimation' of the winning designs.

Quantitative evidence such as repetition (of points) and length of text is in this monograph taken as indicative among other typical features of the architectural writing. Insofar as common words used in the competition texts may have a particular 'architectural' meaning I will attempt to decodify these in order to make them more commonly understandable. Finally, my discussion of the texts has been structured according to the three main topics by which the prize-winning architecture and its rhetoric are treated (see Introduction). Thus the texts are juxtaposed in a dialectical discourse with the visual arguments which constitute their corresponding architectural reference.

9 Personal communication
10 Thomas A. Markus, *Buildings & Power: Freedom & Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types*, (London, New York, 1993), p. 19.

IV

THE MATERIAL

Time, place and category

Some of the major implications of having chosen architectural competitions as the subject for this study have already been outlined in the preceding chapters, but the background for my selection and delimitation of the material needs some further remarks.

The choice of *time* and *place* responds to my desire to explore a field of architecture that could be relevant in current debates and the teaching of architecture. I wished to explore below the surface of the immediate, contemporary situation with which I am confronted, in my country as well as in my professional community. On the one hand this choice might be said to lack the perspective of distance with regard to both place and time. But, on the other hand, due to its topicality it cannot be discarded as irrelevant. Moreover, it may lead to further insight into an area of architecture which we often take for granted, immersed as we are in the stream of challenges day after day.

As one is perpetually reminded of the 'changes' that occur so rapidly, and suspecting that such sudden changes might be more complex than is often alleged, I decided to embrace a continuous period of time of some duration: in essence the postwar period. And since the early postwar competitions are the result of processes initiated before the war, and furthermore reflect architectural attitudes from that era, I have chosen to include the important competition for the New Government Office Complex in 1939.

Thus, by placing the start of the period immediately before the Second World War, I have distanced myself from the traditional categorization into periods such as classicism, functionalism, post-war international style and so forth. I did this intentionally, as my objective is

not to study individual modes,¹ their origin, dissemination and decay, but to regard a period of time and look for typical features which may distinguish as well as transcend the modes.

Likewise I have concentrated my selection of competitions to one place, namely Oslo. Knowing that I might miss out on a few important competitions held elsewhere in Norway, the selection embraces all the competitions (within the defined category) held within the period of 51 years and is thus representative with regard to the general use of competitions in the capital of Norway. All the competition projects, then, originate from the same geographical and cultural entity. As a native inhabitant, beholder and investigator, I am familiar with Oslo in a way which is fundamentally different from my knowledge of any other town or place. In that sense I am able to treat all the various cases included in the material equally.

I have concentrated on architectural competitions for *public* building tasks, because the competitions not only embrace separate buildings, but also require plans for land use and development, as well as well-defined outdoor spaces. By *public* here I mean buildings promoted and owned by the State or municipal authorities, as well as by private foundations which receive public financial support or have some symbolic importance in society. For this reason, the competition for Høvikodden Art Centre just outside Oslo has been included. Moreover, competitions promoted by private developers on sites which are important or prominent in the city, such as Karl Johan *kvartalet* (a central city block) and the Storebrand Insurance Company Building, have also been included. In effect this means that competitions for housing developments is the category which is explicitly excluded.² Of a total of around 300 competi-

1 A *mode*, from L. *modus*; measure, manner, form, can be distinguished by the primary qualities that were sought, what method were employed in the approaches etc. There is a hierarchy of 'mode' distinctions. I think that the 'mode' is particularly evident in the design material: the rhetoric of drawings and models makes the 'mode' of the project easier to trace than in the finished building.

2 See also Bjørn Linn, p. 45. Nils-Ole Lund points out the particular importance of residential architecture in the Nordic countries, and devotes a special chapter to this in his book *Nordisk arkitektur*, pp. 171-200. However, housing competitions are very specialized: they span from the detailed scale of one dwelling, through repetition and variation to the land-use plan; moreover the financial and legislative systems make housing a very specific category, hence my delimitation.

ons held in Norway over the same period, the present study then embraces 36 competitions.

The concept of *public use* can vary from the principally open accessibility of concert halls, museums and shops, to the regular users of schools and institutions, to the select clients of the Bank of Norway central offices. However, 'use' not only includes the clients or visitors to these buildings, but also all those who are employed in these activities and places.

The competition publications and further delimitations

This study is based on the competition material as it has been published in the publications of the Association of Norwegian Architects which reproduces the prize-winning and purchased projects along with the text documentation. In the beginning this was done in a rather random fashion in the architectural review *Byggekunst*. The first separate issue of *Konkurransen* (the Competition) featured the competition for the Akershus area in 1953; later in the 1950s the name was altered to *Norske arkitektkonkurranser* (Norwegian Architectural Competitions).³ I have personally seen the exhibitions of original submissions in about one third of the competitions treated here, independently of this study.⁴

Certain aspects of the design material such as whether the drawings are pencil or ink, the various kinds of reproduction techniques used, the kind of paper quality, colouring and so on, are not included in this investigation. Only on exceptional occasions in the last fifteen years have selected reproductions been printed in colour.

Furthermore, the competition material has of course been selected and arranged by the editor in the process of publication. The present editor now only receives A3 Xerox copies of the awarded projects whereas the original material was used earlier. She also informs me that the financial limitations of the competition publication (paid by the promoter) are very severe and allow only a strictly limited number of pages. Over the period covered in this study, then, the publications vary with respect to the comprehensiveness of the coverage of the competition. This is particularly the case with the texts, which in some periods are abundant and in others so scarce that not even

all types of text have been included. A distinct change occurred in connection with the competition for the development of University of Oslo in 1968: the average length of the published text after that time is 3.5 times longer than before; the longest texts (the Bank of Norway, 1973, Vaterland and Grønland Market, 1982, and the City and the Fjord, 1983) are about 20 times longer than the shortest (Oslo Central Station, 1946).⁵ This does not necessarily mean that the real texts of the respective competitions were correspondingly long or short; this again is merely the result of the priorities of the editing process and the mentality it reflects.

This study defines the *official competition publication material* as its source and focus, and thus prevents itself from pursuing the original representation techniques in detail or the full extent of competition texts, both of which nevertheless represent interesting fields of investigation (to the extent that it is possible to retrieve such information). Thus the priorities of the editor determine the final elaboration of the competition material; the publications preserve the competition architecture as official events in the records of the profession.

As the focus of this study is hegemonic architecture and its rhetorical argument, I have concentrated on the winning projects; that is the 1st prize projects in cases where there was a 1st prize, and all the shared prizes when that was the result. In some competitions in which there was a jury dissent, or if there was a particularly innovative or striking commended project, this has also been included. All 36 competitions have been studied from every angle; these preliminary studies have served as a background for this monograph, in which certain typical or important competitions are focused upon. Owing to my intention of discussing the principles of a large body of material and over a period of time, I have decided to discuss the projects and the juries anonymously in this monograph. However, the names of the prize-winning architects and the architect jurors are provided in the appendix.

3 The editions are surprisingly incomplete and confusing; frequently unpaginated and undated. They are separate, but were published as special supplements to *Byggekunst* or *Arkitektmytt*.

4 Moreover, I have participated in six of the competitions in the material, and won prizes in two of these.

5 These calculations are based on my translations of the original text material into English.

V

THREE SHORT PRELUDES: IMAGES OF OSLO AND FUNCTIONALISM

The city of Oslo

Situated at the innermost end of the Oslo fjord, and surrounded by wooded hills of four to five hundred metres height, Oslo has a bowl-like topography; there is no valley dominating the landscape. Another feature which distinguishes Oslo is its low degree of density: the geographical area is large but the socio-material density, or *le cadre bâti*, is low, concentrated in the bottom of the bowl, along the valleys and the low-lying slopes. On the one side there is the fjord, on the other the wooded hills frame the view.

The old town, *Gamlebyen*, is 900-1000 years old, but there are but a few remains of this old settlement by the mouth of the river *Loelva* in the eastern part of the town. The 'new' town was founded by Christian IV of Denmark and Norway after the great fire in 1624. The remains of this town, which boasted a remarkable composition of ideal absolutist or classical order well-adapted to the local topography, is the basis for the grid pattern quarter *Kvadraturen* of today (to which we will return in connection with the competitions). Owing to numerous fires, only a few of the original buildings in *Kvadraturen* are left today but the spatial layout has remained intact (fig. 4).

Thanks to the treaty of Kiel in 1814, after the Napoleonic wars, Denmark was forced to hand Norway over to Sweden, under which rule the union between the two countries lasted until 1905.¹ Oslo, the capital since 1814, expanded dramatically during the 19th century. The population increased from the approximately the 12,000 of a small town in 1800, to nearly 230,000 (250,000 including Aker) in 1900; a growth that was noticeable not only in the many new buildings but also in an increased density of population (fig. 5). Of

the 6,705 buildings in Oslo in 1900, more than one fifth were less than ten years old.² Thus, in 1900 the appearance of the town was fresh and new. But the impression of the town was 'immature' and ungainly, like an adolescent at 'that awkward age', as the art historian Lorentz Dietrichson said.³ The town was not conceived as a capital, and it sooner displays the features of a colonial town. When the union with Sweden was dissolved in 1905, the new royal house and other institutions of an independent state settled in Oslo.

From 1910 onwards the expansion continued, not only by developing more open land, but also by tearing down existing buildings: 'The new pushed the old aside with "the force of an avalanche"', wrote the newspaper *Morgenposten* in 1915.⁴ *Sanering*, understood in the original sense of the word 'to make something healthy' from Latin *sanitas*, was the dominating objective in the programme for improvement: 'to level the old buildings to the ground, make plans and erect new buildings so that there can be light and air in the streets and in people's dwellings'.⁵ The expansion involved taller buildings, too, which now were possible owing to new technology, such as reinforced concrete and lifts. In 1938 it was declared that the spire of Vår Frelses church 'which we always used as a measure of height is becoming lower and lower in the city image'.⁶ Thus, in 1939 the population of Oslo and Aker was approximately 390,000.⁷ Although the town had expanded, and had changed radically since the turn of the century, some typical features of the town remain: the absence of historical remains in the built environment, the relatively low socio-material density and the impression of the short distance to large areas of undeveloped land.

¹ From being a 'province' of Denmark, the status was modernized as Norway had a constitution and a parliament of her own.

² Knut Kjeldstadli, *Den Delte Byen, fra 1900-1948, Oslo bys historie*, 4, (Oslo, 1990), p. 10.

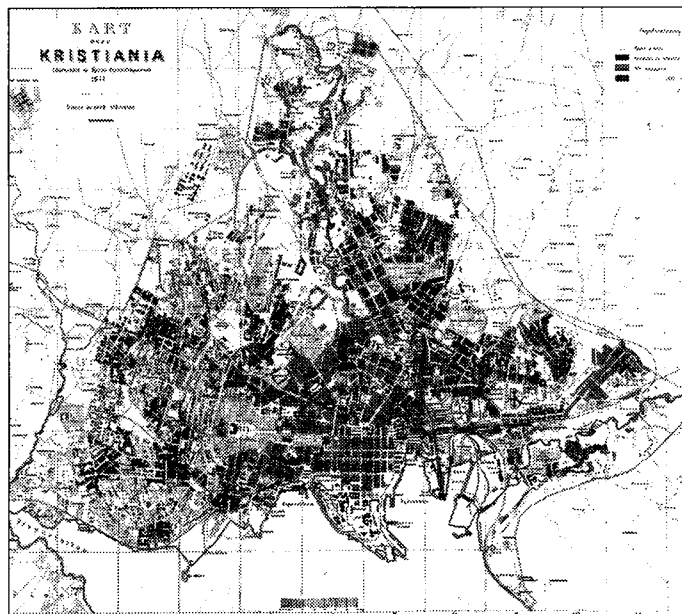
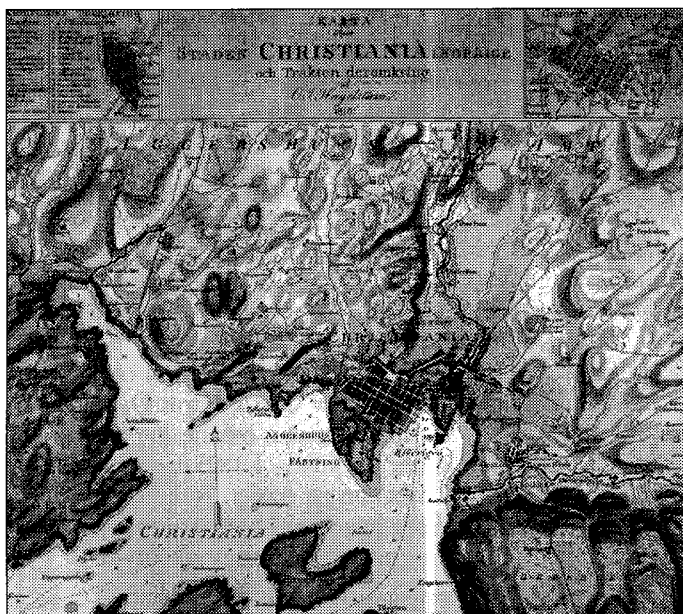
³ Quoted in Jan Eivind Myhre, *Hovedstaden Christiania: fra 1814 til 1900, Oslo bys historie*, 3, (Oslo, 1990), pp. 177, 180.

⁴ Quoted in Kjeldstadli, p. 366.

⁵ One of the main issues on the Labour Party manifesto in 1915, Carl Jeppesen, quoted in Kjeldstadli, p. 367.

⁶ City architect (*byarkitekt*) Harald Aars quoted in Kjeldstadli, p. 364.

⁷ The point here is the density of people within the same geographical area; the Oslo we have in mind is the Oslo which from 1948 included the old Aker municipality. The old Oslo had 275,000 inhabitants in 1939.



The architectural image of Oslo

Before the First World War, Oslo, or *Kristiania* as the town was called then, was commonly said to be 'indescribably ugly, dirty and dull'. It was:

an ugly town in a beautiful location; an international town, with the characteristics of a small town; an old town with a young population; the capital of Norway, but not politically dominating; one town, but distinctly divided into social classes.⁸

The tenement and business buildings in particular, erected during the boom in the 1880s and 1890s, were subject to especially severe contempt. The disdain was aimed at not only the historicist (Gothic as well as German-inspired, classical) lineaments of the buildings, but also the capitalist bourgeoisie that they represented. When erected in the eastern part of the town, these kinds of 3-5 storey buildings displayed classical plaster ornaments on their façades similar to the contemporary residential quarters in the western part. By contrast, however, the buildings in the eastern part of the town were clearly of a lower standard and much more densely populated than their counterparts in the west. They represent one of the typical poor conditions that Erik Rolfsen wrote of in 1940 as a contrast to the new goals:

The city of the 19th century: Dirty factories, dark backyards, narrow streets.

Diseases. Dismal conditions. Ruthless exploitation of people and nature.

The new city: Hygienic workplaces, housing in parks. Health. Well-being. Nature as the background and basis for life and work.⁹

Nor were the monumental buildings erected over the previous decades appreciated; they displayed a historicism that was commonly termed a 'discord of styles' (*stilforvirring*). There was the influence of *Jugendstil*, embodying intentions of being 'national', which dominated mainly before W. W. I. National Romanticism, sometimes including neo-Baroque and neo-Gothic elements, differed from the historicism of the 19th century in that the 'academic' composition orders were rejected; it became in Norberg-Schulz' terms, a pure *motif architecture*.¹⁰

The *classicists*,¹¹ making their impact primarily after the War, declared that the 'national' buildings were not Norwegian but a collection of miscellaneous Swedish details. Sceptical towards nationalism after W. W. I, they maintained that the allegation of a particular national feature was preposterous. Order, clarity and objectivity,¹² were ideals of the classicists, who were to influence the new developments in the town during the 1920s. In this period, a general economic expansion led to extensive building activity. With the increase in the political influence of the labour movement, modern housing for workers was demanded. This classicist archi-

4. (LEFT) MAP OF CHRISTIANIA

5. (RIGHT) MAP OF KRISTIANIA (OSLO) IN 1911

⁸ Kjeldstadli, p. 9.

⁹ Quoted in Kjeldstadli, p. 335. Erik Rolfsen was later to become the Head of Town Planning in Oslo after the War.

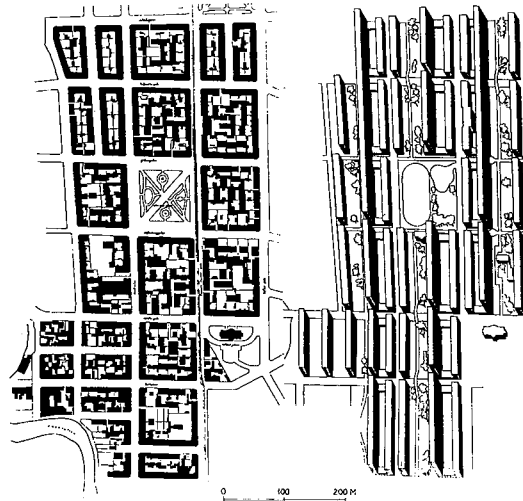
¹⁰ Christian Norberg-Schulz, 'Norsk arkitektur i femti år', *Byggekunst*, 43, no. 3, (1961), p. 62.

¹¹ In *Nattlandene* (1993) Norberg-Schulz calls this classicism of the 1920s 'late classicism' (*senklassisisme*) to distinguish from the neo-classicism of around 1800, whereas Kjeldstadli uses the term *nyklassisisme*, neo-classicism.

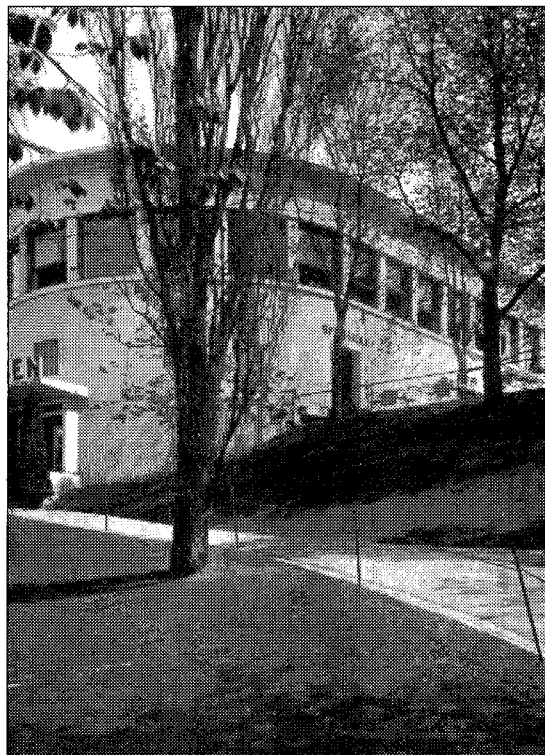
¹² *Saklighet*, or 'matter-of-factness'.

¹³ Kjeldstadli, Norberg-Schulz, (1961) and Seip.

6. GRÜNERLØKKA IN 1930,
AND MUNICIPAL PLAN PROPO-
SAL FROM 1936



7. SKANSEN RESTAURANT,
LARS BACKER



ecture is particularly visible in the new residen-
tial neighbourhoods; for instance Torshov.¹³

The Norwegian architects adopt functionalism

It is said that *functionalism* won over the archi-
tects in Norway in a comprehensive sweep of
enthusiasm around 1930. The 1930 Exhibition
in Stockholm, displaying remarkable buildings
and unorthodox forms which broke with the
historical styles, is generally regarded as the
catalyst for the breakthrough. Isolated, and out-
standing examples of functionalist architectural
projects had appeared in the late 1920s, but
from 1930 on the entire community of archi-

itects was working within the same 'formal lan-
guage'. Even 'the fathers of romanticism', says
Norberg-Schulz, attempted to assimilate the
new ideas. He cites Harald Aars who wrote in a
special issue of *Byggekunst* in 1931:

...it was 'the new objectivity' that put things
in their right place. . . Norway has joined
this immense orchestra which is attempting
to give the wonderful rhythm and melody of
the 20th century form and colour in stone,
glass, concrete and steel . . . The young archi-
tects of today know where they stand. They
have solid ground under their feet.¹⁴

The rhetorical power here is unquestionable,
metaphorical as well as inferential, summoning
everybody together within 'the immense
orchestra' and 'the wonderful rhythm and
melody'; they are united, marching ahead to
the wonderful modern rhythms on what they
perceived as solid ground. There is a striking
contrast between the seemingly rational princi-
ple of 'the new objectivity' and the emotionally
evocative nature of the rhetorical arguments;
how can objectivity be expected under such
suggestive incitements? However, I do not
intend to pursue this question here, but merely
point out the implicit relativity between princi-
ples and rhetorical devices of argumentation.

Within the general concept of modernism,
functionalism is said to represent a radical
break-away from the preceding styles, including
the last revival of classicism. This is undoubt-
edly so: its 'formal language', or aesthetic,¹⁵
represents a reaction against the arbitrary sub-
jectivity of romanticism as well as the bounded
conventions of classical symmetry based on
monumental dominance. Le Corbusier's for-
mulations in 'Five points to a new architecture'
in 1926 outline the main principles of a funda-
mentally new aesthetic. He distinguishes the
different tectonic components, the *pilotis* and
the *toit-jardins*, the *fenêtre en longueur* and the
façade libre, which permit an organization of
the spaces based on the 'free plan' rather than
on distinct components and symmetries.¹⁶

To put it very simply one could say that the
order, clarity and objectivity of functionalism is
distinguished from that of classicism by the
new 'freedom' of aesthetic and structural com-

position, a freedom which visually associated to machine technology and the parallel 'abstract' movement in the other arts. 'Characteristic for the Nordic interpretation of functionalism', writes Gunnilla Lundahl in connection with the 50th anniversary of the Stockholm Exhibition, 'is the moderate scale, the sense of nature and humanism'.¹⁷ In fact, Oslo has a considerable number of fine functionalist buildings from the 1930s; residential buildings as well as various public institutions. However, not only individual buildings and moderate urban projects were made in this pioneering period of functionalism but also large-scale urban plans were put forward, such as the renewal project for Grünerløkka in 1936 (fig. 6).¹⁸

Nevertheless, functionalism draws upon the freedom of composition inherited from romanticism. Furthermore, the connection between classicism and functionalism in Norway is evident, ideologically as well as architecturally. The common features include the typically clean and simple big shapes: long horizontal buildings with low roofs result from an emphasis on 'conscious and logical design'. They display a restraint in details and ornaments which occurs parallel with experimentation and standardization of building techniques. A recent article on Norwegian classicism from the 1920s points to this continuity, and includes classicism as an aspect of the modern architecture of this century. The author elegantly

demonstrates that *Skansen* restaurant, the first functionalist building in Norway designed by Lars Backer and erected in 1927, is a piece of 'classicism and modernism in beautiful union' (fig. 7).¹⁹ In fact, many of the most important functionalist architects were initially classicists who adapted the goals and approaches of their work. Thus, when the first competition in this study was held in 1939, modernism and functionalism had already made a vigorous impact on Norwegian architecture.²⁰

14 Norberg-Schulz, (1961), p. 67.

15 Aesthetic, from Gr. *Aisthesis*, feeling, and *Aisthetikos*, perceptive by feeling, in its original sense embraces all aspects of architecture perceived by the senses: visual, auditive, tactile, smells, temperatures and kinaesthesia (sensation of position, movement). Ideas or desires with respect to these aspects are encapsulated in the drawings as an integral part of the architectural design, or mode: Le Corbusier's *fenêtre en longeur* for instance acts aesthetically differently from an old fashioned

hole-in-the-wall window. The competition drawings can but yield a tentative impression of the factual aesthetic qualities under the physical conditions on the site. Against this background my use of the term aesthetic, which in general refers to the visual perception of the design material, should be understood in a wide sense. Thus, the distinction between aesthetic and architectural, and aesthetic and tectonic is not absolute: the one lends slightly more weight to the visible, surface aspects while the two others

embrace the structural, built totality. I am aware of the other meaning of aesthetic as 'beautiful', now an increasingly fashionable or trendy word, as the government also has instigated a programme for a more beautiful (aesthetic) built environment, with respect to architecture meaning the visual appearance of the buildings to the public space. The difficult problem is to define criteria for beauty.

16 Le Corbusier, 'Le 5 points d'une architecture nouvelle', *Oeuvre complète 1910-1929*, eighth edition, (Zürich, 1965),

pp. 128-129.

17 Gunnilla Lundahl, editor, *Nordisk Funktionalism*, (Stockholm, 1980), quoted in Norberg-Schulz, (1993), p. 133.

18 See Kjeldstadli, pp. 366-376.

19 Elisabeth Seip, '1920-talls klassisismen – den foreløpig siste klassisismen? Eller: På sporet av den moderne tid', manuscript, (Oslo, 1995), pp. 18-19. Lecture given at the Norwegian Institute of Art History and Archeology in Rome, October, 1994, to be published in Magne Malmanger, editor, *Klassikk og klassisisme*.

20 Functionalism is the

more common term for modernistic architecture in Norway; perhaps because the emphasis on utility and economy as well as technical rationality was particularly present in the Scandinavian welfare states. Consensus could be more easily achieved in a broad public by invoking these 'objective' purposes than associating to the abstractions of modern art. See also Weber, 'Zweckrationalität', on instrumental reason and instrumentalism.

PART TWO:
ARCHITECTURE AND RHETORIC

VI

NEWNESS AS GOODNESS A STORY OF DISCONTINUITY AND CONTRASTS

This chapter treats the question of how the 'new' manifests itself in relation to the 'old' in the competition material.

An understanding of the historical process as cultural *progress* was introduced in the early Renaissance. Christine Smith outlines some features distinguishing the Early Humanism from the Middle Ages on this point as she places Alberti's writing on the Florence Dome in a context of cultural progress: Alberti's evidence for man's ability to progress is drawn from architecture, but 'the true subject of the letter [to Brunelleschi] is human creativity, the capacity to invent. Cultural progress is the fruit of the interaction of individual *ingegno* with scientific knowledge'.¹ The merit of the dome lies in its absolute *originality*, claims Alberti, who describes it 'as a feat of engineering. . .that people did not believe possible these days and was probably equally unknown and unimaginable among the Ancients'.² To claim that a work for which there is no model or prototype is better than one that belongs to a tradition was at that time astonishing and revolutionary. The paradigm for this notion of progress is mechanical engineering, and the great achievements of Alberti's time were distinguished by an emphasis on practical inventions and the utilitarian application of theoretical knowledge.³

The belief in progress has gained ever more influence in the Western world, especially since the 17th and 18th centuries. But, parallel with this fundamentally progressive movement is a more Romantic and conservative one: a tendency to rehabilitate the Middle Ages. 'Every epoch is equally near God', is the slogan of the point of view called 'historicism' by the historian Leopold von Ranke, whilst Voltaire and the Enlightenment propagated that 'History is

always progressing'. By means of the Industrial Revolution and the successive technological inventions and expansion, the belief in progress has won a hegemonic position in modern Western societies. The general trend in this century is, thus, characterized by technology and technology-related economy.

At the start of the period covered in this study, the prevalent Norwegian political strategies were permeated by a belief in progress and improvement. Still, there was evidence in debates and underlying various decisions and actions, that there were nevertheless doubts and objections: there must surely be something wrong with a culture that can cause such atrocities as the two world wars. The class struggle before the war was forgotten after W.W.II, and people attempted to start afresh, with a new beginning looking ahead from year Zero, united in a new state of consensus.

In the following the overall question of the 'new' versus the 'old' in the Oslo competitions will be treated using the three different types of rhetoric as they appear in the competition material. Starting with the typical features of the 1940s, then the 1980s, the chapter subsequently discusses the 'turning point' which marks the change in attitudes. Furthermore, the topic of high-rise buildings is treated as a special variant of the same problem.

CLEANLINESS ERADICATES THE OLD IN THE 1940s

In the presentation of the Vestre Vika competition in 1948, the editor of *Byggekunst* employs terms such as

clearance of the crooked, old and derelict

- 1 Smith, p. 21. *Ingegno*, from L. *ingenium*, intellect, mental power, shrewdness, capacity of understanding, inventiveness, (from *gignere*, produce); an *ingegnario*, *ingegnere*, engineer, is a person having *ingegno*.
- 2 Quoted in Smith, p. 26, from J. Spencer's translation of the letter to Brunelleschi in *Leon Battista Alberti: On Painting* (New Haven, Conn., 1966). The letter appears in the preface to the 1436 version of Alberti's *Della Pittura*.
- 3 Smith, pp. 21-29, 37-39.
- 4 'Reguleringen av Vestre Vika, konkurransen 1947', *Byggekunst*, 30, no. 2, (1948), p. 25. The text moreover referred to the competition for the same area which was held in 1937 (See also Kjelstadli p. 390).
- 5 *BK*, 30, no. 2, (1948), p. 32
- 6 *BK*, 30, no.2, (1948), p. 35
- 7 *BK*, 22, (1940), pp. 34-56, (pp. 35, 37, 41).
- 8 I would have used the N. term *lamellblokk*, adopted from the German, but 'lamella block' is not common in English; neither is 'slab' which appears occasionally in architectural texts.
- 9 A thesis by a group of students at the Oslo School of Architecture in 1976 treats the Government Building, the competition in 1939 and the realized project of 1958; a critical, Marxist approach. Petter Bogen, Lene Frank, Nils Friis, Lars Haukeland, Gudrun Mathisen, *Et notat om samfunn, arkitektur og ideologi*, (Oslo, 1976).

part of the town . . . modern requirements for light and air.⁴

Even Victoria *terrace*, a complex of four storeys, originally patrician residential buildings erected 1884-90, was described as 'crooked and ugly'.⁵ The total removal of old values in exchange for new values was the predominant issue in the first period of the competition material. In the competition for the New Government Building in 1939, the jury concludes that the great difficulties involved in the task are

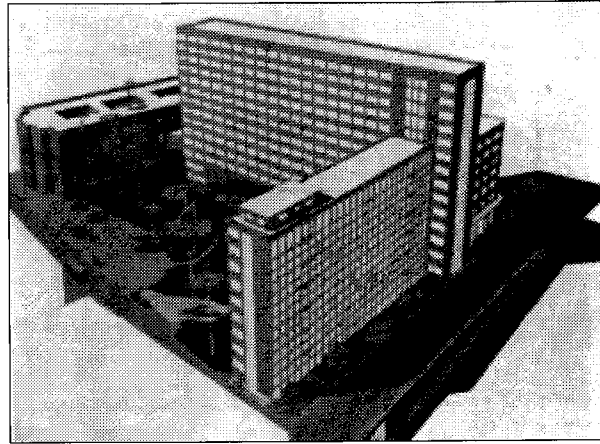
primarily due to the site and to the existing [Government] building from 1906 which, because of its large masses [four storeys], forms a barrier to the south, and whose architecture is not easily adaptable to the demands one now makes to the further extension of the complex.⁶

These modern demands are clearly emphasized as the texts recurrently focus on the daylight conditions:

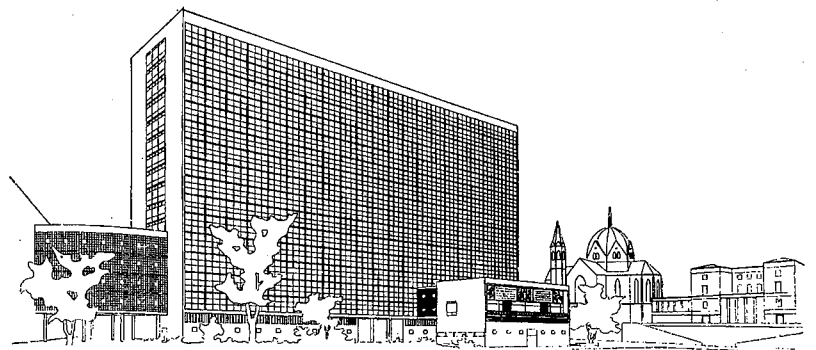
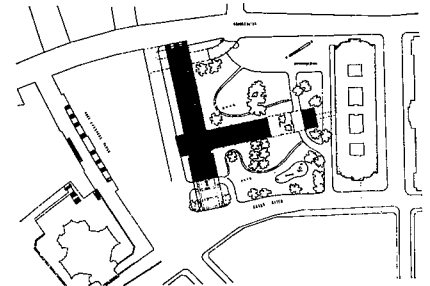
. . . large distance to the surrounding buildings and better sun lighting of the offices . . . no office shall face north . . . all the offices will get sunlight.⁷

Two aspects are given particular attention in the site plan: the *distance* to the surrounding buildings and the demands to the new architecture related to the conceptions of *optimal daylight*, which means certain quantitative requirements to side windows. Three of the four shared-prize projects display high, narrow, free-standing blocks,⁸ in two cases placed at an oblique angle to the old government building, their long façades facing east or west, thus obtaining the ideal sunlight conditions (figs. 8-11).⁹

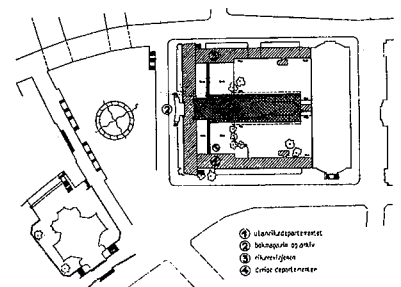
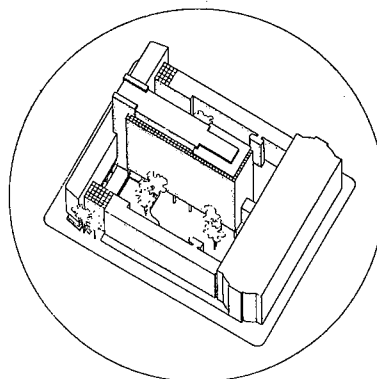
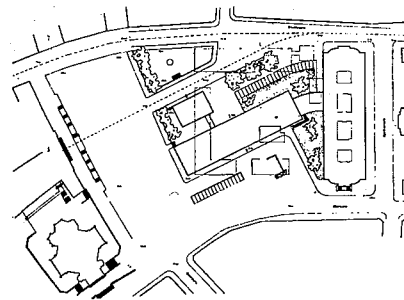
The principle of *contrast* is underlined by creating great distances between the new buildings and the old. The new edifices are placed in the middle of the site with ample open space on all sides except for the narrow connection to the old government building. The simplicity and bareness of form displays a certain harshness which is further amplified by the large dimensions which appear stunningly dominant and alien in the environment.



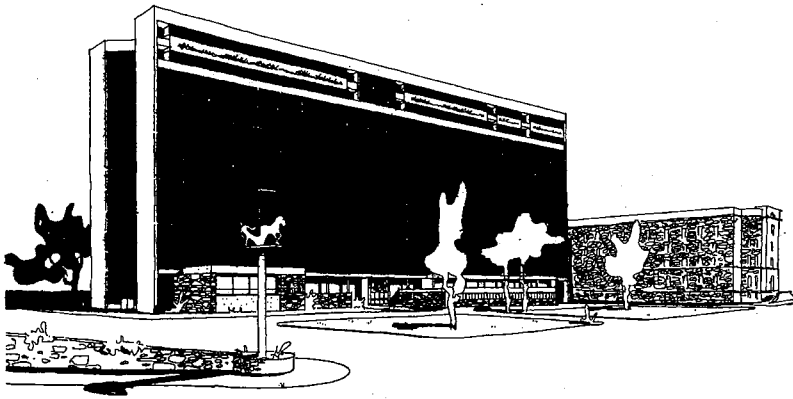
8. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'FRI', SITE PLAN AND PERSPECTIVE



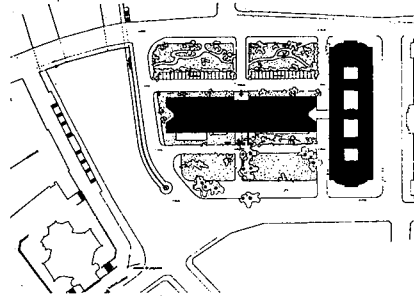
9. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'RYTME', SITE PLAN AND PERSPECTIVE



10. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'U', SITE PLAN AND PERSPECTIVE



11. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'VESTIBYLE', SITE PLAN AND PERSPECTIVE



Graphically the surroundings are presented as vague or disconnected, so that the new buildings appear to be set in open voids; having explicitly different architectural lineaments, they appear as independent and self-assertive objects, not suggesting any connection with the surroundings.

By exaggerating the contrasts between light and dark in the perspective drawing of motto 'Fri', the edifice seems to gleam with light coming out of the windows. With regard to the dominance of light over form in drawing Gombrich believes that:

these equivalences of texture touch a deeper layer of awareness. We instinctively feel that glitter means, if not gold, at least smoothness, brightness, a sensual quality to which we respond with greater immediacy than we respond to outline and which is therefore less easily analysed.¹⁰

Thus, by highlighting the new shapes and their external lineaments while toning down the old, the graphic representation of the Government Building competition focuses on the ideal aspect: the buildings impress us as objects gleaming with *newness* and dissimilarity compared with images of the known; a dissimilarity in principle rather than in relation to its actual historic neighbours. The exterior perspective of the 1st prize project in the competition for the

Central Station in 1947¹¹ (fig. 12) and the 2nd prize design in the competition for the Extension of the Parliament Building in 1949¹² display a similarly dramatic graphic effect of light and dark. The 'night perspectives' emerged in the United States of America and became popular around 1910; the influence of modern technology on modern life, in this case electricity which is one of the most important, is thus depicted in a dramatic and suggestive manner.

In general, only extremely unique buildings were deemed valuable for posterity. The old Akershus Castle is an example of this, as shown in the land-use ideas competition of 1953, which persuasively demonstrates the principle of *segregating* the new developments from the existing. The purpose of the competition was to encourage proposals for the most suitable and aesthetically pleasing use of the area, and an expansion of the harbour area, an arrangement of a major thoroughfare, and office buildings. By razing much of the area, including parts of Kvadraturen, all three shared-prize projects chose to create vast open spaces between the old castle walls and the rest of the urban structure (fig. 13). This open land is transformed into a park with lakes and vegetation arranged in free, informal shapes with the main traffic artery running as a curved line through the park. The drawings *graphically* underline the open land by the shading of grass, trees and water. In the proposal by motto: 'The castle – the plain – the road – the town', heavy dark contours make the fortification walls stand out against the large open plain that has been cleared, as the author desires that

everything that can veil and erase the effect of the mighty edifice of Akershus Castle must be removed, even trees!¹³

Naturally, the regard for the old castle was stressed in the brief:

All possible consideration must be taken to the near vicinity of the Akershus Castle, the park and the surrounding walls. Building heights and masses should not appear ugly

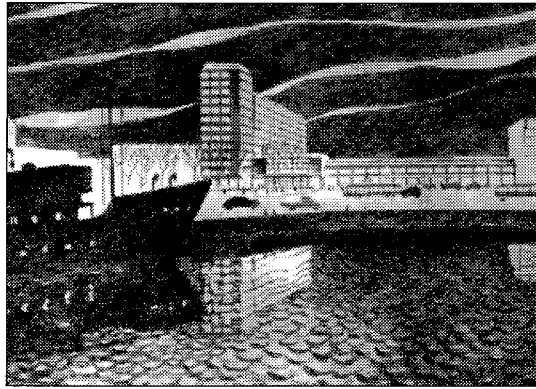
- 10 E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, third edition, (London, 1968), pp. 281-282.
- 11 *BK*, 29, no. 1-2, (1947), p. 15.
- 12 *BK*, 31, no. 12, (1949), p. 209.
- 13 *Konkurransen*, no.1, (s. a.), p. 7.
- 14 *K*, no.1, p. 1.
- 15 *K*, no.1, p. 1. This seems a paradox: the avant-garde, first functionalist building in Norway disturbed the image of a clean, open space and a 'total' plan. The so-called Skansen war, *Skanseskrigen*, in which the 'friends of the Akershus castle', *Akershus slotts venner*, played an active role, was waged in the newspapers in the 1960s. Skansen restaurant was demolished in 1970. In the autumn of 1995 proposals for erecting a copy of Skansen restaurant on the old site were forwarded by prominent architects and antiquarians.
- 16 'Cubic' is used not only in its strict geometric sense (meaning all sides are equal) but for plain rectangular volumes.
- 17 Kjeldstadli. Moreover Benum, who writes about the efforts to eradicate the misery of the past, pp. 12-18.

from the sea nor from the park.¹⁴

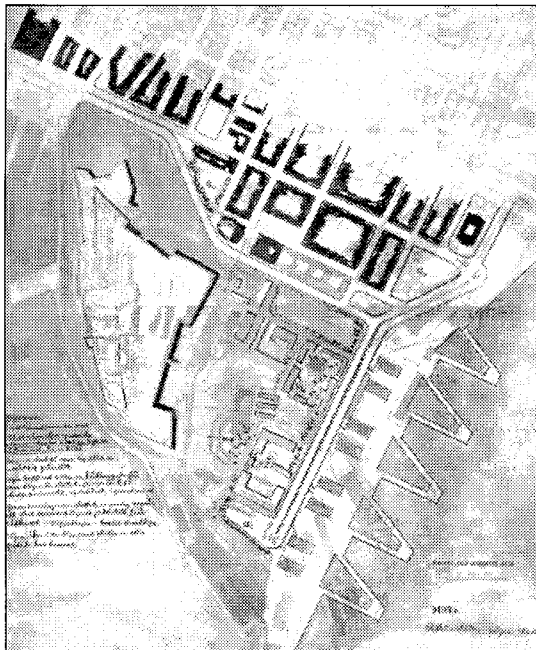
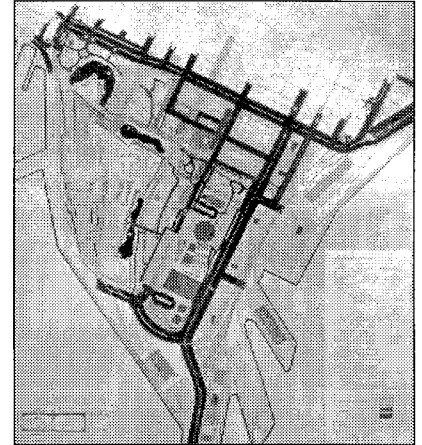
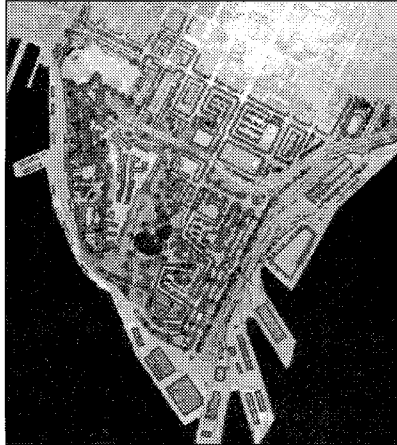
The bare and rough lineaments of the old castle were aesthetically acceptable but not the functionalist Skansen restaurant in the park (see chapter V), which according to the brief could be expected to be torn down within a few years.¹⁵ This building would disturb the aesthetic purity of the scheme, regarded from the point of view of the progressive ideals which in this case coincided with the supporters of preservation of historic monuments. New building complexes, mainly offices, in the cleared urban area are introduced as bare, narrow, cubic¹⁶ forms in various configurations in all three proposals. Some of this development looks dense and compact, in contrast to the open land.

Not only would the park isolate the castle from the town, but also the through road would become a barrier and impede the practical connection to the town. At that time in the early 1950s, people could not imagine the impact that automobile traffic would come to exert in towns 30-40 years later. The point here, however, is not the solution of the traffic problem which actually in one of the prize-winning plans was proposed with an underground tunnel similar to Oslotunnelen of today. The point is the notion of the value of open spaces and parks: these are not considered in relation to any social, demographic studies; who would use this park, having first to pass through a dense area of modern office complexes and cross a motorway as well? The abstract presentations indicate that the open spaces were valued for their *visual effects* rather than integral qualities of use and aesthetics. Vast areas of open air (spaces that *look healthy*) are provided while the visual effect of segregation emphasizes the old castle as a remarkable, historic object fundamentally different from the new.

The statements giving prominence to light and air in these competitions were in agreement with the mainstream in politics and social development at the time: *hygiene* was an imperative, and removal of the old, that was reminiscent of the misery of the past seemed to be inextricably tied to the projects of improvement.¹⁷ A design that provides sunlight and



12. OSLO CENTRAL STATION, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, PERSPECTIVE



13. THE AKERSHUS AREA, MOTTO 'I PARK' (LEFT) MOTTO 'VI KAN 1958' (RIGHT) MOTTO 'SLOTTET-SLÄTTEN -VÄGEN- STADEN' (THE CASTLE - THE PLAIN - THE ROAD - THE TOWN) (LEFT)

open space can be decidedly meaningful compared with the dark, damp and smelly backyards in neighbourhoods such as Sigrid Undset's Keyersgate 5, as described by Giske Anderson:

As you go through the gate into the backyard you see the same 'well' that most of the rooms opened out on to. At that time they had 'dumping toilets' which were emptied at

regular times by the *poudrette* man. Then the smell would rise up the 'well' and waft into the rooms whose windows were open. Even at other times it was difficult to air out the new flat [Undset's], as cooking smells from eight kitchens oozed in.¹⁸

Adequate explanations for the desire to improve the physical conditions under which people lived and worked are easy to find in social history as are reasons for the implementation of new technical inventions, too. But this does not fully account for the contempt and total disregard for actual places and their architecture that are expressed in the early competitions. One can easily imagine that the old buildings could be physically and mentally healthy enough if they were only renovated, supplied with electricity and sanitary equipment and the density of inhabitants was reduced.

The programme for the modernist architecture implied a total rejection of bourgeois architectural lineaments. In the words of Le Corbusier, as he advocates the engineer's aesthetic and mass production: 'the "styles" no longer exist, they are outside our ken; if they still trouble us, it is as parasites'.¹⁹ Not only did modern architecture imply a stunningly different aesthetic, but an entirely new urban layout:

Instead of our towns being laid out in massive quadrangles with the streets in narrow trenches . . . and enclosing unhealthy courtyards, airless and sunless wells, our new layout, employing the same area and housing the same number of people, would show great blocks of houses with successive set-backs, stretching along arterial avenues.²⁰

This is but one example of Le Corbusier's rhetoric which, legitimated by the hygiene ideology, in a highly suggestive manner identifies the old urban structure as reprehensible, and promotes the new type of effective, healthy or 'organic' (arterial) layout as something completely different. Le Corbusier's writings together with his drawings had a tremendous impact on the architecture of the 20th century, as is commonly acknowledged. Compared with the plans of Le Corbusier, which were stretched

out in vast open areas, the site of the Government Building competition was sadly constrained. Even the possibility of considering any local qualities in the environment did not seem to be an issue.

The competitions from the first period bear witness to a complete mental distance to the manifestations of the past. The interesting point is that, in transforming the international ideals to the Norwegian society and Norwegian climate and topography, the imagination involved when setting out to create new, healthy developments seems to have been amazingly constricted and dogmatic. Today, it seems astounding that the simplistic arguments of Le Corbusier could have gained such influence.

The competition texts legitimate the total rejection of the past by referring to health issues, and could thus gain adherence as part of the broad public project of progress. This programme for improvement not only embraced the physical conditions but also a mental modernization of society as a whole.

The programme for mental hygiene was in keeping with an older movement, which placed importance on hygiene in a more medical sense. After the war, the new in *this* area consisted less in the ideas than in the possibilities for their realization. The open layout of the buildings in itself was a part of this realization. Light and air would be let in. The sun provided light and it disinfected.²¹

Hygiene also included mental hygiene, and the implicit modern standards that are referred to in the competition texts imply a more radical difference than merely to improve the physically unhealthy conditions. This difference is made distinctly visible as the new architecture manifests itself with a saliently different aesthetic. Terms referring to the appearance of the existing buildings were used in taking a stand against the old; not only was the old unhealthy, crooked and not adaptable to modern use, but it was *ugly*. The new architecture indirectly and *a priori* implied beauty by its difference from the old. What this beauty consists of is not explained or discussed, but the implicit beauty of something that

18 Gidske Anderson, *Sigrid Undset. Et liv*, (Oslo, 1989), p. 89. Norwegian 'pudrett', from Fr. *poudrette*, latrine manure. Further readings: Yngvar Ustrvedt. 'Med Sigrid Undset i Oslo', *St. Hallvard*, no. 2, (Oslo, 1990), pp. 21-32.

Moreover Liv Bliksrud's dissertation, *Natur og norm hos Sigrid Undset*, (Oslo, 1988), gave new insights into the period.

19 Le Corbusier, (1986), p. 286.

20 Le Corbusier, (1986), p. 61.

21 Benum, p. 30.

is good as opposed to the old and bad 'ugliness' could thus have a strong rhetorical effect in the argumentation.

The *graphical* emphasis on the exterior in the first period substantiates the importance of signalling the new by way of aesthetics. The social programmes which had been included in classicism, were here further narrowed down architecturally and interpreted in the simple guidelines promoting the bare and square, narrow building cubes. In the Norwegian context, this type of architecture and its simple squareness is expressed by the concept of *blokken* which appears frequently in the competition texts.²²

The prize-winning designs disclose a surprisingly static view of the future, considering the dynamic intensity of development that was a major drive in the period. The formal explicitness of the architecture, as shown particularly in the perspectives, expresses the self-sufficiency of the architectural creations, and underlines them as final products: imposing objects of perfection that cannot be easily modified or altered. Moreover, the self-assertedness of the new architecture confirms a belief in technocracy, in the substitution of human domination of politics by *L'administration des choses* (Saint-Simon); a belief that problems can be solved by building and constructing. The technocratic rhetoric was typical for the politics of modernization. In particular the technocratic and 'scientific' distinguished the leadership of the Labour party in the years after W.W.II, says the historian of ideas Geir Grothen in his thesis on Norwegian welfare culture.²³ The class struggles from before the war were over, and in 1945 all parties adhered to the joint programme for rebuilding and the future. The ideas and models for progress which were developed in the 1920s and 1930s were further consolidated and worked out for realization under a political rule based on pragmatic reason and 'scientific' legitimation.

The presentations of the competitions projects feature this line of totalizing technocratic manifestation from the most striking idealizations of the 1930s through the pragmatic, self-asserted expressions of 'culture as a matter of course' of the 1940s and 1950s, as Grothen

says. The competition rhetoric advances the new with an optimism on behalf of the future as enlightened, rational and ordered; a future in which the images of the past were toned down, if not totally erased.

LIVE AND LET LIVE IN THE 1980s

Diversity distinguishes the competitions of the 1980s. There is diversity in the complexity of the task; in addition to competitions for buildings and land-use developments, competitions were held for smaller tasks, too, such as the Landscaping of the Government Offices Complex and Wessels *plass*, a small city square. Although these competitions were different, and although the prize-winning designs featured different architectural approaches and characteristics, the verbal statements bear witness to common problems and common thinking.

In the competition for the Landscaping of the Government Offices Complex in 1990, the purpose was to create *coherence* in the very same place that was the subject of the competition for the Government Building fifty years earlier. The competition was held in order to complete the complex and to cushion the effects of the different constructions on the site, as the jury remarks:

Unifying components or kinship with the central urban space [within the complex] are necessary in order to create unity in the area. The competition has fully shown the difficulty of the task of connecting the highly dissimilar buildings and urban spaces.²⁴

The various existing structures are carefully described and considered with respect to the options of intervention. This is done in detail, right down to a short, partially damaged, avenue of old lime trees, which in the opinion of the jury it is

scarcely desirable or realistic to remove in the near future.²⁵

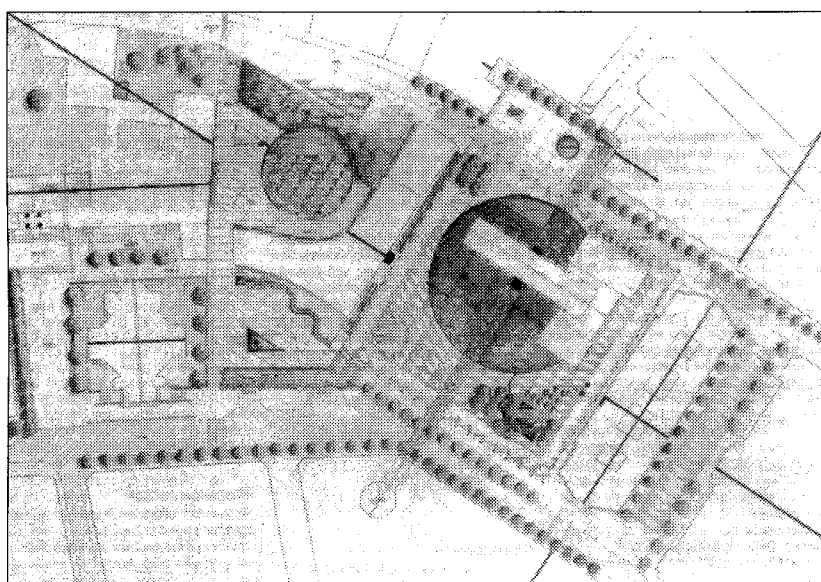
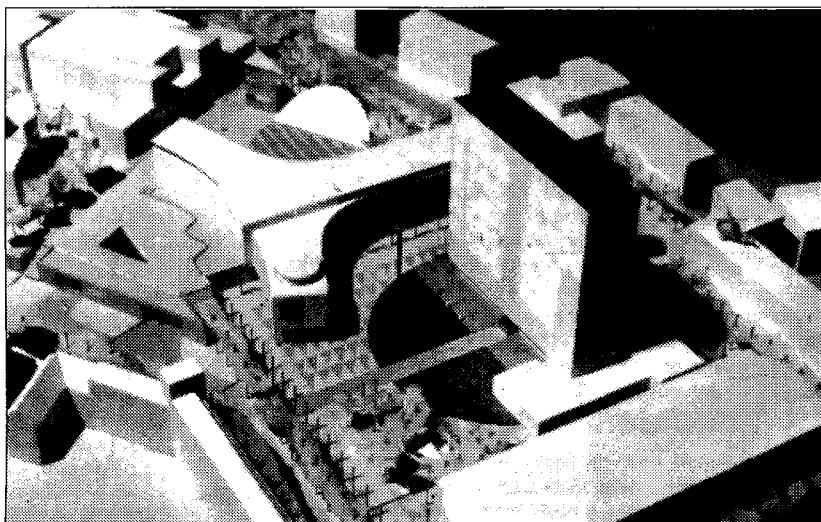
Thus, the *text* conjures up the aim of creating *wholeness* and *unity*, but at the same time it

22 A *blokk* is the same as the English 'block'; a block of granite etc. However, in Norwegian it does not mean a block of houses or the area between 4 streets (*et kvartal*); in architecture it simply means a plain, usually orthogonal and compact volume.

23 Geir Grothen, *Velferdens kultur: Statens kulturbegreper i etterkrigstiden*, (Oslo, 1995), pp. 7-10.

24 *Norske arkitektonkonkurranser*, no. 294, (1990), p. 3.

25 *NAK*, no. 294, p. 3.



14. LANDSCAPING OF THE GOVERNMENT OFFICES COMPLEX, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, MODEL AND SITE PLAN

presents a detailed series of reservations on behalf of the 'old' as in the case of the lime trees; it is indeed a demanding task.

The *visual rhetoric* of the 1st prize project unmistakably takes into account the existing environment. In particular, the model shows the adaptation of urban spaces with pavements, a water basin and trees in a concrete and lively manner. Light green tissue paper as tree crowns as well as the repetition of a graphically distinct pavement pattern certainly create a *visual effect of unity* and coherence between the different buildings. This unifying effect is enhanced by the mirror used to depict the large, semi-circular water basin which serves as a grand introduction to the central high-rise building with the prime minister's office on the top (fig. 14).²⁶

The drawings are more abstract: a softness in the plan drawings, which are coloured, cushions the actual hardness in the concrete situa-

tion. Suggestive, collage-like sketches hint at inspirations, yielding fragmented images, and thus mediate a *sense of temporality*, change and life. Contrary to the competition of 1939, this design presents a limited and modest material intervention which is carefully adjusted to the existing structures. However, the drawings with which it is represented make this reality 'melt somewhat into air', abstracting itself by indicating an infinity of conceivable impressions and experiences.

The unifying aspect in relation to the existing environment was particularly underlined in the preceding example. That competition was exceptional in the sense that it did not include the design of new buildings. In the Aker Brygge Aqua-Leisure Centre competition of 1987, which was held in connection with a large-scale city renewal scheme, the environment is but briefly described. From comments implicit in the text, however, it is clear that the architectural relationship of the baths to its context was given great weight; the site was indeed positioned in the major harbour basin in front of the City Hall. The jury text (which is short; the brief is not mentioned in the publication) states that:

... the residential and commercial development behind the site is extended to Tingvallakaia, as a dense and firm structure in a harmonious interplay with Akershus Castle and the huge *massif* of the City Hall . . . It is in the power lines between these points of gravitation that the baths complex should find its place as an independent, living organism.²⁷

The jury's general remarks pay respect to the main constructions in the environment in a considerable range and detail:

the central axis in the inner harbour basin . . . the dry dock as well as the 'prospect avenue' describing a third line in the intricate complex of lines which forms the basis for the formal challenge . . . the area is very sensitive with regard to building in the water in front of the quay . . . should be a calm cultivated form rather than an extreme, dramatically exposed edifice.²⁸

26 Based on motto 'Vestibyle' in the competition of 1939.

27 NAK, no. 277, (s. a.) p. 3.

28 NAK, no. 277, p. 3.

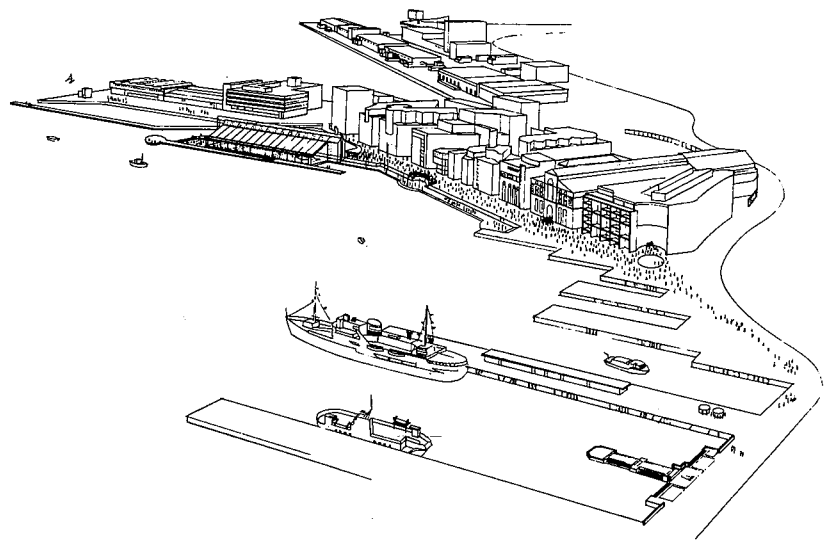
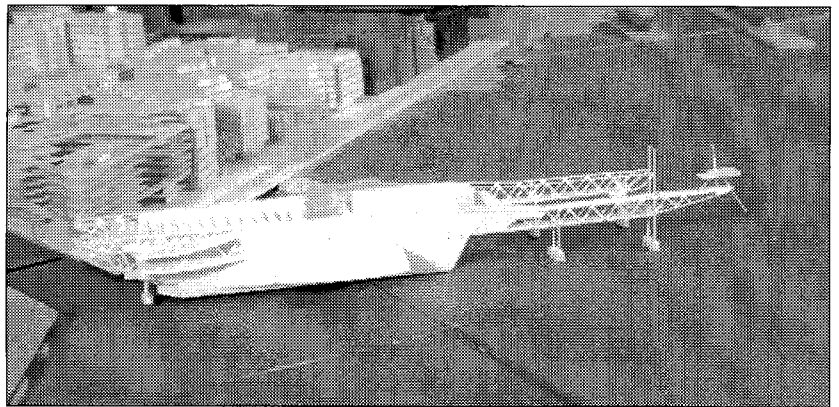
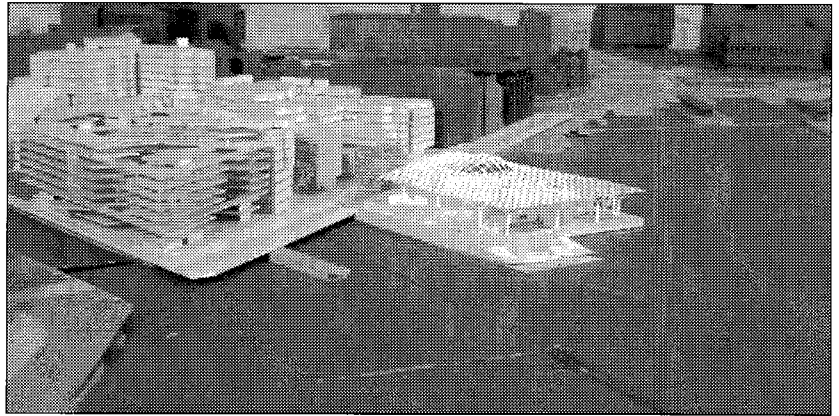
Simultaneously the jury shares the opinion expressed by several competitors of:

creating the building with a character of its own as a living organism with visible functions behind glass walls, as a contrast to the more powerful constructions . . . the baths as a living edifice which spurs the imagination (*fantasieggende*) and reflects the joy of bathing.²⁹

The rhetorical implications are intriguing: the inorganic physical gravity (the unmovable massiveness) of the surrounding monuments, and the bubbling character of the baths preconceived as an independent creature, but which is connected to the given, firm heaviness by immaterial 'power lines'. A 'calm cultivated form' indicates an aesthetic subordination to the severity of the 'power lines'. But this is contradicted by the emphasis on the baths having a character of its own marked by lightness and vivid activity, a constant challenge and contrast to the powerful firmness. The duality, thus, is evident as the rhetoric stresses respect and interdependence, and simultaneously advocates contrast in that the baths must have an *identity* which is fundamentally different from, but which enriches and completes the existing environment.

The balancing of physical and social aspects is crucial in architecture as well as in its argumentation: vitality can be expressed as lively, suggestive *physical forms* or *social vivacity*. The 1st and 2nd prize projects both have calm and simple external shapes, one far more imposing and square than the other. Their existence as unique buildings mark them as independent objects in the setting. This *architectural independence* is further reinforced in the 3rd prize project as it, quite differently, shows extremely diverse and active forms positioned in an even more contrasting way, whilst the social activity here is concealed (figs. 15, 16 and 17).

Thorough consideration has been given by the jury to the placing of the building and the visual consequences for the view from the City Hall as well as from the 'prospect avenue' at Aker Brygge. A vivid debate in the newspapers, involving the huge, floating car parking structure that had been placed on the site for some



years, had focused on the project as a sensitive issue of public importance. Nonetheless, in the end the 'calm-cultivated-form-living-organism' of the 1st prize is a huge cubic volume, not cautiously set back alongside the quay, like the 2nd prize design, but protruding squarely into the harbour basin. This fact is *obscured* by both the graphic and the verbal rhetoric.

The location of the Aker Brygge Aqua-Leisure Centre is unique; it can be compared with that of Sidney Opera House; a position in which any building is bound to be perceived in an extraordinary and large context. As a sculp-

15. (TOP) AKER BRYGGE BATHS, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT
16. (MIDDLE) AKER BRYGGE BATHS, 3RD PRIZE PROJECT
17. (BELOW) AKER BRYGGE BATHS, 2ND PRIZE PROJECT

29 NAK, no. 277, p. 3

tural form a bare cubic volume acts as an abstraction of man's diverse built forms, his infinite variations of rectangular principles; an abstraction yielding to the bare geometric principle of vertex and horizon. A bare cubic form does not possess the relief transitions of solids and shadows, nor of crowning roofs such as classic temples; neither does it offer the plastic qualities of roof terraces and other vernacular figurations of basically cubic architecture; nor can its figurations express a symbolic response to gravity or the infinite marvels of space, as Utzon's Sidney Opera House does.³⁰

A bare cubic building can be provocative as it appears to be both indifferent to the environment and at the same time inclusive without boundaries, if it is made of glass and experienced at close range. How can a huge plain, glass box seen from a distance appear more aesthetically attractive than an ordinary warehouse in the main harbour basin? Would it be tempting as a parcel that we could not resist approaching to unwrap, to see and touch what was inside? The author of the 1st prize project must have been aware of the 'big box provocation' since he had already 'unwrapped' the building in his visual presentation: by simply leaving out the walls he subdues the large, plain outer squareness, as shown in the model.

The jury's preference for a 'calm and cultivated form' seems reassuring, as if it satisfies aesthetic demands for caution and respect, almost subordination, to the immediate environment. This choice, however, failed to assess the importance of the third dimension, that is the sculptural effect in the greater spatial context which is unique to the site.

The aqua-leisure centre text, flourishing in its descriptions of the *living* qualities and the joy of people using the baths persuasively influences our perception of the architecture. This is amplified by the visual rhetoric: by omitting the walls, the 1st prize project exposes the lively curved internal terraces and pools, suggesting vivid activities taking place as if in a large open landscape. The 'living organism' is not the building but the exciting arrangement of human activity; the public display of living creatures in the urban space. A similar conception of the importance of human activity is the

stream of people walking along the waterfront in the exterior perspective drawing of the 2nd prize proposal as shown in figure 17. In both cases the rhetorical function is to stress the importance of the *social activity*, if necessary to persuade the audience that the social effects of the prefigured building surpass any aesthetic disadvantages in the environment.

The competition for Oslo's waterfront in 1982, which formed the basis for the Aker Brygge development, involved extensive references to historical aspects, to the existing built environment and activities. Revitalization and variety was to be achieved by making the city centre 'attractive' and 'accessible', but the premiated architectural measures were somewhat vague; writing (expressing good intentions) seemed practically as important as design in the representation.³¹

A stream of pedestrians is a major issue in the Vaterland and Grønland Market competition, 1982, too, which was a large-scale, urban development task:

. . . a main function to accommodate thousands of everyday pedestrians. . .

As the property prices were expected to be high,

a rather high utilization is presupposed while developing a good and continuous pedestrian environment is simultaneously stressed.³²

The environment in the eastern part of Oslo was complex: renewal of the area was long overdue as the site had been abandoned for years since the clearance of the area was initiated in the 1950s. Meanwhile the old residential areas to the north were gradually being renewed, and Postgirobygget, a plain brown high-rise building, had been erected across the street to the south where also the new buildings for the Central Station (based on the 1946 competition) were being constructed. Traffic was a major problem as the main motor thoroughfare in Oslo runs nearby and connects to a huge flyover crossing on the site, which moreover was to house a major

30 The third prize submitted by Boissevain and Osmond in the competition for Sidney Opera House, shows a project consisting of two cubic volumes; it illustrates the architectural impoverishment of placing 'ordinary' buildings in such a unique situation. See Haan, Hilde and Ids Haagsma, p. 139.

31 *NAK*, no. 252.

32 *NAK*, no. 246, (1982), p. 28.

bus terminal. A chief goal stated by the municipality of Oslo was

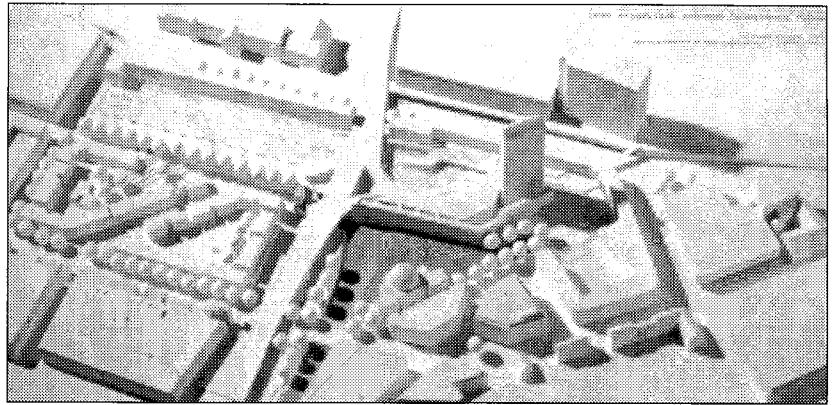
to even the social and economic asymmetry in the city, among other things by making the eastern part of the city centre more attractive.³³

The jury stressed three aspects which were immediately appealing in the 1st prize proposal:

The relationship to the surroundings, the achievements in the plan area, and that the development pattern is not tied up.³⁴

The project is distinguished by an extremely clear layout:

A simple and efficient plan constitutes the framework for a rich social life by a beautifully shaped inner urban space with the expanded mirror of water of Akerselva as a central plane and with a high, slender hotel edifice as an audacious mark in the airspace.³⁵



18. VATERLAND AND GRØNLAND MARKET, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT

The physical dimensions of new masses in relation to the old play a role in the overall view, but no less important are the *spaces between* the buildings, be they emphasized by abstract geometric considerations or simply as open routes for movement and gathering. Thus the rhetorical emphasis on *wholeness* and coherence has a social meaning. The spatial arrangement of movement of people is regarded as a means to connect and unify the area. Hence 'attractive', 'attractiveness' and 'accessibility', terms that are frequently used in the competition texts of the 1980s, make sense.

The terms seem to include the visual and *commemorative* attractiveness of historical monuments as well as modern responses to contemporary life; to traffic terminals, shops, service facilities and cultural institutions. The physical layout secures the accessibility that can prove the attractiveness of the places. 'Attractiveness' and 'accessibility' are central concepts in the commercialism that has grown steadily since W.W. II, in Norway especially visible since the 1970s. These concepts are extended to embrace various aesthetic qualities as well, thus neutralizing the latent criticism of urban development being controlled by commercialism alone. The combination of *commercial* and *practical* attractions on the one hand, and wider *aesthetic* attractions, such as the fjord and the view of Akershus on the other hand, is important in the aqua-leisure centre. The juxtaposition of complementary qualities is crucial in the Vaterland and Grønland Market competition, too. The huge mirror of water introduces an aesthetic, recreational component and moreover represents the historical dimension: bringing the old river to the surface in a generous pond is a way of making a monument of Akerselva (the river) and its importance for the history of Oslo.

The texts are remarkably abundant, and also thorough, with respect to the different aspects of the plan. Or, more precisely: the author's report is thorough and precise, but also rhetorically evocative; the jury's is less exact and more rhetorical. There is a *mixture* of references to concrete geometric phenomena, such as the 'plane' of the water, and an effusion of more ethereal associations to 'beauty' and 'audacity', thus suggesting an interdependence between the two kinds of qualities.

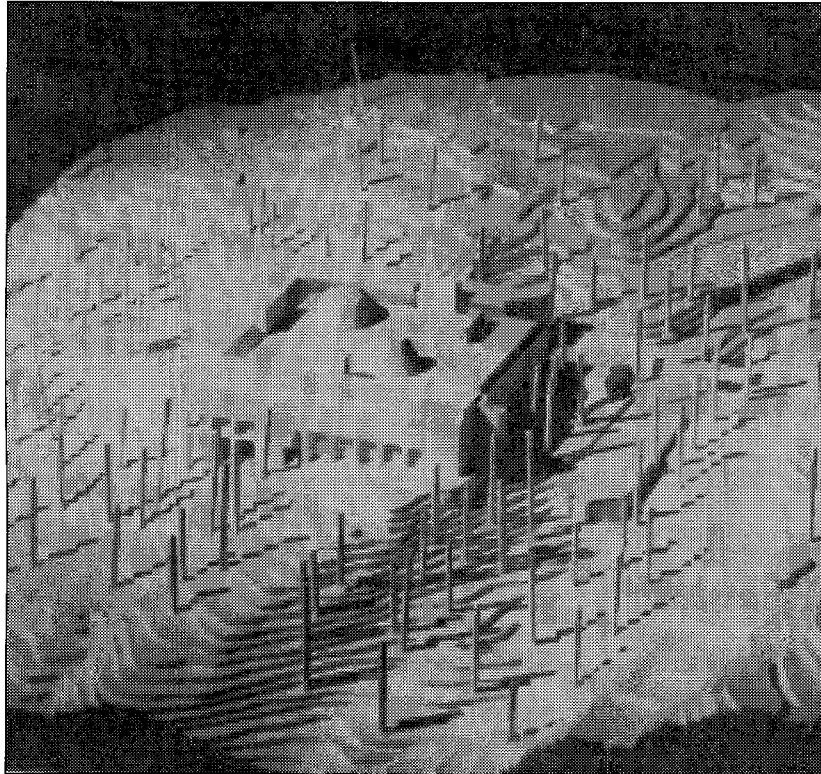
Notwithstanding, the design relates to the surroundings: the layout and the dimensions of the residential part are similar to the blocks on the other side of the street Grønlandsleiret, and the high-rise hotel responds to the height of Postgirobygget. This *conglomerate* plan, which consists of a juxtaposition of building structures with different architectural features, is in principle typical for the 1980s and kindred to that of the aqua-leisure centre. The existing environment and its variety of forms is acknowledged, but the 'new' responds with a duality of respect and dependence on the one hand, and with distinct independence on the other.

33 NAK, no. 246, p. 2. The area is a poor, neglected part of the town, situated near the medieval Gamlebyen.

34 NAK, no. 246, p. 6.

35 NAK, no. 246, p. 2.

19. SORIA MORIA, SITE AN 1ST PRIZE PROJECT



The model of Vaterland and Grønland Market displays the most conspicuous features of the project which are the extreme sizes and the extreme height: 'the wall', a building 10m thick, is 660m long and the slender high-rise building is 90m high (fig. 18). These stunning lineaments, which indeed make the project stand out in the city image, also constitute clearly perceptible, rather simplistic distinguishing marks, sort of *identification symbols* for the area.

Thus, by employing exceptionally large and different urban components (the very long bus terminal, the very long 'wall', the very tall hotel, the very compact civic centre and the very big pond) in a juxtaposition with the large flyover, the proposal introduces a new type of urban design which the jury found fascinating. The buildings repeat the dimensions of modern motor traffic systems. The grandeur of the features recalls the land-use plans from the 1940-50s, but here the narrow block has a

more extreme form (thinner and longer). Whilst the narrow blocks in the 1940s were shaped to achieve the optimal daylight conditions, this long 'wall' is intended to provide protection (rather symbolically) against traffic pollution and noise. Whilst the open spaces between the buildings in the 1940s were meant to create distance, devoid of anything other than occasional use, the open spaces of the 1980s are intended as vital spaces for social interaction; for creating a coherence in use of the built structures; they are regarded as essential vehicles in making the attractions of the buildings work. In the 1940s and 1950s the problem of making the buildings 'work' did not exist; there was a general shortage of premises and the economy of use and maintenance was not central. In the market situation of the last few decades with relative superfluity and market competition, the feasibility of buildings is a decisive issue.

The continuity of open spaces as pedestrian routes is a *structuring principle* which in the 1980s allows a variety of building types to be connected and rather pragmatic variations of the geometric systems. Hence, a more traditional residential quarter can also be included within the entire Vaterland and Grønland Market plan. The typical large-scale tectonic homogeneity of the preceding decades which, somewhat dogmatically, stressed the building types and systems, has given way to another kind of homogeneity: that of surfaces and artefacts.

The first example of *conglomerate* design in the sense of incorporating different morphological principles in one composition appeared in the 1st prize competition project for the Soria Moria medical education centre in 1978 (fig. 19). Although the different geometric systems were dominated by a firm overall shape, they are clearly diverse and independent in character. The environment is non-built (woods) and the author refers to historical models:

... in a way similar to a castle situated in open land or a farm high on the side of the valley.³⁶

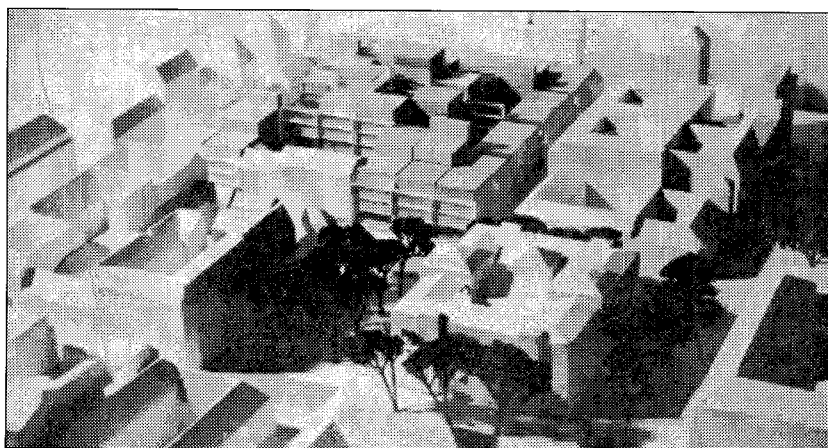
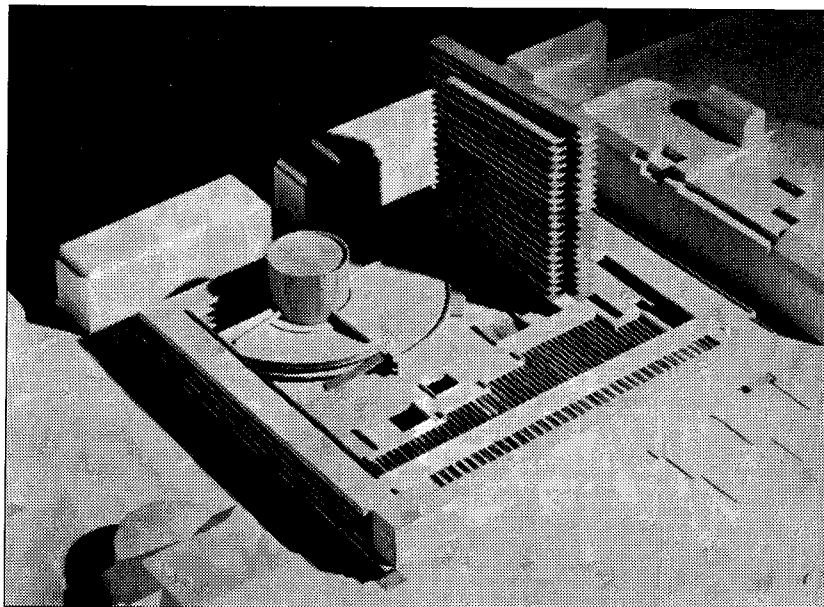
The allegory refers to a historical architectural phenomenon which is related to 'the wall', the 660m long rim building in Vaterland-

Grønland. In both cases the metaphorical comparison implies a rather heavy, closed solidity, a quality which is capable of yielding security and protection; in both cases the *rhetorical implications* are more *archaic* than the actual architecture they promote.

Thus, by contrast to the 1940s, the competition rhetoric of the 1980s evokes images of new and old elements in coexistence and includes a wide range of positive associations to the past. The old can be perceived 'abstractly' as massive monuments, or it can be revived and transformed as was the case with the river Akerselva. More vague and suggestive are the associations to the ancient 'castle' on the hill and the big 'wall' when it comes to transformation into the concrete modern proposals. To some extent the newness and physical impact of the new architecture is rhetorically toned down to underline the primary goal which is to enrich urban life by making places attractive and accessible. The apparent inclusiveness and vagueness of the argumentation is well-adapted to the typical audience of the 1980s when the idea of individual options for self-realization legitimated the more 'discreet ruling techniques'. As Grothen points out, vagueness and relativity became an integral part of the cultural politics in the 1970s, a trend which extended into the 1980s when it was supplemented by the 'value conservatism' of the non-socialist government from 1981.³⁷ While responding to the common mentality in the conglomerate world of the 1980s, however, the architects maintained their right to add new and unique works which simultaneously responded to the more internal discourse among architects.

THE TURNING POINT

The development of the Karl Johan *kvartalet*, a central site on the main street Karl Johans *gate*, and the new Head Office of the Bank of Norway, are two competitions held ten years apart which very clearly illustrate the significant change of attitude towards the existing buildings in urban areas which took place between the two. As the model shows (fig. 20), the shared prize project by motto '13831' in



the Karl Johan *kvartalet* competition in 1962 proposes a grand scheme for replacing the buildings in the entire block with a new composition, a complete and perfect totality, which in most respects differs from the surrounding environment. By contrast the model of the 1st prize project for the Bank of Norway, 1973, displays an adaptation of the new masses to the existing (fig. 21). The question of the turning point in the match of the 'new' versus the 'old' will be illuminated by the two competitions below.

Verbal reverence - architectural dismissal

The brief of the Karl Johan *kvartalet* competition states that:

the buildings. . . which were erected in the middle of the previous century, have become obsolete and less suitable for the multifarious and partially new functions which are desirable and which are possible in this big block in the heart of Oslo.³⁸

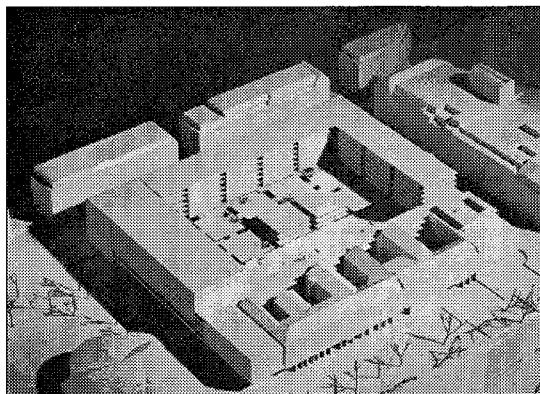
20. (TOP) KARL JOHAN KVARTALET, MOTTO '13831'

21. BANK OF NORWAY HEAD OFFICE, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT

36 *NAK*, no. 215, p. 4.
37 Grothen, pp. 48-52, 71-80.



23. KARL JOHANS KVARTALET, 'MOTTO' 27059', MODEL AND PERSPECTIVE



given free reins with regard to the question of preservation;

the competition was a decisive test of the cultural, architectural and economic judgements of the participants . . . creating a correct overall picture of the Karl Johan environment and accepting the subordinate role of the block in this have been difficult for the participants.⁴⁰

22. KARL JOHANS GATE



The question of preservation was met with exceptionally great interest, and the jury was of the opinion that an expert assessment by an independent architectural historian must be consulted before the final decision was made.⁴¹ According to the jury, the façades in Karl Johans gate could be preserved without hampering the architectural solution in some of the best proposals. The jury recommended that the most important of these façades ought to be preserved provided that the financial calculations were acceptable. Thus, compared with the removal ideology and the undisguised contempt for the historical bourgeois architecture advocated in the 1940s and 1950s, an explicit concern for the existing qualities is present in 1962 – at least verbally (fig. 22).

Nevertheless, the existing environment is highly praised:

. . . a city block whose cultural-historical value by way of its situation and architecture is undisputed. . . the block has to a high degree preserved its aristocratic atmosphere. . . When it comes to the essential architectural features, the environment is already complete. It seems only able to tolerate accompanying architectural themes, so to speak.³⁹

The jury's general remarks refer to the brief as 'open' in the sense that the competitors were

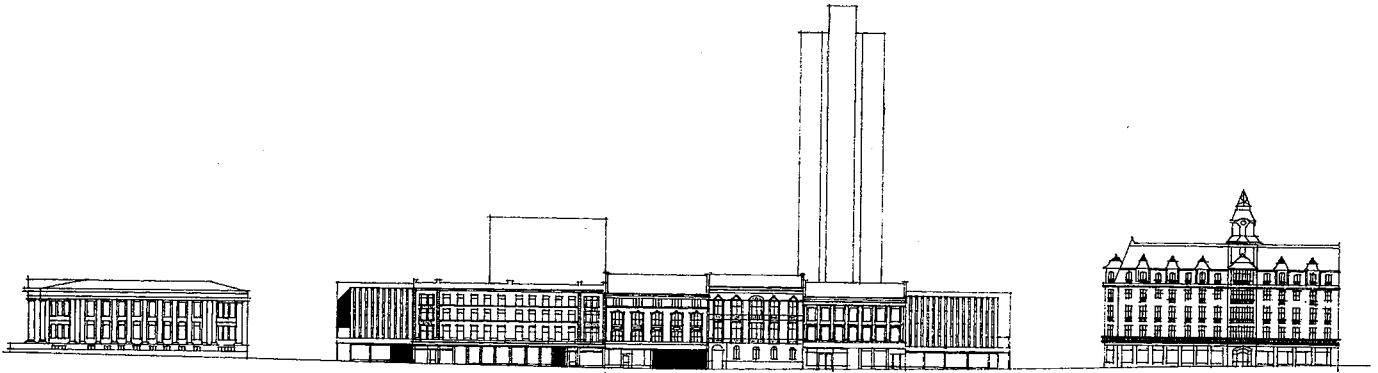
In what manner do the architectural interventions respond to the good intentions? In the shared-prize entry by motto '27059' all the buildings in Karl Johans gate except the corner buildings are preserved and surrounded by a new structure covering the rest of the entire block (fig. 23). By its very tectonic uniformity and set-back position the new structure appears relatively subordinate to the existing environment in Karl Johans gate. This asset is rhetorically enhanced in the *visual* representation by

38 *NAK*, no. 93, p. 27.

39 *NAK*, no. 93, p. 14.

40 *NAK*, no. 93, p. 14.

41 There were many old buildings on the site, but the debate was in effect limited to four buildings which were on Karl Johans gate itself. Several of these can be seen there today, including the two corner buildings (the largest and most unique, 'romantic', buildings on the site) which were considered the least worthy of preservation in the competition.

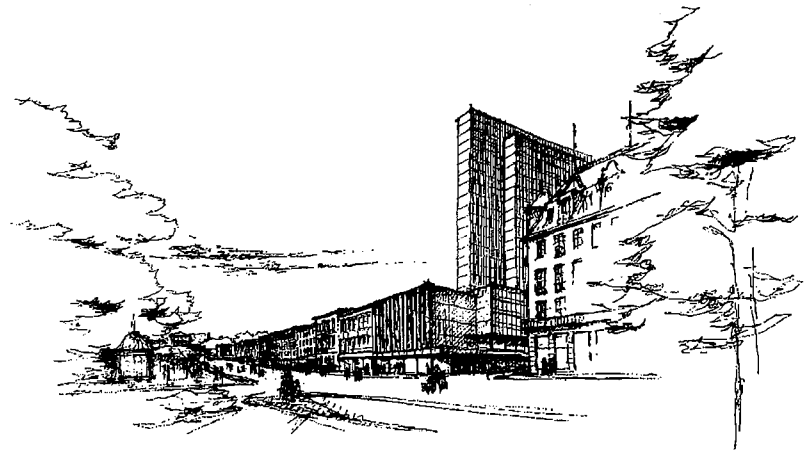


the exterior perspective drawn *en face* from across the square called Spikersuppa: shading underlines the lineaments of the old buildings with the plasticity of windows, cornices and roof, and the rendering includes the existing buildings in the neighbouring blocks on either side as well. The new corners appear neutral in the familiar image, with the same blinds over the shop windows seen from behind the trees in Spikersuppa. The large masses of the uniform new structure in the block is not visible from the chosen vantage point.

Nevertheless, it was the shared-prize project by motto '13831' which was promoted for commission. As the jury says in its criticism of the project:

The author shows a variant containing a possibility for preservation of the façades on Karl Johans gate.⁴²

This rather cautious statement refers to the author's alternative proposal in which the façade walls are preserved as remnants disconnected from their structural context, and penetrated by huge openings on the ground floor as shown in the elevation (fig. 24). The model and plans make sufficiently clear that such a preservation is fundamentally contrary to the architectural principle that structures the new design. When it became more common to incorporate old building structures in new developments in the 1980s, these architectural principles had developed into (what I have called) conglomerate structures or conglomerate principles of composition. These could more easily adapt different tectonic components into agglomerations in which the various architectural principles were more equivalent and independent.

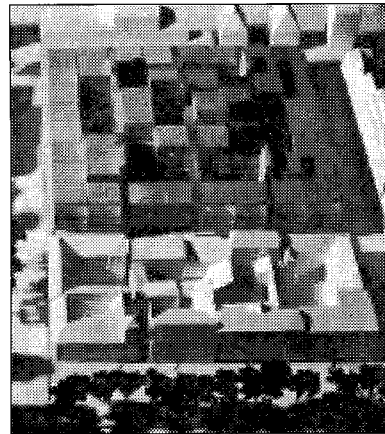
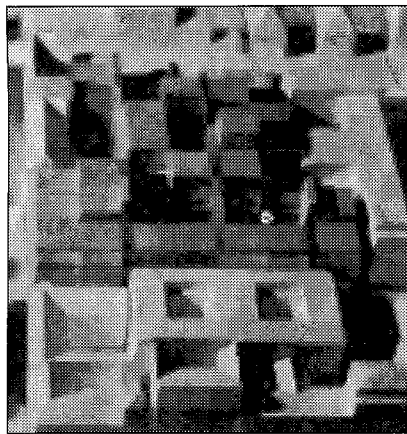
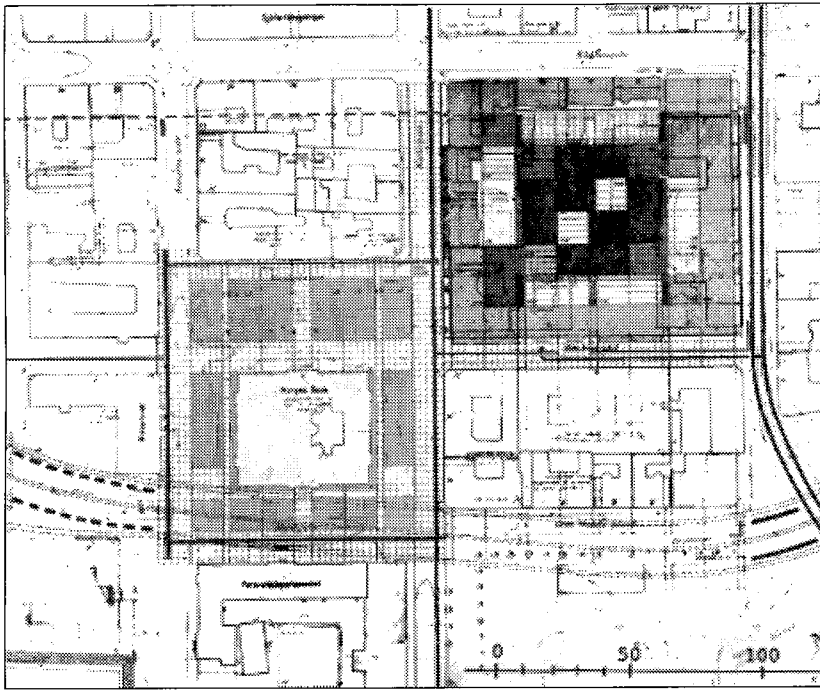


In the case of motto '13831', however, the new uniform structure is the *all-dominating* and totalizing system to which the stripped and penetrated old walls appear like mutilated price tags still sticking to the new product. By contrast to the proposal by '27059', the exterior perspective of '13831' shows the main façade as a rather vague continuous wall, subduing the importance of the figural and plastic qualities of the old. Instead the graphic emphasizes the new plain corner of Rosenkrantzgate behind which the high-rise, 27 floors high, appears as a 'not-too-much-higher' extension to the five-storey high Grand Hotel in front because of the angle of the perspective. The architect obviously must have been aware that the issue of the historical environment, was or would be, sensitive. The exterior perspectives of the Karl Johan *kvartalet* competition, thus, display how the graphic rhetoric can be used to emphasize assets or conceal disadvantages of the designs in relation to an anticipated criticism.

In 1962, removal of the dark and crooked backyards hardly required particularly persuasive arguments. But whilst the new designs in the 1940s-50s provided light, air and large open spaces, the old fabric is now replaced by compact building structures covering the

24. KARL JOHAN KVARTALET, MOTTO '13831', ALTERNATIVE ELEVATION AND PERSPECTIVE

42 NAK, no. 93, p. 6.



25. BANK OF NORWAY HEAD OFFICE, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, MODEL, SITE PLAN

entire block. The program for renewal is different. Order and rationality prevail as overall objectives, but economy and efficiency have replaced the earlier health imperatives.

Text and design: hand in hand

By 1973, when the competition for the new Head Office of the Bank of Norway was held, the city planning authorities had forwarded a proposal for regulating the area of the site as a 'conservation area'. The new Ministry of the Environment had been established, and preservation policies were a current issue. Hence the brief expresses that a proposal for the Bank of Norway could be considered

... if the façades were adapted to the rest of the built environment.⁴³

The various existing buildings are thoroughly

described in the brief, and a number of preconditions are stated, such as for instance the request that the proposals should show a two-stage development in two variants: one with, and one without the preservation and incorporation of Victoriagården, Rådhusgata 8, which was a functionalist building from 1930-40; the newest and biggest of the existing buildings on the site. The jury's remarks after the assessment are more abundant and evocatively rhetorical than the brief. A large part of the text deals with the issue of preserving the historical buildings and adapting the new structures to the existing, for instance:

...to invite the competitors to work towards development principles and solutions which not only take the existing buildings into consideration – but which moreover, in relation to the dimensions of these buildings, the environment and proportions, give the new buildings an adequate expression. . . The block appears relatively derelict today. Not only can a new edifice for the Bank of Norway give the block a new distinctive character but also lead to a refinement of the existing buildings that it is natural to preserve.⁴⁴

This is a competition in which the text is extremely thorough with regard to the relationship to the existing environment. A further quotation from the jury's general remarks will exemplify this:

It is possible that a rational and distinguished building can be joined to the old urban environment in a natural manner, without disturbing the historical dominant of the area – the Akershus Castle. The competition has clearly shown that the preservation of the old buildings in Rådhusgaten and Kirkegaten has not been a hindrance to a good and well-functioning solution for the Bank of Norway. Only two proposals were submitted in which the preservation of the old buildings was regarded as having no value. The proposals have gained no advantages by their free positions. On the contrary, their unarticulated and compact building masses do not fit in at all with the his-

43 NAK, no. 192, p. 25.

44 NAK, no. 192, p. 3

45 NAK, no. 192, p. 28.

torical character of the surrounding area, and above all not with its human scale. In a number of proposals in which the old is preserved, the old buildings have been brought back to something close to their original expression, which evidently must be correct. The jury, however, rejects proposals for building new edifices in the old timber frame style.⁴⁵

In this manner the jury substantiates its choice of the winner: a good and well-functioning solution for the bank can be combined with preserving the value of the old environment, especially the *human scale* of the old as opposed to the old building style.

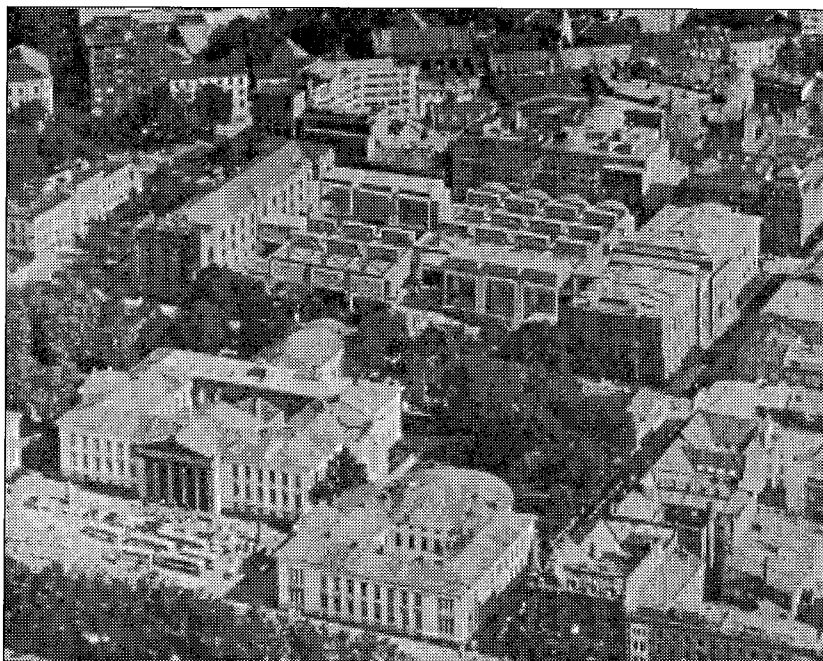
The author of the 1st prize project devotes a large part of his report, which is exceptionally extensive, to considerations affecting the historical environment, not only the adjacent buildings, but the entire area including the Akershus Castle.

The municipality of Oslo has committed nearly irreparable offences in the area during the past 30-40 years, by allowing the demolition of older buildings and erection of new buildings the scale and dimensions of which totally destroy the earlier (built) environment.⁴⁶

Rather specific aspects of this historical environment are treated under headings such as 'The castle – Bankplassen (the Bank Square) – The Bank of Norway' and 'Streets, roads and squares in this historic environment', 'Existing buildings' on the site, 'Masses and scale' and 'The relationship of the block to Bankplassen'. This detailed account proves to be consistent with the proposal; it supports the design in all respects, for instance:

The considerable masses ought to be decomposed into units which, when it comes to height, scale and dimensions, form and character, are related to the existing buildings that are worthy of preservation in the area.⁴⁷

The author is exceedingly skilful in arguing for the design with seemingly irresistible logic and



26. TULLINLØKKA, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT

conviction, in the manner that he connects the analysis (or the features he chooses to emphasize in the existing environment) to essential features of the proposal. His enthusiastic appraisal of the historical buildings more than suggests that a deep concern for historical values is implicit in the entire proposal, for instance as he argues that Grev Wedels *plass* should be preserved:

Depotet and *Børsen* are given the exterior space that these magnificent buildings demand.⁴⁸

On the concrete site, then, it can be easily agreed that the decomposed new masses can well be adapted to the existing fabric. But this does not necessarily lead to a building consisting of totally equal, standardized units; that is a matter of choice and taste, and in this case it is a basic constituent of the implicit architectural mode or ideology.

In the same way that the *text* is highly persuasive with regard to the concern for the historical surroundings, the *visual* rhetoric also emphasizes the coherence between the new structures and the old: the photographs of the model show the familiarity of dimensions between new and old masses, as well as illustrating the flexibility of options with respect to the degree of removal or preservation (fig. 25). (The elevations include the neighbouring

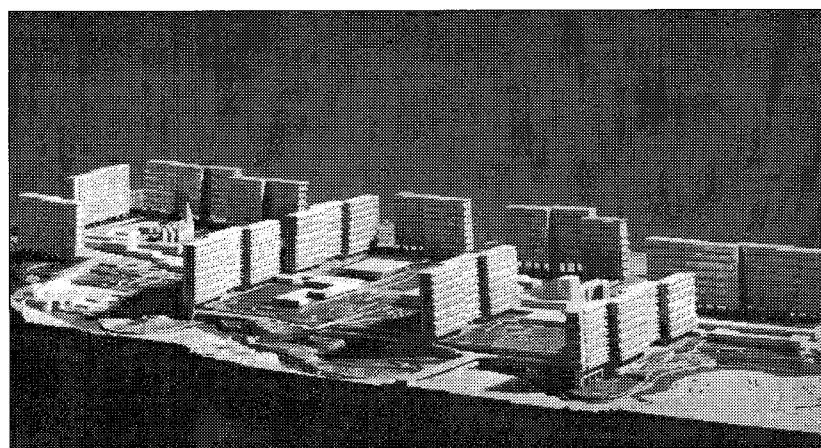
46 *NAK*, no. 192, p. 4

47 *NAK*, no. 192, p. 5

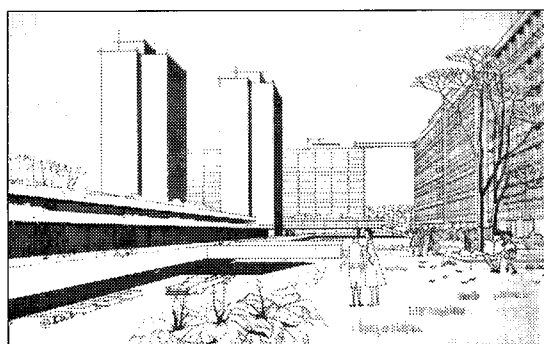
48 *NAK*, no. 192, p. 4



27. (TOP) NATIONAL THEATRE EXTENSION, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, PERSPECTIVE



28. ABOVE: GRÜNERLØKKA, PROPOSAL FOR URBAN RENEWAL, BY DAG ROGNLIEN AND ROBERT ESDAILE
RIGHT: GRÜNERLØKKA, PROPOSAL BY MARI AND GULLIK KOLLANDSRUD, PERSPECTIVE



façades, which are precisely and articulately drawn, see chapter XI.) Because of the small scale and the implicit degree of abstraction, the photograph of the model rhetorically favours the importance of the masses rather than the figural aesthetic features. Coherence or a sense of 'belonging together' is also stressed graphically in the site plan as the grid pattern embraces indoor as well as outdoor spaces outside the site, and thus underlines the floor on which people can walk rather than the buildings which face them. This graphic is rhetorically effective as it tones down the gross difference between a 4-8 storey building and the outdoor area, and

thus persuades the beholder (of the drawing) that both belong to a shared space. Structural or organizational coherence is stressed rather than formal or aesthetic. Several other submissions in the competition featured 'repetition-of-identical-units' systems but none employed a similar flexibility and variation of the masses as the 1st prize design.

I chose the New Head Office of the Bank of Norway as an example of the adaptable 'repetition-of-structural-units' or *structuralist* type of architecture because the situation was comparable with that of the Karl Johan *kvartalet* with the site including a number of historical buildings. The competition for the Head Office of the Society of Chartered Engineers in 1969, the Extension of the National Gallery in Tullinløkka, 1972 (fig. 26), and for the Extension of the National Theatre, 1973,⁴⁹ were won by the same architects with very similar architectural approaches: compact repetitive structures adapted to the dimensions (especially the heights) of the old buildings. In the two latter competitions the sites were open public spaces, and the buildings to be extended were grand, solid and monumental edifices, all with prominent locations in the city centre.⁵⁰ The considerations presented with regard to the historical environment are thoroughly worked out as in the bank competition.

However, in this context, I want to draw attention to a certain point: the tendency to visual *self-effacement* in which the drawings represent the new buildings in relation to the old. This is especially the case in the elevation and section drawings, in which the old buildings are drawn very precisely with contrasting shades and details accentuating their figural as well as material qualities, whereas the new structures appear more as abstract grids of lines. The realistic thinness of the modern constructions, evidently accounts for some degree of the apparent vagueness, but still the impact of the new volumes is rhetorically subdued. The perspective drawing of the National Theatre Extension (fig. 27) displays a similar lightness or vagueness of the new volumes. This is definitely a different way of presenting the new prize-winning architecture than the self-assertedness of the competition projects for the New Government Building in 1939.

49 *NAK*, nos. 168, 183 and 190.

50 The National Theatre, 1899, architect Henrik Bull. The Tullinløkka competition comprises the History Museum, 1902, by Henrik Bull and the National Gallery, 1881-1924, by H. E. and A. Schirmer.

A time of change and public confrontation

A total change of mentality appears to have occurred between the competition for the Karl Johan *kvartalet* in 1962 and the Bank of Norway in 1973. Or, more correctly, a total change of mentality matured during these years and found an adequate expression in the Bank of Norway. The homage to the historical environment in Karl Johan, although it was repeated several times in the text, was expressed in very *general* terms, rather vaguely:

cultural-historical value. . . is undisputed. . . preserved its aristocratic atmosphere. . . in the heart of Oslo.

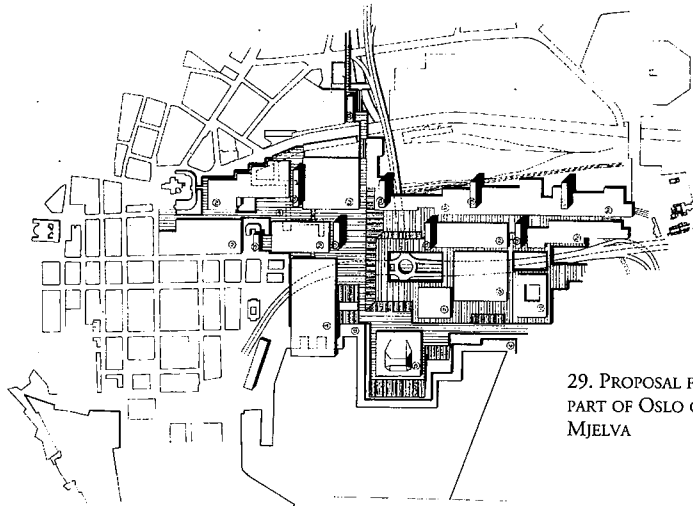
These appraisals were frequently coupled with economic aspects as:

the façades should be preserved if the financial calculations were acceptable. . . . to solve the architectural and financial problems . . . on the one hand the existing and demanding cultural-historical value of the Karl Johan block, and that the brief on the other hand should point to a solution in which the financial interest of the site owners should be given an adequate synthetic solution.⁵¹

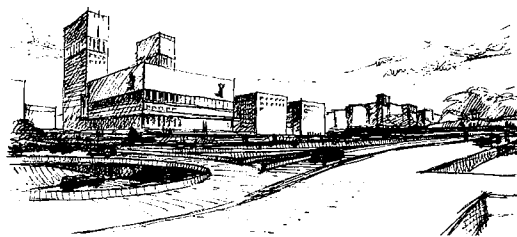
Although the buildings were part of a city image of cultural-historical value, the buildings were regarded as 'obsolete' and not suitable for the financial interests of the site owners. In the case of the Bank of Norway, the suitability of the existing buildings was not *a priori* discarded; the question was simply not discussed to any significant degree; if the buildings were not beyond repair it was taken for granted that they could be renovated and used. As the jury says, the winner succeeded in

. . . incorporating the buildings worthy of preservation [in the block] and repeating the urban dimensions of the environment, while he at the same time enables the functions of the Bank of Norway to develop in a flexible and elastic manner within the given framework.⁵²

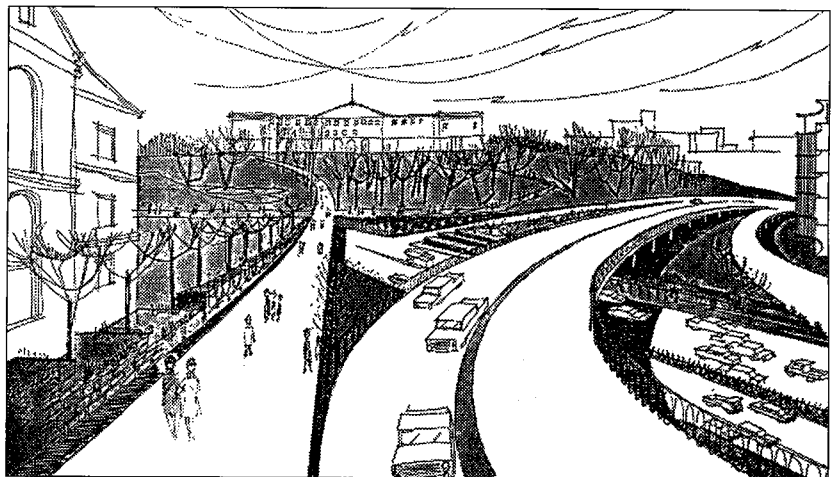
In retrospect it seems incredible that the proposal by motto '13831' in Karl Johan could



29. PROPOSAL FOR EASTERN PART OF OSLO CENTRE, MJELVA



30. PROPOSAL FOR MOTOR THOROUGHFARE, AT CITY HALL SQUARE, MJELVA



31. PROPOSED MOTOR THOROUGHFARE, 1967

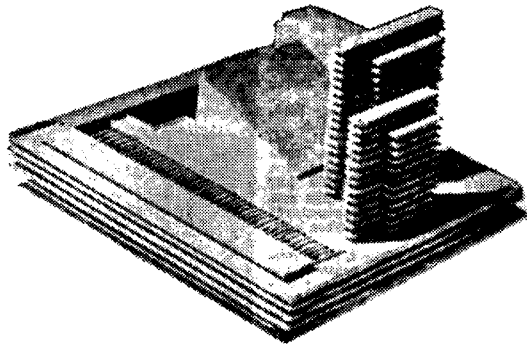
succeed, bearing in mind the reverence to the unique historical environment that was expressed by the jury. But if we recall some of the projects that were featured in the public media at that time, we understand that the prevailing architectural mode simply had not developed appropriate tools.

In 1961, *Byggekunst* featured four proposals for a total renewal of Grünerløkka in Oslo,⁵³ the result of a closed competition promoted by *Selskabet for Oslo Byes Vel* in cooperation with the city planning authorities (examples are shown in figure 28). Typical for all four proposals was a complete demolition of the existing structure, except for the old church which appears as a Lilliputian toy between the huge

51 *NAK*, no. 93, p. 14-15

52 *NAK*, no. 192, p. 9

53 Odd Brochmann e.a., 'Grünerløkka - fire saneringsforslag', *BK*, 43, (1961), pp. 185-202.



high-rise buildings in the model. (Grünerløkka was, as we know, to be partially preserved and gradually renovated during the 1970s-80s.) The designs resemble those of the 1940s and 1950s, except for the cars which now have been favoured with parking decks and pedestrian bridges, and the orthogonal designs which are somewhat more 'neat' or 'cute'; they have a different touch of sophisticated exactitude.

A bold design for a major part of central Oslo proposed by Håkon Mjelva, the author of proposal '13831' in the Karl Johan *kvartalet* competition, shows a large-scale redevelopment of the area from Stortorget to Gamlebyen, including the Central Station, Bjørvika and Vaterland-Grønland (fig. 29).⁵⁴ The design has an Utzonian flavour to it, although schematic, and it is difficult to grasp the consequences of the spatial dimensions *in situ*. Mjelva's proposal for the traffic arrangement in Rådhusplassen, shown in *Byggekunst* in 1960, is easier to perceive because of the familiar image of the City Hall (fig. 30).⁵⁵ As late as in 1967 the City Council of Oslo agreed to proceed with a proposal for a motor thoroughfare through central Oslo (from Frognerparken to Etterstad, with only the part through the Royal Palace Park in an underground tunnel) (fig. 31).⁵⁶

The mental climate for architectural innovation was simply not ready for the ideas of the grand, total schemes to be discarded in favour of more gradual, finely interwoven urban plans. The proposal by motto '27059' in Karl Johan was actually a forerunner to the structuralist Bank of Norway prize, but it lacked elegance and conviction in its presentation. Hence the jury was more enthusiastically rhetorical in its praising of the '13831'. In spite of the jury's total rejection of the high-rise solution that was part of the proposal (see below), and in spite of the explicit

concern for preservation, it was the 'liberating total solution'⁵⁷ that was given priority; the spirit of idealizing a totalizing dynamic project permeates the text, as will be elucidated in chapter IX.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Oslo resounded with uproar and protests against the official urban development schemes, as did also many other Western cities. Many architects were active and the Oslo School of Architecture was also involved in this political debate. Primarily the protests were aimed at stopping the highway projects, but the actions soon included protests against razing of existing urban areas, as well as against building on open spaces and parks in the town. They fought against the transformation of residential buildings into commercial offices and demanded green open spaces instead of parking lots. 'Who wants a motorway running through a residential area?', was the question posed by the architect Thorbjørn Hansen who was leader of the residents' organization in Skillebekk-Ruseløkka in 1971.⁵⁸ Similar protest actions occurred in various parts of the town and, in fact, succeeded in stopping major traffic plans and demolition projects. Benum treats the issue of the growing concern for environmental issues quite extensively in his history of Oslo, and concludes:

The struggle from the late 1960s altered the ideological climate. Motoring and large highway systems were no longer synonymous with progress. Traffic was restricted in urban areas, pedestrian areas were planned and built. The flow of traffic became more of a question of negotiation between residents and authorities.⁵⁹

The political attitudes that marked these action organizations were fervently directed against commercialism and capitalist institutions. The new head office of Kreditkassen, a major Oslo bank, erected in Stortorvet opposite Domkirken (the cathedral), was furiously attacked in the newspapers; the charge was allowing a symbol of capitalism to occupy a dominant position in a place which until then had been marked by a modest clerical edifice

54 Håkon Mjelva, 'Kan Oslo bli storby?', *BK*, 46, (1964), pp. 93-99.

55 Håkon Mjelva, 'Er grunnlinjen nok?', *BK*, 42, (1960), pp. 17-21.

56 Benum, pp. 358-359.

57 *NAK*, no. 93, pp. 6, 14-15.

58 Benum, pp. 358-359.

59 Benum, p. 360.

60 Francis Sejersted, 'Hvem kan redde city? Vaterland-prosjektet 1954-79', *Arbeidsnotat*, no. 21, TMV-senteret, UiO, (Oslo, 1990), p. 1. The plan was to build a continuous in-door complex more than 260 000 square metres on the 44 decares site including a high-rise of 36 storeys.

61 Benum, p. 356, from a presentation in *Dagbladet*, 4 July 1967.

and rather tranquil traditional buildings. Moreover, the recommendation by the city council in 1971 to proceed with the grandiose redevelopment plans for a commercial centre in Vaterland promoted by Den Norske Creditbank, another important bank corporation, evoked massive criticism. The project, which was later to be reopened in the competition for Vaterland and Grønland Market, was put on ice for another decade.⁶⁰ Not only were the design and construction of this kind of project questioned, but in particular the size and the content or the purpose of the enterprise were also criticized.

Edgeir Benum devotes several pages to the fate of the project for Karl Johan *kvartalet*: the high-rise proposal had been reduced in size from the competition, and made less compact as presented by the architect in *Dagbladet* (fig. 32).⁶¹ The newspaper text states that the characteristic façades are preserved but this is not shown in the photograph. According to Benum, the city authorities (*bygningsrådet* and *bystyret*, to be exact) first rejected the project in 1967. Then an intense struggle started, in which a number of modernist architects and the site's owners took one side, and the city planning office and professionals concerned with preservation of historic monuments the other side. 'The entire capital is petrified under the antiquated views of *byplansjef* Erik Rolfsen (Head of the town planning administration)', stated the evening newspaper *Verdens Gang* while Stephan Tschudi Madsen at the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings 'accused the Oslo press of subjecting self-effacingly to "certain wild plans" and warned against sacrificing Karl Johan to the altar of Mammon.'⁶² In 1972 the city council accepted the plan, provided that the total height was reduced to 16 storeys, but when a minority appealed to the new Ministry of the Environment, the project was finally rejected in 1973.

The caution as well as the thoroughly argued concern for the existing environment in the competition for the new Head Office of the Bank of Norway should be viewed against this background: it was important that the relatively huge expansion of the nation's chief

monetary institution should not appear offensive but blend in with the built environment that was already there.

THE PROBLEM OF HEIGHT AND SIZE

Height and *size* represent a special variant of the topic of the 'new' in relation to the 'old'. An underlying principle here, that of the cult of newness, of man's inventiveness and engineering, is reminiscent of that which was celebrated by Early Humanism. Christine Smith devotes a chapter in her book to the moral problem of size: 'Within the literature of architectural description, great size is one of the most constant criteria by which the moral value of a building is positively or negatively judged'.⁶³ Vast size sometimes has and at other times has not been regarded as a sign of vice. Alberti himself seems inconsistent; he condemns the Egyptians for taking 'delight in the colossal scale of their works . . . the insane idea of constructing pyramids . . . certainly I detest those monstrous works that the Egyptians built for themselves'.⁶⁴ Yet he praises Brunelleschi's dome for its large size; 'for its surpassing great size and for its difficulty, but not for its aesthetics', Smith says.⁶⁵

This praise has three justifications: as evidence of man's God-given power to invent; as evidence of the excellence of Florentine culture and the greatness of its citizens, the dome served a useful political purpose; and thirdly it revealed the flourishing condition of the city as evidence of the immense wealth of the Florentines.⁶⁶ The justifications of surpassing constructions in the 20th century are very similar.

It would certainly be beyond the framework of this dissertation to conduct a profound comparison of the celebration of great engineering and building achievements in the Renaissance and those at the threshold to the third millennium. However, from the point of view of a city dweller, I would like to point to the simple difference that the Florence Dome is a structure which encloses a shared public space, a collective room that can be entered quite simply from the *piazza*. Regarded as a socio-material construction the great cathedral is not burdened with instru-

⁶² Benum, p. 355.

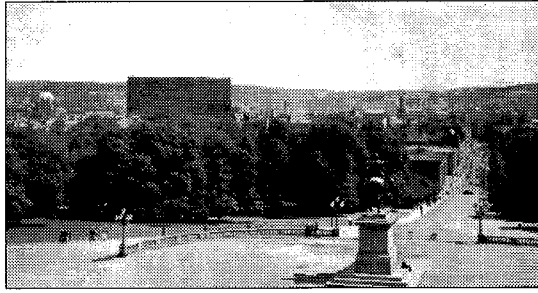
⁶³ 'Foul Enormity or Grandiose Achievement? The Moral Problem of Size' in Smith, pp. 41-53 (p. 41).

⁶⁴ Leon Battista Alberti, *De Re aedificatoria*, VI.iii and VIII.iii, editor G. Orlandi, (Milan, 1966), p. 451 and p. 681, translated by and quoted in Smith, p. 42.

⁶⁵ Smith, p. 27, aesthetics here in terms of style, order, not aesthetic or sensual experience.

⁶⁶ Smith, pp. 42-43.

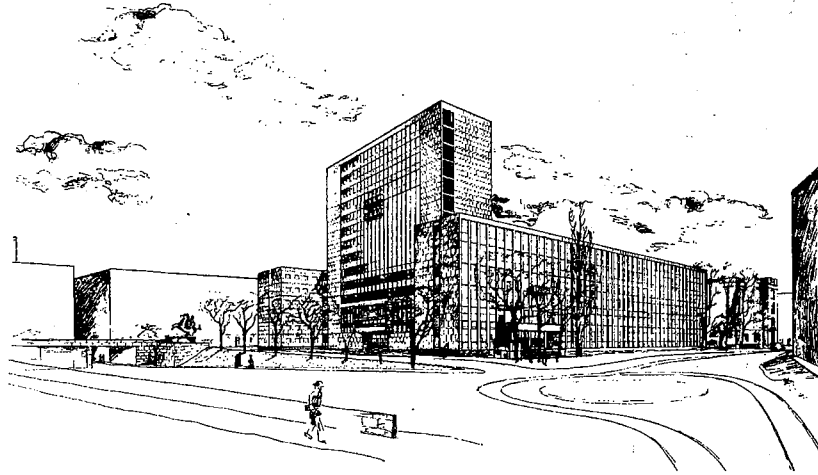
33. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING PROJECT SHOWN *IN SITU*, JURY MEMBER REPPEN



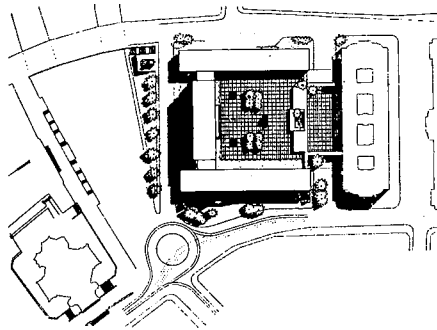
The city centre is a symbol of the intensity of our era, here you first and foremost get the feeling of a tempo which involuntarily forces the economic exploitation of the workforce and time. Business and traffic are increasing in the city centre, creating a dense area of commercial buildings, with the consequent exploitation of space.⁶⁸

The role of high-rise buildings as 'dominants' that could 'straighten up the city image and the silhouette' is also pointed out:

Cathedrals are not being built any more, but high-rise buildings can take their place in the city image. Who knows – perhaps one day there will be new towers here and there in the city periphery, – between the towers there will be green plains, playgrounds and parks.⁶⁹



34. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'TONE', SITE PLAN AND PERSPECTIVE



These visions from the Norwegian pioneering period prior to W.W. II were partially realized, as we know, although perhaps not as poetically as in these preconceptions. However, the very same ideas were fundamental when they were realized in the pragmatic building projects of the postwar period.

Height in the Oslo competitions

Height is the *first* topic that is mentioned in the extract of the brief for the competition for the Government Building in 1939:

According to the regulations, the cornice towards Arne Garborgs *plass* has been determined at 42m above sea level [which meant 25m above street level]. It can be taken for granted that this limitation can be altered.⁷⁰

mental intricacies, with overcrowding of people and dependence on hypersensitive technological systems. By contrast, in our time great structures are justified by complex utilitarian purposes which are subjected to severe investment figures. The *Grande Arche* in Paris, for example, is filled up with rather ordinary office rooms.

In its conception the 'tall building' is the landmark of our age; 'a structural marvel that breaks the traditional limits on mankind's persistent ambition to build into the heavens', says Ada Huxtable in her essay entitled in homage to Louis Sullivan.⁶⁷ The high-rise building in its most familiar and exhilarating aspect is a celebration of modern technology. Reflected in the debates on aesthetics and economy in Oslo in the late 1920s, the high-rise symbolizes the major forces of the modern world:

In this competition the aspect of optimum daylight, as we have seen, favoured narrow blocks with ample open space on either side; it was recommended that the building height should not exceed 5/4 of the distance to the opposite façade. These considerations as regards height are purely quantitative and simplistic; height is the result when the need for space is accommodated by means of floors on top of each other on the site. All four shared-prize projects are considerably higher than the authorized limita-

67 Ada Louise Huxtable, *The Tall Building Artistically Reconsidered*, (New York, 1984), p. 7.

68 Jacob Tostrup Prytz, quoted in Kjeldstadli, p. 351.

69 Harald Hals quoted in Herman Munthe-Kaas, 'Fra nyklassisisme til funksjonalisme', *BK*, 38, no. 5/6, (1956).

70 *BK*, 22, (1940), p. 34.

tion; they vary from 49 to 60m above street level. Motto 'Rytme', displays a 60m high building which provided more space than needed, arguing in the author's report that

it was correct to utilize the site, as it could be done in such an open and free manner,⁷¹

60m being exactly 5/4 of the shortest distance to the opposite façade. The ideal of height is advocated for reasons of efficiency, in one project extended beyond the client's need, and the argument was 'softened' by the provision of 'free' open spaces around the building.

However, it was precisely the question of height that caused the Oslo Association of Architects to address a note to the Government stating that the Association supported the majority of the competition jury in the conclusion that the site was not suited for the New Government Building. A photo taken from the Royal Palace Park, in which one of the architect jury members had inserted one of the prize-winning high-rise buildings, was enclosed as a visual argument (fig. 33).⁷² It is noteworthy that several competition projects showed more moderate heights. Both the shared-prize motto 'U', and the purchased motto 'Tone', for instance, display well-designed buildings forming a *carré* in conjunction with the old building; the new, adjoining wings were aligned with the height of the old, and provided inner courtyards as well (fig. 34).

There was disagreement in the jury on the question of height. Admitting that a high-rise block placed on a north-south axis would provide the best light conditions in the offices, the promoter's representatives in the jury doubted that

such a strongly concentrated and extreme high-rise building would be a practical solution for the purpose,

and moreover questioned whether

such a giant high-rise building would have a stifling effect on the old government building and the surroundings. A free-standing, huge high-rise building will hardly constitute a whole together with the old government

building, as was a precondition of the brief.⁷³

The competition led to a vivid debate. The *ideal architecture* confronted with the existing environment caused a dilemma. Criticizing the vagueness of the brief, Odd Brochmann wrote in *Byggekunst* that he quickly came to the conclusion that a high-rise building would provide the best solution with respect to efficient plans and good light conditions, but that the effect of a sky-scraper on the city image, would be more than doubtful.⁷⁴

On the one hand great height is seen as the (only) logical solution to the modern demands to an office building, which moreover could be a 'decisive dominant which would reduce the disharmony' in the area.⁷⁵ On the other hand this very high and compact size is regarded as visually offensive in the environment. Any signs of willingness, ability or imagination in favour of modifying the rigorous demands, were by the progressive majority considered as incompatible with the modern ideology, which implied a total liberation from the old planning principles. The distinguished functionalist architect Ove Bang, author of motto: 'Rytme' argued as follows:

Good architecture is not made from the outside. Free solutions independent of traditional axis systems and street lines can be very valuable and give richer and more varied city images.⁷⁶

Further arguments supported this, such as:

greater aesthetic richness, with more human, charming and varying city images would result from a 'free' land-use plan.⁷⁷

Great height is justified by the richness and variety that results from the rational planning 'from the inside' of the building, as well as being justified by large open-air spaces. This aesthetic 'richness' is very relative, though, and simply refers to the visible contrasts which follow when the new is merely different from the existing environment.

This public debate, which did not lead to a new choice of site, continued after W.W. II

71 *BK*, 22, (1940), p. 41.

72 *BK*, 22, (1940), p. 44.

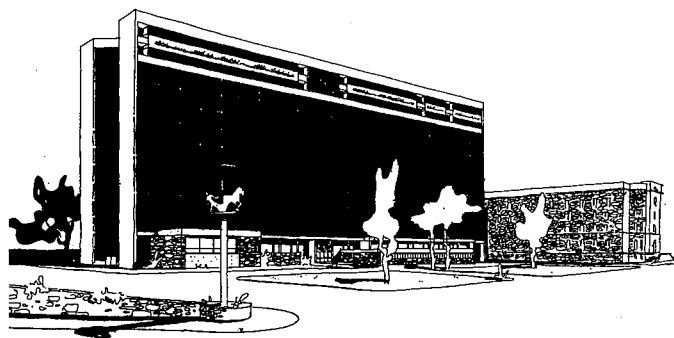
73 *BK*, 22, (1940), p. 35.

74 Odd Brochmann, 'En kritikk av Konkurransens arrangement', *BK*, 22, (1940), p. 47.

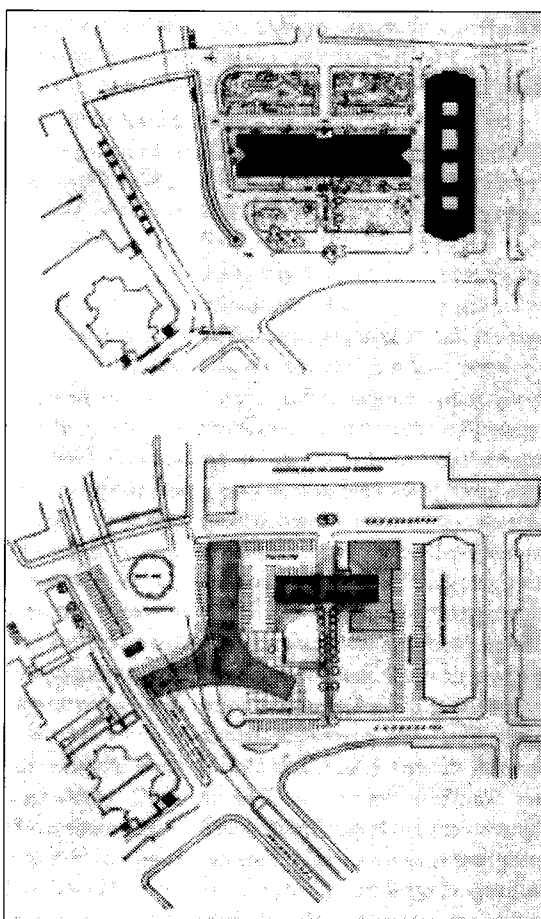
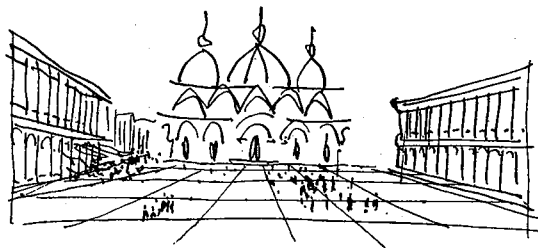
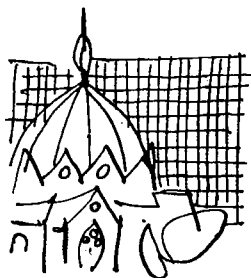
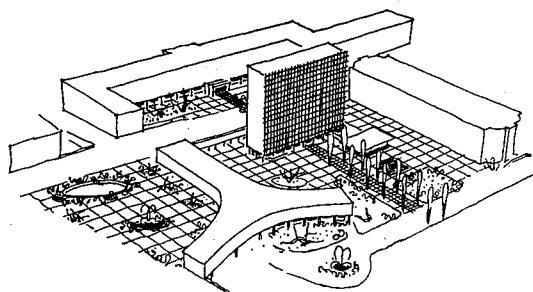
75 Lidvard Hallset, 'En diskusjon om regjeringsbygningkonkurransen i Oslo Arkitektforening', *BK*, 22, (1940), p. 56.

76 Quoted by Hallset, p. 56.

77 Hallset, p. 56.



35. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'VESTIBYLE' AND REALIZED PROJECT, SITE PLANS AND PERSPECTIVES THE ARCHITECT COMPARES THE ARCHITECTURAL CONTRAST OF HIS PROJECT TO THE TREFOLDIGHET CHURCH TO THAT OF THE DOGES' PALACE TO SAN MARCO IN VENICE



when the architect of the proposal by motto 'Vestibyle' was commissioned. Several proposals for the new building were forwarded which included partial preservation of Empirekvartalet, the old buildings on the site; an issue which was debated fervently.⁷⁸ The brief for the building was radically reduced. The building, which was inaugurated in 1959, was set further back from Akersgaten. With its much smaller base, the high-rise building appears far less dominating than in the prize-winning competition proposal (fig. 35).⁷⁹

High-rise buildings as an alternative that saves public open spaces are mentioned in a few later competitions, such as the Parliament Building Extension in 1949 and the land-use and development plan for the Akershus area in 1953. The issue of height was not specifically discussed in the competition for the Akershus area, it was simply stated that the Bank of Norway owned Bankplassen and had announced its plans for an extension of the building on the square, but

because of strong opinions against building on the square, the Bank of Norway has proposed a high-rise solution.⁸⁰

The plans for extending the Parliament Building on the 'tiny green belt' between the building and Akersgaten evoked a lively debate in the Oslo newspapers in which strong opinions against such a project were advanced. The arguments were partially founded on a sense of respect for the old building and partially on

an unwillingness to deprive Oslo of one of its few open spots.⁸¹

Motto 'Skulptur', the 60m high tower building of the 2nd prize project for the extension of the Parliament Building (fig. 36) is praised by the jury because it

more than any other solution leaves the Parliament Building intact. Simultaneously the park in Akersgaten is left intact all the way to Lagtingssalen [the Hall of the Lagting]. . . the placing of the tower building at the end of Stortingsgaten is a very impres-

78 Among others in *BK*, 31, no. 5, (1949), pp. 89-96, and *BK Tillegget*, 31, (1949), pp. 17-20.

79 From Erik Rolfsen, 'Bygg for regjeringskontorer', *BK*, 41, no. 1, (1959), pp. 6-15.

80 *K*, no. 1, (s. a.), p. 1.

81 Eivind Alnæs (the editor of *BK*), 'Stortingsbygningen', *BK*, 31, no. 12, (1949), p. 205.

82 *BK*, 31, no. 12, (1949), pp. 206, 208.

sive move and yields a new and festive rhythm to the entire building complex.⁸²

The argument against this high-rise project was of a *practical* nature: primarily the relatively long distance between the offices in the 'tower' and the assembly halls.

More than 30 years of competitions passed until a new high-rise project was praised in similarly enthusiastic terms. The hotel building in Vaterland and Grønland Market in 1982, a diagonally set

high-rise building which is higher and considerably slimmer than Postgirobygget,

is said to be

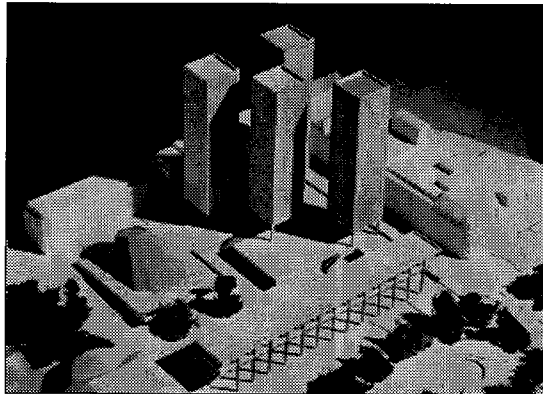
captivating in the long-distance perspective, in which Postgirobygget today appears with its isolated heaviness. . . . moreover, the jury believes that the close-range effect is favourable . . . it is an explicit condition that the direction [diagonal], and the height and slenderness, are kept . . . the sculpturing of masses reveals great professional skill.⁸³

This competition was held after 15 years of struggle and criticism against high-rise buildings, both in principle, and especially against high-rise housing. Therefore, it is not surprising that the rest of the prize-winning projects display more traditional designs and more moderate heights. The fact that Postgirobygget was already there may have made it easier to promote the high-rise tower; moreover the location was in a poor part of the town where protests were not likely to gain decisive importance. The 'slenderness', presupposing one-sided corridors in the hotel, was however unrealistic for reasons of feasible hotel management; the final building, the Plaza Hotel, has a much wider base. It is commonly agreed that the jury should have been aware of this factor.

In general, however, attitudes towards high-rise buildings are *negative* in the competitions. Thus, the 10 storey-high blocks in the winning project for the New Technical College were regarded by the jury as being too high. The



36. THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING EXTENSION, 2ND PRIZE PROJECT, PERSPECTIVE



37. KARL JOHAN KVARTALET, MOTTO '26439', MODEL



38. VATERLAND AND GRØNLAND MARKET, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT

high-rise block of the shared-prize motto '13831' in Karl Johan *kvartalet* was explicitly rejected by the jury, it was said to be

a mistake which would lead to the scale of the buildings around Eidsvolds *plass* [by the Parliament Building] and Studenterlunden being disturbed.⁸⁴

Similar criticism was levelled at the purchased project motto '26439', which features a cluster of four slender towers (fig. 37):

. . . undoubtedly has employed the possibilities afforded by a high-rise building most elegantly. . . the composition of the milieu is very beautiful but . . . the jury finds that it would constitute another far too powerful exclamation mark in the Karl Johan environment [or atmosphere, setting, milieu] where a calm horizontal movement sets the tone.⁸⁵

In the presentation in *Dagbladet*, as we saw

⁸³ NAK, no. 246, p. 6.

⁸⁴ NAK, no. 93, p. 6.

⁸⁵ NAK, no. 93, p. 20.

previously, the architect who was commissioned for Karl Johan *kvartalet* had attempted to respond to the criticism. He had altered the shape of the single high-rise building from the competition (motto '13831') into two volumes with smaller bases; they were slimmer, 'two "slice-like" (*skiveformete*) high-rise blocks of respectively 16 and 20 storeys, welded together in sculptural unity'.⁸⁶

It is in the very central areas of the town, closer to the important, old, monumental buildings, that the question of height has been particularly sensitive. As Benum points out, a number of high-rise buildings have been erected in the periphery since the 1950s: the Philips building, Indekshuset, Rikstrygdeverket, the Shell building, Postgirobygget and the high-rise housing at Enerhaugen.⁸⁷ The SAS Hotel which was situated only a stone's throw from the Royal Palace Park, caused some debate in the newspapers. But when the SAS Hotel competition was held in 1969, tall buildings were practically taken for granted because of the presupposed high utilization of the site; the issue became more a question of how to shape the volume (90m and 29 floors) and of how to place it on the site.

Slender poetic 'towers' or colossal, artificial 'termite hills'

Visually, then, the competition renderings reflect the ambivalence and ambiguity towards high-rise buildings: the drawings of the Government Building and the Parliament Building Extension displayed the tall buildings with the particular self-assertedness of the time; the Vaterland-Grønland project presents more diverse images: a distinct, tall object in the model and vague contours in the drawings (fig. 38).

The few high-rise buildings that are praised in the competition material have something poetic and naive about them. Thus, the Parliament 'tower' building in motto 'Skulptur' and the high-rise hotel in Vaterland share an important quality: they are slender and thin, and are praised for their sculptural elegance, their resemblance to 'towers'. A 'slender tower' is an architectural ideal, something that has poetic connotations appealing to the imagination and the emotions. The scattered old church spires of Oslo, the cluster of medieval towers in San

Gimignano in Tuscany, the verticality of the relatively slim skyscrapers of Manhattan yield other associations than the tediously plain, brown box of Postgirobygget and the ordinary, long, high-rise housing blocks. The poetry of an object which surpasses in height alone is different from that which is colossal in height *and* width. It expresses more elegantly the *ingegno* of modern man as something individual which satisfies the search for aesthetic identity without involving the troublesome risks of social and technical malfunctioning that come with enormous, congested arrangements.

'The tall building romanticizes power and the urban condition and celebrates leverage and cash flow', because tall buildings are also a response to the real-estate and money markets, clients' requirements and efficiency, politics and speculation.⁸⁸ On the one hand these aspects of feasibility correspond to the fantasies of builders which from the Tower of Babel have been vertical rather than horizontal; fantasies that have been made increasingly possible through modern technology. On the other hand, the tall building is also a matter of practical use and everyday social life, inside the building as well as in the environment. In this area, Huxtable states, the inventiveness has been far less keen than in finding ways to enclose the structure that makes the height possible; the interiors seldom reach beyond the repetition of standardized rooms.⁸⁹ The symbolic power of height and its imagery play a particular role in the assessment of high-rise buildings, whether from the point of view of human use and everyday experience, or from that of the economy and the cult of technology. This is evident in the 51 years of architectural competitions in Oslo, too, in which height also appears as a highly sensitive issue. The high-rise proposals in the Oslo competitions are modest; like innocent infants compared with global metropolitan structures. However, as Huxtable points out 'the single historical consistency of the tall building is its predictable penchant for setting records, for rising to greater heights'.⁹⁰ Skyscraper culture implies that height and size are to be surpassed; 'There are no limits', she quotes an engineer who has constructed some of the tallest structures. The quality of sur-

86 Benum, p. 156.

87 Benum, pp. 12-14.

88 Huxtable, p. 11.

89 Huxtable, p. 99.

90 Huxtable, p. 116 f.

91 Paul Weidlinger quoted in Huxtable, p. 117.

passing, of being taller and slimmer than its neighbour, is just what was praised so vividly in the Vaterland-Grønland hotel building.

Today the inventive drive for surpassing in height and size have produced the 'super-skyscraper' projects. The technical rationale is ready for super-skyscrapers of several hundred storeys to be built, and they probably will, says Huxtable, but there is no consensus that they are desirable: 'Heroic problems require heroic engineering solutions; the engineering solutions, in turn, produce heroic social problems'.⁹¹

The search for the ultimate super-skyscraper continues, however, and the forces that make it happen are financial. Up to 4,000m high super-skyscrapers have been designed in Japan, proposed to solve the increasing problems of urban sprawl. These proposals argue that 'A few immensely tall "super-skyscrapers" would suffice to gather in all the dispersed and disordered urban space which makes up the cities and render it ordered, efficient, comfortable and architecturally significant'.⁹² Whether the super-skyscrapers will hold up, be comfortable, and irradiate beauty is debatable. But discussing the three Vitruvian virtues in the context of super-skyscrapers would lead us away from the point which is essentially financial, an operation schemed 'to redress the equilibrium of the price of building sites', as Giancarlo De Carlo points out. He concludes that 'the super-skyscraper breakthrough could be seen from one standpoint as the last phase of the zoning model; and from another standpoint it could be seen as the extreme subordination of urban planning and architecture to the ever more violent demands of the neo-capitalistic market'. In the meantime the metropolises are savage and deteriorating, but the pressing questions of overdevelopment, and the relationship of buildings to the people and cultures they serve are rarely raised.

The renowned Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa recently gave a lecture in Oslo in which he talked about animal architecture. He showed a great number of beautiful and technically impressive slides from animal constructions made by spiders, termites and birds, 700m long dams made by beavers etc. A termite 'hill' (or nest) and the life of termites in it, he said, compared with human settle-

ments is as if the entire population of New York City was housed in one big skyscraper. The most fantastic thing about the termite hill was the highly advanced ecological systems: the economy of energy in all aspects from circulation of air and of termite inhabitants, to construction economy and instrumental economy, as the hills (high, narrow, long box-like volumes, which bear a stunning resemblance to the dogmatic functionalist project for Grünerløkka in 1936, see chapter V) were systematically placed on a north-south axis and could thus obtain optimal temperature conditions. The termite hill is a perfect example of efficient and rational organization.⁹³

Architects are impressed and fascinated by the ingenuity, the comprehensiveness and also the beauty displayed in such advanced 'natural' organizations. They certainly have a lesson to learn from animal building on matters of economy and ecology in view of the urgent issue of sustainable construction developments.⁹⁴ But it would be a terrible mistake to disregard the problems of a more social, cultural and political nature which are inextricably part of human civilizations, and the remedy for which appears incompatible with a rigidly instrumental, over-controlled and over-crowded agglomeration of humans in an outsized, artificial 'anthill'. The basically instinctive collectivity of insects, their collective logic, cannot be compared with that of humans.

In an international context the scepticism towards tall buildings that is expressed in the Oslo competitions is perhaps remarkable. It is a matter in which the sensitivity of the broad public audience plays an exceptionally important role. Thus, it was the very struggle about the high-rise building in the Karl Johan *kvartallet* that marked the turning point with regard to the preservation of the old buildings. It was the prospect of surpassing size and surpassing height penetrating the very 'heart of Oslo' that crucially injected doubt into the dominant belief in progress to the degree that its manifestations would be moderated and toned down in the competitions for decades.

This scepticism shows how the inertia of the democratic processes balances the consequences for use and social life against the fascina-

92 Giancarlo De Carlo, 'Vesuvius and Fujiama', *Spazio & Società*, no. 69, (1995), p. 9 f.

93 Oslo School of Architecture, 3 November, 1994.

94 *BK*, 77, no. 5, (1995), a special issue on sustainable development focusing on architecture and building. Moreover, Nicholas Lenssen and David Malin Roodman, 'Making better buildings', in Lester R. Brown, editor, *State of the World 1995*, (New York, 1995), pp. 95-112.

tion with symbolizing the dynamic forces of our age. It balances cultural continuity against the thrust of technological and economic power. Implicit in these considerations are notions of equality and the deeply ingrained reluctance towards demonstrations of power. This inertia also expresses a certain kind of conservatism on behalf of a culture which still appreciates free movement and easy accessibility to common ground not impoverished by the long shadows and congestion of high-rise developments; a culture which projects its own particular non-urban qualities on to urban life: that essence which is found in the fjords and the woods. Thus high-rise buildings have not convinced the Oslo audience of their sovereignty as a solution for a good way of life.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There has been a dramatic change in attitudes towards the existing environment during the course of the period. The threefold rhetorical set of texts and design material (architecture and visual representation rhetoric) substantiates this change. The tendency in the first 30 years was to *eradicate* the old, and replace it with large, simple shapes as manifestation of a total modernization project. By contrast, the last 20 years of competitions show new buildings in *coexistence* with the old, which, predominantly, have been preserved. This crucial change of conditions relates to a distinct *turning point* which occurred in the late 1960s at a time when a long-prevailing political consensus came to an end.

In the first period the *texts* support the alienation of the past by evoking negative feelings: old buildings are called 'ugly' and 'crooked', and 'derelict', 'obsolete' and 'unsuited for modern purposes' up until as late as in the competition for the Karl Johan *kvartalet* in 1962. In the last period, great verbal homage is paid to the old buildings. The goal is to 'enrich' or to 'refine' or 'complete' the already existing environment: the new insertions must be 'accessible' and 'attractive' in order to enhance the urban vitality and variety.

The *visual rhetoric* expresses a similar change of attitudes too. In the first period, the typical graphic emphasizes the new buildings as dis-

tinctly *self-sufficient* objects, underlining their disconnectedness from the existing buildings. In the last period, the graphic presents the existing environment thoroughly, and the new is advocated as an *integral part* of a greater, coherently functioning whole.

Thus, the threefold rhetorical set enables a broad advocacy of the prize-winning architecture; an advocacy which is related to the fluctuating political issues as well as to the autonomous issues of architecture. Amplified to gain the maximum adherence, the rhetorical intensity varies with the degree of controversy or sensitivity with regard to the 'new' versus the 'old' in the public audience. The 'new' totalizing architecture of the 1940s was legitimated by health which, when equalled with light and air, had to be different from the 'old' which was regarded as ugly and miserable. The two-facedness of the Karl Johan *kvartalet* competition in 1962 indicates the advent of a turning point: the old is regarded as irreconcilable with modern, rational demands but its cultural-historical value is still appreciated.

Nonetheless, an equally totalizing architecture, which is more compact than the previous, wins the prize. The texts in the early 1970s treat the old with remarkable thoroughness and respect, and forward a modern architecture whose square masses have been adapted to the old dimensions.

The role of the throbbing life of the consumer market which was introduced in the Karl Johan competition plays an increasingly central role in the 1970s and 80s, in which aesthetic qualities, nostalgia, the historical as new, testify to the relative notion of multiplicity, and the architecture appears in more varied configurations. The public, since the late 1960s innately sceptical towards changes in the image of its surroundings, could thus be persuaded that the 'new' would improve the 'old' by creating a more 'humanly' attractive totality.

Progress is no longer unambiguously identified with removal of the old. For example when Christian Norberg-Schulz in the early 1990s with governmental authority states that 'Buildings are beautiful when they suit the place',⁹⁵ this presupposes an audience which will respond positively to the idea of place, *genius loci*. Included in this sense of place are

⁹⁵ Norberg-Schulz, quoted on the *Byggeskikketsirkel*, a poster published by Statens Byggeskikkutvalg, Norges byggforskning-institutt and Husbanken, (Oslo, 1992).

the existing buildings which, by contrast to the 1940s, the general audience now appreciates for more or less vaguely formulated aesthetic reasons. This statement here testifies to the relativity of architectural judgement or architectural legitimation as is also evident in the competitions. Norberg-Schulz does not mean that contemporary architecture should consist of copying the old, but he underlines the importance of the aesthetic relationship of new architecture to the context of place.

Parallel to the general concern for tradition and the existing environment, 'newness' is appreciated as something undoubtedly good in itself. Thus, when the architectural researcher Grete Bull in a lecture on residential institutions for the elderly emphasizes the slogan 'Creative newness or blind copying', she rhetorically mobilizes the unconsciously positive attitude to newness in the audience.⁹⁶ 'Creative' has a definitely positive connotation, and 'blind' a negative one, as nobody wants to be shown to be unable to perceive the problem which is being discussed. But actually 'Creative copying or blind newness' could be just as relevant as a starting point for debate. Whether the legitimation in the competitions is health or attractiveness to the consumers, the prevailing tectonic preference is said to be an architecture which is 'clear', 'calm' and 'firm' while nevertheless acting as a framework for a modern, rich and varied human life.

The *visual* rhetoric, seeks by its diverse techniques to embrace and compromise the diverging aspects by mediating the new in relation to the old in the least provocative manner, and at the same time emphasizes the work of architecture as an artistic object. But still blind spots remain: the designs can be spoken of by other and different verbal arguments, and the texts can be visualized using other and different architectural designs. The degree to which the texts legitimate the designs by referring to broad, general issues in society is remarkable whilst the development within the other arts (literature, music, drama and especially the visual arts) which have continuously influenced contemporary architecture, are not mentioned. Underlying the most evident rhetorical presentations, especially in the graphics, the *autonomy* of architecture proceeds pursuing the drive of its internal core issues. Its intrinsic logic transcends

the oscillations of politics, and escapes the scrutiny of conscientious and thorough inquiry.

The sensitive issue of *high-rise* buildings is treated with ambivalence in the competitions; an ambivalence which oscillates between ardent rhetoric, and pragmatic demands to utility. On the one hand high-rise buildings are taken for granted as the 'modern solution' and they are justified as necessary visual 'dominants' or expressions of power in a disordered environment. On the other hand, a dislike of 'dominants' is supported by both aesthetic and practical explanations. The particular and vague blend of poetic rhetoric and practical considerations indicates the symbolic importance of the issue, and the visual representations display the implicit ambivalence and ambiguity.

Only twice is a high-rise building specifically praised as an excellent solution. In both cases the premiated high-rise buildings are characterized by extreme *slenderness*. Associating to poetic connotations as a 'tower' and a 'campanile', the supporting rhetoric advocates the 'festive', 'captivating' and 'audacious' architectural manifestations. The discrepancy between rhetoric and reality is revealing: architectural 'demands' of maintaining the poetic 'slenderness' tend to be overruled by the technical-economic rationalism of clients. These attempts at embodying the old fascination of surpassing greatness as symbols of human ingenuity with artistic objects which are freed from the 20th century joint forces of economy and technology do not succeed in reality, but nevertheless the proposals survive in the annals of architectural ideas.

In general the juries take a *negative* position toward high-rise buildings: 'the high-rise building is a mistake', said the jury in the competition for the Karl Johan *kvartalet*. The general view in the Oslo competitions involves reservations about the visual effects of a new and disturbing dominance in the existing environment. In a society dominated by the principles of reasonable equality and moderation, the art of balancing utility and beauty must take into account the fact that extremes are carefully monitored by the public opinion. Extreme high-rise buildings are just that kind of conspicuous tectonic enterprise that induces fervent rhetoric and involves the risk of total rejection.

96 Presentation of the Norwegian Building Research Institute (Norges byggforskingsinstitutt) at the Oslo School of Architecture, September, 1995.

VII

MONUMENTALITY, ANTI-MONUMENTALITY AND IDENTITY

The previous chapter dealt with the new competition architecture in relation to the old from a general point of view, and the issue of great height and size was treated as a special variant of the same problem. Although we detected a distinct turning point with regard to appreciation of the existing, historical environment, attitudes toward the buildings from the past nevertheless remain ambivalent. In this chapter, then, we will pursue the implicit commemorative function of the new architecture as well as the old as it comes to expression in the Oslo competitions.

The competition texts do not specifically investigate the problem of monumentality. Organizational problems, for instance, are discussed with far greater enthusiasm and commitment. This is noteworthy insofar as monumentality concerns our common heritage, and moreover, since the competitions comprise major public projects in the capital of Norway, they are of great symbolic significance. The problem is also intriguing today as a new quest for monumentality has been in the process of surfacing in the public domain over the last few years.¹

As far as its etymological origins are concerned, 'monumentality' stems from the Latin *monumentum* and *monere*, to remind, to warn. 'Monument' designates an object which serves to perpetuate the memory of a person, an event or an idea. In a more general sense the word 'monument' is also often applied to remains from past eras, for their documentary interest and artistic value. 'The memorial character basic to the concept of monument may be intended from the outset, acquired by interpretation, or conferred'.²

In current usage, *monumental* seems to imply a slightly different quality to *monument*:

the adjective 'monumental' seems more evocative, more emotionally involving, whilst 'monument' is something referred to in a more abstract and detached manner. As for 'monumentality' in architecture, 'vast size, massiveness and permanence' are traditionally held as defining characteristics. 'Monumental' also associates to certain components of *style*, such as for instance a distinct symmetry, a strong figural hierarchy and architectural emphasis as for example 'a monumental entrance'. But it can also be used in a wider poetic sense as something pleasing, unique and memorable as the fountains in Rome or the Spanish Stairs. Nevertheless, history has been preserved for us in the form of its 'monuments'. The role they play changes as history proceeds, and new 'monuments' are continuously added.

The work of the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl (1858-1905) provides some seminal clues to the understanding of architecture as monuments. His work is gaining ever more recognition outside the German-speaking countries, among other reasons for his early repudiation of the narrowly empiricist approach to the study of art.³ Although the ostensible subject of Riegl's essay from 1903⁴ was historical monuments and their preservation, it saliently delineates some questions which are decisive for the fate of art and architecture in modern times.

Riegl distinguishes between three kinds of response to artistic works of the past interpreting them as 1) *intentional* monuments, 2) *unintentional*, or historical monuments, and, 3) works possessing *age-value*. He maintains that in the same way that the 19th century was the age of 'historical value', the 20th century is that of 'age-value'. The historical process over five hundred years from the cult of the value of

- 1 The *Architectural Review*, for example, recently treated the issue of monumentality in editorials and various articles, CXCVII, nos. 1180 and 1181, (1995).
- 2 Rosario Assunto, 'Monuments', in *Encyclopaedia of World Art*, Volume X, (London, 1965), p. 271.
- 3 Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*, (Cambridge, Mass., London, 1993).
- 4 Alois Riegl, 'The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin', *Oppositions*, Fall 1982: 25, (1982), pp. 20-51, the original essay 'Der moderne Denkmalkultus', (written in 1903), published in Alois Riegl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, (Augsburg-Vienna, 1928), translated by Kurt W. Forster and Diane Ghirardo.

'intentional monuments' through 'historical value' to 'age-value', is part of a much broader emancipation of the individual which has progressed dramatically since the 18th century. In his words: 'The characteristic drive in this change is the desire to transcend an objective physical and psychic perception in favour of a subjective experience.'⁵

Both historical monuments and those appreciated for their age-value, embrace all works of art and artefacts without regard to their original significance and purpose. The buildings, and built environments, in the Oslo competitions have historical value in that they convey irreplaceable testimony about their time. They are 'unintentional monuments' from the point of view of our modern perception of them, that is the relative *art-value* at the time of appreciation which corresponds with the *Kunstwollen*, or the artistic volition, at the same time.⁶ On the one hand the *Kunstwollen*, at a given time influences the evaluation of the *existing* monuments in the competition contexts. On the other hand the same *Kunstwollen* crucially influences the new designs, it determines the prefiguration of *future* monuments which, if they were realized in correspondence with the proposal, will be assessed in the light of changing art-values after they have come into existence.

The difference between 'historical value' and 'age-value' reveals itself when it comes to the treatment of the monument: the cult of 'historical value' aims at the most complete conservation of the monument whereas the cult of 'age-value' favours natural decay. The advantage of 'age-value' is its universal validity; since it does not rest on a scientific basis which requires knowledge and reflection, it can be appreciated by anyone:

Its value as memory does not interfere with the work as such, but springs from our appreciation of the time which has elapsed since it was made and which has burdened it with traces of age . . . This immediate emotional effect depends on neither scholarly knowledge nor historical education for its satisfaction, since it is evoked by mere sensory perception.⁷

The very universal nature of age-value, which embraces the historical value, appeals to a broad public audience without requiring scholarly training. This kind of relative evaluation of the past is included in the art-value which at any given time addresses the future as well as the past. A further investigation and distinction of the *Kunstwollen* in relation to the broader collective cult of age-value in society would however go beyond the bounds of this study.

Although being part of an inclusive *Kunstwollen*, the art-value forwarded in the competitions is nevertheless also relative in the sense that its criteria to a great degree are determined within the autonomy of the architectural profession. There is a constant conflict of interests between art historians and architects on this matter. Importantly, since architects today lack the historical education that is essential to art historians, the art-value they place on objects is relative in a fundamentally different manner which tends to leave them in a more subjective position. Public opinion, or the taste of the clients and users, are active in the prevalent amalgamation of value preferences at any given time. But when it comes to the *artistic practice* or handling of art-values in architecture, old as well as new, the architects still play the leading role.

Conceptions of monumentality in the Oslo competitions

The most explicit statements on monumentality in the competitions are found in the late 1960s and early 1970s, where the attitudes expressed are ambivalent and partly anti-monumental. The jury in the Tullinløkka competition repeatedly points to the necessity of respecting the character and integrity of the *existing monumental* buildings:

The difficulties have been to avoid a closed character [of the new] towards the town as well as a monumental attitude which competes with the existing buildings.⁸

The jury praises the 1st prize project because it succeeds in

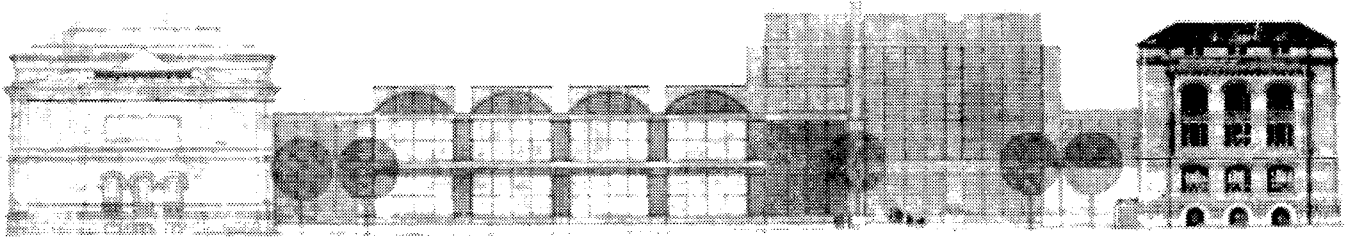
. . .shaping a new edifice which appears as an independent building and simultane-

5 Riegl, p. 29.

6 *Kunstwollen*, refers to the thrust of interests and attitudes in a particular phase of artistic development. The *Kunstwollen* of an epoch, says the translator Forster, conveys in its broadest sense the unreflected force, and compelling power of a particular vision. Kurt W. Forster, 'Monument/Memory and the Mortality of Architecture', *Oppositions*, Fall 1982:25, (1982), p. 6. Riegl saw 'artistic development as running parallel to, and in harmony with, changes in other domains of culture, philosophy, science, and social life, view, artistic development', Iversen, p. 11.

7 Riegl, pp. 23-24.

8 *NAK* no. 183, (1973), p. 3.



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39. TULLINLØKKA, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, ELEVATION

ously connects the existing buildings in reality as well as visually. The proposal is one of the few in which the scale of the new building refers to the existing buildings, and to a moderate degree adopts formal elements and materials without being incriminated with an unpleasant monumentality.⁹

The connection with respect to the similar formal elements is vague: it is merely the visual resemblance between the arch that can be found in the old windows and the arched vaults of the new roof (fig. 39). This distant echo of the old, suggesting a figural familiarity, responds to some anticipated claims for aesthetic coherence, and simultaneously permits what was regarded as obsolete monumentality to be avoided.

The author of the 1st prize project evocatively and delicately balances his ambivalence when he writes that it may be difficult to establish contact even with 'the massive beauty' of the National Gallery although the monumentality of the old buildings is not 'terrifying in itself'. His intention, however, is to create an intimacy in the environment by creating spaces of various dimensions and thus reduce and make more nuanced the impression of the 'enormous dimensions' of the museum buildings.¹⁰ The rhetoric here succeeds in acclaiming the existing monumentality, but at the same time also in isolating its relevance to monuments belonging to the past: monumental is identified with the heavy, static and oppressive architecture of bygone eras which is fundamentally contrary to the goal of the new edifice, which is to be intimate, 'friendly, inviting' and open. Monumentality can be unpleasant; the author of the purchased project motto: '10001' says quite candidly that his project is *anti-monumental*.¹¹

The competitions for the National Theatre and the Bank of Norway express similar views on monumentality: the problem is to find a way of paying respect to the existing monumental buildings, whilst there is at the same time no question that the new insertions must imply a totally different architecture. In the case of the National Theatre, the 1st prize project is based on a self-professed *Noli me tangere* attitude, wishing to *subordinate* the new extension to the 'dominating architectural motifs' of the old edifice.¹² The old Bank of Norway building is described by the jury as a

confidence-inspiring, grey stone building in moderate *Jugendstil*. . . 1906.¹³

The author of the 1st prize project, however, states that

The existing Bank of Norway building will, insofar as it is not removed, still appear with its character of self-assumed monumentality. The new buildings in the block ought not to be incriminated with similar pretensions.¹⁴

One last example from this period is the 1st prize project for the University of Oslo, in which the author quite intricately bases his extensive argumentation on anti-monumentalization:

Does not the present university complex at Blindern yield an unnecessarily strong impression of the *differences* between functions – between faculties? Does not the complex suffer from a nostalgia for 'representative forms' – a representative expression? Does not the form of the buildings and their organization contribute to a separation of the disciplines – of the many faculties?

9 *NAK*, no. 183, p. 4.
 10 *NAK*, no. 183, p. 5.
 11 *NAK*, no. 183, p. 25.
 12 *NAK*, no. 190, (1973), p. 7.
 13 *NAK*, no. 192, p. 2.
 14 *NAK*, no. 192, p. 4.

It is far more interesting to point to the *similarities* between the departments – what they have in common, what they can contribute to each other!

Is this not an expression of disassociation – of the separation of the parts of the university! ‘Look at us’, the proud, free-standing buildings say, ‘are we not strong and independent’.¹⁵

Here the *relatively new* buildings, the majority of them erected after the competition in 1958, are associated with historical (be it classical, romantic or modern) monumental buildings *in general*, and identified as obsolete and contrary to the current requirements of flexibility, openness, and spatial coherence. In his characterization of the existing buildings, the author evokes sentiments and thoughts that are disagreeable to the new ideology, in which informality and social integration between teachers and students as well as between other different societal categories, are an important democratic goal. Thus he elaborates and substantiates the explanations for his design, which consists of a low, continuous structure that spreads out over an extremely large area.

Returning to the immediate pre-war situation, in the competition for the new Government Building in 1939, isolated comments on monumentality do occur. The demand for a distinguished design, however, is connected to the purpose of the building, which again is dominated by practical and financial aspects. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs alone was suggested to have a *prominent* location. Comments on the old building from 1906 were negative, emphasizing the edifice as obsolete and massive, and moreover as casting large shadows on the site; it was regarded as unsuitable for the purpose of a modern office complex. Still, the front façade of one of the prize-winning designs, motto: ‘U’, is praised for its monumental architecture.¹⁶ For the rest, monumentality is mentioned in notably vague terms; three members of the jury stated that

the site was unfit for a simultaneously monumental and practical Government Building,¹⁷

and requested another site which could accommodate the adequate monumentality.

Reverence for the *old* monumentality was decidedly regarded as subordinate to the modern ideals. Monumentality with respect to the *new* edifice in the context of these ‘free plan’ ideals implied the particular grandeur of sculptural *simplicity* and *large sizes*; as ‘dominants’ with great height in combination with *open spaces*. Regardless of how matter-of-factly these ideals were advocated, as cited above, one does however feel that the reference to ‘monumental’ is a rather inane justification for the difficulty of adapting the ideal architectural principles to the conditions of the site.

The competition for the Extension of the Parliament Building in 1949, another edifice of national importance, involved a detailed discussion of the degree of preservation or alteration of the existing monument, the Parliament Building from 1866. From the conspicuously divergent proposals, the chosen solution is praised for leaving the existing building *intact* and arranging the new spaces in a simple and aesthetically tranquil design.¹⁸ The tone here in 1949 is more appreciatively reverent toward the old monument than in the case of the Government Building in 1939. The spirit of consolidating the nation immediately after the war provides an explanation; this broad collective mentality influenced the architecture as Norberg-Schulz,¹⁹ Lund²⁰ and Grønvold²¹ have argued. The architecture of this period is usually considered a retrograde step from the heroic functionalist advances of the 1930s which were renewed later in the 1950s; Norberg-Schulz employs the terms *Heimatsstil* and ‘cosiness’, connoting to the homely and familiar, as opposed to the progressive force of the international movement. He nevertheless describes the extension of the Parliament Building as calm and in good taste.²² In my opinion, the Parliament extension quite elegantly adapts a new front to the old monumental complex.

15 *NAK*, no. 156, (1969), pp. 10-11. When translating these lines from Norwegian, I phoned the author Erik Hultberg to discuss what he had meant by *representativ*. He confirmed that the expressions were charged with ironical connotations: *representativ* represents something typically self-sufficient in its separateness; here *representativ* is not used in the more common, positive sense of distinguished or dignified.

16 *BK*, 22, (1940), pp. 34-39. Motto: ‘U’, had classicist features such as simple symmetry and grand lineaments in the front façade.

17 *BK*, 22, (1940), p. 44

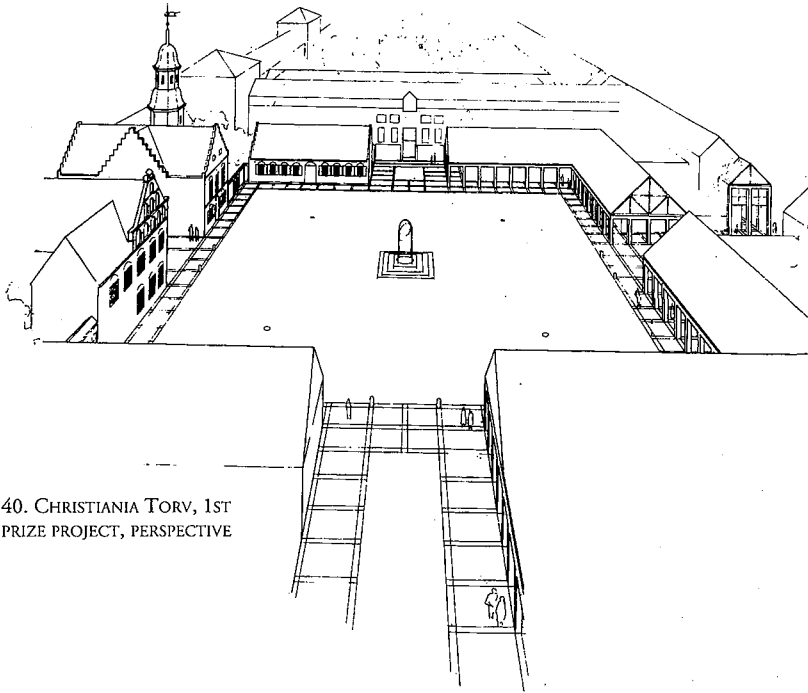
18 *BK*, 31, no. 12, (1949), pp. 205-208.

19 Christian Norberg-Schulz, ‘Norsk arkitektur i femti år’, *BK*, 43, no. 3, (1961), pp. 57-102, p. 90.

20 Lund, (1991).

21 Ulf Grønvold, ‘I hybridenes dager’, *BK*, 73, no. 7, (1991), pp. 402-417.

22 Norberg-Schulz, (1961), p. 90 and p. 101.



40. CHRISTIANIA TORV, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, PERSPECTIVE

The competition for the Landscaping of the Government Offices Complex several decades later in 1990 does not include the design of a building. However, a *new kind* of reference to *monumentality* appears repeatedly in the text, for instance in the criticism of the 1st prize design:

The baths itself was not anticipated to be grand or imposing. On the contrary, there were strict regulations with respect to height, but its form and location were expected to take part in the *grand layout* of the surrounding inner harbour basin area in which the existing monuments played important roles.²⁴

Only one of the competitions, the redevelopment of Christiania Torv, a central city square, in 1986, involved the conscious commemoration of historical architecture:

The primary requirement of the task is to 'recreate' Christiania Torv.²⁵

This did not entail copying the old buildings, but incorporating the fundamental principles of the former urban space in a new structure. The jury, associating to the old central symmetrical square, called for

A neat and harmonious urban space . . . a simple geometry. . . The new buildings . . . should have some of the clarity and rhythm of the Renaissance.²⁶

23 NAK, no. 294, pp. 3-4. Høyblokken is the high-rise building in the centre of the complex, based on the competition of 1939, and in which the Prime Minister's offices and the cabinet meeting room are located.

24 NAK, no. 277, (s. a), p. 3.

25 NAK, no. 268, (1986), p. 2.

26 NAK, no. 268, pp. 2-3.

27 Joan Ockman, *Architecture Culture 1943-1968*, (New York, 1993), p. 27.

28 J. L. Sert, F. Léger, S. Giedion, 'Nine Points on Monumentality', published in Joan Ockman, *Architecture Culture 1943-1968*, (New York, 1993), pp. 29-30. The paper was intended for publication by American Abstract Artists, along with more extensive essays by each of the three, but the volume was never published. Giedion's essay 'The Need for a New Monumentality' came out in 1944 in *New Architecture and City Planning*, edited by Paul Zucker.

The distance to Høyblokken [the high-rise block] that emerges in this way, together with the mirroring plane of water, reinforce the monumentality and dignity of the building in accordance with its function. . . The project would have gained in monumentality as well as strength if. . .²³

The point here is to enhance the *total impression* of dignity or monumentality by creating architectural *coherence* and unity of a certain *grandeur* between the different existing buildings. The tendency towards grandeur was already explicit in the Vaterland and Grønland Market competition in 1982, in which the extremely clean-cut and large shapes were emphasized as 'striking' and 'captivating'. A few years later in the competition for the Aqua-Leisure Centre, 1987, references to monumentality are general, describing the very different historical examples of architecture as massive objects perceived in a visual setting of axes and views, and underlining qualities such as *firmness* in the *placing* of the new edifice.

The 1st prize project is shown in figure 40. In the last period of the competitions, then, monumentality emerges as a positive quality expressed in different forms, with different connotations relating to the type of competition task. *Newness* prevails as the explicit prerogative of the design, but the notion of preserving the monuments of the past as well as of making the new architecture memorable, were now also taken into consideration.

Monumentality: a controversial saga of relative values

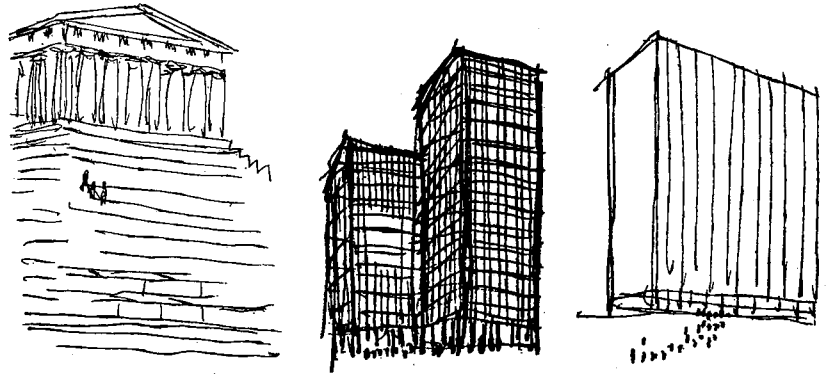
The very concepts of *monumentality* and *monument* appear as a target for criticism and alienation in the majority of the competitions. *Forward and forget the past*, could be an adequate slogan for the dominant ideology, which was most vociferously expressed in the first period with the huge demolition projects, but also echoed later when large-scale clearance was no longer a primary goal.

Monumentality is a highly controversial concept in modern architecture. When the

theme of 'the new monumentality' was debated in the 1940s, opinions were strongly divergent. 'If it is a monument it is not modern, and if it is modern it cannot be a monument', as Louis Mumford wrote in the *Culture of Cities*, was the accepted view, according to Joan Ockman.²⁷ By contrast, in the paper 'Nine points on Monumentality' in 1943, Giedion, Léger and Sert stressed the need for the 'new monumentality . . . the expression of man's highest cultural needs,' and underlined the importance of placing it within the historical evolution of modernism itself. New, lighter materials were suggested for the modern monumental buildings in contrast to the old ones: metal, bright colours and giant walls like projection screens, presaging today's advertising environment.²⁸ The debate reached a climax in an issue of the *Architectural Review* in 1948 to which among others Gregor Paulson, Walter Gropius, Alfred Roth, Sigfried Giedion and Louis Mumford were invited to contribute. The Swedish architectural historian Gregor Paulson maintained that the term 'monumental' was connected with autocracy and dictatorship, and therefore ought to be excluded from architectural terminology in a democratic society.²⁹ This latter view, invoking associations to the architecture of Albert Speer in Nazi Germany, to Mussolini's Italy and the East Bloc totalitarian regimes, seems to be most representative for the Norwegian attitudes.

Although monumentality was not a goal of the new architecture in the Oslo competitions, some implicit clues may be found in contemporary local writings. Herman Munthe-Kaas wrote in *Byggekunst*, 1956, about the young architects of the 1920s who wanted to break away from 'the romanticism and the individualism which did not meet their requirements for calm, order and monumentality'.³⁰ Whilst the term 'monumental' largely disappears in connection with contemporary architecture, its content remains intrinsic in the endeavours of architects to create *calm* and *order*; *firmness* and *harmony*; to stand out and distinguish itself by simplicity and bareness in size and forms.

I mentioned in chapter VI that high-rise buildings were introduced as *dominants* in places where a strongly marked silhouette was



41. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE SAME 'STYLE MENTALITY' BY KNUT KNUTSEN

considered necessary as a focus for the image: 'One does not build cathedrals any more, but the high-rise buildings can fill their place in the city image.'³¹ This statement seems tediously commonplace, but it nevertheless stresses the monumental and commemorative dimension of architecture in a secularized world. Moreover it focuses on the *long-distance* or landmark function, while the proximate monumental experience is ignored: the *inner space* of a cathedral is monumental in quite a different way to that of an office building with repetitive square rooms. When Benum in retrospect speaks of the post-war high-rise buildings as reminders or distinguishing marks of 'the information city', it is indeed the very same case that was anticipated in the 1930s: 'High-rise buildings represented, particularly in the 1960s and 70s, a way of expressing the power and prestige of the new bureaucracies'.³² The Rikstrygdeverket building is 'a monument to Norwegian Social Policy', said the minister Gudmund Harlem at its inauguration in 1960.³³ Karl Otto Ellefsen, professor of urbanism, also points to the 'social democratic monumentality' of these high-rise buildings, 'they break away from the traditional urban structure and establish monumentality in terms of their size'.³⁴

This kind of architectural monumentality was opposed by Knut Knutsen, one of the important modern Norwegian architects, who as early as 1953 illustrated how 'the different forms of building were all expressions of the same mentality', or authoritarian power, which he defied (fig. 41). Knutsen represented an extremely humble attitude to architecture, renouncing all *style mentality*, and claiming that vanity must be reduced: ' . . . objects must be made as unimportant as possible. *Human*

- 29 Nils-Ole Lund, 'Drømmen om mening – Christian Norberg-Schulz som teoretiker', *BK*, 68, no. 7, (1986), p. 402.
- 30 Herman Munthe-Kaas, 'Fra nyklassisme til funksjonalisme' (1926-1936), *BK*, 38, no. 5/6, (1956), pp. 135-148, p. 135.
- 31 Harald Hals quoted in Munthe-Kaas, p. 140.
- 32 Benum, (1994), p. 13. In pp. 9-26 and 383-409, he speaks about *informasjonsbyen* which he distinguishes from *varebyen*, the 'commodities town'; *informasjon* or information employed in a wide sense, includes everyone in the urban community who is involved in working with information, i.e. decision-makers, information producers and information mediators; all public and private bureaucracies. This is used as a contrast to the former 'commodities town' in which the major activity was the production and trade of goods.
- 33 Quoted in Benum, p. 384.
- 34 Karl Otto Ellefsen, 'Planlegging for det nye mennesket', in *Foreningen til norske fortidsminnesmerkers bevaring, Årbok*, 1992, (Oslo, 1992), p. 93.
- 35 Knut Knutsen, 'Arkitektens oppgave', *BK*, 35, no. 8, (1953), pp. 195-197.

beings are the important thing'.³⁵ Similar ideas have underlain the critical attitudes towards high-rise buildings and large-scale renewal to varying degrees during the period of competitions in this study, see chapter VI.

From a different ideological point of departure, in the late 1960s, the politicized revolts against the technocratic way of expressing power and prestige involved a massive social criticism, substantiated by reports on the social life in high-rise housing areas; the high-rise buildings lacked a human quality. Coinciding with the growing concern for preserving the existing environment, *recent monuments* could be rejected while monuments of the past, including the more typical built environment, gained new importance. This movement gained popularity and soon embraced more conservative tendencies, including vernacular architecture and the small-town idyll, as was typical in the competition for the redevelopment of Oslo's waterfront, in 1983.³⁶

In the Oslo competitions, then, *monumentality* is largely understood in the sense of *grandeur* and *impressiveness*, but its connotations change over the period according to the views on the role of the *new* or modern in relation to the *historical*. Moreover, the intensity of argumentation on the matter increases in correspondence with the urgency of the issue of preservation in the public debates.

Whilst the general opinion and the public authorities definitely changed their attitude in favour of preserving historic buildings, or monuments, around 1970, the hegemonic architects did not adapt their artistic codes to the cult of historical value in the sense of immaculate conservation or imitation of historical forms. Since then, requests for historical forms have been recurrently forwarded in society, and architectural responses were to emerge later in the 1980s, in modernized and fragmented forms. However, to the progressive architects, these 'nostalgic' demands were like an echo from the late 19th century when, in their view, everything seemed determined by its former life, and history turned into the deadweight of the past and blurred the real continuum of history. The popularistic echo sounding from the early 1970s evoked the very

situation that modernism so vigorously sought to break away from.

The highly selective descriptions and changing attitudes toward monumentality and existing monuments in the competitions saliently demonstrate the *relative* art-value as an aspect of the cult of age-value. Moreover, the emotional aspect emerges in the rhetorical remarks, such as for instance the evocative comments on the unfitness of the old government building in 1939, as well as the 'unpleasant monumentality' of Tullinløkka in 1972.

Riegl comments on the *negative* implications of art-value, saying that they conflict less with age-value than the positive implications do with regard to the question of preservation, including the manner and degree of preservation. His words 'What goes against the grain, appearing stylistically out of the key or downright ugly in the view of the modern *Kunstwollen*, generates a demand for deliberate destruction',³⁷ quite precisely describe attitudes advocated in the first 25 years of the competitions studied here.

But the problems in the Oslo competitions were more complex: it had been decided that monuments were to be preserved, for their historical value as well as for financial reasons. The rhetoric in the competitions over the period shows various means of applying the general *Kunstwollen* to the art-value of the historic monuments, expressed in positive or negative terms, as well as by mere neglect. The function of involving *negative* implications served to reduce, or to obscure, the conflict between the relative art-value and the age-value and the historical value, thus providing the architects with the optimal freedom, an independent point of departure for architectural treatment of the historic monuments.

Moreover, if the monuments do not satisfy the prevalent *Kunstwollen* at the time, they can be treated *ironically* in order to alienate the new principles from the old, as in the text from the competition for the University of Oslo in 1968. With a similar irony, alienating the recent past and implying a new decisiveness and intent, the Vaterland site was said to be 'a monument to unrealized plans' in the brief for the competition for Vaterland and Grønland

36 *NAK*, no. 252.

37 Riegl, p. 49.

38 *NAK*, no. 246, p. 28.

Market.³⁸ It is in fact remarkable that irony in general is applied only to the issue of monumentality in the competition texts.

The Danish historian Søren Mørch's article on the University of Odense (in Denmark), a typical structuralist complex from 1966, is explicitly ironical as he argues that the building doubtlessly was conceived as a monument in the sense that it is a conscious demonstration, a memorial to the future generations of the political situation in the field of higher education in the 1960s. He then proceeds to unmask the shortcomings of this monument by, among other things, investigating the complex with reference to the notions of democracy, and states that 'the users were not able to express other desires than that the building should be large!' Moreover: '... it is not made for rest but for movement'; there are 'hundreds of metres of wide corridors', but 'very few lavatories in an area where thousands of people would spend their entire working day. This illustrates', he continues, 'that the issue here concerns the highest matters'.³⁹

Whereas Mørch conducts a concrete and specific criticism, in several respects with evidently good reason, the Oslo competition texts are rhetorical with conspicuously little degree of specificity. In Mørch's opinion the cardinal problem with the University of Odense is the 'building's postulate of harmony'; it implies that the world is regarded as principally harmonious, non-conflicting, and the building appears as a State monument to pluralistic harmony. This reasoning matches the *Kunstwollen* of the hegemonic (new) architecture of the Oslo competitions: an architecture which attempts to smooth out the differences and which largely rejects the term 'monumental'. A *Kunstwollen* which disregards the products of the past in an emphatic advocacy of progress and newness could not appreciate a word which in its original meaning valued endurance and memory of the past. With its historical connotations, a monumental new architecture would simply (and perhaps dogmatically and naively) imply that something explicitly was to be regarded as more important, or more memorable, than other things, and this could bring about disharmony and inequality. 'The symbols of power are hidden

and individual expressionism is modified by strong egalitarian ideals', says Ellefsen in an article on the Norwegian consensus in post-war architecture.⁴⁰

Mørch's writing, which is specific and pregnant in its criticism, covers problems which appear in some of the most outstanding competitions in the Oslo material, too. It is thought-provoking, though I do not agree with all his negative assessments of the architectural solutions. Nonetheless, written in 1993, the article represents a stunning example of the changes in the relative art-value and the corresponding evaluations of recent, unintentional monuments as well as highlighting a kind of architectural rhetoric which was particularly typical around 1970.

In the competitions, the act of exclusively connecting the concept of monumentality to the old architecture with negative connotations, made it possible to disconnect the deeper aesthetic implications from the current architectural agenda; to make them invisible or ineffable. 'Monumental' assumed a negative timbre with associations to civic power and societal rigidity, to oppression and misery as in the past. The persuasive ideological alienation did not invite closer attention or appreciation of the inherent architectural qualities. Thus the aesthetic aspect, that of tectonic and spatial arrangements which move the senses, independently of the ideologically ascribed values, was also avoided. In addition to the conscious recognition of what buildings represent, buildings have an aesthetically emotive and commemorative⁴¹ effect which is more complex, and not necessarily negative. Some properties can associate to a person's former experiences with the building, or with similar qualities in other buildings, even to images of buildings portrayed in literature and pictures. These aesthetic qualities include the materials, the arrangement of openings and solids, ornamentation, micro-climatic qualities, acoustics and smells, as well as ways of guiding movement and so forth. Defined as symbols of power and rigidity, however, the old buildings were largely treated as a *quantitative* and geometric problem in the competitions, a reductive and abstract question of overall dimensions, angles and axes of view in the urban setting,

39 Søren Mørch, 'Universitetet som monument: enquete om demokratisk arkitektur', *Arkitekten* (DK), 95, no. 12, (September, 1993), pp. 430-433. The excerpts from the architect's description advocate quite other qualities than monumentality: '... a large urbanized development... street level... pedestrian level', etc. in a spirit similar to that of the University of Oslo in 1968.

40 Karl Otto Ellefsen, 'Tendenser i norsk arkitektur 1986: sprekker i den norske enigheten', *BK*, 68, no. 7, (1986), pp. N1-N22, (p. N2).

41 I am using 'commemorative' (commemorate, from *commemorare*, to call to mind) in a wide sense to include qualities, not in memory of particular events, nor necessarily remarkably old, but which yield that immediate emotional effect that constitute a basic criterion for age-value and art-value.

In a manner different from the history of art, the architectural *Kunstwollen* views on historic architecture include the *use-value* of the monuments. The monuments have meaning by the potential they offer for use. The architectural ideologies of any period comprise programmes for use as well as for aesthetics. The *conceptions of use* are encapsulated as integral parts in the architectural ideology, and consequently enter into the argumentation and its rhetoric as important constituents. Thus the old Government Building could be dismissed allegedly for reasons pertaining to its use, the condemnation of the crooked, old bourgeois buildings in Vestre Vika was legitimated by health arguments etc. until the turning point in the late 1960s. (The heated debates on high-rise buildings implied just that kind of integrated use-aesthetic value.) From that time on, the architectural conceptions of use were gradually less dogmatically related to historical edifices: old buildings could continue their life, or they could be renovated and transformed to suit modern life, while the use ideals as prescriptions for new architecture were further elaborated.

As a whole the views on the historical architecture in the Oslo competitions were exclusively linked to the modern conceptions of use until the 1980s. Practical use, lifestyle and social atmosphere (modern, intimate, friendly, accessible, flexible integration etc.) were stressed, and the new aesthetic was kept deliberately neutral, subordinate, attempting to escape figurative differentiation and (traditional) monumentality. The typical old buildings in the Bank of Norway block were not considered especially oppressive in the competition in 1973, and could be used for practical purposes, thus yielding a picturesque element to the neutral modern complex. Nevertheless, the attitudes towards new monuments underwent a change: firstly, during the realization process, the project was attacked in the arena of public debate for spending the taxpayers' money on excessively costly materials such as granite, marble and copper. Later, after the inauguration in 1983, as the aesthetic aspect emerged as a criterion of renewed importance, in that the project was criticized for not being monumental enough, in other words that it was aesthetically too neutral and subordinate, and not figu-

ratively, 'symbolically' monumental. This story illustrates the lability of public opinion and the sensitive circumstances of urban development projects. History offers no guarantee as to what kind of architectural monuments will endure, which qualities will be preserved: the survival of the historical value is dependent upon the art-value, and the *Kunstwollen*, at any given time. Thus, in the competitions of the 1940s and 1950s, (for instance Vestre Vika, 1947, and Vålerenga, 1956) the architects were more eager to tear down the older buildings than the newer ones.

Riegl employs the term *present-day value* which includes values of practical use as well as artistic value, and demonstrates the relationship between present-day values and the cult of monuments, a relationship which ultimately leads to conflict both with regard to natural decay as well as complete restoration. He reminds us that we generally prefer to find old buildings (he mentions St. Peter's in Rome) in constant use; 'once fully abandoned to destruction they would create an objectionable impression even in the terms of the cult of age-value'.⁴² Present-day value lies at the core of the problem of evaluating the monuments in the Oslo competitions. Present-day value does not arise unanimously as a joint priority of the parties involved, but represents an intricate compound of interests including the building industry, the owners and the users, as well as antiquarians and architects. The relative present-day values advocated in this study represent the competition hegemony's synthesis of these values, selected and recreated in the words of the competition juries and the winning architects.

The new monuments of the competitions

There is obviously a crucial distinction between the prize-winning proposals and the edifices that eventually were built on the basis of the competition designs. Nevertheless, to the degree that the competition designs encapsulate the fully realized architecture, they constitute *prefigurations of future monuments*. Regardless of whether the dominant taste today renounces the architecture of the Government Building as well as the SAS Hotel and the Bank

⁴² Riegl, p. 39.

of Norway, they are still monumental buildings or architectural monuments of their time. It is not the kind of modern, particular and symbolic monumentality that was called for by Sert, Léger and Giedion in the 1940s.⁴³ Nor is it the kind of monumentality that Norberg-Schulz, with reference to Giedion, speaks of as 'the new monumentality'. He shows magnificent expressionist works such as Le Corbusier's Ronchamp Chapel, Utzon's Sidney Opera House and other outstanding pieces of very particular architecture on 'free', open sites. The post-modern prerequisites, whether in the spirit of Venturi or Rossi, who in Norberg-Schulz' opinion were importantly influential in the efforts towards the new monumentality,⁴⁴ only appear in a few cases, and then rather faintly. Thus explicitly symbolic and expressive monumentality is not typical in the hegemonic Oslo competition architecture.

Nonetheless, the commemorative value of the buildings resulting from the Oslo competitions is still valid; they are monuments of the hegemonic architectural taste, as well as of the typical architectural tasks of their time. A disregarding of these images, a denial that this hegemonic architecture has a commemorative or symbolic effect, reflects in my opinion a continuation of the cleft between rationality and emotions. It would imply that the public or collective buildings erected under the programme of democracy, welfare and progress, can be appreciated only in a reductive view; as if they were exclusively perceived within a context of rational utilization and instrumental functioning and not as cultural expressions. Human experience of architecture does not operate in such a segregated and reductive manner. But such a tendency to reduce the assessment of our culture to instrumental efficiency reinforces the drive for newness, 'forward and forget the past', thus avoiding having to face the immediate past with the candour that is necessary in order to learn the lessons that it offers.

The architects who took part in the modernization of Norway had ambitions of influencing the whole physical environment: schools, health institutions, museums and administration buildings were all part of a broad development programme. This naturally delimits the

opportunity for figurative uniqueness and symbolic excesses in a society where the majority of building tasks were of a pragmatic nature. Moreover, these architects genuinely believed in what they were doing. Thus, it would be paradoxical if they believed that their work would have no value in the future, despite their rhetoric of understatement with regard to monumentality. Nevertheless, taking into account that the competitions concerned important public buildings, the intriguing problem is now to articulate architectural uniqueness or distinction; to what degree the architecture emphasizes the particularity of a new architecture.

In a period dominated by secularization and social equalization, the magnificent and figuratively outstanding monuments are more likely to be found in the technological structures designed for particular purposes such as ski jumps and bridges, power plants and television towers. It was a period in which the strive for progress lent more weight to organizational emancipation than outer significance. The competition texts treating conceptions of use in office buildings, educational institutions, museums and so forth, testify to the importance of such aspects.

Newness, identity and integrity

Returning to the competition material, a distinct feature emerges which in my opinion expresses a quality closely related to monumentality: the recurring references pointing to architectural *identity*. Identity, according to Webster's dictionary is derived from *identitas*: sameness, from latin *identidem*: repeatedly, from *idem*: the same; the condition or fact of being the same in all qualities under consideration; sameness and oneness; the condition or fact of being some specific person or thing; individuality.⁴⁵ In correspondence with Leibniz' 'principle of the identity of indiscernibles' we can ask what makes the architecture of the project in question *distinguish itself* so that it can be identified as an entity with its own specific character? The persistent sameness within itself that we can call its identity is close to *integrity*, from *integer*, untouched, whole, entire, and both terms are used in similar contexts. Integrity, it seems to me, possesses a

43 Sert, Léger, Giedion, (New York, 1993), and Siegfried Giedion, 'In Search of a New Monumentality', *Architectural Review*, (September, 1948), pp. 12-127.

44 Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Roots of Modern Architecture*, (Tokyo, 1988), pp. 153-175.

45 Webster's, p. 902.

slightly deeper, more complete quality. What constitutes the individual *integrity* or wholeness of the project? These distinguishing features manifest the memorability, the commemorative properties of the new architecture, whether it succeeds in living up to the aspirations of changing taste and art-value, or not.

Relieved of the specific, historically commemorative and representational objectives of intentional monuments the artistic force in architecture turns toward the object, the artefact itself. Giedion's classic manifesto *Space, Time and Architecture* is a modern expression of the cult of the object, says Richard Sennett who treats the issue of 'identity' and 'integrity of form' in modern architecture quite extensively.⁴⁶ There is but the object, or the building project, with its intentions of activity and meaning to cultivate in the given cultural and geographical context. This is the core, which the architecture can enhance by stressing the intrinsic sameness, coherence and integrity of the architectural design.

According to the jury, the 1st prize project for the Storebrand Insurance Company Building in Vika, 1957, has

an individual and distinguished form which simultaneously yields a clear expression of the plan.⁴⁷

Distinctiveness and *individual integrity* are frequent themes in the texts, often with pleonastic expressions. A typical expression is included in the criticism of the 1st prize design for Høvikodden Art Centre in 1964:

The project is so good in its main conception, and so strong artistically. . . a distinctive museum with specific character.⁴⁸

Although Høvikodden was an extraordinary project,⁴⁹ the same kind of verbal expressions are frequently used with respect to more typical designs. 'Specific character' and 'distinctiveness' are linked to the concepts of the 'artistic nerve' and originality of the architect, as it is appears in the design. Attempts at expressing these individual artistic qualities in words with any degree of precision are

hardly ever made, but they are easily communicated within the inter-professional context of assessing architectural drawings and models, as 'the particular crooked line or some dots with the pencil, and the meaning was immediately understood' of Østbye, mentioned in chapter II.

We shall however return to the particular tectonic and aesthetic features, the distinguishing *identity*, of the hegemonic competition architecture as the designs are further investigated in the following chapters. Meanwhile, some additional statements from the competition texts will illustrate the inherent preoccupation with the problem.

In connection with the SAS Hotel, the jury emphasized the importance of the high-rise building being positioned at an angle that could 'display the face' of the hotel.⁵⁰ The 1st prize winner achieved this by 'getting a firm grip of the task'. In the competition for Oslo Concert Hall the 1st prize project:

displays a supremely skilful grasp of the overall layout.⁵¹

This 'grasp', *grep*⁵² is, together with a strong artistic or architectural 'nerve', a very typical expression when complimenting designs on the grounds of *architectural integrity* and independence. The Soria Moria project, 1978, is according to the jury designed with a 'strong architectural nerve', and can be developed into a

distinctive, particular and stimulating centre . . . in keeping with the best Norwegian building tradition.⁵³

The notion of 'tradition', here, is abstract and vague, referring chiefly to the 'castle-like' concentrated placement of the building in the terrain; an agreed basis for the otherwise new 'identity'. In a similar spirit the very distinctiveness of the Vaterland and Grønland Market 1st prize project was described by the jury:

the project displays a striking assurance and originality. . . a captivating idea [of altering the access ramp to the flyover] . . . the solution [of the high-rise building] is captivating.⁵⁴

46 Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*, (London, Boston, 1990), p. 103, and pp. 86-89, 97-106.

47 *K*, no. 31, p. 3.

48 *NAK*, no. 105, p. 3. Quoted from the printed English text.

49 It is the only project which is based on an irregular geometry, with expressive and heavy forms.

50 *NAK*, no. 169, p. 3.

51 *NAK*, no. 38, p. 4.

52 *Grep* in Norwegian means 'grasp' or 'grip', it is the noun from the verb *gripe*, to take hold of with the hand, but also have control of, or a (lucky) move. Moreover a *grep* is a tool, a forked spade, used for digging in the earth.

53 *NAK*, no. 215, p. 3.

54 *NAK*, no. 215, p. 6.

A common feature in several texts is the use of pleonasm which amplifies the importance of particularity in the design. Simultaneously the lack of nuance and precision of the specific qualities becomes apparent.

Architectural *identity* can be achieved with a *homogeneous* structure, which in the case of Tullinløkka art gallery yields an architecture 'rich in character', in the interior as well as the exterior seen from the air, according to the jury's criticism.⁵⁵ In this respect, the prize winner's argumentation with regard to the preservation or removal of the existing buildings in the competition for the Bank of Norway is interesting. Victoriagården, a functionalist edifice from 1930-40 in good condition, occupied nearly one quarter of the site, and could easily have been incorporated into the project as shown in the alternative design. In fact Victoriagården was very effective in terms of the amount of floor space it provided. However, the older buildings, which needed thorough renovation, were valued more highly. The author says that in the present architectural situation on the site, Victoriagården represents a particular problem: because of its young age (the economic value), one is reluctant to tear it down, but it ought to be done on the grounds of

the environmental wholeness.⁵⁶

The *environmental wholeness* is here regarded visually; its present-day art-value is influenced by the *Kunstwollen* expressed by the architect. In this view, the architectural integrity of the project requires that Victoriagården is removed. As will be further demonstrated, this particular wholeness depends upon a *uniform* structure which then could be recognized as the identity mark of the bank complex; a sign of unity which would continue throughout the block and mark all four corners with the *oneness* of an identical architecture. Although the masses of the complex are decomposed and parts of it look small, the dominance of a particular sameness underlines the great size of the bank as well as its uniqueness in the environment.

The quality of identity pertaining to any architectural object, can manifest itself in diffe-

rent ways: on the small scale by possessing architectural features which are individual (clearly different from its neighbours), and in the larger scale by a conspicuous distinctiveness in size or appearance. These qualities, or identity marks, are commemorative in the sense that they make us remember the particular building and its identity in a wider context.

A high-rise building standing alone has a very different effect to one surrounded by numerous others. Similarly, the pre-clinical medicine building at the University of Oslo (Gaustad) was built as a result of the competition in 1968 as a minor part of an immense, continuous structure, which was never realized. This makes a difference to the perception of the identity of the building: what you perceive is the finished building, naturally, but the typical feature that constitutes its identity is that of a fraction, a part that could be repeated endlessly. Most of the intended structure is still lacking, but today a new extension with different, curved forms has been added on top of the roof, and thus altering the 'identity' of the building.

As Alan Colquhoun points out, Riegl's concept of 'newness' in relation to 'age-value' seems particularly apposite in the context of the problems in contemporary architecture,⁵⁷ and in my opinion this includes the question of identity. Riegl remarks that:

In our modern view, the new artefact requires flawless integrity of form and color as well as of style; that is to say, the truly modern work must, in its concept and detail, recall earlier works as little as possible.⁵⁸

Written in 1903, with the ideas of contemporaries like Otto Wagner in mind, the relevance of this can be extended to include the Modern Movement that followed. Indeed, if we allow for differentiation and moderation, the remark is sufficiently pregnant to be valid for the characteristics of the hegemonic architecture in this study. Riegl establishes a sort of complementary relationship between the notion of *newness* and that of *age-value*, saying that the recognition of 'age-value' depends on its *contrast* with new and modern artefacts. Alternatively, one could say that the 'newness'

55 *NAK*, no. 183, p. 10.

56 *NAK*, no. 192, p. 5. In the left photograph of the model in figure 25, chapter VI, Victoriagården is shown on the right side of the complex on the site.

57 Alan Colquhoun, 'Thoughts on Riegl', *Oppositions*, Fall 1982:25, (1982), pp. 79-83.

58 Riegl, p. 44.

value depends upon its ability to contrast with the old, and the *Kunstvollen* of the new architecture differentiates and selects a suitable age-value within the old context. The removal of Victoriagården in the case of the Bank of Norway, provided a clear-cut contrast between the new architecture and a group of existing premodern buildings that were all more or less similar. A purely dialectical composition which was not confused by the functionalist architecture could thus be achieved in a manner which enhanced the visual effect of the new identity.

From this angle, we can say with Colquhoun that 'The past is valued for its "pastness" and not because it provides models for a normative architecture or represents timeless architectural values. . .'.⁵⁹ Evidence of decay, however, is not the crucial element in our sense of age-value, as it was in Riegl's examples. Over the period of competitions, the architectural modes of creating contrasts, and thus identity, were developed in correspondence with the perpetual dynamic between 'newness' and 'pastness'. 'New' becomes 'past', and the relative age-value of the environment changes, both with regard to architectural properties and to actual age. Projects from the first period thus became historical monuments attributed with age-value in the later periods.

The complementary relationship between 'newness' and 'age-value' is present in the competition designs as well as in the texts. This complementariness persists although the 'newness' enhances or rejects different aspects of the past. The huge, clean shapes of the new architecture in the 1940s and 50s related to the bourgeois 'crooked' irregularities of the past, whereas the decomposed masses of Tullinløkka contrast to the 'self-contained' massivity of the old monumental buildings. The disruptive effect of this constant creating of contrasts may appear to be approaching a point of saturation, if one considers the intensity of the preoccupation with and emotions about environmental issues among the general public today. The popular protests that were raised by the plans for the new super railway running through Gamlebyen to the new airport at Gardemoen is one example: the claims that the railway must run through an underground tunnel in order

to protect the old residential area caused great controversy and reconsideration of the plans by the Municipal authorities as well as the Parliament.

The power of age-value versus 'newness' value is clearly demonstrated in the case of the Landscaping of the Government Offices Complex. In the 1st prize project of 1990, the old *avenue of lime trees* which leads from Akersgata to the main entrance of the high-rise Government Building was removed. This move was essential in order to create the large, clean 'mirror of water' surrounding the existing high-rise building. The basin of water was the main feature of the design, the very quality of the design representation that yielded the requested clarity, coherence and monumentality. Public protests emerged immediately, and vociferously demanded that the trees be preserved, although several of them were in very bad shape. The project, which is being completed in 1995, now includes the old lime trees, which have been pruned, supplemented and neatly arranged in the stone pavement. The water basin has subsequently been reduced to small, isolated fragments of the grand circle that was intended. The issue here is not that of having trees or not, because, obviously new, even large, fully grown trees could be planted almost anywhere on the site and provide the 'green' element. The point is that the age-value of the old trees, the trees that have been living in that place infinitely (infinite in the common perception which does not demand exact knowledge), dating back at least as far as the era of Empirekvartalet before the appearance of the high-rise building, is perceived to be of far greater importance. This, in my opinion, illustrates a dimension of monumentality, and identity, of commemorative greatness appreciated in the minds and emotions of the general audience. Fortunately the architects were able to alter their plan and incorporate the old, living monuments in the new monumentality of their design.

In the (majority of the) competitions the concept of monumentality was narrowed down to suit the selective, negative or negligent attitudes towards the old architecture.

59 Colquhoun, p. 82.

Nevertheless, monumentality is associated with the representational aspect, i.e. the appearance of the architecture, that which distinguishes the individual buildings in such a way that they will be remembered by the beholders. Identity and integrity may seem to complement monumentality: eventually the new buildings will also have an appearance with distinguishing features that make them memorable, no matter what one actually thinks of them. In the same way that the 19th century emphasized the extrovert, representational monumentality, the inwardness of the emphasis on identity and integrity of modern architecture serves a similar function; that of articulating the memorability for the future. These typical features of identity and integrity as they are expressed in the hegemonic architecture of the Oslo competitions will be pursued in the following chapters.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Monumentality concerns the memorability, or the commemorative function of new architecture as well as old. The thinking of the art historian Alois Riegl on the cult of monuments in modern times contributes to a further understanding of the competition material on this point. All works of art and architecture are monuments, whether intentionally or unintentionally, but the appreciation or the 'art-value' of the monuments is relative, and depends on the *Kunstwollen* at the time. In architecture, the *Kunstwollen* includes the 'use-value' as an important factor, which together with the artistic 'age-value' is embraced by the 'present-day' value. The very subjective nature of the 'age-value' cult, which is prevalent in the 20th century, addresses the sensory perception directly without requiring scholarly training. Hence the 'present-day value' of architectural monuments becomes a subject of public opinion and political importance, as well as of professional interest to architects.

The competition *rhetoric* reflects this wider field of reference and the relativity involved. Although the competition projects are of symbolic, public importance, the monumentality of the new architecture is understated.

Monumentality, most often identified with *heavy grandeur*, is regarded as a quality pertaining exclusively to the past. A range of rhetorical means, including contempt, explicit anti-monumentality and irony as well as more subtle alienation, serves to create an optimal freedom for architectural *newness* and *contrast* to the old. As long as the term 'monumentality' was associated with authoritarian power and class distinctions, and this was the case until the mid-1980s, the contemporary *Kunstwollen* could thus legitimate the differentness and newness of its designs to the broad public.

The commemorative function of the new architecture, its *unintentional monumentality* one could say, must therefore be found within the architectural features that are typical for their newness; features that distinguish the designs, enhance the sameness and make them stand out as individual objects. Rhetorically, then, qualities such as *identity* and *integrity* are emphasized; the buildings are praised for having a specific character, for being distinctive and unique. 'Artistic nerve', 'originality' and 'audacity' on the part of the architect serves as a guarantee for the value and the memorability of the design. Such general terms sufficed since they were based on a general consensus which combined scepticism towards monumental excesses of power with the modern ideal of innovation, of the artistic axiom 'to express the age' and be in the lead. Thus adaptation to the old monuments can be accepted as a matter of overall dimensions while the architecture still demonstrates contrast and newness.

VIII

INTERLUDE

NORWEGIAN CONSENSUS AND POSTWAR INPUTS

Norwegian postwar architecture is characterized by what has been called the 'Norwegian consensus': the architecture that formed the welfare state, which lacks traditional monumentality and in which individual expressivism is moderated by strong egalitarian ideals.¹ To Peter Davey, editor of the *Architectural Review*, Norwegian architecture appears to fall into two camps, that of the followers of Arne Korsmo with his allegiance to international modernism, and that of Knut Knutsen with his allegiance to, in Davey's words, 'Arts and Crafts and National Romanticism'.² The conflict between the smooth and the rough, internationalism and regionalism, realism and romanticism, has influenced the development of Norwegian architecture in the postwar period, but it seems a stereotyped conception to divide Norwegian postwar architecture by such contrasting labels: the 'Norwegian consensus' draws upon the inheritances from both of these two 'father figures', both of whom were influential innovators. 'Even at its most intense, ideas of Norwegian style have been invested with inputs from abroad', Davey remarks. 'What matters in Norwegian architecture is the way in which you transmute international currents to be relevant to yourselves'.³

When Ellefsen studies the 'Norwegian consensus' architecture he finds that the world of ideas which the two opposite camps have in common is *anti-academic*: ideology is regarded as something negative. An important inheritance from Knutsen is the ideal of 'a human architecture liberated from the styles'; a tradition which lends weight to the particularities of place and the unique function of each building project. While Knutsen looked to Norwegian *nature* for reference, either directly or through traditional Norwegian vernacular architecture,

Korsmo emphasized the contrast between nature and man-made objects. Included in this anti-academic tradition was Korsmo's view of the role of the architect as an *artist*: of architecture as an introverted and personal matter; of emphasizing uniqueness. 'From this world of ideas the particular Norwegian architectural rhetoric, the Norwegian style within the international style developed', says Ellefsen, 'and became a sort of "reductionism" with a limited set of themes which together formulated the design problem'.⁴

The hegemonic architecture of the Oslo competitions appears to be dominated by 'the smooth' international, rather than the 'rough' and rustic side of the Norwegian consensus, although the general 'consensus' is more comprehensive and includes a wider range of architectural modes of expression. Inputs that were specifically connected with regionalism or irregular, 'organic' forms such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Alvar Aalto for instance, are remarkably scarce in the competition hegemony, although they were appreciated by both camps as unambiguously positive models.

A few points ought to be mentioned to illustrate inputs which are important with respect to the Oslo competition architecture after W.W.II. The vital renewal of the international influence was marked in 1952 by extensive presentations in several issues of *Byggekunst*. A leading figure was Korsmo who, owing to his close contacts with prominent architects in Europe and the United States, initiated PAGON, a Norwegian group of CIAM (Les Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne).⁵ The PAGON group was dissolved after a few years but the influence of its members continued, in the buildings and pro-

1 Ellefsen, (1986), p. N4.
2 Peter Davey, 'Norwegian Reflections', *BK*, 68, no. 4-5, (1986), pp. 226-228, (p. 228).
3 Davey, p. 228.
4 Ellefsen, (1986), p. N5.
5 *BK*, 34, no. 6-7, (1952). This group of progressive architects included among others Christian Norberg-Schulz, Sverre Fehn, Odd Østbye, Håkon Mjelva and the Dane Jørn Utzon with whom Korsmo had collaborated since their stay in Sweden during the war. *Byggekunst* treated the new agenda broadly, presenting the leading CIAM members, and articles and projects by the PAGON architects.

jects they designed, and through the teaching of students of architecture in Oslo and Trondheim by Korsmo, and later Fehn and Norberg-Schulz; the latter who in addition to his increasing importance as an architectural writer was also the editor of *Byggekunst* from 1963-79.

The architecture that was to feature in the Oslo competitions in the 1960s and 1970s draws upon an international exchange and influence which continued and increased after the early 1950s. Particularly important to structuralism with its repetition of standardized units was the CIAM congress in Otterlo in 1959, which was prepared by the group who called itself Team X.⁶ The issue was architecture in the chaos of a changing world, 'but at the same time terms such as structure and identity become part of the architectural vocabulary', in Nils-Ole Lund's words. Patterns and systems, change and the study of relations dominated the debate to which the design of architectural forms was related.⁷

Nevertheless, the continuity of ideas and attitudes is remarkable. An architecture featured by the repetition of similar units, for example, was prevalent in the competitions from the mid-1960s until the mid-1970s, and was echoed in 1986 (Christiania Torv, 1st prize) more than 25 years after the Otterlo congress. As early as in 1952 Korsmo called for standard units that could be put together in order to liberate human activity and achieve a 'rich variation with simple means', and he on his part refers to Le Corbusier's 'system house' from 1916.⁸ Thus, when the Otterlo congress in 1959 was concerned that the physical environment should 'stimulate man's spiritual growth'⁹ it sounds to me like a variation of Korsmo's expressions 'psychologically stimulating' and 'total perception of existence'.¹⁰ It reflects a general tendency of architects to include broad humanistic concerns in their design ideas.

But the manner in which to convey these broad perspectives changes. Looking at *Byggekunst* from the 1970s, for instance, one is not only struck by the complexity of the issues that are treated but also by the compactness of their presentation. The pages are

extremely dense, full of complex, abstract and intricate texts, relating architecture to a number of fields in society: politics, the sciences, the arts, mass industry and mass consumption, animal physiology and cybernetics, distant exotic villages and general existential problems in general. Odd and seemingly disconnected photographs and quotations enhance the message with suggestive, connotative effects. The cover layout of *Byggekunst* around 1970, for instance, is symptomatic of the tendency to acknowledge vast plurality, but insist that it ought to be structured within order and regularity; as if the diversities could be treated like chessmen.

International exchange and influence increased after the 1950s. Owing partially to Norway's restrictive education policy, many Norwegian architects got their education abroad, and moreover the schools of architecture and associations of architects in major towns and cities have been active in forwarding international exchange.

In 1986 Ellefsen describes the 'cracks' in the Norwegian consensus architecture which appeared in the 1980s as a response to the commercial boom, the increased internationalization and the need to break out of the stable, but in the long run, constricting architectural norms. He refers to the peculiarities of Norwegian culture as seen by the foreigner, Hans Magnus Enzenberger who remarks the curious capacity of Norwegians to 'on the one hand tightly hang on to pre-modern ways of thinking and lifeforms, and on the other have a disposition for unintentionally anticipating the future'.¹¹ The 1980s brought extensive economic, societal and cultural changes which provided the architects with new objectives and changed the framework of professional work. Simultaneously images from the new international architecture and theoretical debate exerted a direct influence on architectural practice. This happened at a late stage, phase-delayed in relation to that 'Thunder over the Atlantic'¹² postulating the death of modernism, which had marked the architectural debate for 20 years. But the changes occurred with vitality and regional interpretations of these interna-

6 Ulf Grønvold, 'Norsk strukturalisme', *BK*, 65, no. 2, (1983), pp. 60-63. Architectural structuralism should not be confused with structuralism in linguistics or other liberal arts with which it runs parallel.

7 Lund, (1991), p. 63.

8 Arne Korsmo, 'Hjemmets mekano', *BK*, no. 6-7, (1952), pp. 110-113.

9 Jacob B. Bakema, in Oscar Newman, *CIAM '59 in Otterlo*, (Stuttgart, 1961), p. 12.

10 Korsmo, (1952), p. 110. The key word in Korsmo's teaching was *romopplevelse* or *romformemmelse*, spatial perception or spatial feeling.

11 Hans Magnus Enzenberger, *Norsk utakt*, (Oslo, 1984), quoted in Ellefsen, (1986), p. N1.

12 Juhani Pallasmaa, 'Torden over Atlanten', *Skala* 2/1985, pp. 18-20.

tional postmodern templates.

Ellefsen regards the changes in Norwegian architecture in the 1980s as a further development and not a fundamental break with modernism; a continuity in which the search for a new *raison d'être* appears as attempts to complete the Norwegian unanimity by adding a multitude of new features.

Not only does a new interest in the pioneers of international modernism and the two architectural lines of Knutsen and Korsmo contribute to this formal enrichment, but also the classicist inheritance. Ellefsen draws up a broad range of different architectural tendencies in the Norwegian architecture of the mid 1980s architecture. He distinguishes Norwegian modernism from the Norwegian variant of an international style as it was expressed by the progressive architects in 1952, and which in Ellefsen's view represented a side-tracking, while the former is renewable and has more to do with attitudes than with aesthetics. He finds support for this view in Bruno Zevi who states that 'The codification of the modern language. . . is our most urgent task' and Norberg-Schulz who in *The Concept of Dwelling* argues for a more figurative architecture.¹³

Six different tendencies are discerned in Ellefsen's study of Norwegian modern architecture in the 1980s. Firstly, the 'new official expression' which incorporates postmodern methods in a pragmatic architecture. Secondly, the further development of *high-technology* architecture, which includes glass architecture and its aesthetics. Thirdly, a stream of *poetic modernism* seeks a deepening of content and a simplification of effects by means of modernistic aesthetics. 'Poetic modernism' has been carried forward by Sverre Fehn, but reaches back to Arne Korsmo and his desire to 'unite the logic and the poetic in architecture'. Fourthly, a 'regional and organic' architecture connected to the Knutsen tradition is subject to renewed interest. The terms (which are vague) do not refer to traditional architectural forms but to working methods that imply an alternative to international mundaneness and sales-oriented architecture, and include thorough studies of

the local community, and affinities toward free, sculptural forms, simple technology and local materials. Fifthly, Ellefsen mentions the category of 'a conscious break' which includes postmodernism as an architectural style representing a desire to bridge the gap between elitist architecture and common taste. Jan Digerud and Jon Lundberg were pioneers of an aesthetic postmodernism in Scandinavia with some small, but exquisite works in the late 1970s.¹⁴ Another kind of 'conscious break' is represented by the works of the studio Blå Strek in Tromsø which at the same time is intricate, collage-like deconstructivist and inspired by the day-to-day conditions of the polar community of which they are part. Since 1986 other deconstructivist-inspired works have appeared such those as by studio Snøhetta who won the international competition for a Library in Alexandria, Egypt in 1989. It still remains a point of debate to what degree architectural elitism has been broken or continues in new forms.

Finally, Ellefsen points to a sixth tendency which he calls 'day-to-day architecture and architectural ideas'. He reminds us that most of the building projects must show consideration not only to nature and the landscape but also to what has already been built. Thus, a calm rational architecture 'which could always have been there' is essential in order to form that part of a city which should not have the character of particular collective symbols. And he points to a few projects articulated by cautious classicist features; an architecture which is subordinate to the urban fabric and does not break away from local building typology.¹⁵ Today this last category seems as much a wishful recommendation of Ellefsen's as a distinctly manifested tendency, or it seems to have merged with the first category.

The image that Ellefsen draws up of Norwegian architecture is in my view intelligent and well-observed. The new plurality of the 1980s, which also represents a widening continuity of the modern 'consensus', is distinguished by the corresponding heterogeneity in society and a new emphasis on the figurative aspect of architecture. Only part of this architectural plurality is reflected in the

13 Bruno Zevi, 'Architecture versus historic criticism', *RIBA Annual Discourse* 1983, published in

Transactions 3, quoted by Ellefsen, (1986), p. N10. Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling - On the Way to Figurative Architecture*, (New York, 1985), referred to by Ellefsen, (1986), p. N10.

14 Jan Digerud was educated in the U.S.A., influenced by Robert Venturi and Louis Kahn, and Jon Lunberg, educated in Graz, Austria, had been an assistant to Jørn Utzon during the work on the Sidney Opera House. Digerud and Lundberg's submission to the competition for the National Theatre Extension in 1973 showed an underground solution with free sculptural forms, a project which was rewarded with a purchase, see *NAK*, no. 190, pp. 14-16. See also Lund, (1991), pp. 212-213, and Thomas Thiis-Evensen, *The Postmodernists Jan&Jon*, (Oslo, 1984).

15 Ellefsen, (1986), pp. N8-N22. See also Lund, (1991), with regard to the entire period.

hegemonic architecture of the Oslo competitions, as is also the case with the previous consensus architecture. This dissertation, however, does not have room for visual exemplifications of the total image of Norwegian architectural tendencies, and I recommend the literature to which I have referred for further references on this point.

IX

SPACE AND CONCEPTIONS OF USE A STORY OF STEADY DEVELOPMENT

This chapter treats the spatial structure, or the system of rooms and places or spaces for activities, which comprise the main reason for the promoter to arrange the competition. The spatial composition in all its aspects is essential in architecture, and it is also a fundamental aspect of the competition designs in which the hegemonic tectonic principles manifest the prevalent conceptions of architectural space. Plan and section drawings (orthogonal projections) constitute the main source of information, but also perspectives, various other drawings and photographs of models contribute to the understanding of the spatial qualities.

The English language has two words 'space' and 'room' whereas Norwegian only has one, *rom*, which is used for all kinds of three-dimensional voids (void is *tomrom* in Norwegian, i.e. an 'empty room or space') with and without its boundary structures, from the enclosed bathroom, *baderom*, to outer space, *verdensrommet*.¹ The verb *romme* means to contain, to hold. Most of my architectural thinking has been related to this one concept, to expanding or delimiting and to nuancing its contents to the different spatial relations and conditions in question. In Webster's dictionary a 'room' (derived from the same Anglo saxon *rum* as the Norwegian) is a space that can hold something; an interior space enclosed by walls or separated from other similar spaces.² The Norwegian-Danish etymological dictionary suggests that the origin might be the Latin *rus*, 'open land', and furthermore relates it to the Norwegian verb *rydde*, *rydde land*.³ It is precisely this meaning of *rydde* that appears so significantly in Norberg-Schulz' thinking on the characteristic Nordic spatial conception or structure of spatiality:

In the Nordic countries space (*rommet*) is not then something comprehensive and inevitable, but rather a clearing man has created in an unsurveyable whole.⁴

The Nordic conception of space is a *rydning* (clearing) in the ungraspable multiplicity of places, which in turn is perceived as an overall spatial structure which lacks well-defined boundaries and clear, geometric form. The land, the vegetation and buildings are perceived as a 'lattice', *flettverk* or *tykning*, in the oblique sunlight and the long shadows of the North. Norberg-Schulz refers to the forest as the best image of the Nordic world.⁵

The Nordic space is *anti-classical* in contrast to the Southern or Mediterranean space in which the sun makes objects appear as individual forms and bodies with a distinct, plastic character. The typical Nordic built environment is dispersed and lacks figural quality, indeed it is even made of such an ephemeral material as wood. By contrast:

Classical architecture maintains and represents the Mediterranean world as a defined, homogeneous space, as characteristic plastic form, and as a distinct *Gestalt* or structure, and the stone materials furnish the surroundings with the desired permanence.⁶

The comprehensive space of the Mediterranean is the homogeneous whole which, saturated by sun, extends between the boundaries of the horizon and the firmament. This open, comprehensive and comprehensible space provides an explanation for the very concept of *space*, a 'boundless, continuous expanse extending in all directions or in three dimensions, within which all material things are contained'.⁷

- 1 *Rom* in Norwegian is used for both a specific space or room such as a big *rom* or a circular *rom*, and in spatial concepts such as *teaterrommet* ('theatre-room') and *uterommet* ('out-room' used in planning contexts; people would commonly say *ute, utendørs* (outside, outdoors) or *i friluft* (in the open air). Moreover people would say *plass* when referring to the amount of room or space they have for this or that activity, the question of having *god* or *stor plass*, for instance in their flats.
- 2 Webster's, p. 1573.
- 3 Hjalmar Falk og Alf Torp, *Etymologisk ordbog over det norske og danske sprog*, (Oslo, 1991), p. 661.
- 4 Norberg-Schulz, *Nattlandene*, (1993), p. 15.
- 5 Norberg-Schulz, (1993), pp. 11-27.
- 6 Norberg-Schulz, (1993), p. 13.
- 7 Webster's, p. 1736.

Derived from L. *spatium*, and *spatiari*, 'to wander', as in the modern Italian *spaziare*, 'roaming about', and *spaziarsi*, scatter or disperse, it suggests a pre-existent continuously open space which one can take possession of by placing objects in it or wandering limitlessly, rather than by clearing (*rydde*) enclosures or spaces in a 'lattice thickening'.⁸

Important for the modern conceptions of space in architecture are the discoveries made since the Renaissance. These discoveries are based on the same optical theory which permitted conceptions of the environment as discernible in quantitative entities that can make measurement of land, ocean planes and the outer space meaningful. In the 20th century the geometry of relative physics has influenced the spatial imagination of artists and architects, adding anarchic elements to the architectural conceptualization.

The period from the 16th until the 20th century was an era of great discoveries as well as great conquests. In this context the Danish art historian Lise Bek calls the predominant conceptions with respect to European urban planning 'a kind of imperialistic view of reality, aimed at a concrete conquest, in a way similar to the viewer who conquered his surroundings by seeing them in his perspective'. She continues, 'The main concern was to have power over objects and be able to extend this power as far as possible'.⁹ This way of manifesting power was crucial to the development in Europe particularly within residential planning and architecture, she claims in her treatise of the conceptions of space in architecture from the Renaissance ideals to the contemporary 'dissolution' of space. Norberg-Schulz adheres to the positive aspects of this in his 1952 article on 'Space in Architecture' in *Byggekunst*, in which he regards European architecture as 'the story of space being conquered by man' and continues 'the new world presupposes an increased awareness, an awareness of the relative reality of the four-dimensional space'.¹⁰ From his point of view, then, the book *Nattlandene* reflects a further pursuit of and concern with the particular Norwegian spatial aspects in relation to the international.

Ideas of architectural space are inextricably connected with conceptions of human *use* in its whole spectre from more or less utilitarian activity to socio-emotional and aesthetic experience. The Oslo competition programmes normally outline the prospective activities and indicate the basic requirements for the kinds of spaces and their approximate sizes.

Recommendations with regard to the placing of the different spaces in relation to each other are included both in general terms, and in detail, such as for instance, that it must be easy to transport heavy musical instruments to the concert hall stage.¹¹ The contemporary mentality or ideological attitudes with regard to the particular activity involved (education, offices, health institution etc.) and in society in general, normally permeate the requirements and recommendations on all levels. Although it could be possible to conduct a meaningful study of architectural space and the corresponding conceptions of use on the basis of plan details, specific spaces and specific fields of use, the material in this study points to a more overall, general approach.

'The discourse of space, the one which is truly architectural in its practice and should be in its theory, for which no other discipline can be called upon for help', says Markus, 'has found no adequate methods either to describe its object or analyse it'.¹² However he regards the methods of *space syntax* developed by Bill Hillier and his colleagues at the University of London as a valuable tool for dealing with part of this problem. Space syntax implies that architectural space is treated by focusing on the morphological arrangement, the geometric delimitations of the voids with respect to sight lines and patterns of movement. The principles of nextness and fields of movement, spatial permeability and intelligibility, of spatial pattern, depth and shallowness, to mention some rather general concepts, have been outlined and elucidated in several articles for the Scandinavian audience. Bill Hillier exemplifies his theory by referring to a few existing buildings and the masterplan for the Kings Cross area in London;¹³ John Peponis discusses a few museum buildings including Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York.¹⁴

8 In the Norwegian competition texts the word *areal* (area) is generally used instead of *rom* for 'space': *areal* is the expanse of floors that can be used. A Norwegian would not use a word whose meaning was three-dimensional to describe something that was essentially a horizontal expanse or a quantitative quality of the same. The English use of 'space' in architectural texts thus lends weight to (the conceptions of) the open, stretched-out 'land' on which one can wander, and thus also supports Norberg-Schulz' reflections.

9 Lise Bek, *Arkitektur og livsmønstre*, (<Copenhagen>, 1983), p. 160.

10 Christian Norberg-Schulz, 'Rommet i arkitekturen', *BK*, 34, no. 6-7, (1952), pp. 97-101, (p. 101.). See also Lund, *Nordisk Arkitektur*, (1991), pp. 33-39, 63-70.

11 *NAK*, no. 38, p. 20.

12 Thomas A. Markus, 'On re-discovering space', *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, 6, no. 2, (1993), p. 7.

13 Bill Hillier, 'Specifically Architectural knowledge', *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, 6, no. 2, (1993), pp. 13-37.

14 John Peponis, 'Evaluation and Formulation in Design - the implications of morphological theories of function', *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, 6, no. 2, (1993), pp. 53-62.

The space syntax principles have increased my awareness with respect to the morphological aspects of architectural space. However, I have decided not to apply a space-syntax method in this study of the space aspect of the competition designs. There are several reasons for this. One is the provisional character of the drawings or the prefigurations which are not complete with respect to the spatial characteristics. Moreover, the material which is extensive emphasizes other spatial aspects than the mere concrete spatial arrangement of surfaces which is essential for a space-syntax approach, an approach I thus believe in this case would be slightly speculative and also too specific. Although the spatial aspect is a major issue in the competitions, it is one of three main topics the focus of which is the prefigured architecture and its different rhetorical advocacies.

Alluding to Umberto Eco who in his *Six walks in the fictional woods*¹⁵ writes about the role of the reader in the writing of a narrative text, I can say that I have chosen a few of the many 'forking paths' inherent in the competition material to interpret the hegemonic examples of architectural space. Moreover there are many types of 'reader' taken into account in the competition designs: the role of the different users for instance is one category which is pre-interpreted, pre-conceived in the prefigured architecture. I could say that I am a sort of meta-reader, an architect who chooses to follow some of the forking paths in the different narratives of texts and designs in order to understand some of the roles involved: the role of the user as well as that of the designer and the builder, and so forth. In this view the competition publication and its rhetoric represent the narrator, and the winning architect and the jury share the authorship.

With respect to the etymological considerations above and the possible corresponding influence of this aspect on the underlying spatial perception manifested in the competitions, the hegemonic space conceptions in the Oslo competitions represent a synthesis of specifically Norwegian and international or Mediterranean conceptions of architectural space.

STRICT IDEALS IN THE 1940s

Daylight, order and simplicity

The dominating concern in the early competitions is the creation of *good workplaces*. Good workplaces are rooms with optimal sunlight conditions as is repeatedly stated in the competition for the new Government Building:

good sunlight conditions in the work rooms
... the best light conditions in the office rooms. ...¹⁶

This may seem to be a repetition of quotations from chapter VI, but this is not the case; it merely illustrates the extent to which this issue is focused on in the competition. This is expressed most explicitly by the author of motto 'Fri', as he declared that the primary requirement he set for the project was '*no office shall face north*'. Hence

the building has been turned towards the south in order to achieve the correct distribution of sunlight between east and west-facing offices.¹⁷

The ideal planning principle was legitimated by the concern for the inner spaces rather than the environment. 'Modern requirements for light and air' is a self-evident conception applied in the competition for Vestre Vika in 1947, and Vålerenga in 1956 as well.¹⁸ The texts from these competitions make it clear that the modern requirements for an office building by definition imply good daylight conditions and that the ideal spatial organization is a narrow, linear building containing rooms which face either east or west. Thus, the competition brief prescribes the office rooms for the Government Building:

the depth of the office rooms should not be more than 5m and the net height approx. 3.20m.¹⁹

The demand for different sizes of rooms, from 35m² for the ministers to 12m² for assistants, matter-of-factly suggests a hierarchy of user importance.

The four different shared-prize projects

15 Umberto Eco, *Six walks in the fictional woods*, (Cambridge, Mass., London, 1994).

16 *BK*, 22, (1940), p. 35.

17 *BK*, 22, (1940), p. 37.

18 *BK*, 30, no. 2, (1948), p. 25.

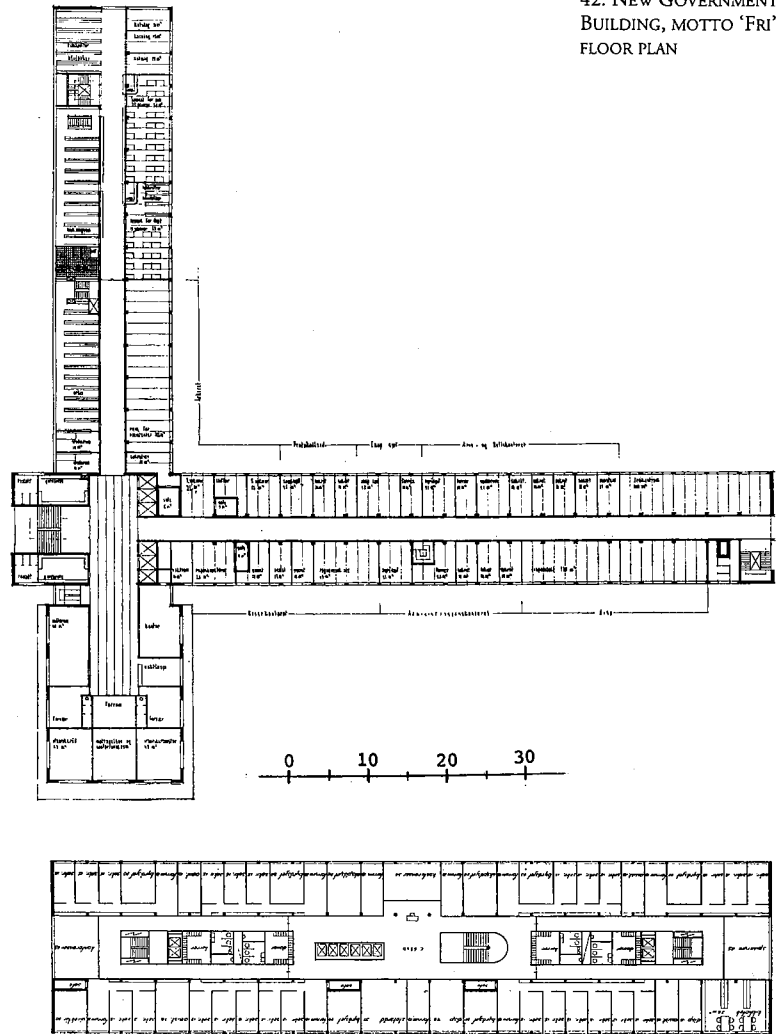
19 *BK*, 22, (1940), p. 34

include the most idealized or dogmatic solutions as well as more nuanced approaches. The most 'correct' projects with regard to principles (the two that had turned the building to follow the north-south axis) also demonstrate the typical spatial treatment in the most schematic manner: *straight corridors* and *straight rows of office rooms* along the 'well-lit' façades (figs. 42 and 43). The spatial ideal is a square room with a broad window and individual access from a plain corridor. This arrangement suggests a state of *neutrality* and *equality* between the individuals in the setting of equal and neutral accesses; nothing creates different or conspicuous spatial situations except the size of the office, but that is not immediately visible since the corridors and doors appear extremely neutral and anonymous.

The two other shared prizes, mottos 'Vestibyle' (fig. 44) (which was to be commissioned after the war) and especially 'U' (fig. 45) display more differentiated spaces in combination with linear rows of offices. This greater differentiation can be observed for instance in the differences between *individual* rooms and groups of communal rooms. The *collective* spaces are more architecturally elaborate with curved walls, windows from the corridors and views of the inner yard. Motto 'U' did not solve the site plan according to the planning ideal, but the jury employs such terms as 'beautiful, monumental and imaginative' about its spatial qualities. In 'Vestibyle', the author says, the communal spaces are simply

more monumental . . . than the usual long, dark and infinitely dull corridors of office blocks.²⁰

Here the vertical differentiation and openness achieved in the two lower floors by the lobby yield a sense of spatial coherence; of being part of a functional totality; it connects or 'roots' the trunk of the building, with its linear arrangement of floors with individual rooms, to the ground as it also mediates the movement of people between the outside and the building. The spatial and social organization resembles that of a spruce tree with branches (and twigs from the branches) extending equally from a strong vertical trunk which is thicker near the



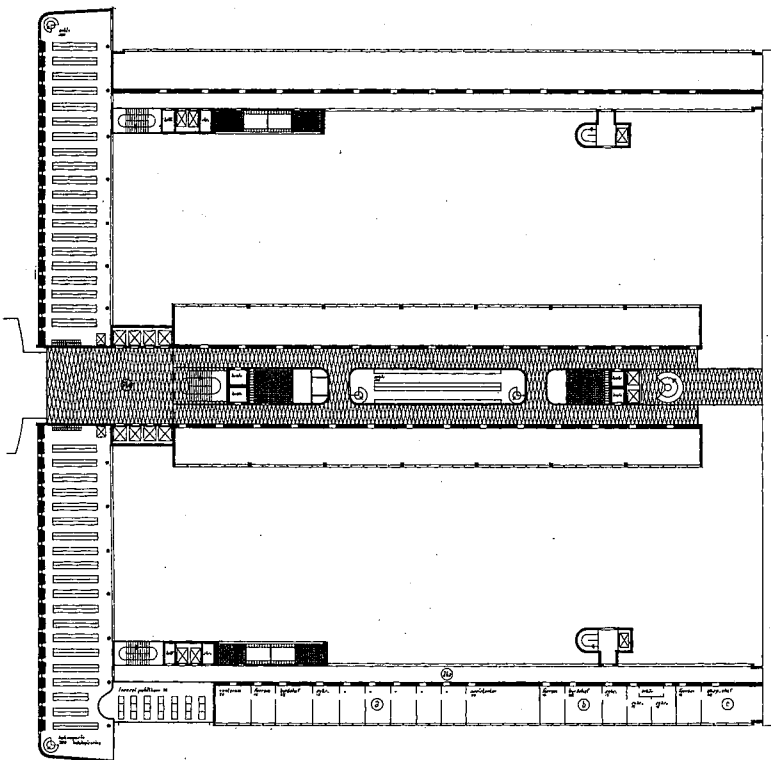
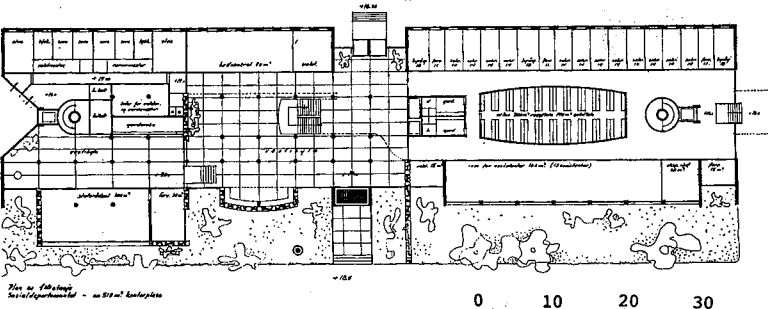
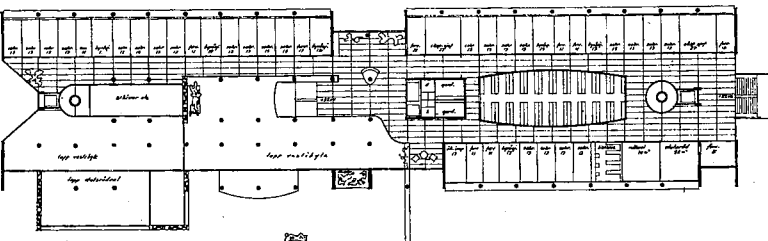
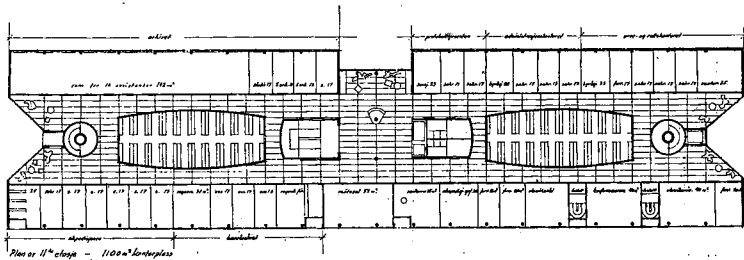
42. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'FRI', 1ST FLOOR PLAN

ground where the tree absorbs most of its nutrition. It is perhaps peculiar then that the cabinet meeting room, which is a room for a very exclusive group of people, is placed on the ground floor and shielded from the park area by heavy rubblework walls. This location 'too near the noise of the street' was criticized by the jury but it does suggest a somewhat romantic (because it is symbolic rather than integral; a functionally disconnected, and not an informal or socially open place) intention of expressing publicly a symbol of democracy; an intention of making the highest national authority visible and accessible.

43. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'RYTME' 12TH FLOOR PLAN

The 'new hygiene gospel' (*hygieneevangeliet*) is the name that Kjeldstadli gives to the programme for the building projects of the 30s.²¹ He outlines the history of Oslo from 1900 to 1948, describing the class antagonism and poverty of the 1930s and the moderation and general programme for improvement and pro-

²⁰ BK, 22, (1940), p. 43.
²¹ Kjeldstadli, p. 341.



cipline in the structuring of time and economy.

Away with the old filthy, dark and unhealthy class society of Kristiania. A new clean, light and hygienic Oslo was to be built for everybody.²²

As mentioned in chapter VI the hygiene programme included social hygiene as well as mental hygiene; housing programmes, for instance, promoted smaller separate rooms for parents and children of different genders, each room having independent access, instead of larger shared rooms.²³ An individualization went hand in hand with mass thinking. The pronounced focus on the correct light conditions in the competition expresses a criterion for the appropriate architecture according to this programme; the more equal or identical the light conditions, the better. As said by Benum:

All rooms should be laid out in such a way that they had a window and received direct sunlight. The ideal was therefore narrow blocks of flats, where the sun could shine as far as possible into the rooms.²⁴

The main goal of the hygiene planning programme was to improve housing conditions; the relevance of ideal light in buildings used during working hours²⁵ is, in my view, less pressing than in places where a large part of the population spend most of their time. Anyhow, the norm of planning long, narrow buildings on a north-south axis implies a reductive notion of light: half of the offices would have direct sunlight for a few hours in the morning, the other half from around noon, or one hour later during the summer due to summer time. Today it is a general problem that employees with west-facing windows exposed to the (low Nordic) sun complain that they are blinded at their desks, and that their workplaces get overheated; shading devices are necessary, which in turn alter the basic qualities of light and view.²⁶

In the case of the Government Building, in which the rigid daylight requirements resulted in rather unfortunate consequences for the site (see chapter VI), I think that sufficient air and light could have been achieved by a design which also took other qualities on the site into

44. (TOP) NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'VESTIBYLE', GROUND FLOOR, MEZZANINE, AND 1ST FLOOR PLANS

45. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'U', 1ST FLOOR PLAN

gress. Moreover he describes the important role of professionals as authorities in all fields (e.g. health, economics, engineering, pedagogics and so forth; the 'professional' housewife following a regime of cleaning the house, waging a war against bugs); the overall ideal of order and dis-

consideration.²⁷ For instance, a particular quality of the site is the view to the north of the unique buildings of the Trefoldighet church and the classicist Deichman library, between which the rising hill of Hammersborg with its trees can be glimpsed; this is particularly a pleasant view as the area is sunlit for long periods of the day. Being able to see this, even from a north-facing window, I should think, would be an attractive alternative to blinding sunlight.

'The tie between cleanliness and morality made hygiene the natural focus of reforming regimes' says Thomas A. Markus in the chapter called 'Cleanliness is next to godliness' in *Buildings & Power* in which he, by adopting a space-syntax approach, analyzes the spatial organization of 19th century bathing establishments as examples of social differentiation and segregation; between the genders and between lower and upper classes.²⁸ While social distinctions are minimized in the spatial and aesthetic structure of the Government Building, the ability to *monitor* and *orient oneself* is clearly favoured by the narrow and high type of building. The jury praises 'good', 'simple' and 'clear' accessibility between the different rooms and departments; concentrated and straightforward plans in which lifts and stairs are easy to find, are emphasized. A building with relatively short, straight corridors which are connected to the central, vertical circulation 'trunk', and which lead to one, central entrance hall is obviously easier to monitor than a long crooked, horizontal system. It is more difficult to escape from the seventh floor in a free-standing high-rise block than out of a lower, elongated structure.

However, the State Administration has overcome the problems of security in many types of building. There is nothing in the competition material to indicate that the preference of a clean, high-rise, spatial arrangement responded to an explicit requirement made by the client. On the contrary, the client's representatives in the jury preferred the more traditional solution on aesthetic grounds. The spaces of the clean, high-rise type of building correspond with the international architectural and technocratic ideology of cleanliness, discipline and order. In Norway, the *egalitarian* programme of the aut-

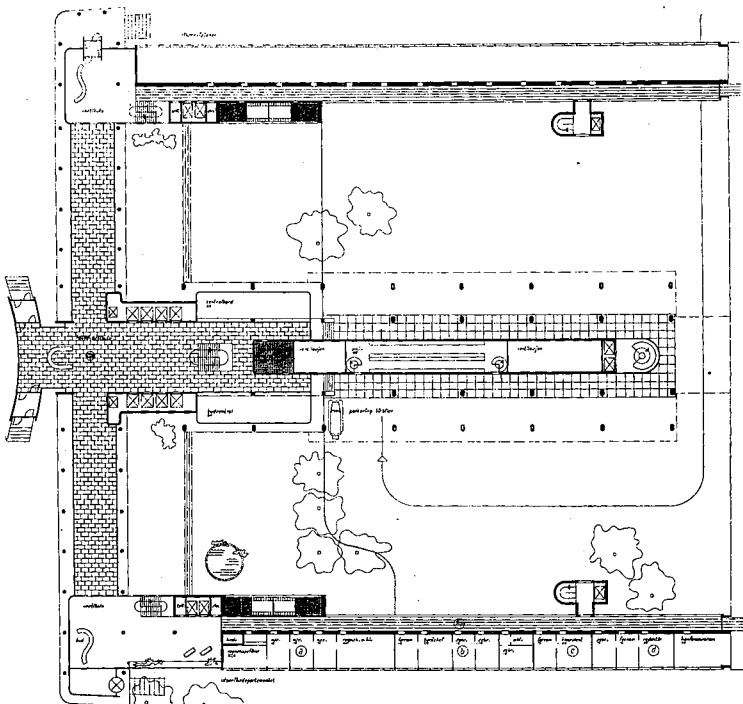
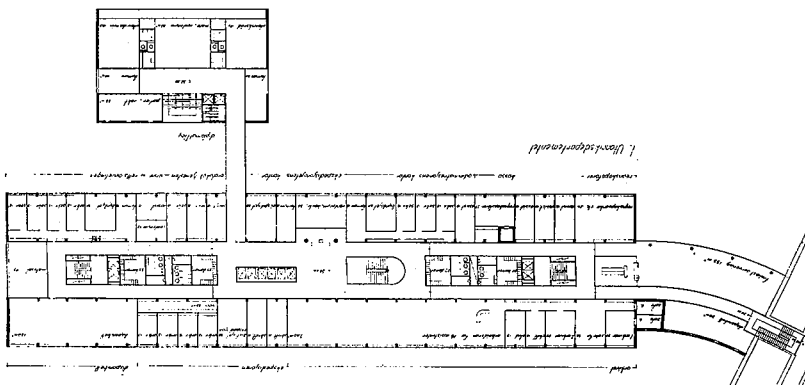
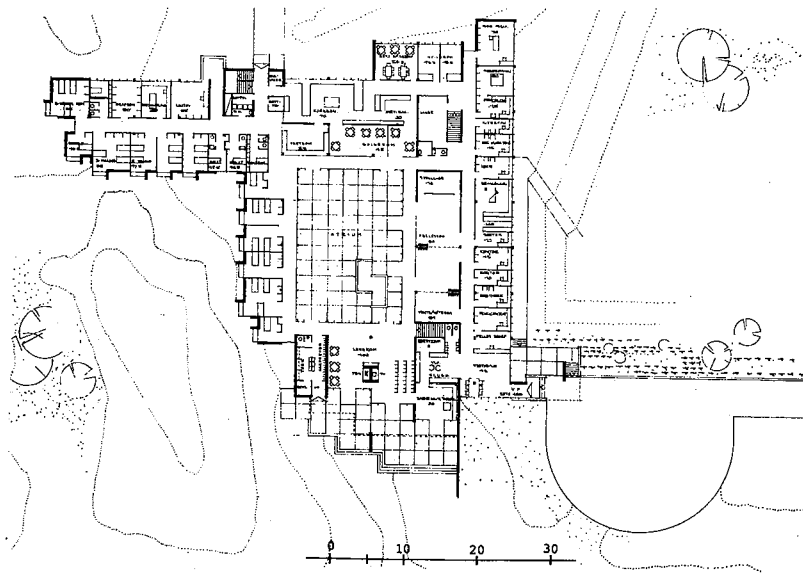
horities lends weight to these architectural principles and thus enhances the sense of order and clean simplicity in the spaces. In principle this joint programme favours equality before differentiation or segregation and thus brings about a simplification and unification of the spatial features. Simultaneously the clarity of the spatial arrangement yields a sense of *identity*, of belonging to a perceptible *unity*, to one institution. But, in this respect, the design of 'Vestibyle' is unrealistic: the communal spaces are too large and too open, they would probably have to be (and indeed were eventually) reduced and partitioned off due to expense as well as fire regulations.

Usage as a justification of exaggerated solutions

The need for archives is an issue which illustrates a paradox within this thinking, within the abstractness of the architectural ideal in relation to the use of the buildings. The two shared-prize projects that have wings facing north, mottos 'Fri' and 'U', have located archives in the north-facing section. Motto 'U' displays a façade which, although beautifully shaped and proportioned, merely has a few extremely narrow window slits in the uppermost floor of the rather narrow wing (which, however has continuous windows towards the south). In correspondence with the ideals of the competition, good work rooms could not face north, but archives were considered storage rooms and not workplaces.

The jury's fixation on this matter not only illustrates the *rigidity* of the ideal, but also a curiously *static* view of life, of use and the future. These architects considered themselves to be in the midst of an age of extraordinary change and development, yet, they did not imagine that perhaps the patterns of activity, the ways of organizing work could change within the lifetime of their buildings. They planned spaces for archives which would be sufficient for a long time ahead.²⁹ They did not however foresee that ministries might be expanded or reduced, be split or merged. Nevertheless, today the archives are still important workplaces, located near other workplaces, and they house several persons in an average-sized ministry.³⁰

- 22 Kjeldstadli, p. 354
- 23 Kjeldstadli, p. 341.
- 24 Benum, p. 30.
- 25 Ordinary office hours in Norway were between 9:00 and 16:00 with a 20 minute lunch break normally spent within the office premises. Kjeldstadli refers to the popular concept of the typical nine-to-four office worker (*ni til fire funksjonæren*). Since the 1960s, state employees have worked a 37.5 hour, 5 day week, lunch included. An agreement defines the average normal time from 8:00 to 15:45 during the winter and to 15:00 from 15 May to 15 September.)
- 26 The angle of the sun in Oslo (which is situated 60° North) is 53° at mid-summer, and 7,1° at mid-winter. See Anne Brit Børve, *The design and function of single buildings and building clusters in harsh, cold climates*, (Oslo, 1987).
- 27 I know this site quite well since I had my workplace in one of the 3rd-floor rooms in the old Government Building for a number of years in the 1980s.
- 28 Thomas A. Markus, *Buildings & Power*, (London, 1993), pp. 146-156. See also the Swedish ethnologists Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren, *Den kultiverade människan*, (Lund, 1979), which treats the disciplining of human life up until the 20th century.
- 29 BK, 22, (1940), p. 39.
- 30 Karin Stoltenberg, deputy undersecretary of State, personal communication. Several persons have their daily workplace in the archives: all mail to a ministry arrives at the archive, where it is opened, listed, sorted, and distributed to the different departments; office staff working in a ministry frequently visit the archive, which moreover, pursuant to the Public Information Act, is open to frequent visits by journalists. Equally, all outgoing mail is listed and filed, so that the complete records of official executive work is kept and used daily in the archive spaces. After a certain period of time, the files are transferred to *Riksarkivet*, the State Central Archives.



46. (TOP) THE NORWEGIAN RED CROSS INSTITUTE, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, PLAN

47. (MIDDLE) NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'RYTME', GROUND FLOOR PLAN

48. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'U', GROUND FLOOR PLAN

North-facing windows were not considered unsuitable for ministry workplaces some 20 years later. In the final project based on 'Vestibyle', a large number of the offices in the Y-block (*Y-blokka*, see fig. 35, chapter VI) face north.³¹ More than 50 years after the Government Building competition, 'the magnificent view of a sunlit park from the [north-west facing] reading areas' is stressed as a particularly valuable asset in the project for the new main library at the University of Oslo, as it appears in the 1st prize project in the competition held in the Spring of 1994.³²

The jury and the competitors in the competition for the Government Building overestimate some ideas of usage, ideas which function rhetorically out of proportion with respect to the character of the problem and its relation to the totality of the architectural solution.

Another example of overemphasis of or an *idée fixe* about use is the Institute for Asthmatic and Allergic Children (1966) in which the jury stressed the need for segregation of the inhabitants (the children and staff) on the one hand and visitors (including the parents) on the other who were regarded as 'polluted' (*forurensete*). They were not permitted to visit the home itself with the children's rooms, but were directed through a changing room, a 'lock', to a special visiting lounge where they could meet the children (fig. 46).³³ Needless to say, this 'pollution' ideology in children's health care has been abandoned and the Voksentoppen institute was recently renovated. Nevertheless, this competition was exceptional with respect to the weight that was given to the regard for socio-emotional aspects, to an architectural environment which promoted the well-being and feeling of security of the children.

Graphic narratives

In the Government Building competition the graphic representation underlines the *abstractness* of the spatial properties, which were especially schematic in the high-rise projects: it is not the spaces that are important but the fact that sufficient rooms with ideal light can be provided and reached by corridors. In motto 'Rytme' it is hardly possible to grasp where one can enter the building (fig. 47). Section drawings of 'Vestibyle' are not presented; the

spatial structure, then, is perceived through the plans. This is possible since the idea is chiefly based on a repetition of separate, identical storeys, one on top of the other, and the vertical differentiation in the two lower floors is simple enough to be perceived from the plans.

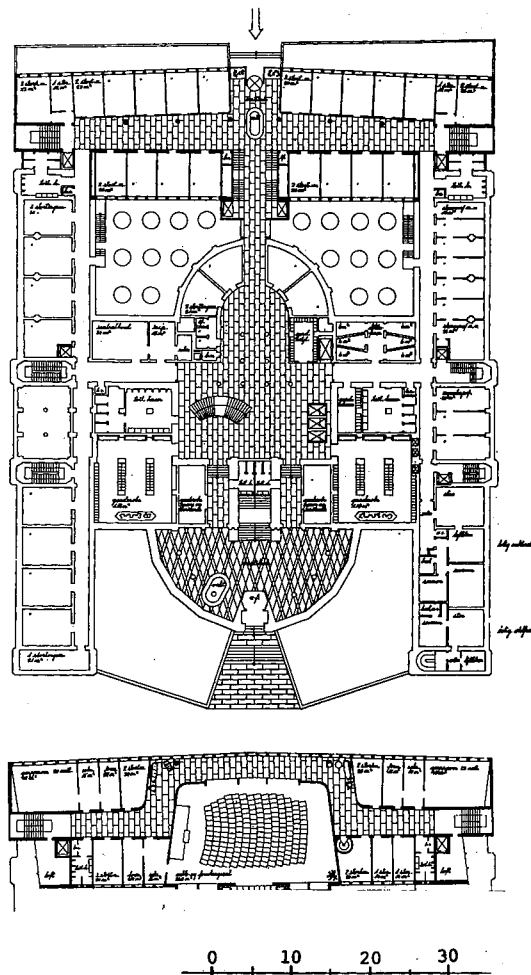
The graphic representation of motto 'U' is definitely more informative: it yields concrete indications of material qualities and spatial elaboration as shown in the different thicknesses of walls, the exactitude of windows and doors, and in the texture and pattern of the flooring as well (fig. 48). The graphic material not only testifies to a concern for the architectural qualities in the building but simultaneously clarifies the organization of the spaces.

The author of 'U' also won the competition for the extension of the Parliament Building in 1949 with a design that features similar qualities: the massing, carefully adapted to the old building, displays a spatial neatness and delicacy combined with a great simplicity of organization (fig. 49). Here, in 1949, the ideal requirements for light were moderated, perhaps because of the small site. It is maybe more correct to say that the jury emphasized a solution which was adapted and integrated in a functioning and aesthetic whole with the existing building. According to the brief, 'spacious and more suitable workplaces' for the Members of Parliament also meant good internal connections since

activities apart from the meetings of the Parliament, the Lagting and the Odelsting are of particular importance.³⁴

The editor of *Byggekunst* in 1991 Ulf Grønvold calls this kind of architecture 'the successful hybrid' in an article treating the first decade of Norwegian postwar ('modern-traditional') architecture. The jury was fascinated by the 2nd prize high-rise office tower; in a similarly approving spirit Grønvold calls it a *campanile*, but adds that 'in retrospect there is reason to be grateful that the jury did not judge the other way around'.³⁵

With regard to space and spatial concreteness, motto 'U' and the Parliament Building were exceptions in the competition material: refined and adapted, but not heroic avant-



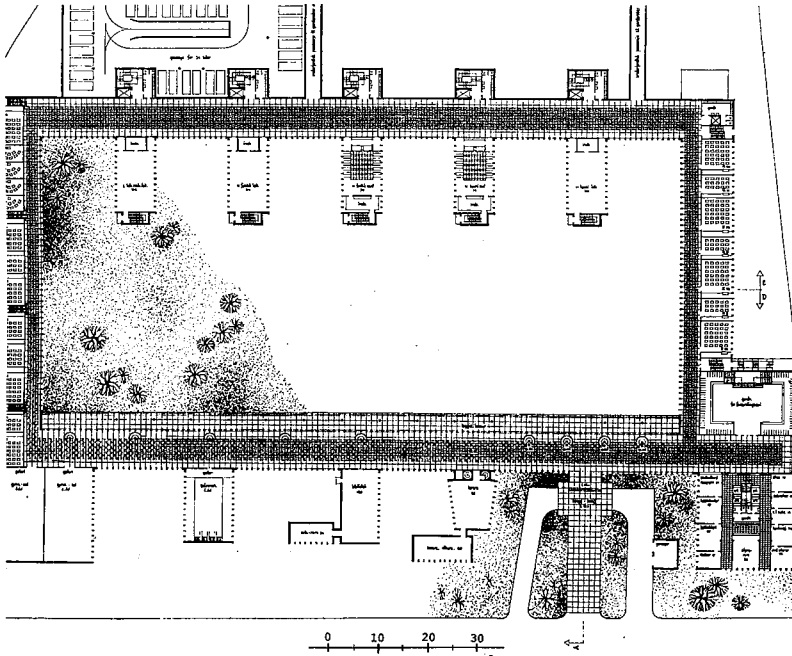
49. THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING EXTENSION, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, GROUND-FLOOR AND 4TH FLOOR PLANS

garde. The formal concreteness of classicism was, in the mainstream of competitions since the 1930s, replaced by a new formal mode which, when it comes to the principles of spatial arrangement, had some common features: often linear plans with rooms and corridors. The new arrangements tended to be more *simplicistic* and less symmetrical, and the graphic representation tended to render the spatial features as more abstract and bare. This minimization of spatial characteristics, ever more exclusively emphasizing the repetitive order of post-and-lintel structures, encapsulated the germ of the 'dissolution of space' that was to be celebrated in the 1960s and 1970s.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTINUITY AND EXPANSION IN THE 1950s

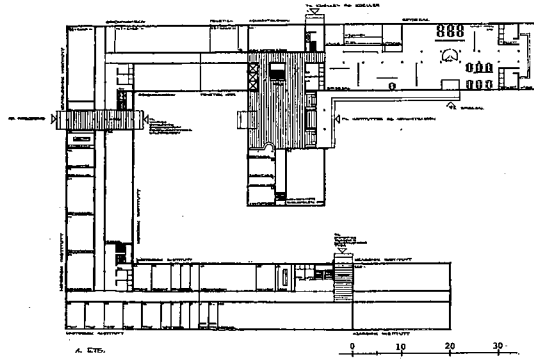
The architectural principle of narrow buildings with rather simple plans and ample outdoor spaces prevailed throughout the 1940s and 50s as shown in the land-use competitions as well

- 31 *BK*, 41, no. 1, (1959), p. 14.
 32 Hege Sandvig, 'Kunnskapens Mekka på Blindern', *Aftenposten*, 20 November 1994, p. 13.
 33 *NAK*, no. 127, (1966).
 34 *BK*, 31, no. 12, (1949), p. 205.
 35 Ulf Grønvold, 'I hybridenes dager', *BK*, 73, no. 7, (1991), p. 409.



50. (ABOVE) NEW TECHNICAL COLLEGE, WINNER PROJECT, LOWER GROUND FLOOR PLAN

51. (RIGHT) DEPARTMENT OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF OSLO, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, PLAN



- 36 *K*, no. 12, (1955).
 37 *NAK*, no. 48, (1958).
 38 *K*, no. 22, (s. a.).
 39 Terje Thorstensen, personal communication.
 40 *NAK*, no. 38, (1957), p. 4.
 41 *NAK*, no. 38, p. 4.
 42 The land-use plan was based on the 1st prize project in the competition for Vestre Vika, presented in *Byggekunst*, no. 2, (1948), in which a theatre, concert hall and opera house were placed on the site of the Railway Station, Vestbanen; it was argued that since this area would not be vacant for a long time, the other sites should be used for the more urgent commercial needs as 'these [cultural] complexes not can be expected to be realized in the near future' (p. 26). In 1952 the city council proposed that the concert hall and a cinema should be located within the commercial development. After fierce debates during 1953-54, this proposal was confirmed, 'in a poor, secluded and unfestive (*ufestlig*) location within a practically medieval triangular *carré*', according to the architect as quoted in Benum, p. 148.

as in the competition for the New Technical College 1954 (fig. 50),³⁶ and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Oslo, 1958 (fig. 51).³⁷ Good daylight conditions in the rooms were a matter of course, but the configurations were gradually modified, and the dogmatic north-south axis gave way to orthogonal compositions containing wings in both directions, in which high-rise and lower volumes could be combined. *Clarity* and *simplicity* in the plans were still highly commended, and, within this overall ideology, the range of spatial quality was enriched by the introduction of inner courtyards in some projects such as the Technical College and the Edvard Munch Museum. These courtyards are reminiscent of motto 'U' and motto 'Tone' in the competition for the Government Building in 1939, which were discarded because the low wings cast a shadow on the courtyard.

A peculiar notion of *use*, however, can be observed in the 'invisible' social segregation

explicitly stated, since students were not allowed to use the lifts in the high-rise buildings, neither in the Technical College nor in the University buildings. Naturally this presupposition influenced the arrangement and the dimensions of the spaces as well: high-rise buildings were exclusively for staff and researchers, lower blocks for the students. This kind of segregation ideology was to be abandoned by the new University competition in 1968, but in the realized high-rise buildings the underestimation of vertical circulation needs has represented a severe obstacle with regard to the use of the building; the students obviously use the lifts resulting in congestion and queues.

The 1st prize project for the Central Office of Storebrand Insurance Company (1956) breaks away from the dominance of orthogonal constructions, and features a clean office block based on a plan with the shape of a concave lens.

The shift in Norwegian architecture that occurred in the early 1950s with the sudden and marked impact of the postwar international style, is not particularly distinct in this competition material. However, the 1st prize project in Voksenåsen centre for cultural exchange with Sweden in 1956 represents a particular trend within this new line: clean, long, horizontal lineaments with terraces and continuous glass façades (fig. 52).³⁸ According to the author, the project was greatly influenced by the Økern Old People's Home, erected in 1955 by the PAGON members Fehn and Grung.³⁹

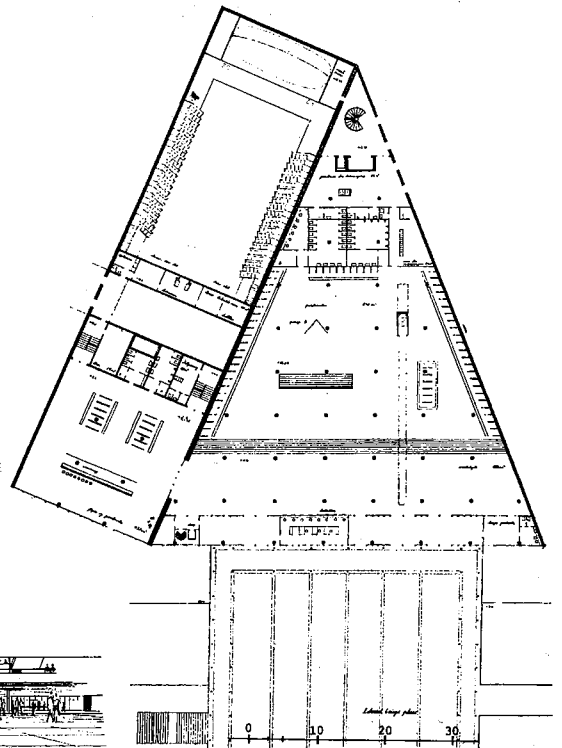
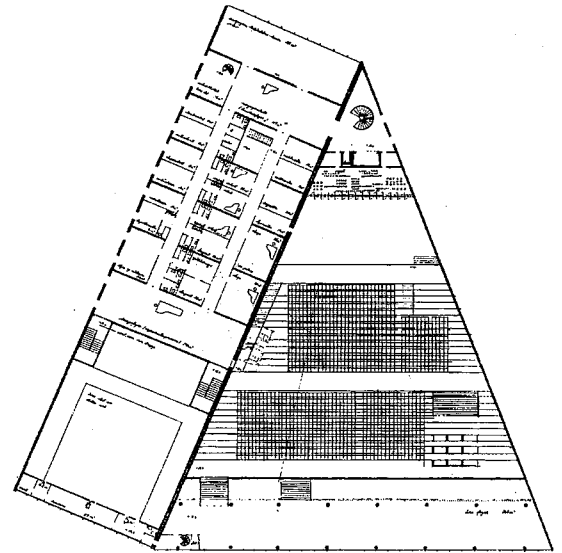
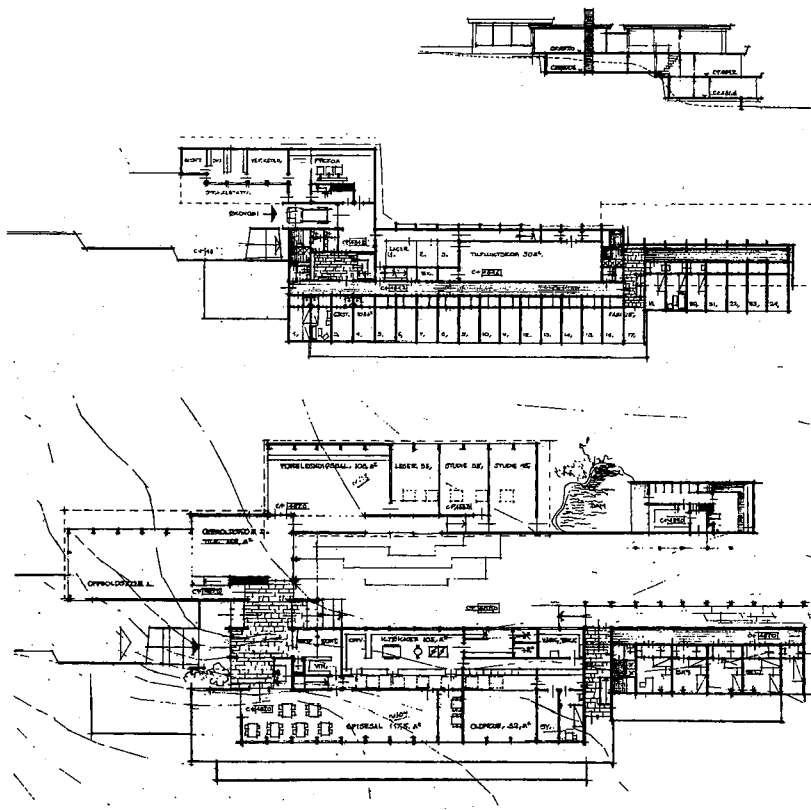
The 1st prize design for Oslo Concert Hall, 1957 (fig. 53), also features a very simple, precise building, 'a superior approach', according to the jury, which moreover admires

...the asymmetrical axis... an original and clear subdivision of the space into a triangle and a rectangle.

Further compliments on the spatial arrangement are

simple harmony. . .the author's empathy in the task

which is shown in the way he has placed the



audience (slightly asymmetrically within the symmetrical triangular shape), and thus

...reinforces the air of distinction and pleasure in the hall.⁴⁰

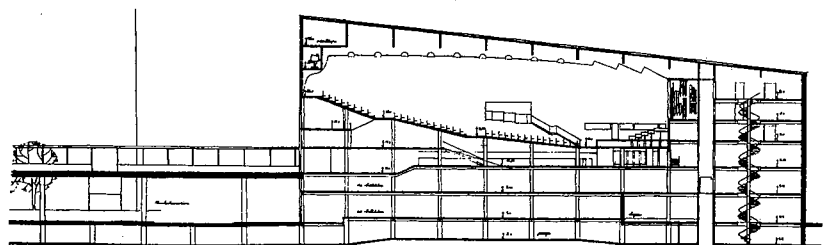
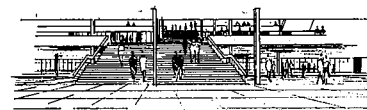
Practical and acoustic conditions are a priority. Importantly, from the spatial point of view however, a new sort of *vertical differentiation* and *openness* is introduced here: first a slow tiering of the wide, open ground-floor lobby, then ascending upward in a gradually lighter arrangement of stairs and planes. This section of the building is commented by the jury as being:

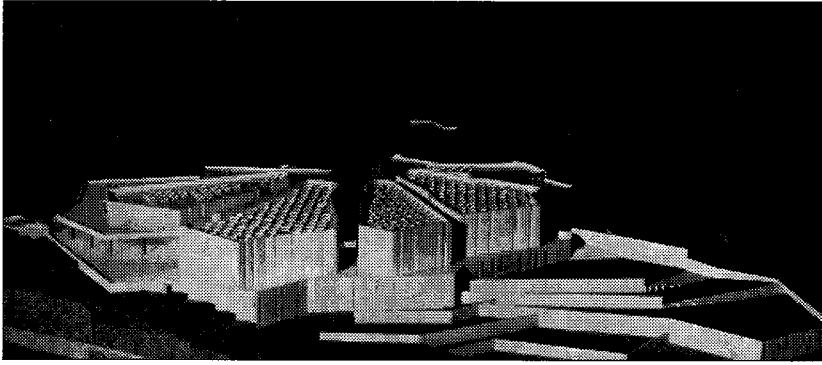
spiritually accentuated within the simple form.⁴¹

This sense of openness and movement yields a pleasant spatial compensation for the secluded and constrained site in the backyard of some ordinary commercial buildings;⁴² nor was the need for extensive daylight façades urgent in a building with large, enclosed spaces. However, regardless of poor site conditions, the openness and 'flow' in parts of the concert hall project, a sense of *movement* enhanced by spatial bareness and asymmetry, may be seen as a sign of a new spatial trend.

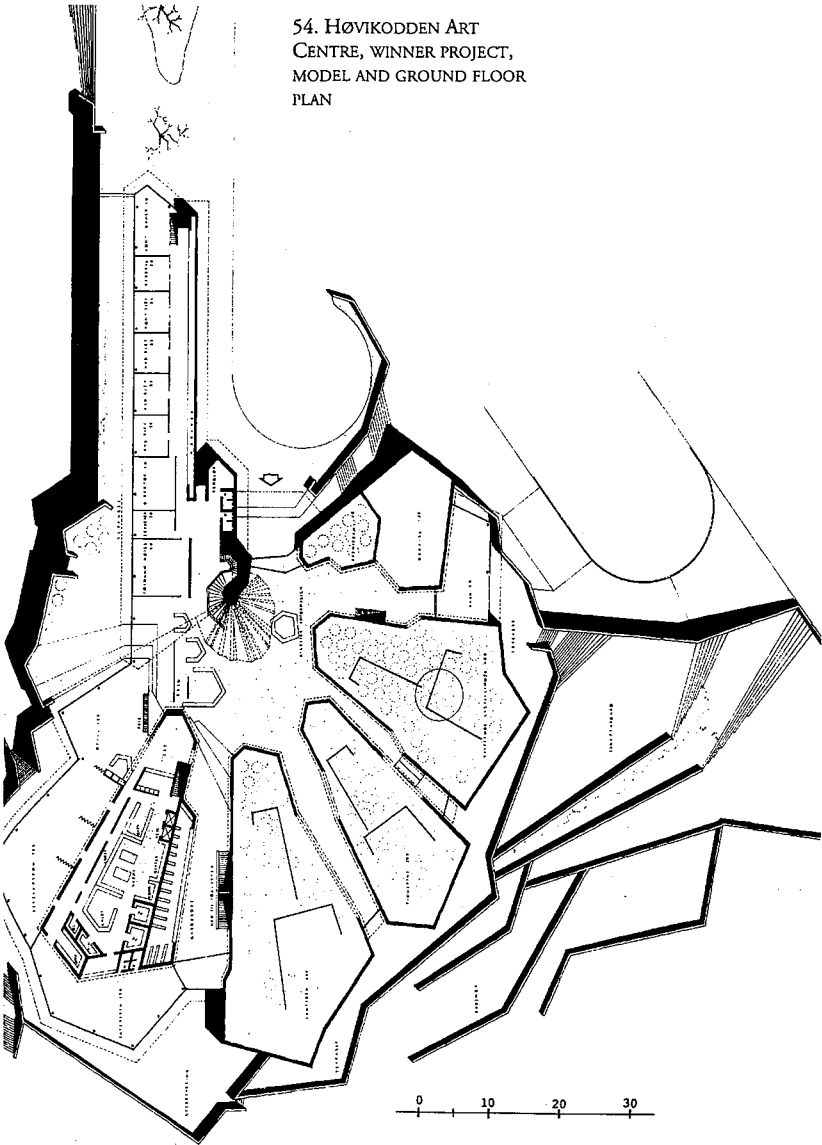
52. (ABOVE LEFT) VOKSENÅSEN, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, MAIN FLOOR AND LOWER FLOOR PLANS, SECTION

53. (RIGHT) OSLO CONCERT HALL, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, 2ND AND 4TH FLOOR PLANS, SECTION, PERSPECTIVE





54. HØVIKODDEN ART CENTRE, WINNER PROJECT, MODEL AND GROUND FLOOR PLAN



The competition for Høvikodden Art Centre 1963-64 represents an exception in the line of homogeneous competition architecture characterized by clean, geometric principles. The 1st prize project, which won after a new competition between five of the competitors, consists of oblique spaces arranged in the shape of an irregular fan, connected to a narrow rectangular wing containing the administration rooms (fig. 54). This very obliqueness, and the inwardness

and closedness which result from the solid concrete walls place this design in a unique position with regard to spatial character. The jury praised these spaces for pragmatic reasons:

The principle arrangement of the exhibition section brings many advantages. The obtuse angled, irregular exhibition rooms with indirect skylight lighting give very good possibilities for arranging and grouping pictures, and the room where current exhibitions are held is also well suited for other functions.

The public can choose freely how much of the exhibition they wish to see at a time. They will always be able to locate themselves and therefore avoid the feeling of being lost in a maze, such as one has in many museums.⁴³

In this case uniqueness and distinctiveness of form provide a sense of order, of possibility to find one's way about which equals the more ordinary clarity and coherence of spatial organization which are emphasized by the juries in the majority of competitions. The project associates to the more figuratively expressive architecture of, for instance, the Finnish architects Aalto and Pietilä. Although definitely a design of its age, it may in the mainstream of hegemonic competition architecture also be seen as a predecessor to the greater diversity of the 1980s: it is conglomerate and dynamic in the manner in which the composition combines the closed, oblique volumes with the open, orthogonal and horizontal open wing of offices and a restaurant.

The jury praises the project for blending well with the terrain by the extensive arrangement of outdoor terraces on several levels that surrounds the building. The graphic representation on this point is exaggerated as the terraces appear as more dominating barriers than the solid outer walls in the plan.

43 *NAK*, no. 105, (1964), p. 6. (The text is the original from the competition publication which was printed in English as well as Norwegian, as the donors Sonia Henie and her husband Niels Onstad were residents of the U.S.)

SPATIAL LIBERATION IN THE 1960s

'Enriching flow' of people and spatial grandeur

In the competition for the Karl Johan *kvartalet* in 1962, the jury concludes that:

An *increased richness* in the spatial composition of the environment of the Karl Johan *kvartalet* can be best and almost exclusively achieved by a *liberating* architectural intervention in the *interior* of the block (my italics).⁴⁴

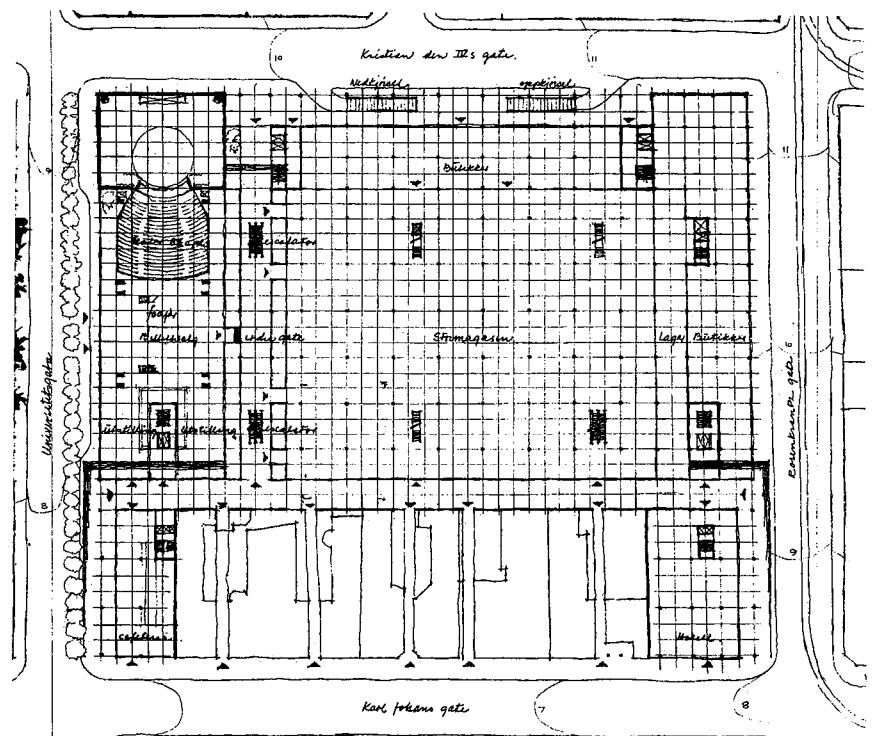
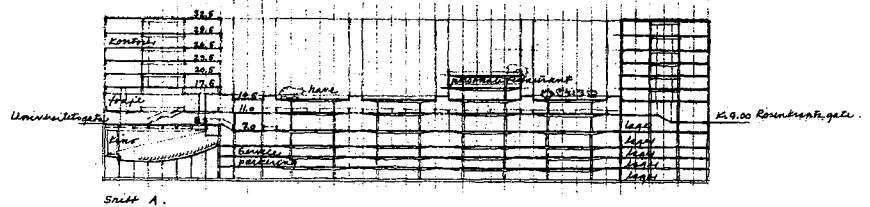
This is a revolutionary statement, the essence of which is repeated several times in the jury's remarks:

enriching extension to the life and rhythm of the Karl Johan environment [*miljø*, setting, atmosphere]. . . an alluring entertainment and shopping life in the interior of the block. . . the liberating total solution.⁴⁵

'Enriching' and 'increased richness', 'liberating', 'life' and 'rhythm', are concepts that suggest a goal of greater intensity, of movement and expansion. But apparently this can only be achieved through a liberating intervention in the interior, by eradicating the constraints of the old block and replacing them with one, total solution.

A considerable number of participants. . . have therefore created new enriching dimensions . . . , a new spatial composition within the block. The jury is of the impression that the decisive battle between the competitors has been fought just here [on the solution of the interior], and not particularly many competitors have succeeded in creating a human, living and at the same time economically promising environment in the block.⁴⁶

Statements like this set the agenda for the next 30 years if one considers the goal, the intention of *enriching* the environment, stressing *attractiveness* (including the commercially attractive aspect) and *human vitality*. It is here in the competition for Karl Johan *kvartalet* that the



first spatial response emerges with a consistent architectural expression.

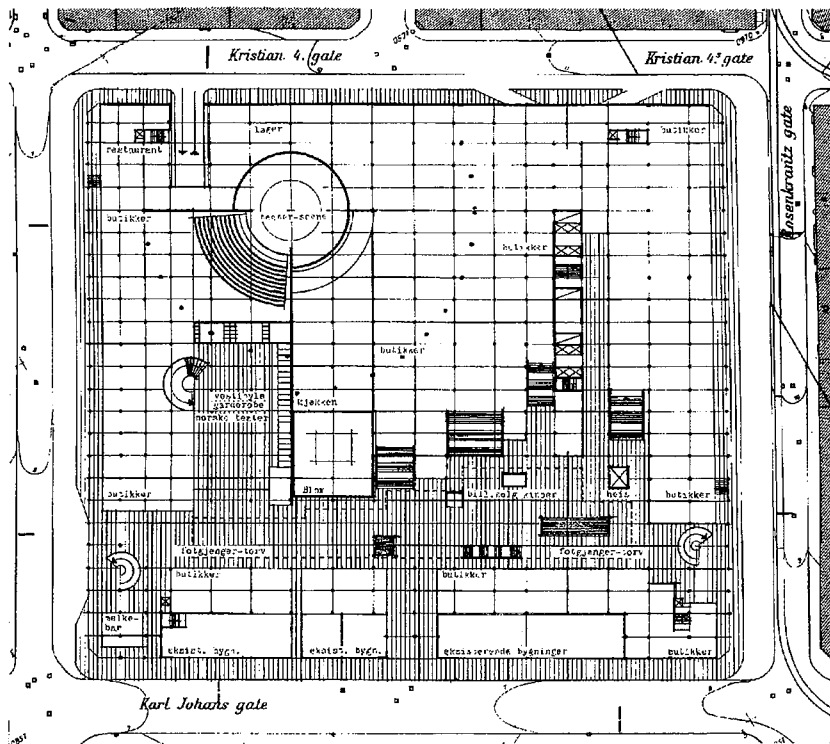
Both shared-prize designs motto '13831' and '27059' display a continuous, open spatial structure covering the entire block; in the case of '27059' (fig. 55) some of the old buildings were integrated, but '13831', which was later commissioned, is more powerful as a total image. In '27059' the different activities (theatre, shops and circulation spaces) are located in a seemingly neutral, indifferent structure, whereas in '13831' the ground and first floor plans show a spatial composition which is full of energy and *movement* (fig. 56). The distinct, asymmetrical placement of different characteristic shapes contribute to this effect. The jury adheres to these conceptions in their appraisal of the aesthetic qualities:

The cinema and theatre complex in a radial shape is *beautifully* situated in the Northern corner, in *organic* connection with their spacious lobbies' (my italics).⁴⁷

It is not the collocation of material tectonic

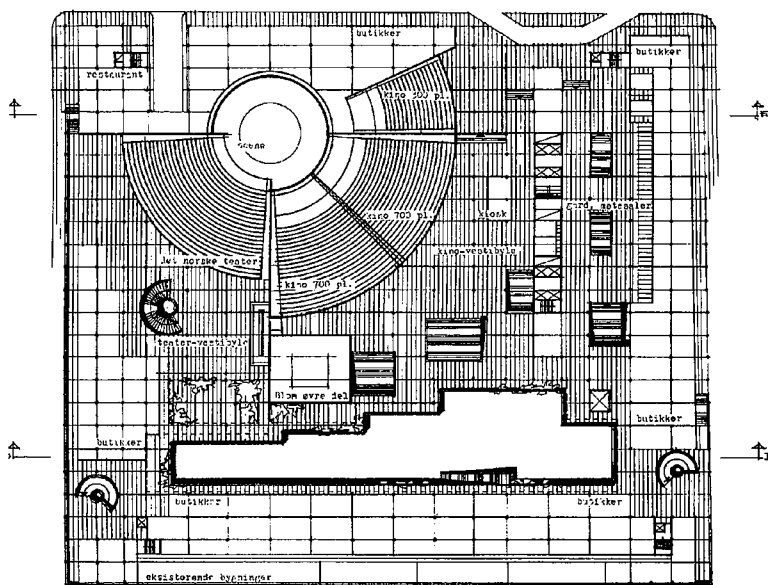
55. KARL JOHAN KVARTALET, MOTTO '27059', GROUND FLOOR PLAN, SECTION

44 NAK, no. 93, (1963), p. 14.
45 NAK, no. 93, p. 14-15.
46 NAK, no. 93.
47 NAK, no. 93, p. 6.

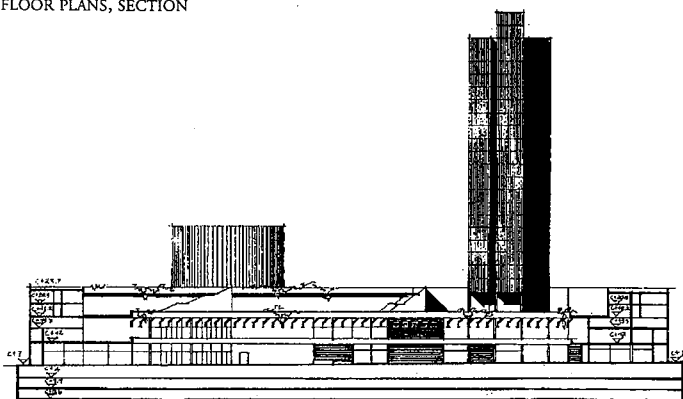


shapes and voids in itself that is beautiful, but the manner in which this arrangement, rather than being perceived in a state of rest, underlines the open, dynamic coherence and circulation of air and people. The shaping of the lavish main passage through the block greatly enhances the *dynamic* impression: excessively dimensioned stairs, irregularly placed, connect the two floors with sweeping movements; the large circular shape, the irregular open well and the excessive flights of stairs become spatial focal points which are approached and passed through.

The main idea of the project is to let the Karl Johan environment flow⁴⁸ in a natural manner into the block and there compose a very good spatial formation, which again flows further upward and through interesting stair arrangements and lobbies into Kristian IVs gate. In the opinion of the jury the interior of the block can become a fine supplement to Karl Johans gate as far as function, spatial formation and scale are concerned.⁴⁹



56. KARL JOHAN KVARTALET, MOTTO '13831', GROUND AND FIRST FLOOR PLANS, SECTION



The jury's criticism thus highlights the importance of uninhibited movement, of floors extending from the street, letting the 'flow' of people from the street permeate the entire complex. But the texts scarcely mention a human being or people, nor do they specify the activities: it is the atmosphere of the environment, and the life and rhythm of the environment, that flows in through the complex. Only the term 'pedestrian square' written on the plan associates to that aspect of the Karl Johan environment which is referred to, the function of the broad pavement as the predominant pedestrian area in Oslo. The conceptions of use are vague, taken for granted, implicit in concepts such as 'alluring entertainment and shopping life' and 'human living' etc.

The emphasis on *homogeneity* as a significant quality in the interior is also noteworthy. Strong architectural measures were considered necessary in order to consolidate the interior as an environmental centre of gravitation that could match Karl Johans gate. The jury's criticism of '13831' states:

In this manner, the lower floors form a homogeneous interior, which in the opinion of the jury places the project in an exceptional position on this essential point.⁵⁰

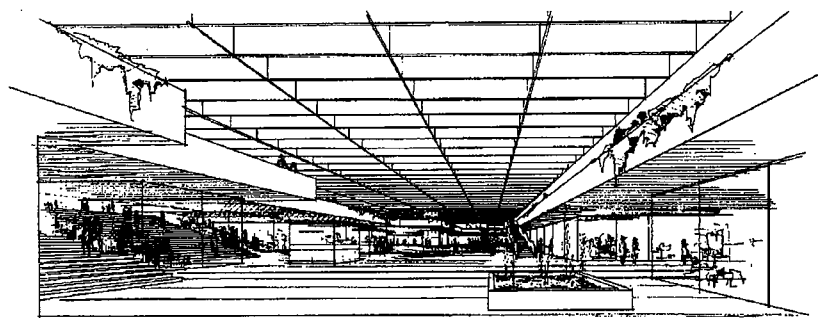
This homogeneity, the very *monomorphic* tectonic character is displayed in the interior perspective (fig. 57): the continuous floor and the grid of the ceiling infinitely repeated throughout the entire length of the inner pedestrian square, some 150m, the 'never-ending' gallery parapets and the broad stairs conducting streams of people, in a similar way to in an open landscape. These components truly give the impression of being liberating in the sense of open, continuous and grand; especially in the horizontal dimension. And it is precisely openness in the *horizontal dimension* which promotes freedom of movement and which necessitated that the old constraints of the site were removed.

The best result is achieved when the inner, larger spatial units, squares and stairs which serve different purposes, through architectural synergy, form a continuous series of larger spatial units which – corresponding with the terrain – ascend in a natural manner. . . .⁵¹

The homogeneity strengthens the sense of *grandeur* because it substantiates a large scale of order: there is *one* big theatre form, there is *one* open well, *one* central area in the pedestrian square, and *one* main direction of the ascending flow of stairs. Motto '27059' in many respects also responds to the general tone of the jury texts, but the intensity of the architectural composition of '13831' and its rendering as well, conveys far stronger images of vitality and movement. The ground floor of '27059' is open, free and homogeneous, but visually it appears still and lifeless in comparison (although in reality it might be just as full of human activity and gathering).

The graphic highlights openness and temporality

Visually the project motto '13831' is emphasized as a whole, an *indivisible totality*, not only in the perfection of the model, but also the



57. KARL JOHAN KVARTALEET, MOTTO '13831', INTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

plans in which the hatching underlines the continuity of space. Minor elements may be altered or placed differently within the totality such as for example the contour of the gallery parapet and the individual flights of stairs. These 'free' elements enhance the visual sense of dynamic continuity, of breathing *temporality* and pulsating life. The hatching, leading inwards marks the public passage stretching from Karl Johans *gate* all the way to Kristian IVs *gate*; it penetrates into the more untouched shop areas on the ground floor, but in a very suggestive, ephemeral and undulating manner; like the wet traces left by waves on a beach, where one tongue reaches farther up than the other, and remains for a while in the sand.

The hatching thus emphasizes the continuity of spaces for *public movement* and moreover distinguishes these spaces from the shop areas and theatres. But the *segregating* effect of the vertical components are heavily *subdued* by this rendering. It is intriguing that the gallery parapet by the opening in the floor is drawn with more emphasis than the walls separating the theatre and cinemas from the lobby although it is quite obvious that this big wall would have to be solid and well (sound) insulated, and consequently a dominant spatial element in the interior. The exaggerated openness of the shop areas makes these entire spaces appear like predominantly open voids, whilst they would in fact be subdivided into smaller units and filled up with spatial elements such as racks, staff rooms, lavatories etc. But such details are a minor aspect in the rendering; they merely support the jury's preference for a total and complete composition:

the *liberating total solution* must be the decisive factor to which the individual functions must be subordinated, even quantitatively (my italics).⁵²

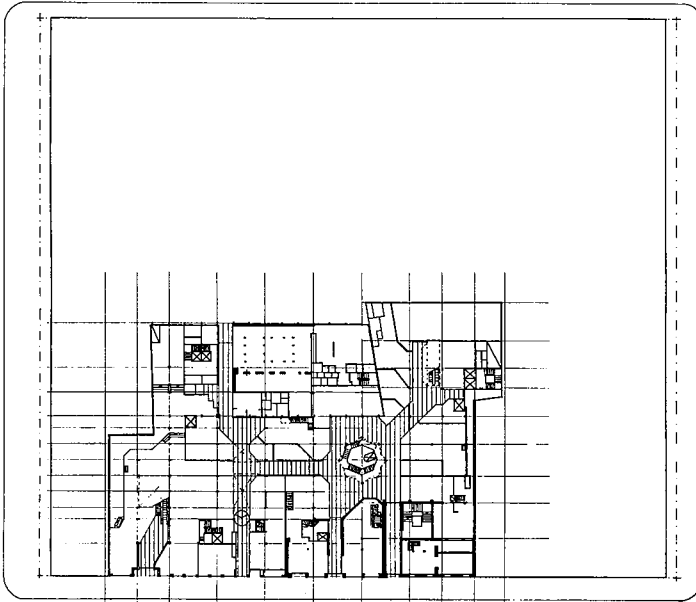
48 The Norwegian word *flyte* means both 'float' and 'flow'.

49 NAK, no. 93, p. 6.

50 NAK, no. 93, p. 6.

51 NAK, no. 93, p. 14.

52 NAK, no. 93, p. 15.



58. KARL JOHAN KVARTALET, PALÉET SHOPPING CENTRE, THE GROUND FLOOR

Only a project which exaggerated the aspect of continuity is able to convey graphically a sense of horizontal movement and temporality.⁵³ And, the plan is definitely a beautiful composition.

No doubt a system of public passages and shops could be arranged in a more conventional and less 'totalizing' structure, for instance as in the block today. The ground floor of Paléet, an arrangement of 42 shops over two floors on part of the competition site, is shown in figure 58. Compared with the '13831' design, the spaces for public circulation are strikingly different; they are very narrow and resemble crooked, old town passages. The centre is aimed at a relatively up-market audience, and offers 'culture' (live piano music, rather exquisite materials in the interiors etc.) in addition to shopping. Paléet, which was opened in 1990, is a very successful shopping centre according to a recent study of three shopping centres in central Oslo.⁵⁴

In the competition in 1962, the jury's general remarks call upon the fourth dimension, that of *time*, with reference to the historical buildings:

As the three-dimensional richness in the inner solution of the block is a precondition for a good solution, the historical component of time – the 4th dimension – constitutes a valuable extension to the whole.⁵⁵

This however is a rhetorical construction, a wishful thinking with regard to incorporating the existing buildings and the historical dimen-

sion of time into the preferred design, but it indicates a new interest in the aspect of time and temporality, as I have suggested above.

By stressing the public, social atmosphere and highlighting the intervention in the *interior* of the block, the attention was steered away from the sensitive architectural problem of relating to the historic main street. When the uniform totality and grandeur of the inner intervention were emphasized, the external consequences of the architectural principles were not explicitly exposed. This focus on the interior may have been convenient in this exceptionally sensitive case. However, it is also symptomatic of the new period in which open architectural spaces and flexible spatial structures came to be developed further and dominate as an architectural principle. As the requirements for direct daylight were modified and the sites were utilized more intensively in the 1950s and 60s, the need for adequate architectural means that could structure compact building complexes increased.

OPEN SPACE AND STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS IN THE 1970s

Modular spatial systems and use

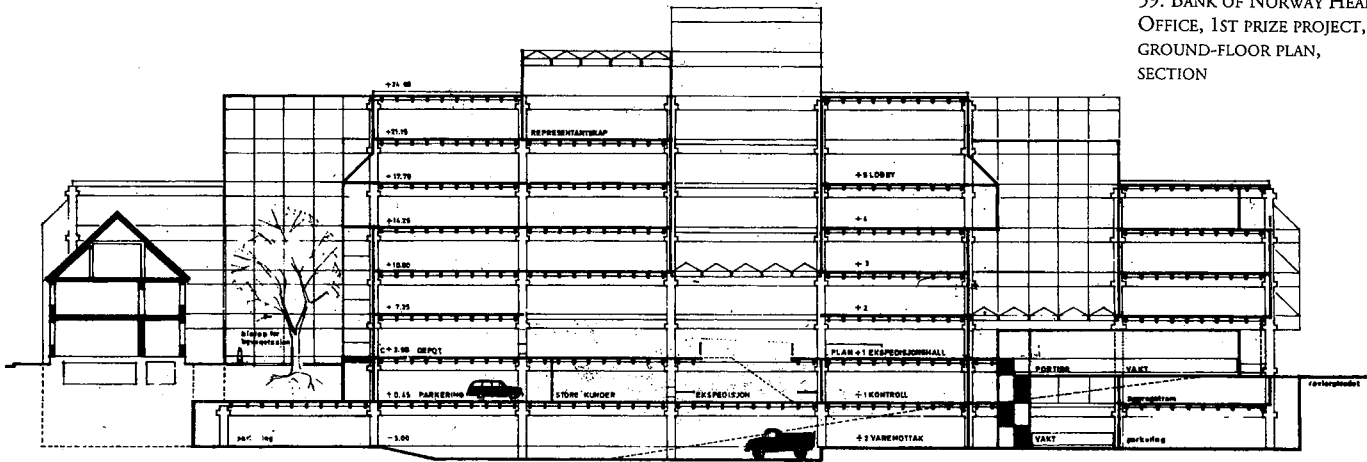
The Bank of Norway 1st prize project from 1973 is laid out like a spatial *patchwork* quilt, a system of cubic units that in principle can be extended in three directions endlessly by adding one unit to the next. The model photographs (in chapter VI), the ground-floor plan and the section show how this system covers the entire site and ingeniously adapts the new volumes to the existing buildings by leaving some squares as empty voids (fig. 59). Movement is not stressed as emphatically as in the Karl Johan *kvartalet*. However, it is quite evident that the central principle of spatial structuring is based on optimal *openness* and *continuity* in the horizontal dimension. Openness and freedom of movement are immanent but the main routes are not explicitly underlined as they were in the case of Karl Johan. Movement and circulation can take place almost anywhere, as the spaces are emphasized as totally open between the columns; vacant places that can be used as

53 I refer here to traditional graphic means such as plan and section drawings. I imagine that some particularly dynamic perspective drawings with streams of people, or virtual reality, would be able to illustrate speed and movement in narrow corridors as well, but in an ordinary plan drawing it simply looks dull if it is not exaggerated.

54 Olve Kristin Kränge and Åse Strandbu, *Kjøpesentra og forbrukskultur: materiell og væremåter i tre kjøpesentra i Oslo*, (Oslo, 1994). The director of Paléet, Grete Kobro, says that there are no problems with vandalism.

55 *NAK*, no. 93, p. 15.

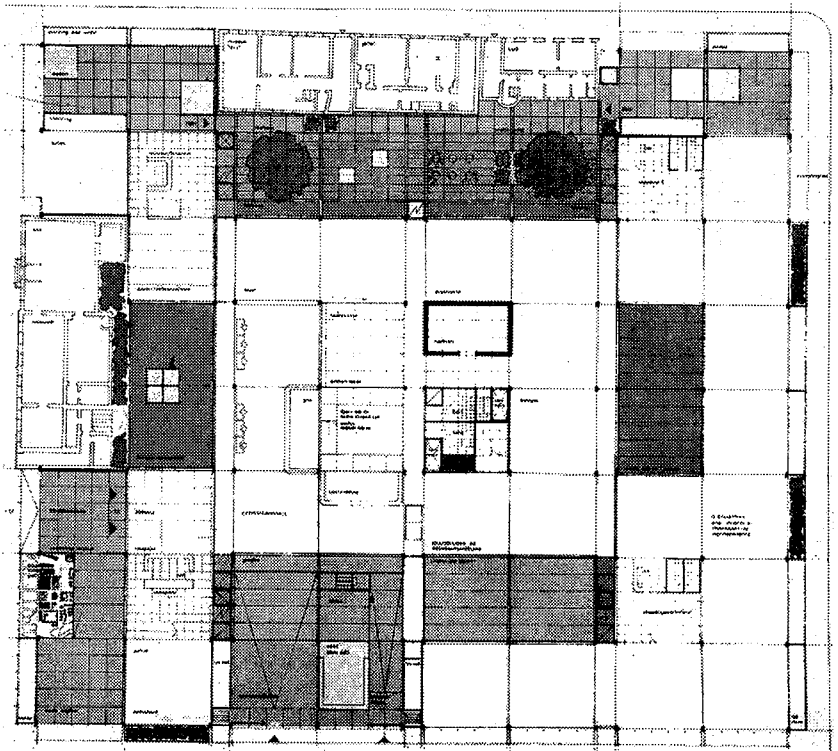
59. BANK OF NORWAY HEAD OFFICE, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, GROUND-FLOOR PLAN, SECTION



open passages or furnished and inhabited. Five strategic units, one in each corner and one in the middle, are designed as circulation nodes accommodating lifts and stairs, thus connecting the series of open horizontal planes which are stretched out on several storeys.

The *section* drawings are no less important than the plans; they provide more precise information about the basic spatial properties as well as underlining the essential quality of open horizontal continuity on each floor. Daylight in the workplaces is secured, but this is not a major issue; workplaces either face toward inner yards or out to the surrounding streets. Spaces for special uses are incorporated within the structure, such as the lecture room with tiered seating as well as the board meeting room with double-space height and skylighting. Thus the *structural system* itself is more heavily stressed than the different spaces or functions. Rather than giving specific types of activity a particular spatial frame, the architectural measures homogenize the spatial aspect of human activities and human roles. Anything can take place anywhere; it is an optional matter within the given set of rules. An architecture which to this degree is open, neutral and optional, has but one tectonic aspect to cultivate and elaborate: the structure. Le Corbusier's slogan 'the plan is the generator' has become 'the *plan system* is the generator'; the grid, marking the load bearing columns 11.5 x 11.5m (and three narrow intermediate zones), generates the different solutions that can be organized within the plan system.

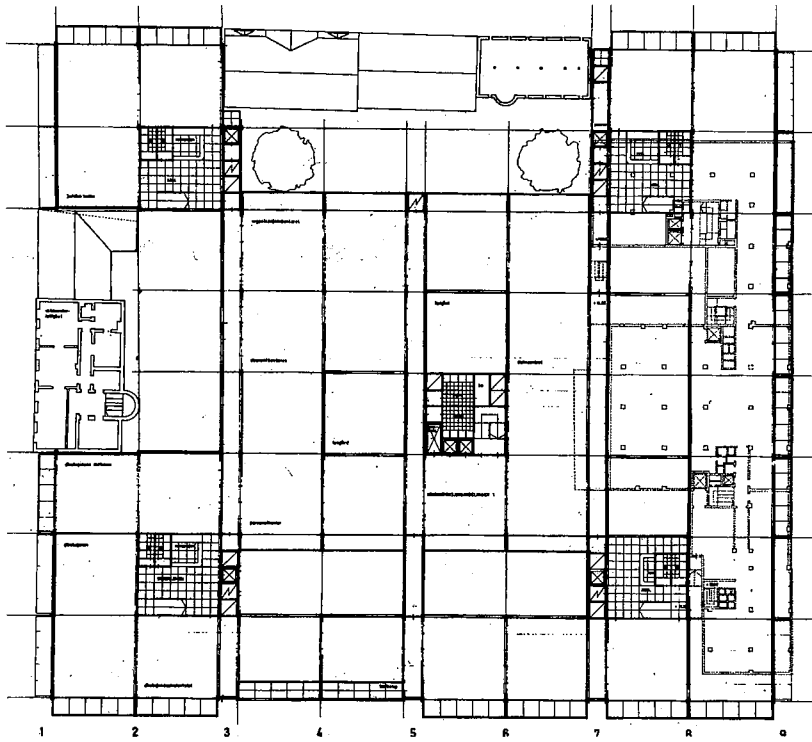
The *texts* in this competition are exceptionally extensive and thorough. This goes for the jury's comments and criticism as well as the author's



report. The jury states:

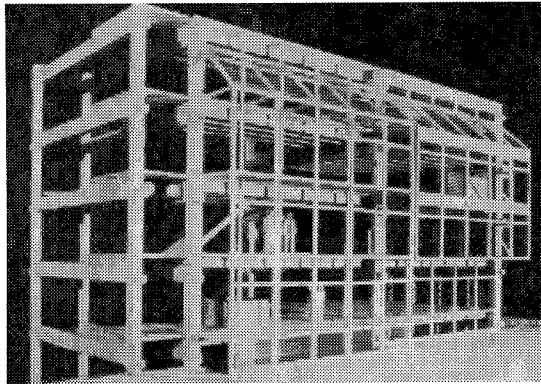
Through a deep and thorough analysis of the competition area the author makes clear his conclusions and succeeds in giving a response to the objectives through his project. The starting point of the author is a *construction system* which can incorporate the buildings evaluated for preservation and the urban dimensions of the quarter, and simultaneously let the functions of the bank develop with flexibility and elasticity within the given framework . . . Alterations to the interior can easily be made. The construction unit is developed into a *dynamic and elastic three-dimensional chess set* (my italics).⁵⁶

⁵⁶ NAK, no. 193, (1974), p. 9. There is a distinction between the specific 'structural system', N. *konstruksjonssystem*, and the 'construction' or 'building system', N. *byggesystem* based on the construction unit (or bay), *utbyggingsenhet* used in the original text here; the latter which in a wider sense embraces the system of construction or development, in which however the structural system is fundamental.



60. BANK OF NORWAY HEAD OFFICE, 3RD FLOOR PLAN

61. BANK OF NORWAY HEAD OFFICE, CONSTRUCTION MODEL



Although not altogether precise, this metaphorical expression 'the construction unit is developed into a dynamic and elastic three-dimensional chess set' very succinctly and quite poetically points to the essence of the project: the *construction unit* and its *three-dimensional grid system* are compared with the chessboard and the infinite and highly advanced possibilities inherent in the rules of the game of chess. On the one hand there is the small spatial unit and the *simplicity* and *regularity* of its structuring order, on the other hand there is the incredible range of possible options for forming and inhabiting the building. Small moves may be of crucial significance, but it is absolutely necessary to follow the rules. In this case the system not only permits a flexible adaptation to the different internal needs but simultaneously also provides a sensible tool for adapting to the external spaces.

Hence, the spatial framework reigns with an overall impression of regular order and *uniform calmness*; the columns stand in their firm grid connected by beams and floor slabs, but the spatial openness and continuity allow individual moves within the framework and thus enable the ground floor plan to appear with a certain degree of variety or disorder.

Although the brief

gives relatively summary information with respect to spaces and functional relationships⁵⁷,

as the author of the 1st prize project says, the texts in this competition are quite extensive with regard to the prospective use. The organization of the bank is described with its different departments, the number of employees and calculated space needs; the need for direct customer accessibility to certain departments is distinguished from information about needs for connections between internal departments, and so on.

The brief states clearly that the bank would prefer individual offices as the chief type of office, and that part of the activities, approximately 18% of the office spaces, could be housed in large open spaces, provided that the room heights were increased accordingly. The Norwegian term here is *cellekontor*, cell office. Why not *enkeltkontor*, single office like a single hotel room? This biological metaphor, 'the cell', underlines the notion of the employees connected in a synergetically functioning whole (the work organization) and simultaneously it distinguishes the social use from the physical structure. On the one hand there is the mutually interchangeable relationship of people and activities, on the other hand there is the definite construction system with its chess-like order. Yet, the biological metaphor expresses an attempt to 'materialize' relations that are immaterial, to strengthen the interdependence between social or operational and physical or built phenomena.

The author of the 1st prize project for the Bank of Norway states that the task is to work out principle solutions, a framework within

which the building can be made concrete at a later stage, and he very quickly introduces a *repetitive* construction system:

The building structure ought to have considerable capacity for adaptation according to altered or unpredicted programming. The actual buildings ought to be based on *axis units* which correspond with the existing buildings and which can be related to rational structural systems and technical installations. *Modular units* can be determined on the basis of furnishing components, secondary structures for façades etc. (my italics).⁵⁸

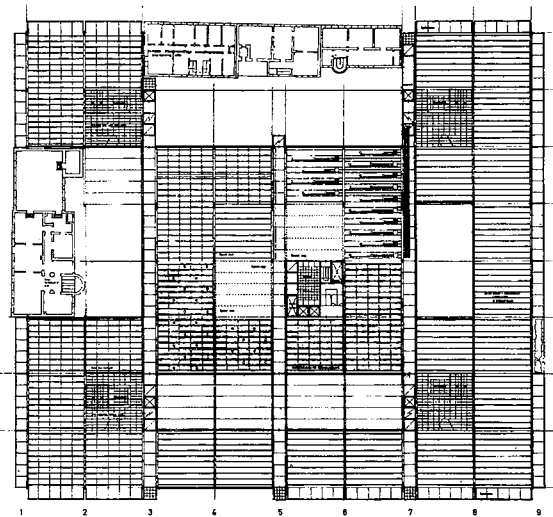
Further on the author distinguishes between two main types of programmed spaces, general and specific spaces; the first type includes offices and the second type, a variety of spaces such as vaults, guard rooms and lecture rooms. The proposed architectural solutions are further advocated:

An extra space zone along the outer walls can enable the extension of a cell office in this direction. Such a zone can be used for *many purposes*: extensions of offices, group meetings, *ad hoc* activities, recreation, indoor gardens, internal communication between groups of rooms and internal stairway connections. Such an arrangement could *enrich* the rigid system of cell offices along a central corridor and create groups of rooms with an identity and unity (my italics).⁵⁹

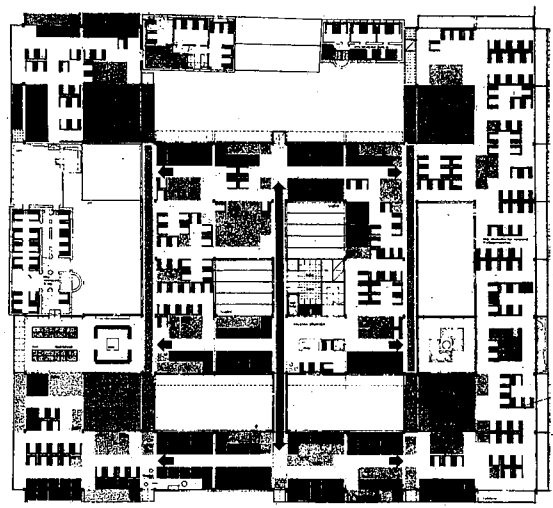
These examples from the text demonstrate the manner in which the conceptions of use are closely tied to the tectonic components in a joint *rhetorical strategy*.

Rhetorical ambiguities

Returning to the drawings, the contradiction between the *inherent tectonic rigidity* and the *optional variety* becomes apparent. On the one hand there is the seemingly total openness and freedom in the spaces as displayed in the typical plan, for instance the 3rd floor (fig. 60): an empty 'chessboard' dominated by the regular grid of posts and lintels; displaying abstract guidelines for rational subdividing rather than spatial characterization or concreteness. This



62. BANK OF NORWAY HEAD OFFICE, PLAN OF CEILING, 2ND FLOOR PLAN WITH OFFICE ARRANGEMENTS



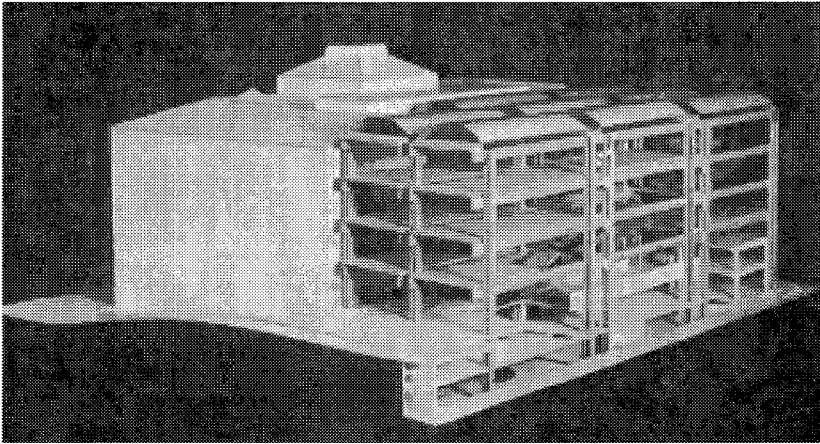
spatial freedom is further reinforced by the section drawings, the detailing of which also adds a sense of *concreteness* with regard to dimensions and proportions. The manner in which the existing buildings and the interstitial spaces are indicated substantiates the rendering which appears with convincing credibility when it comes to adaptability. It is the tectonic components of the modular unit that constitute the spatial identity of the project: the columns, consoles and beams, floor slabs and modular subdivisions, as is clearly demonstrated in the section drawings as well as in the construction model (fig. 61). This *impression of openness* and continuity of the spaces, which is thus skilfully advocated, rests upon the fact that the *load-bearing structures* alone are depicted.

On the other hand the quality of openness and freedom is held within a strict framework. Two other plans indicate further detailing of the

57 NAK, no. 192, (1974), p. 6.

58 NAK, no. 192, p. 6

59 NAK, no. 192, p. 8.



63. PERMANENTEN, BERGEN,
1ST PRIZE PROJECT

spaces: the plan of the ceiling including technical installations, and the 2nd floor plan featuring a typical office storey (fig. 62). The order of repetition and regularity is very dominant in the ceiling plan, and, since walls in principle are avoided or minimized, the ceilings will obviously have important aesthetic impact on the perception of the spaces.

The 2nd floor plan shows a proposal for offices including 'cell offices', larger spaces with groups of work booths and some open lounges. Shading distinguishes the different kinds of space and the main routes of circulation. Although graphic 'coding' like this serves to indicate temporary or optional examples of utilization rather than representing factual spatial properties, the figuration is credible and exhibits some of the multiple possibilities advanced in the text. However, had 80% of the spaces been cell offices as requested, the spaces would have appeared dramatically more dense, closed and rigid in the drawings. Importantly with respect to the spaces, then, would be the design of walls as well as arrangements of communal

spaces, regardless of whether this would reinforce the sense of standardized rigidity or give room for pleasant deviations and modifications.

The presentation, however, yields evidence that the principle of repeating a limited set of equal components has first priority, which implies that the consistency is physically and visually underlined in the spatial elements; in work booths and other furnishing units as well as primary and secondary construction components. Whether workplaces are arranged in an open 'landscape' or in 'cell offices', the spatial feature of 'units-in-a-repetitive-system' prevails. As in chess, awareness of the rules becomes an imperative, but here permanently manifested in the architecture. You can move a workplace from square to square, you can take a bishop and leave an empty space; you can checkmate all the walls and still the spaces will remain dominated by an abstract hierarchy of orthogonal regularity.⁶⁰

The Bank of Norway project is represented with a persuasive authority covering a wide range of aspects. The 'buildability' seems extraordinary as the production, based on standardized modular units, is focal and the structural components are thoroughly worked out. The spaces appear rational, efficient and adaptable and the text includes realistic indications as to different possibilities for use.

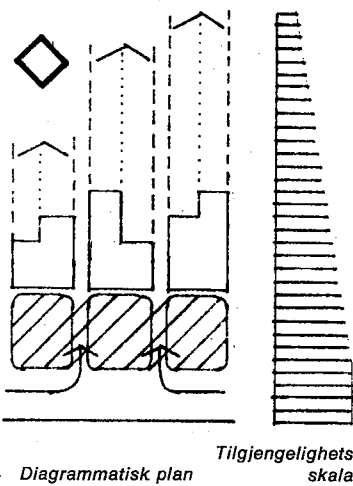
A rational and standardized construction system was a goal; indeed it was practically presupposed from the start, but the representation rhetoric yields an illusive image of openness and spatial continuity. Until the chessmen have inhabited the board, until the offices have been partitioned off, the spaces appear completely collective. Structural 'scaffolding' can be fascinating, it visualizes a framework for spatial imagination and exploration, but in building constructions, especially a huge office complex, the 'scaffolding' is bound to be filled in. These fill-in components will highly influence the quality of the spaces, and it is on this point that the rhetorical representation understates the inherent weakness: the fill-in structures superimposed on the primary structural system highly increase the dominance of regularity and uniformity. Thus it may seem that the most attractive spaces are those that originate in relation to external structures; the interstitial

60 Norberg-Schulz commented *VG-bygningen*, a recent project for a major Oslo newspaper designed by the same architects, which is based on similar principles thus: 'Insofar as the precision emphasizes the abstract impression, we could say that the system lacks plastic 'tangibility', and therefore does not relate to the human body. The abstraction is caused by an undefined down/up-relationship; the building neither 'stands' nor 'rises', but merely 'is' in the space as an imaginary system of coordinates', Christian Norberg-Schulz, 'Rygg mot rygg', *BK*, 76, no. 6,

(1994), p. 383. *VG-bygningen* has a lighter and more open character than the Bank of Norway project. The 10-storey high inner space of the broad public passage through the complex yields a light and grand impression which vibrates as the ever-present repetitive patterns almost seem to dissolve the spatial coherence: the shiny surfaces and modular ribs appear diffused, indeterminable, so that the green plants hanging over the gallery railings in the high space become the most tangible and concrete elements. Some degree of continuous surface material on which

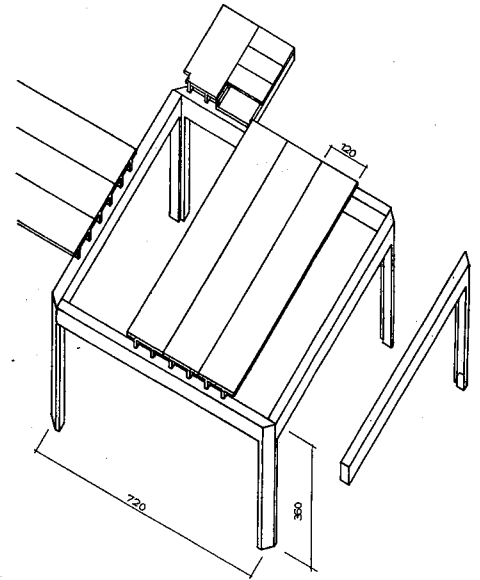
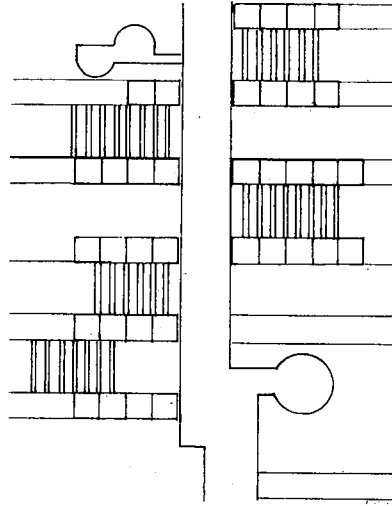
to rest the eye could have made the interior appear more tangible, coherent and stable. However, the lofty spaciousness provides in my perception a nice complement to the urban space. The huge glass wall through which one faces the massive, old granite Government Building across the street (Akersgata) justifies the new building, it releases the bounds of repetitive regularity and includes its public interior in a larger spatial context. See also Peter Davey, 'News in print', *The Architectural Review*, CXCIV, no. 1180, June, 1995, pp. 46-51.

Ekspansjon



Diagrammatisk plan

Tilgjengelighets skala

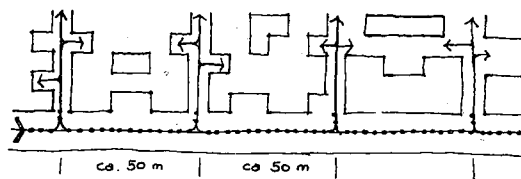


spaces between the new and the old, spaces in which the rules of the game are gracefully released and met with a robust tangibility.

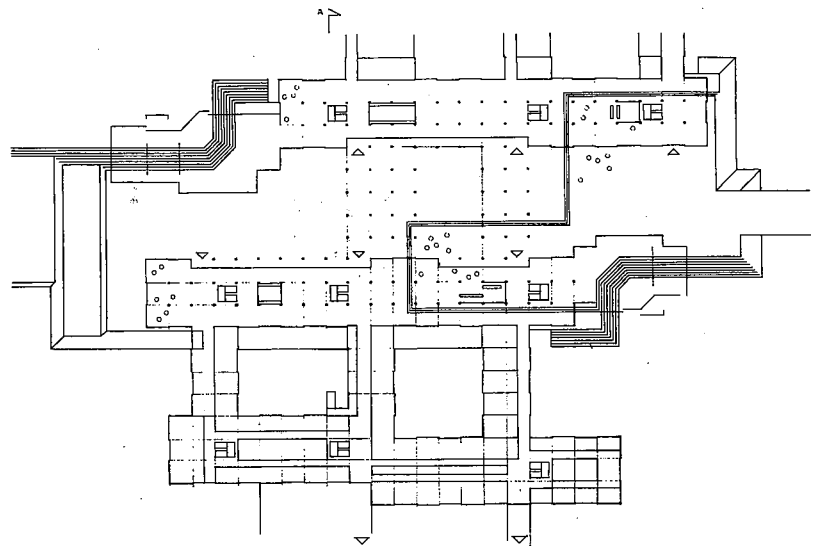
A wave of repetitive space systems in Norwegian competitions

In the light of the importance of structuralist projects in the competition material, I feel this issue merits further treatment. The Bank of Norway competition was the last in a series of four Oslo competitions in the period 1969-73 which were won by the same architects (see chapter VI). This series of projects demonstrates the development and adaptation of a particular design principle based on repetition of structural units. As mentioned above the origin and impact of structuralism in Norwegian architecture is described by Grønvold.

Grønvold refers to the 1st prize submission in the competition for *Permanenten* in Bergen (an extension of a museum building) by Ulf Lyngar in 1967 as the first project in Norway in which a building appears as a structural building or construction set, in that case based on clearly separated main zones and intermediate zones (fig. 63).⁶¹ In the competition for the University of Oslo in 1968 this type of approach was further manifested in the 1st and the 2nd prize projects (figs. 64-65), both of which display low, continuous construction systems repeated over vast areas. The accompanying texts are extensive and comprise systematic, analytic considerations along with diagrammatic illustrations. The starting point of the 1st prize author is an acknowledgement of the



64. UNIVERSITY OF OSLO, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT (SEE ALSO NEXT PAGE)



immense and very *rapid developments* within the sciences and higher education:

It is not only a question of expansion in the number of students and of the increased need for floor space, but of totally new building types and new requirements for new and hitherto unknown needs for connection between different disciplines, different departments etc.⁶²

Unforeseen newness is the key concept here: the *rapid changes* and the state of uncertainty and *unpredictability* of future needs (needs

61 Grønvold, (1983), p. 61. See also Grønvold's biography, *Lund & Slaatto*, (Oslo, 1988), pp. 251-265.

62 *NAK*, no. 156, (1969), p. 5.





with regard to organization of people as well as space) lead to a planning system in which *flexibility* and *equality* are focal:

The university is made up of individuals and groups who work alone or collaborate within different disciplines. When individuals cooperate, new possibilities emerge – the individuals and the groups develop new needs. . . . It is far more interesting to point to the *similarities* between the faculties – what they have in common and how they can *contribute* to each other.⁶³

As outlined in chapter VII the author employed these egalitarian goals in his anti-monumental argumentation but the principal focus was the spatial construction principles. Arguing against disintegration and isolation, and referring to the general tendency towards interdisciplinary projects and cooperation, towards coordination and integration, the author promotes a *general construction system*. This system

expresses an unauthoritarian attitude which allows order – and offers opportunities . . . a system which admits that the needs can be many and varied but – within a framework – an organization.⁶⁴

Instead of the existing norm of free-standing 'specialized' buildings for 'specific' institutes or departments, the proposal is based on a zoning of *different types* of spaces which are valid for university buildings in general. *Accessibility* is a structuring principle: the central pedestrian thoroughfares, then the general teaching spaces, while the more specialized spaces, laboratories etc. are placed further within, as

We are seeking a *system* that offers the minimal organization which is necessary in order to connect the different disciplines.⁶⁵

Equally important as the aspect of social organization, is the regard for *economic* solutions as well as *rapid constructions*. One of the headings in the author's report is:

Swift development and demand for soluti-

ons that can be rapidly built.⁶⁶

As was also the case in the Bank of Norway competition, the connection between the text and the design is clear, but the underlying thinking is more explicitly expressed in the case of the university. The 1st and 2nd prize projects for the university, and the Permanenten 1st prize as well, all display the bare, standardized structural systems; frameworks ready to be occupied and supplemented according to the varying needs and desires and the proposed types of solutions.

As mentioned previously, the germ of structuralist architecture in the Oslo competitions was first observed in the Karl Johan *kvartalet* competition, particularly in the shared-prize design by motto '27059' and its manner of structuring the complex based on a square grid of columns. But there the system was not clarified and stressed as in the later examples. The shared-prize project motto '7.62' in the competition for the Oslo Police Headquarters in 1967 and the 1st prize project for the SAS Hotel in 1969, feature strong structuralist elements in their employment of structural systems, but in these designs the systems are subordinated to the general shaping of the volumes and not focused on as a major architectural theme. The Police Headquarters project, in particular, displays a spatial variation both in the arrangement of the inner spaces and the 'free', geometric composition of the volumes (fig. 66).

The Smithsons maintain that the old secrets of repetition appear to have been lost among both American and European architects, and discuss the problem with reference to in their view, good examples from classical (including Bernini's colonnade, St. Peter's in Rome) as well as modern, industrialized architecture (Mies van der Rohe, Charles Eames and others). Their conclusion that 'the idea of repetition is not something to be fought against . . . the quality – good or bad – depends on how well repetition was handled',⁶⁷ seems fairly representative for the prevailing ideology at the time, but is still open-ended.

Returning to the series of prize-winning structuralist projects which led up to the Bank

63 NAK, no.156, p. 10.

64 NAK, no.156, p. 12.

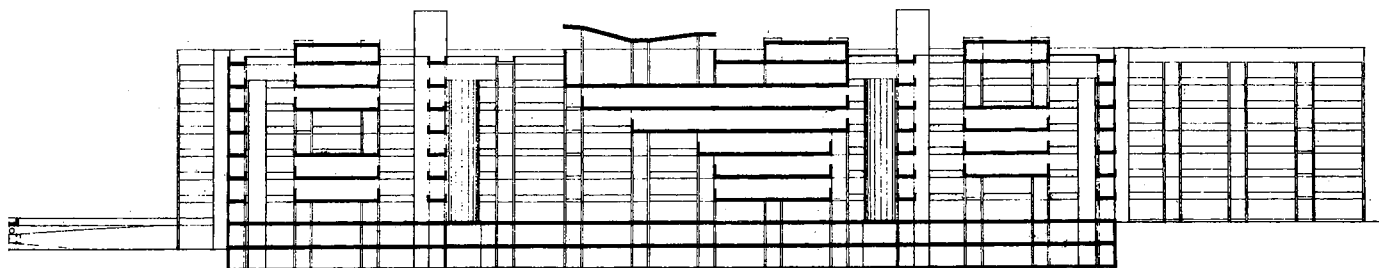
65 NAK, no.156, p. 12.

66 NAK, no.156, p. 5.

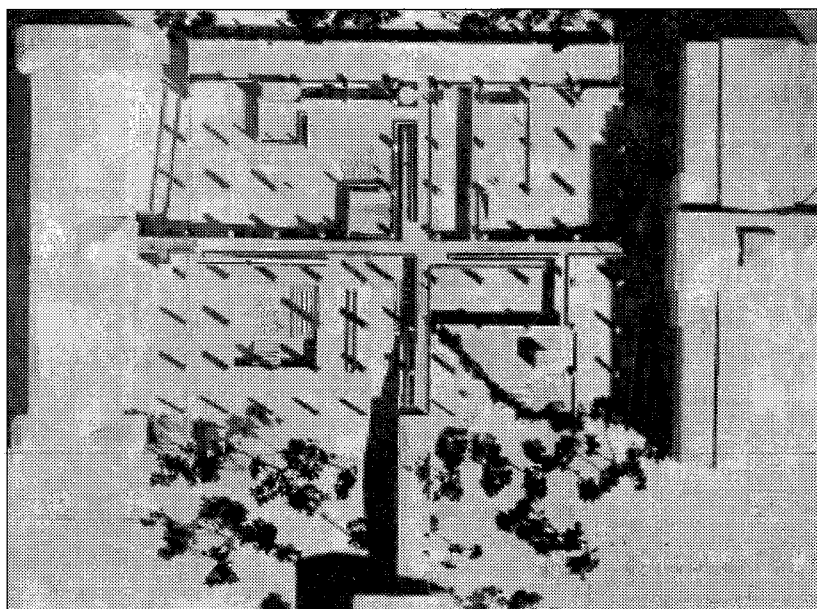
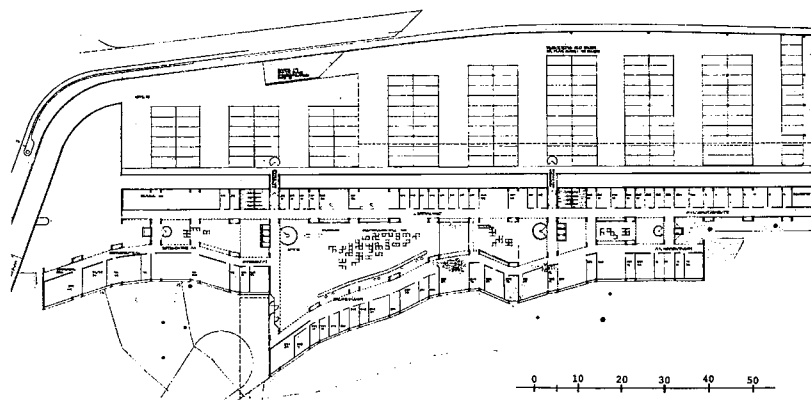
67 Alison & Peter Smithson, *Without Rhetoric - An Architectural Aesthetic 1955-1972*, (London, 1973), pp. 29-42.

68 Bjørn Larsen, '15 år etter - en samtale med Per Knudsen', *BK*, 76, no. 3, (1994), p. 173. The editor erroneously states that this competition project represented a breakaway from the earlier conceptions of organizing university complexes (Miesian free-standing pavilions). As we have seen such a breakaway in Norway had already appeared in the competition for University of Oslo in 1968.

69 NAK, no. 183, (1974), pp. 25-27.



of Norway, one finds that Permanenten and the University of Oslo projects display diverse types of unit: a hierarchy of different rectangular and square units. Thus the construction patterns of these designs appear with a certain degree of dynamic and playful informality. The sketchy plan of the University of Oslo shows an attempt at spatial formation (the tiering of the floor) acting independently of the load-bearing system, and in Permanenten the large ramps with the high showcases create a grand spatial movement that transcends the 'scaffolding' system. Similarly the large glass-covered internal passages in Henning Larsen's 1st prize project for the University of Trondheim in 1972 create a spatial hierarchy that surpasses the repetitive order of the construction unit.⁶⁸ Perhaps the most tectonically elegant combination of 'structuralist' order and unique configuration is composed in the purchased project motto '10001' in the competition for Tullinløkka: communication spaces (I am referring particularly to the sloping bridges and ramps) introduce a well-defined, grand order which is superimposed on and embraces the repetitive spaces (fig. 67).⁶⁹



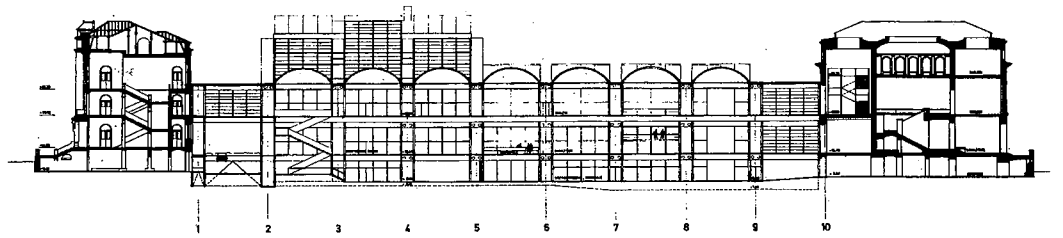
The successive winning designs of Tullinløkka, the National Theatre and the Bank of Norway clearly manifest repetitive spatial systems fully developed and worked out with exceptional consistency. Moreover, these projects do so by employing repetitive structuring in a certain manner which firstly implies strictly square grids, thus indicating a tectonic *equivalence* of the two directions, and secondly by strongly *subordinating* the modifications and variations to the primary system. The effect of the primary system can be further reinforced, as in Tullinløkka, where the quadruple columns in a 2.30 x 2.30m formation and the corresponding beams create a 'thickness' of the grid, an intermediate zone. Here the spatial openness

appears convincingly in the plan as it is easier to illustrate continuous spaces in an exhibition building than in a bank office complex, but the photograph of the model shows how the dominance of the primary system influences the freedom in practice (figs. 68 and 69). Thus the typical tectonic style in these projects appears exceptionally consistent and harmonious; harmonious in the sense of possessing a certain firmness, simplicity and calm homogeneity. The spaces are sensible, adaptable and practical, they may be built with aesthetic refinement and material solidity; a liberal, egalitarian architecture which renounces any disso-

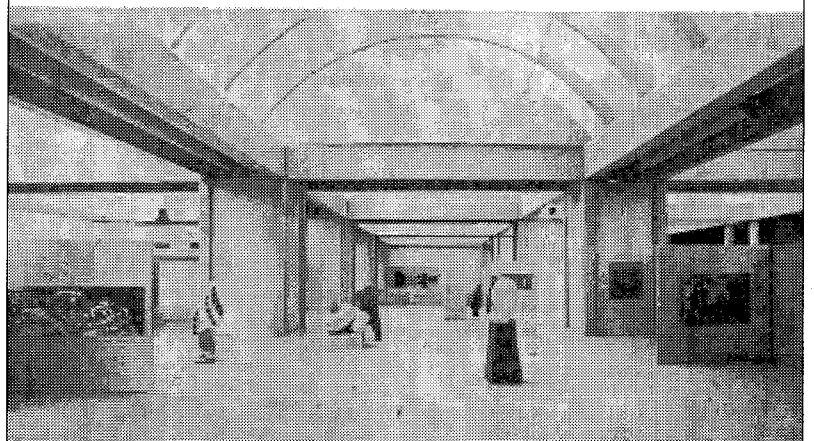
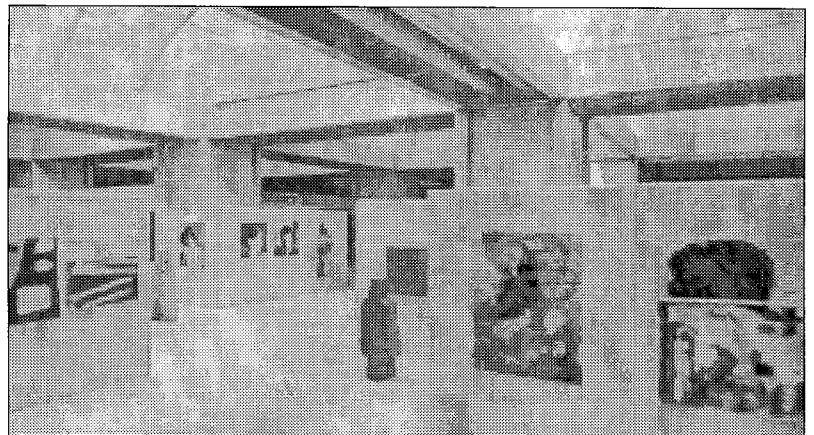
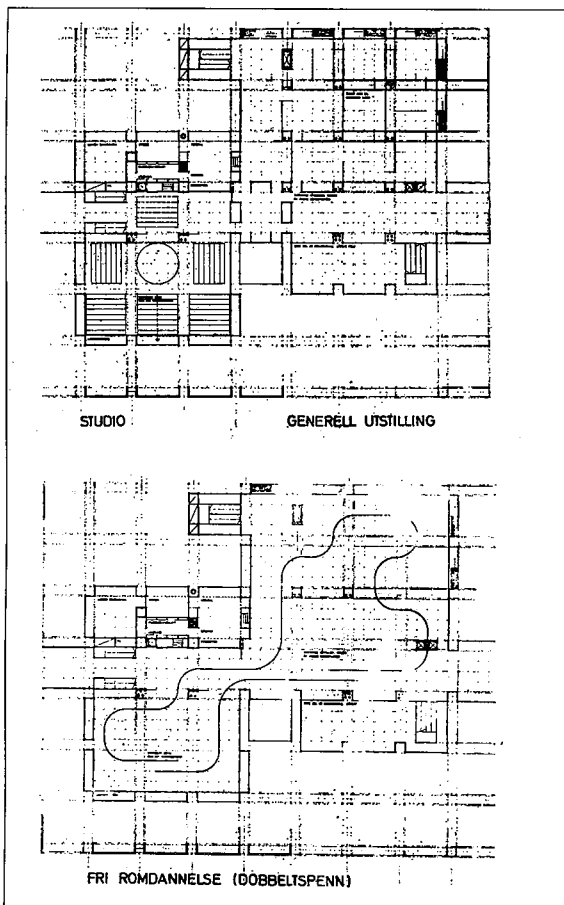
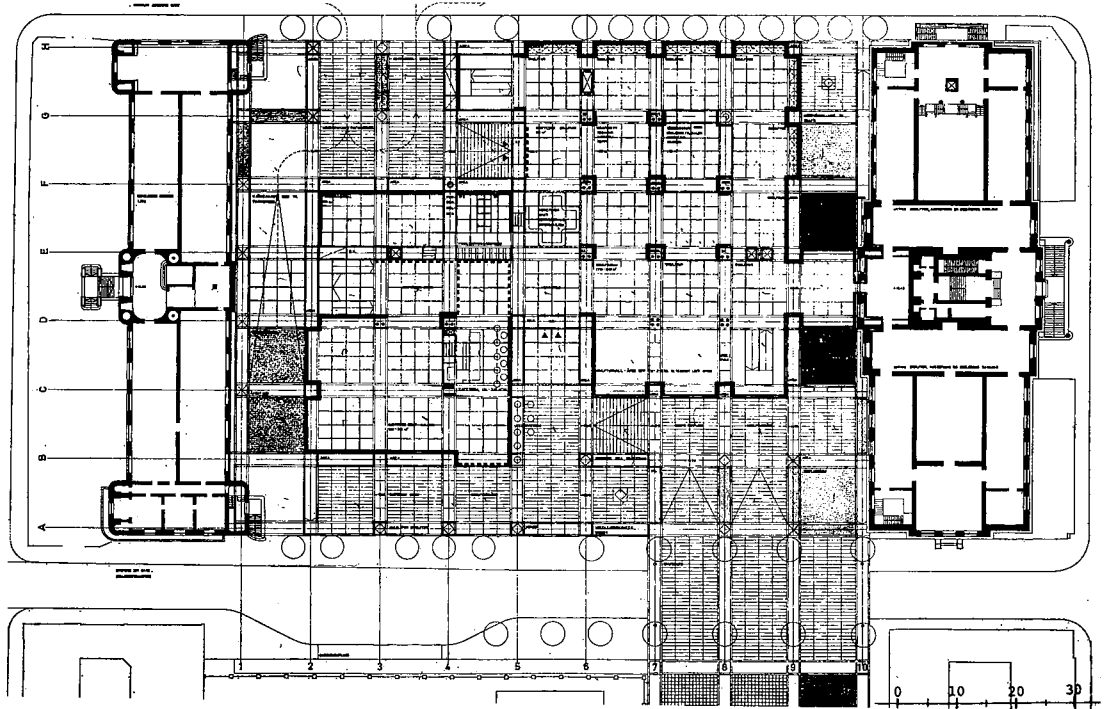
66. (ABOVE) OSLO POLICE HEADQUARTERS, MOTTO '7.62', GROUND FLOOR PLAN, SECTION

67. TULLINLØKKA, PURCHASED PROJECT, MOTTO '10001', MODEL

68. TULLINLØKKA, 1ST PRIZE,
GROUND FLOOR PLAN,
SECTION



69. (BELOW) TULLINLØKKA,
1ST PRIZE PROJECT, PLAN ILLU-
STRATIONS, INTERIOR MODEL



nant or transcendent elements that could disturb the simple equilibrium.

Spatial monopoly and system-centric growth

Dismantling the architecture and reducing it to its bare structures was intended to embrace the complexity, changeability and unpredictability of life that were acknowledged. But in the struggle towards human inclusiveness and equivalence the structural systems themselves became very powerful; powerful in terms of imposing order and regularity on the spaces, and powerful in their aesthetic dominance. Implicit in human tolerance and the endeavour for democratic and equivalent architecture was indeed a strongly *monopolistic* aesthetic. Not only were the constructions limited to a few standardized components, but the principle was designed to allow gross expansion, for a 'self-generating' endless growth of identical units. The low constructions of the University of Oslo, for instance, laid out on the map cover a huge area (from Blindern to Kringsjå) when compared to the existing built environment in Oslo, with one identical and in principle continuous structure. The jury appreciated the *unity* that could be achieved in the huge university complex, and remarked that its 'inner structural system' could remain even though the original standardized components were likely to have gone out of production, in the event of future extension in correspondence with the master plan.⁷⁰

Recently the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Education presented the preliminary brief for a new architectural competition for the two museums in Tullinløkka in 1995, arguing that 'the project from 1972 was a child of its time aiming for a far more extensive development than we are planning today. . . I [Kleveland, the Minister of Culture] assume that more than half of the site will be open public space'.⁷¹ This statement aroused my curiosity as it rhetorically implies that the new programme is modest and small in comparison with the former, which was never realized. I expected to find that the 1st prize project of 1972 would be considerably larger than the new plan which presupposes 18,000 m², 8,000 of which are to be above the ground on the

8,500 m² site. It turns out that the 1st prize project in the competition in 1972 consists of altogether 18,080 m².⁷² Roughly 9,500 m² of this space is above the ground, and the building covers approximately 4,500 m² of ground, which is slightly more than half of the site. The minister's statement is thus misleading; the difference is not that great.

Nevertheless, there are two ideological aspects which can explain this notion, this rhetoric. Firstly, the idea of 'general spaces' which could be used for a variety of purposes was strongly prevalent in the early 1970s. In order to accommodate the desired flexibility, the general idea of providing daylight to all spaces which were not by definition 'dark' (car parking, magazines, auditoria) was important. The demand for good accessibility coincides with this; the spaces were conceived as a continuation of the public street floor, they were characterized by horizontal continuity and 'transparency', plainly arranged above the ground.

Moreover, the problem of open urban spaces in relation to indoor spaces (or 'buildings' as they are usually called when perceived from the outside) was not as articulate in 1972 as today, both within the profession and in society at large. Actually, the sensitivity of this issue was slowly growing in 1972, as the realizations of a series of urban projects were cancelled on this account (see chapter VI), but the hegemonic architectural principles were far too 'internal-system-centric' to respond to an awareness on this point. Thus, the outdoor spaces in the 1st prize design for Tullinløkka 1972 take the form of various voids surrounding the actual building masses which, as in several other of the submissions, are organized along the central axes of the site. Note, however, that the modular pattern of the construction system is continued outdoors, 'superimposing' its order on the pavement far outside the building; it is almost as if there were no walls, this system extends to include the entire site and across the street to 'invade' the old university complex. As in the 1st prize project for the Bank of Norway, mentioned in chapter VI, this graphic method rhetorically underlines adaptation to and coherence with the existing buildings by stressing the common outdoor area. At the

70 NAK, no. 156, p. 4.

71 Åshild Breian, 'Tullinløkka: Arkitektteveling på nyåret, *Aftenposten aftennummer*, 14 December 1994, p. 6. See also Margareth B. Bentsen, 'Park og nybygg på Tullinløkka', *Uniforum*, vol. 8, no. 20, (1994), p. 1, and Elisabeth Tostrup, 'Retoriske opptakter på Tullinløkka', *kronikk*, *Aftenposten*, 26 February 1995.

72 NAK, no. 183, p. 10.

same time the graphic represents a type of spatial 'imperialism' from the point of view of the new structure. Hence, when the two ministers now suggest that a large part of the space at Tullinløkka can be accommodated underground (as has been done in the Louvre Extension in Paris), the real point is not the alleged smaller size of the museum building, but a different attitude with respect to the use of underground spaces and to outdoor urban spaces as well.

This incident, however, illustrates the need of the ministers and architects involved in promoting the new competition, to employ a rhetoric that can oppose the hegemonic architecture of 20 years ago. That type of architecture provided the spatial adaptability and flexibility which responded to a broad emancipation with respect to use and organization of activities in all fields. (For example women's liberation, liberalization within psychiatry, education and the prison services.) In its best built examples, in which the basic principles are executed with sensitivity and modulation, this type of architecture displays refined and well-functioning buildings: Lund & Slaatto's Veritas complex outside Oslo, Henning Larsen's University of Trondheim, and more inclusively varied examples of repetitive structures such as Utzon's projects and Louis Kahn's Kimbell Art Museum in Texas. But, in pursuing and extending the *plan libre* principle dogmatically centred on the inner structural system and system standardization, this architecture exaggerated technocratic efficiency and belief in progress; it became the embodiment of potentially endless and uniform horizontal expansion.⁷³

SOPHISTICATED SPACES OF THE 1980s

The spaces of the competitions of the 1980s are marked by *tectonic diversity*. Regular post-and-lintel structural systems are taken for granted as a means to create open spaces which are juxtaposed with more solid, 'permanent-looking' and figurative spatial arrangements. In the Bank of Norway and the University of Oslo, the *organization of people* and use functions could be complex, but the spatial features were plain and homogeneous. Now the spatial

compositions become more complex in terms of featuring *different tectonic principles* in one building complex.

Tectonic complexity and practical priorities in Soria Moria

As mentioned in chapter VI, the conglomerate type of design appeared in the Soria Moria 1st prize project in 1978 in which the contrast between the orthogonal geometry and the irregular sculptural shapes is a major feature (fig. 70). Four wings containing various rooms surround a spacious inner square; a high-ceilinged space with round columns in a square grid. Skylights highlight the galleries which give access to the rooms in the wings above. Three different free-standing, rounded volumes are placed in the square; their conic shapes rise through the roof to be crowned at the top with glass bringing the light into their unique, irregular spaces. Because their outer shapes can be distinguished so clearly in the open void these shapes resemble houses inside the house; like a Chinese puzzle. But the apparent consistency is broken as the inner shapes hatch their way out into the light through the 'shell' in an irregular manner.

Meeting rooms, dining rooms and lounges are situated facing the panorama view of the fjord, the town and the faraway hills. The diagonal movement from the entrance through the central space to the conservatory on the bottom floor in the opposite corner yields an overall overview and at the same time connects the different 'attractions' in a pleasant and perceptible manner. Nevertheless, the architectural *richness* in this project is executed within a simple geometric order which unifies the different elements within *one totality*, one unity: a cubic complex with a communal central space. There is a complementary interplay between ordinary and extraordinary spaces; between low and high spaces; between introvert and extrovert spatial situations. This variety is important not only from an architectural point of view but also from a *socio-spatial* one: the guest rooms are well accommodated, they are easily reached but not without passing through the central core of communal activity. Neither the individual rooms nor the communal rooms have been given exclusive benefit of sun and

⁷³ A similar 'overall expansion' principle is described by Benum as 'the landscape of the fork-lift truck' (*gaffeltruckens landskap*); buildings for industrial purposes were established in the periphery of the city where large available sites could meet the demand for large, continuous horizontal floors. Benum, pp. 75-103.

⁷⁴ *NAK*, no. 215, (1978), p. 30.

the view, leaving the other to the dark interior; bedrooms, lounges and the ordinary meeting rooms are all placed next to the façade and arranged with special care to achieve the optimal exploitation of location and use. They are not dramatically separated, nor ambiguously mingled (as in the Bank of Norway), but arranged with a sensibility that pays respect to the private and the public elements. *Spatial equivalence* is not a matter of providing identical spaces for various purposes; but equivalence emerges as a reciprocal interrelationship between spaces which each have a certain degree of individual specificity responding to their primary purpose.

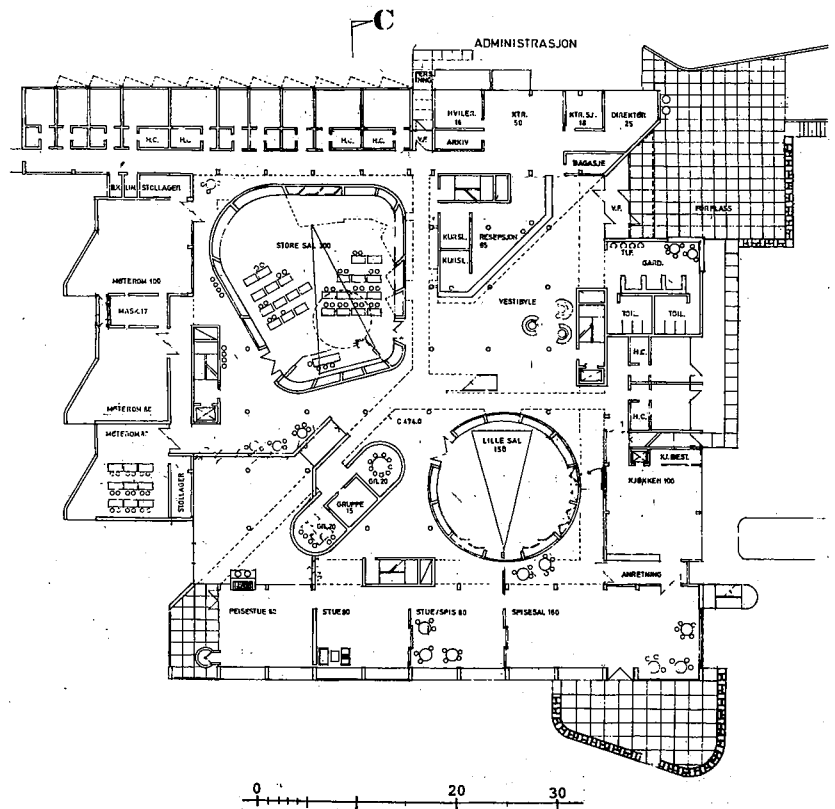
The competition brief does not indicate the spatial qualities described above; in its straightforward manner it emphasizes the *practical* aspects:

It is important that the plan yields rational and good communication lines within each department (education, residences and kitchen-dining hall) and between the departments. In every way the building complex is expected to provide possibilities for an efficient and pleasant environment for work and education.⁷⁴

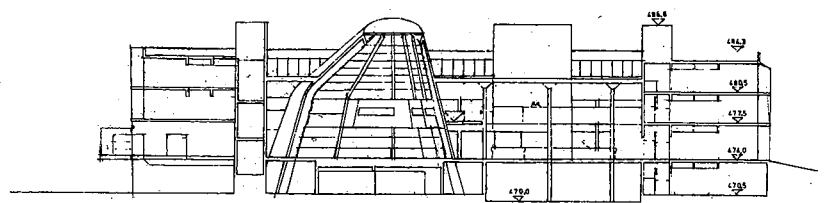
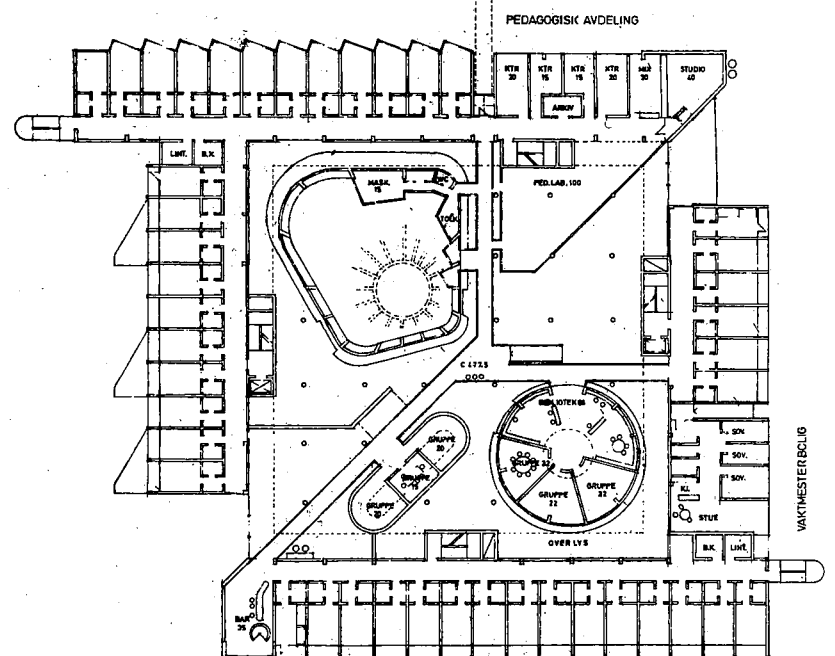
As the needs of the different departments are outlined, the aspect of *supervision* is specifically mentioned:

The lobby containing the reception area is the central part of the complex and must be located and designed in order to achieve optimal possibility for control and surveillance as well as good connections to the different departments. It must be spacious and allow for various arrangements of the furnishings and should be able to act as an extension to the lounges, for instance for serving coffee after dinner.⁷⁵

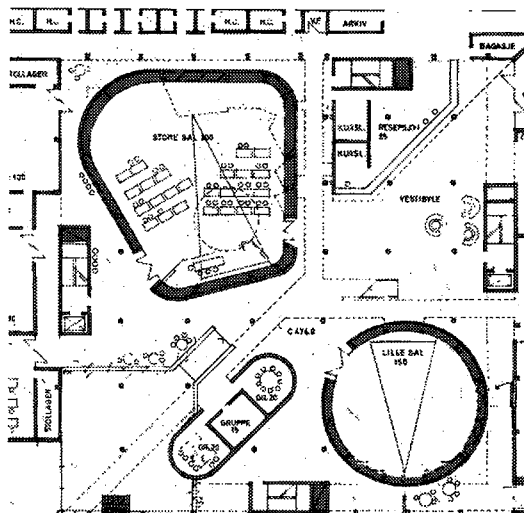
This emphasis on a practical building together with the regard for preserving the external environment, the forest, necessitated in the winner's opinion a *concentrated* building complex. The most controversial element is the central space which the author describes in his report, more rhetorically, as an inner *space landscape*:



70. SORIA MORIA, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, GROUND FLOOR AND FIRST FLOOR PLANS, SECTION



71. SORIA MORIA PLAN WITH FILLED-IN CONSTRUCTIONS AND SPATIAL BOUNDARIES



Through the inner space landscape one wishes to create [a sense of] intimacy and closeness as a conscious contrast to the tremendous view which totally dominates the outer situation. In this manner one is able to enjoy the panorama view and simultaneously have the possibility to draw inwards to the quiet corners and short lines of vision. The quality of the inner landscape is enhanced by the conservatory which can bring a life-giving impulse to the complex during long winter months.⁷⁶

The jury doubted the value of this inner landscape, and suggested that it be partially converted into an open courtyard; a more traditional solution.

Rhetorical matter-of-factness

In this competition practical aspects and aesthetic aspects are considered with great specificity and concern for the different types of space. The various aspects are confronted and balanced differently from in the Bank of Norway project which focused on the 'abstract' location of activities in relation to each other on the one hand, and the specific design of the 'universal' construction system on the other. Here, even the more suggestive statements such as 'intimacy', 'closeness' and 'tremendous view' are directly related to concrete spatial situations. The *graphic realism* and *concreteness* of the drawings almost make the project appear dull: no quality is emphasized at the expense of another; abstract guidelines are absent, and the actual spaces can be easily imagined from the

drawn walls and the tentative furnishings. Moreover the hatching of the terraces with their rough rubblework parapets indicates the connection to the terrain, and yields points of spatial reference and orientation.

Thus, by 'moving around' in the building as it is prefigured, social and practical implications can be readily preconceived in the distinct tectonic setting; a setting which can be altered, which can accommodate considerable multi-purpose uses and informal interaction, but which also possesses a definite spatial character. A typical feature, here, is the disparity or the contrast between inwardness and outwardness, between open and closed, large and small, and between straight and curved forms. It is on this point that the graphic representation, which I appreciate for its straightforwardness, actually *understates the intensity* of spatial contrasts and diversity: the drawn lines in the plan, however accurate they are, do not fully visualize the density and dominance of its three-dimensional reality. This is an implicit problem of orthogonal projections due to the two-dimensional representation principle: it necessitates spatial thinking, and perhaps further visualization, to imagine the solid round columns which are represented as thin circles on the plan drawing. The bridges in the first floor together with the four vertical shafts by the galleries and the numerous columns, tend to dominate the inner space and thus weaken the aesthetic effect of the large curved volumes and the spatial tranquillity and dignity that is inherent in the concept. In figure 71, I have filled in the structural cross sections and closed parts to illustrate the prefigured 'materiality' more substantially; a three-dimensional model or an axonometric perspective would have supplemented the visualization on this point.

After Soria Moria, other competitions followed in which compounds of different tectonic principles were applied, for example in the Health and Service Centre for the Disabled, 1982, and the Norwegian State College of Music, 1985 (fig. 72). A typical feature is the juxtaposition of more traditional constructions containing closed, individual rooms and larger, collective spaces; the collective spaces tend to be open, connecting different 'attractions' such as coffee

75 NAK, no. 215, p. 31.

76 NAK, no. 215, p. 5.

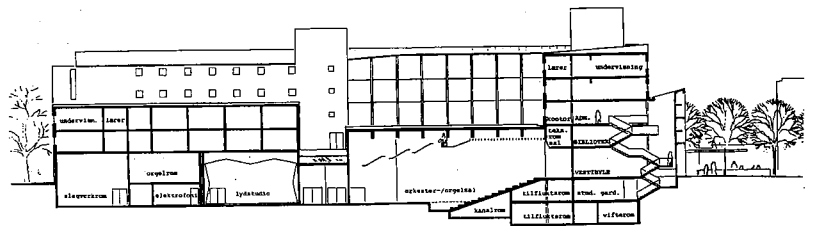
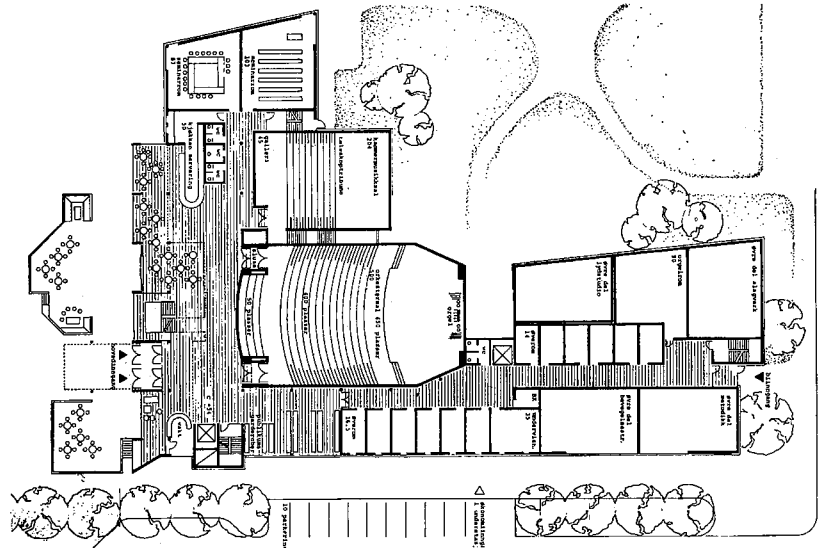
bars, lounges and reading rooms with an extended lobby, often in a high-ceilinged space including several storeys, and with glass walls and roofs in contrast to the more traditional solid constructions.

Compared with Soria Moria, the prize-winning designs of these competitions are less distinct, less elegant as architectural compositions. With the exception of motto 'Repro Reppen' in the Health Centre competition, they generally appear more arbitrary with the volumes broken down and the overall order dissolved. The compound of open collective spaces and traditional constructions is typical for a number of buildings erected in Norway during the 1980s, such as administration complexes, shopping centres and various public institutions.

The *vertical* differentiation of the inner spaces that became typical in the competitions in this period, as shown in the College of Music, firstly and most significantly (after the suggestion in the Concert Hall project) appeared in the shared-prize project motto '7.62' in the competition for the Oslo Police Headquarters in 1967 (figure above). Designed by the architects who later won the competition for the Soria Moria centre, this project employs the large and lofty central space, the lobby, as an integral part of a structuralist design; a contrast to the more conglomerate solutions of the 1980s.

Spatial and technological sophistications at Aker Brygge

In the Aker Brygge Aqua-Leisure Centre competition in 1987 spatial variation and sophistication are further developed; the 1st and the 3rd prize designs feature two fundamentally different trends in this respect. In the 1st prize design, motto '36644', the idea of open, continuous space, held within a plain, box-like shape, which had developed since the 1950s is dominant. However, here it is highly refined and differentiated. The conglomerate aspect appears in the contrast between the plain and rigid enclosure and the different forms in the interior. The idea of an inner *landscape* mentioned by the author of Soria Moria, is here more figuratively recreated as the curved and rectilinear contours form a continuous, undu-



lating 'floor-scape' in which pools and places for circulation, rest and refreshments, are arranged on different levels (fig. 73). In the words of the jury:

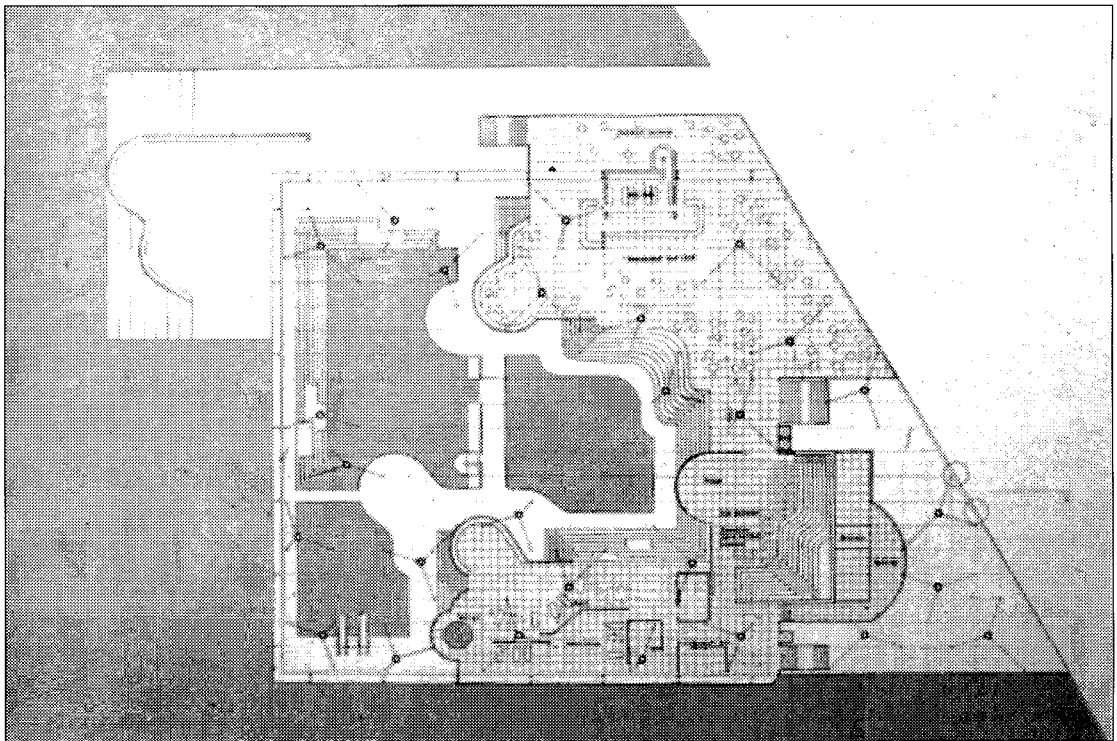
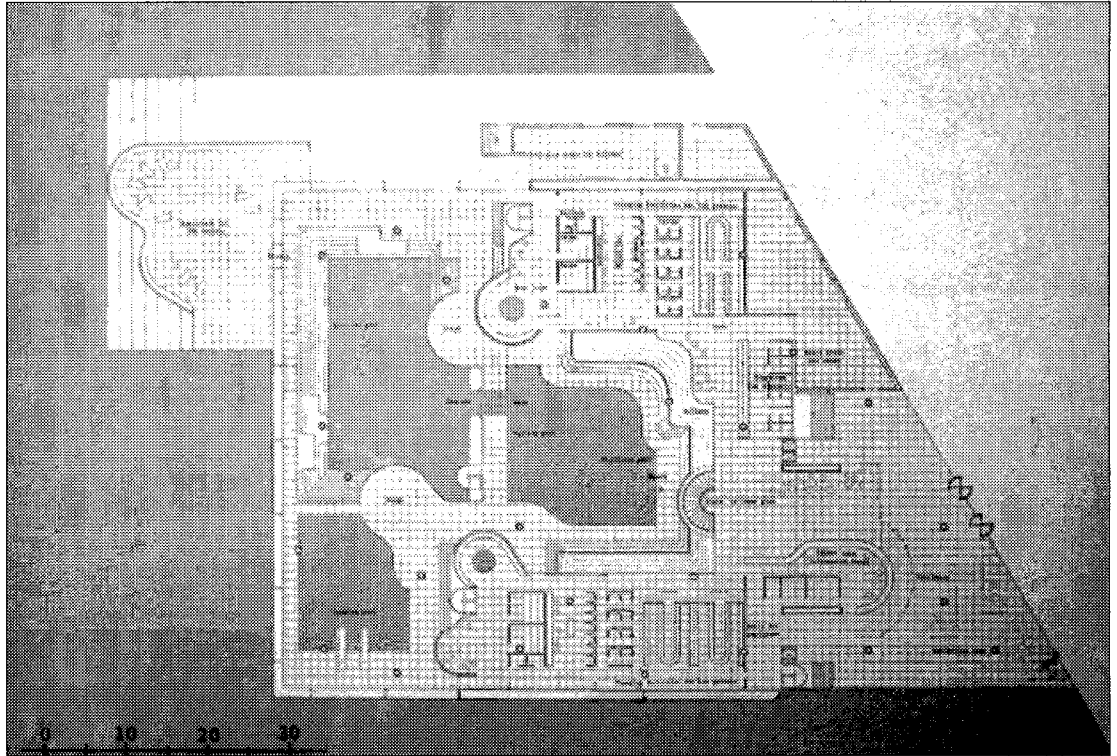
72. THE STATE COLLEGE OF MUSIC, WINNING PROJECT, GROUND FLOOR PLAN, SECTION

Arriving directly from the edge of the quay one enters a spacious lobby and overlooks the bathing area which unfolds itself freely with its well-considered curves, within the strict limitation of the building. From this main entrance level the bathing level lies below and the restaurant level above as curved balconies around the bathing complex. Gradins for spectators connect the different levels and slope like rhythmical cascades down towards the bathing area.⁷⁷

This floor-scape is quite ingeniously designed with respect to exploitation of the vertical dimension: the different types of space are segregated by way of different floor levels rather than walls. Thus refreshment bars, restaurant and pools are spatially connected; it is rather like being situated in different places on a sloping hill: all the places on the 'ground' level (up or down) are connected as they face the same open void; they can be next to each other, but still accessibility and visual contact are controlled by the contours of the landscape.

77 NAK, no. 277, p. 4.

73. AKER BRYGGE, BATHS, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, TWO PLANS, SECTION, MODEL (SEE ALSO NEXT PAGE)



The roof that encloses this 'floor-scape' in one continuous void is an umbrella structure, borne by large, round columns which are placed rather freely where they do not impede the furnishing nor the circulation of people. As a higher ceiling is needed for artistic performances at the uppermost level, the umbrella structure simply lifts the roof a little higher and forms a local dome. The tall columns and the umbrella struts,

between which plants are intended to grow, yield a unique spatial character; repeated as free-standing 'identification marks' they have an aesthetically unifying effect throughout the entire baths. This situation reminds me of the Villa Doria Pamphili in Rome: a large public park which appears curiously disordered with its mixture of 'informal nature' and formal fragments such as classical buildings, fountains,

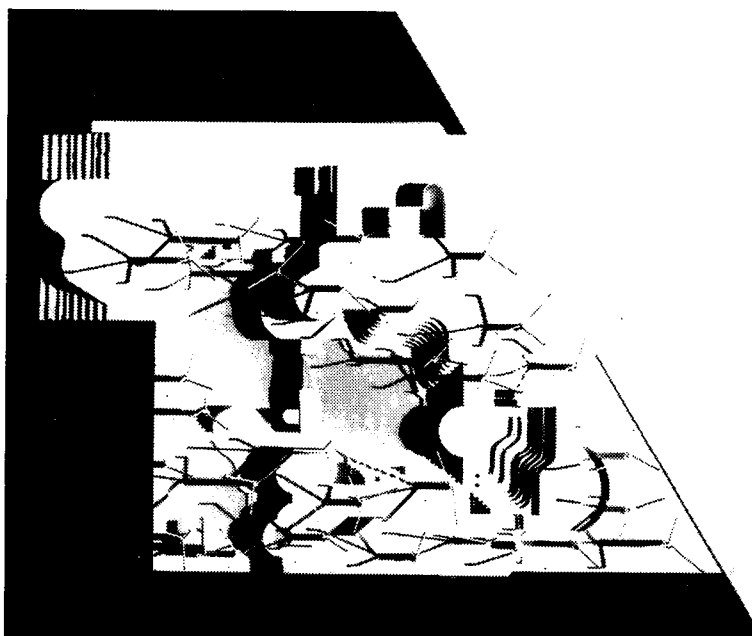
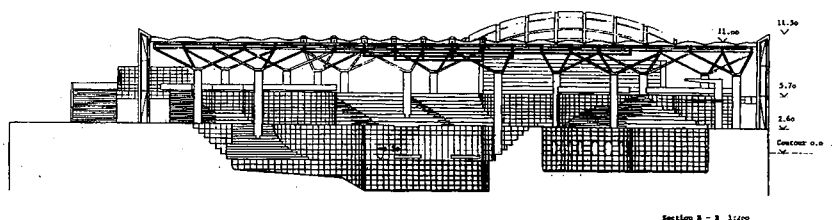
sculptures and geometric gardens scattered here and there in the softly undulating landscape. There, the many huge umbrella pine trees which spread out their large green crowns like a more or less continuous tissue constitute a dominating feature, an element which together with the green grass serves as a distinctive unifying reference to the various oddities. Similarly, in the baths the *ground* and *roof* (with its stout, supporting columns) are architecturally underlined, the two kinds of structure which unfold the 'horizontal' continuum in-between. Enclosed by huge glass walls, in a strictly simple box-like shape, the *openness* and *transparency* of the baths appears to be endlessly extended (figs. 74 and 75).

In both the 1st prize project for Soria Moria and the Aker Brygge baths, the new tendency towards figurative architecture manifests itself in the structure of the internal spaces which appear tectonically rich and varied in contrast to the calm and cubic outer shapes. Moreover, the Aker Brygge baths project continues and refines the tradition of cultivating the structural systems as shown in the roof structure and the outer walls. The postulates of flexibility and changeability of the 1960s and early 1970s however seem exaggerated as one regards the tectonic uniformity that followed, and desires for spatial openness and coherence can be adequately solved by more differentiated designs.

Usage as a new lifestyle

The text in the competition publication of the Aqua-Leisure Centre is brief, only excerpts of the jury's general remarks and the individual criticism of the prize-winning projects are included.⁷⁸ Conceptions of the *use* of the baths, however, are indicated in the general remarks:

The third-generation baths is intended to include a wide range of bathing facilities with corresponding connected activities. The baths then addresses itself to a public ranging from small children to the elderly and pensioners. Bathing is connected with joy. It represents a cleansing of body and soul, which is experienced as pleasurable whether it takes place in the sauna, in swimming pools, on vacation in Southern climes,



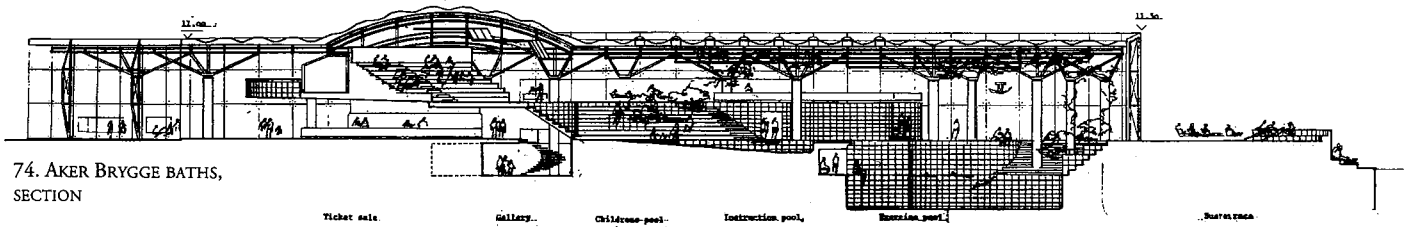
or in the short Nordic summer. . . From the bathing institutions, in which the chief purpose was cleansing, several types of baths were developed with stronger emphasis on sport and swimming, to the third-generation baths, which includes a wider range of bathing activities in addition to body care and recreation in soft surroundings.⁷⁹

Not only bathing and body care were intended as activities, but also concerts and other kinds of performances requiring the widest possible field of use were to be held in the aqua-leisure centre; an audience of up to 1,800 people was prescribed in the brief. Many of the competitors struggled with this demanding combination, and proposals for various devices for arranging concerts for large audiences in the pool areas were invented. During the assessment, however, the jury moderated the requirements; it concluded that the bathing facilities constituted the overriding purpose, and praised solutions such as the 1st prize design in which

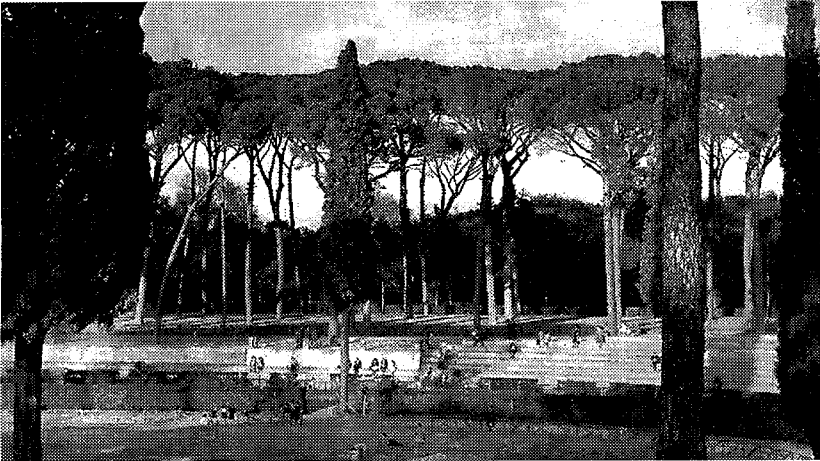
stage platforms, as extensions of the pool edges, are located in several places, and a

78 Since the late 1970s the publications have tended to include less text, omitting the author's report and the brief. Vaterland and Grønland Market is an exception in which large parts of the author's description were reproduced.

79 NAK, no. 277, p. 3.

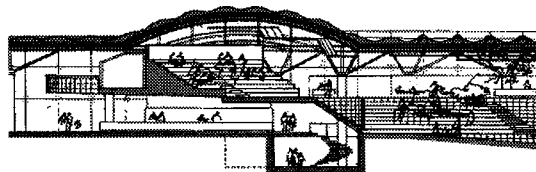
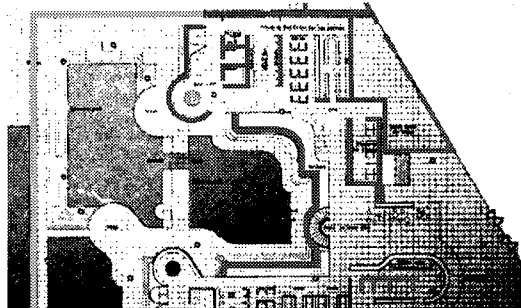


74. AKER BRYGGE BATHS, SECTION



75. ROMAN UMBRELLA PINES

76. AKER BRYGGE BATHS, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, SPATIAL BOUNDARIES MARKED



tion took their teeth-losing daughters to learn how to swim, hushing their voices in front of the lifeguards. In the Aker Brygge project, the association to the open landscape is relevant: one thinks of public parks, public beaches, places by the sea where people picnic and enjoy diverse activities in informal coexistence as a 'big, happy family'. Recreating an atmosphere similar to the open-air vivacity in a limited indoor space could be disastrously noisy and crowded. Attempts to counteract this were made by the means of the curving contours which form local, relatively protected places within the open complex. Moreover, private activities are discreetly hidden behind screens, or sheltered underneath the open floor-scape, 'burrowed into the ground', such as the changing rooms, showers and saunas. This segregation of open, public functions and private, more sheltered functions enables a facile circulation of people between the different facilities all while the 'floor-scape' continues above and connects the entire complex in seemingly one space; the house is perceived by the jury as

a living organism with visible functions behind glass walls (my italics).⁸²

Rhetorical intricacy and charm

If one was able to hover like a bird around the umbrella struts beneath the ceiling, one could perhaps experience the baths in accordance with the jury's description and the image that is emphasized by the visual rhetoric: one would be able to perceive the surface of the 'floor-scape' and the open space that it delimits; one would see the very concrete, detailed elaboration of pools, benches, waterfalls and green plants. Notwithstanding, the jury's statement that one has a view of the baths 'which freely unfolds itself' from the lobby, is simply not the case; one has to climb a staircase up one storey to the restaurant to achieve this. Entering from the lobby, one passes the ticket desk, turns left

separate, closed room for 400 people is situated in connection with the restaurant.⁸⁰

The use of the building is described in terms of a new *lifestyle*. A typical feature is the breaking down of boundaries and segregation; between generations and genders, between specific activities and recreation. By including eating, drinking and artistic performances in the same place, the baths seemingly takes on a character of a fairground.⁸¹

This is not a baths of former times like the intimate, 'secret' pool of the early functionalist Vestkantbadet where mothers, in naked discre-

80 NAK, no. 277, p. 4.

81 The English version of the brief employed the term 'aqua-leisure centre' which covers the content better than the traditional Norwegian *badehus* (bathing house). This divergence also expresses the dilemma of the task, the conflict between providing a baths and a multi-purpose performance/concert hall.

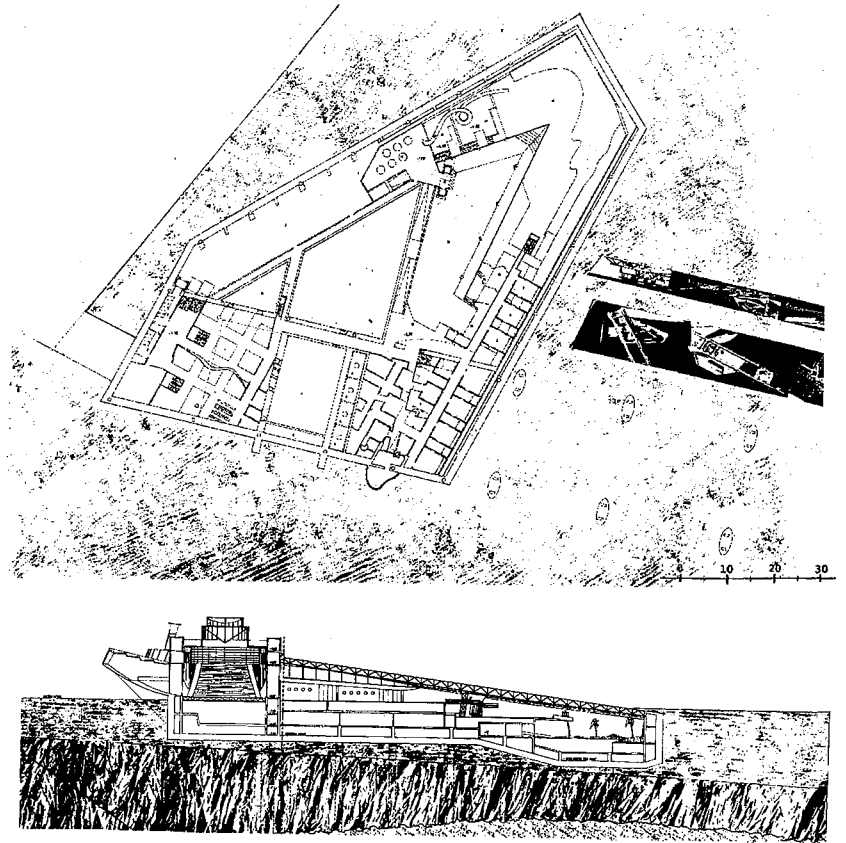
82 NAK, no. 277, p. 3.

or right to the changing rooms or continues straight ahead to the staircase leading down to the changing rooms on the lower level. It is here that, instead of overlooking the bathing landscape, one looks straight at the underside structures of the tiered floor; a solid sloping wall connecting to an 'underground' corridor on the lower level, which one can see from the railing by the narrow well on the ground floor.

This is a totally different situation, but a situation which is not immediately clear from the verbal or visual representations. The drawings give distinct priority to the ideas of transparency and *continuous openness*. The main floor plan is correctly drawn as it shows the arrangement of spaces on that particular level. But the visual unity of floor tiling, emphasized by the hatching, creates an image of spatial continuity that strongly overrides the effect of the vertical barrier. Similarly the section drawings emphasize the continuity of spaces and obscure the barriers. In comparison, figure 76, in which I have filled in the structures, illustrates more adequately the actual spatial barriers that are proposed, and also indicates the thickness of the outer glass walls.

The bathing 'landscape' actually consists of two worlds or two spatial entities: one is the lobby which faces towards the public life on the waterfront and gives access to the changing rooms, and the other is the baths which addresses the fjord. These two worlds, these separate 'valleys', meet on top of the 'floor-scape' ridge, and they can be connected through the 'underground' changing rooms. In my opinion, this differentiation of the two 'worlds' is a feature that distinguishes the project and highly contributes to its attractiveness: the bathing situation would simply benefit from being protected from the roughness of urban street life.

When this differentiation is subdued in the presentation it is symptomatic of the persistent tendency to 'dissolve' space, to pretend there is horizontal open continuity beyond what is actually there, beyond what is possible and even beyond what is desirable. But, the ideology of open space rhetorically expressed in this manner provides an explanation: it explains that the emphatic concern with the formations



77. AKER BRYGGE BATHS, 3RD PRIZE PROJECT, PLAN, SECTION

of the inner space convinces us of an outstanding bathing complex – as it did both the jury and the author. Moreover, it explains that it is possible to be captivated by the exquisite tectonic construction as experienced in the interior, to such an extent that one overlooks the impact the building will have in the external environment.

Introverted polygonal spaces

The 3rd prize project motto '88888' displays totally different spatial priorities: there is no uniform structure; various rectilinear and circular geometric systems are juxtaposed within a pentagonal complex in line with the deconstructivist principles of architecture. The complex is *introverted* and largely submerged in the harbour basin, and only portholes and a few large window openings communicate with the surroundings. Nevertheless, the entire pool area is visually open to the sky through a glass roof which slopes down into the water. The baths is a sophisticated creation which, once you have left the shore behind, encloses you and all the other guests and employees in a huge, isolated, partially submarine structure. Granted that the technical problems were overcome, however, the solution can be contested

from an aesthetic-emotional point of view: the experience of swimming in an underwater pool with the waves of the harbour basin, polluted by oil from ferry boats and so on, washing over the glass roof above your head, may not be the most attractive solution after all (fig. 77).

The specific spatial elaboration is just what makes this project so typical of the late 1980s. We saw in the Soria Moria project, 1978, a new richness in forms and figurations, of individually shaped spaces rather than open ambiguous spaces. Here in motto '88888', overall geometric simplicity and regularity are abandoned; the drawings display a collage of different geometric systems irregularly juxtaposed. The intuitively perceived dynamic of obliqueness, curves and linearity seems to rule this intricate spatial complex in which small odd rooms, straight corridors and large collective spaces are all constituents. Figurative spatial arrangements are not only confined to the interior of a plain, simple shape but characterize the total architectural composition.

Graphically the unconventional shapes of motto '88888', i.e. of the actual building, are represented with extremely precise and almost dry drawings, which are traditional in the sense that they show the concrete spatial layout; no obscure abstract guidelines or shades disturb the actual tectonic arrangement. However, in the representation the surrounding water is disturbed by a dramatic graphic pattern and collage miniatures of various photographs of the model have been superimposed onto the drawings. The visual picture is confusing: abstract and illusive objects not belonging to the physical reality that is represented, interfere and become visually more distinct and dramatic than the building itself. Thus arranged, the building assumes perhaps a more sensible and straightforward character than is realistic.

As the winning design shows the hegemonic tradition of spatial homogeneity and openness brought to a high degree of aesthetic refinement and technical sophistication, the 3rd prize design represents new spatial principles. Its architecture breaks away from the dominating rectangular geometry and the principle of open spatial unity, and features spaces with more closed walls, or more solid enclosures,

arranged in a complex of expressive forms which are delineated by a superimposition of multiple geometric systems.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In contrast to the overall question of the 'new' versus the 'old', in which there was a distinct turning point in the development, the competition material shows a *steady and logical progress* with regard to the principles of *architectural space*. The spatial aspect is treated extensively in the texts as well as the design material. The early, simple geometry and orthogonal plans, with post-and-lintel structures and plain partitioning walls in narrow blocks, already contained the germs of the *spatial liberation* which were celebrated later as more comprehensive structural systems were developed for increasingly more compact and complex buildings. If there is one point of particular importance in this development, it is the emergence of open-space plans as shown in the Karl Johan *kvartalet* competition. The battle of preservation versus removal occurred at a point in time when the spatial or architectural principles, in accordance with the pursuit of their intrinsic logic, could be readily adapted to more piecemeal constructions. The tradition of cultivating and refining the structural systems continued, and the Aker Brygge baths project is an outstanding example of this as displayed in the roof structure and the outer walls.

The spatial differentiation and technological sophistication, typical of the 1980s as responses to greater requirements for plurality, are further steps in the same line of architectural development, and thus confirm the importance of the spatial problem as the focus and essential drive in architecture. In both the 1st prize project for Soria Moria and the Aker Brygge baths, the new tendency towards figurative architecture manifests itself primarily in the structure of the internal spaces which appear tectonically rich and varied in contrast to the calm and cubic outer shapes. The spaces seen as parts of a universal system designed for endless expansion are replaced with more definite, 'permanent' and complete spatial compositions. Thus 'cracks' in the Norwegian consensus also can be regarded

as indicative of cracks or doubts in the unanimous and firm belief in cultural progress.

As in chapter VI the verbal rhetoric addresses *broad issues* in society; issues that are approached with a 'slippery', ambiguous combination of conceptions of use and physical solutions. Firstly, the emphasis on correct daylight coincided with the current *hygiene* imperative. Then, the 'total spatial liberation', the 'increased richness' and 'flow' of people in 1962 set the tone for the rest of the period, as the *diversity* of urban life was increasingly influenced by the principles of consumerism, which were adapted to principally non-commercial purposes as well. Though subject to various, sometimes odd categorizations in today's view, the *egalitarian* principle is strongly implicit: it spans from the 'right' to equally good daylight, to equal access to choices among the multiple attractions that the buildings can offer. A particular feature here is the explicit priority of user influence and structural flexibility in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Considering the emphasis on spatial richness and diversity, the predominance of squareness and simple regularity in the spaces is remarkable. Qualities such as order, clarity and rational organization are recurrently mentioned; in a matter-of-fact manner they imply a set of underlying architectural principles of a practical as well as symbolic nature.

One aspect is distinctly favoured by the *visual rhetoric* throughout the period: the *open spatial continuity*. Walls and enclosures are left out or obscured in the visual representation, thus exaggerating the impression of unbounded *movement* and permeability. This transparency goes for the inner spaces as well as between inner and outer spaces. One utopia of this spatial idealization is urban life as a 'big happy family' in a flux of pluralistic consensus.

X

ORDER AND SPATIAL POETRY

There is a certain feature with regard to space and spatial organization in the hegemonic competition architecture which deserves further comments. This typical feature is the contrast between the simple, square and regular order of the prefigured spaces and the vividness and suggestive vagueness of the rhetorical advocacies which relate the design to ideas of meaning, life and use.

SIMPLE SPACES AND CONNECTING ARGUMENTS

Let us first take a look at the spaces. They are predominantly featured by simplicity of form and plain, regular geometry, most often orthogonal. A recurrent statement is that the spatial organization should be 'rational' and 'efficient'; 'clarity' and 'surveyability' are positive remarks. Nowhere are the opposite qualities encouraged such as for example that the spaces should be obscure or crooked, labyrinthine or secretive. Variety is praised, but subordinate to a clear order. Only the 1st prize design for Høvikodden art centre accommodated the desired clarity and order in a spatial organization based on an irregular, oblique geometry. Clarity and rationality represent a duality: on the one hand spaces that are easy to grasp and to orient oneself in provide the users with a feeling of security, coherence and social unity; on the other hand they favour control and surveillance in a more negative or oppressive sense.

The repertory of spatial forms in the winning competition designs is limited and in general loyal to the structural system. This enhances the impression of architectural purity and structural unity of the building, and allows

it to be perceived with an identity as a harmonious object in itself.

The predominant squareness and simplicity in the Oslo competitions naturally correspond to the rationality of the standardized building industry, of simplification of calculations and operations, and of the logic of post-and-lintel systems and reinforced concrete slabs. Machine-like order and repetition were considered a fundamental principle in spatial aesthetics. The quality of architecture based on these principles however all depends on whether it is created with an understanding of size, scale and measure, as the Smithsons have convincingly argued.¹

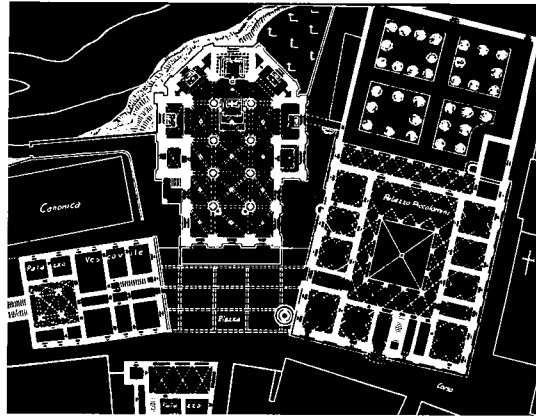
Architectural history provides a magnificent advocacy for square architecture: the Egyptian temples, Ancient Greek and Roman architecture including residential buildings such as in Pompei and Ostia, moreover Pre-Columbian South American complexes, Chinese architecture, and traditional Japanese architecture which is much admired by modernist architects. Moreover the monuments featuring calm and symmetrical order from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries as well as the many urban grids provide an overwhelming multitude of orthogonal spatial models.

In fact the Norwegian building tradition, too, is square: simple, calm, orthogonal spaces are enclosed by wooden walls. Norberg-Schulz reminds us that the traditional Norwegian way of building is a combination of 'stave and log' (*stav og laft*) constructions in which the square form constitutes the spatial unit.² Rectilinear and rectangular constructions simply constitute natural and logical ways of building with timber materials. Kjell Lund, winner of several competitions in the early 1970s, told me of how he as a boy had studied the old wooden

1 Alison and Peter Smithson, (1973).

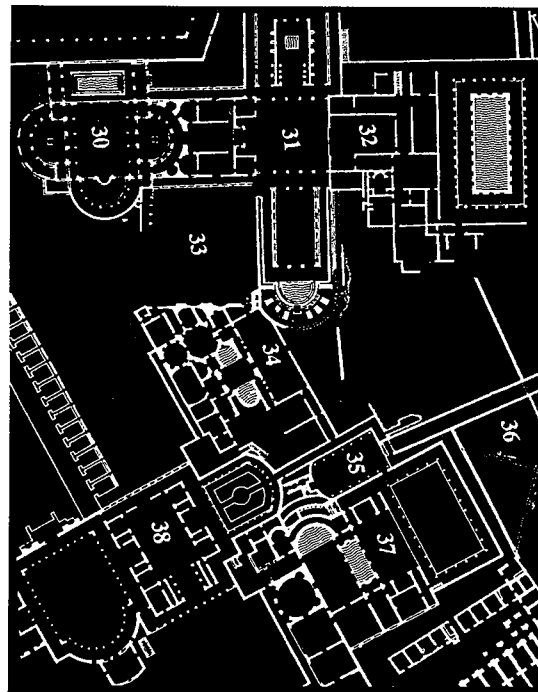
2 Norberg-Schulz, (1993), p. 63.

buildings collected at Maihaugen in Lillehammer, and that he had been fascinated in particular by the role of the *post* or the *stave* (*stolpen*) in the constructions. Since then, he has been devoted to studying and refining the use of structural components in architecture.³ The result of this is a variety of buildings embracing small wooden houses, churches and large urban complexes, some of which are among the finest works of Norwegian postwar architecture.⁴



78. PIENZA, PLAN

Gradually, starting with the interior of the 1st prize project for Soria Moria in 1978, the spaces in the hegemonic competition architecture become more diverse and include compositions based on different spatial principles. Variety of spatial forms in architectural design is not a new idea that arrived with Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* in 1966, but his book did signify a powerful dissonant in the compact homogeneity of modern architecture, the echoes of which are still sounding. The great ancient Greek complexes were composed on spatial principles of variation and obliqueness,⁵ and the principle of *varietà* was important in Early Humanism in Italy. The method of Alberti when he walked about in Rome and proposed solutions to architectural problems was indeed based on the belief that the nature of reality is change, always moving '*di varietà in nuove varietà*'.⁶ His principle implied the creation of a synthesis of the diverse objects (buildings, ancient monuments, etc.) in a larger composition featured by *varietà*. Christine Smith argues that the governing principle of the design of Pienza in Tuscany is Alberti's *varietà* which operates through the relationships established between the different buildings (fig. 78).⁷ Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli (from the 2nd century), a juxtaposition of different parts, each of which is a harmonious composition which was added as an extension, can be appreciated today as a magnificent synthesis of harmony and contrasts (fig. 79).



79. PART OF HADRIAN'S VILLA, PLAN

In a definitely more simple and modest architecture, the traditional Norwegian *tun*, clusters of houses in the countryside or villages on the coast, also represents a similar spatial variety, which in this century has been further

developed for example in the tradition of architects such as Frederik Konow Lund and Knut Knutsen. Furthermore, the works of Aalto and Utzon, another Scandinavian, have been admired by Norwegian architects for their integration of simple order and variety. Utzon's projects, such as for example his submission in the competition for the University of Odense in Denmark (1966) and his own house in Mallorca (1972) display an outstanding combination of clean, repetitive orthogonal order and dissonant variety.

Against this background the influence of spatial and tectonic *varietà* in the postwar hegemonic competition architecture is modest. As a whole, the predominant winning designs are characterized by homogeneous spaces which are adapted to a simple overall order and a rational building industry. The verbal preoc-

- 3 Personal communication.
- 4 See also Grønvold, (1988), Lund, (1991) and Norberg-Schulz, (1993).
- 5 See A.C. Doxiadis, *Architectural Space in Ancient Greece*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1972).
- 6 E. Garin, 'Il Pensiero di L.B. Alberti nella cultura del Rinascimento', in *Convegno*, p. 24, quoted in Smith, p. 119.
- 7 Smith, pp. 98-129, ('*Varietas and the Design of Pienza*'). She argues that Pienza is not a flawed or hesitant manifestation of Platonic or Pythagorean principles, but a fully realized expression of early, as opposed to high or late, Renaissance values.

cupation with variety, with enriching architecture and urban multiplicity which was actually mentioned in 1939 and which increased in the 1960s, seems primarily to have evoked a response in the heightened concern for social variety.

Two architectural issues, *light* and *openness* or spatial continuity, act as mediators between the prefigured spaces and the more poetic and metaphorical conceptions of use expressed in the texts. These advocacies are found both in the designs and in the corresponding texts. Nevertheless, they operate with a certain degree of independence with regard to the principle of spatial order they refer to, i.e. their general character could be descriptive of several, different geometric and tectonic references. The two architectural themes span from the idealistic east-west oriented offices in the Government Building to the total transparency of the aqua-leisure centre. Conceptions of *use* vary from satisfying the requirements for a modern workplace in 1939 (the state employee at his desk in a 'well-lit' room) to the 'living organism' of people sharing the joy of bathing at Aker Brygge in 1987. This issue will be pursued below.

THE SPATIAL POETRY OF USE

The most catchy slogans and metaphors in the texts seem to have obtained a status of their own, as bright mental, banners which symbolize the implicit lifestyle and the conceptions of use that are embodied in the proposed spatial arrangements. The role of a metaphor in a text is to strengthen the message of the speaker, in that the metaphorical term or expression possesses a figurative meaning analogous to literal meaning. 'In a metaphor a speaker imposes his own conceptions on a receiver', says Stein Haugum Olsen. The speaker creates a frame of reference by simply presenting an image. This gives the metaphor a wide potential for directing and reinforcing the general course of intention of the utterance, the meaning of which the receiver has to infer 'from such aspects of the terms employed and such aspects of the context of utterance as can be taken to

provide informal information about the speaker's purpose'.⁸

Phrases such as 'No office shall face north' and 'the liberating total solution. . . the environment flows into. . . the very good spatial configuration flows further . . . organic connection', and moreover 'the dynamic and elastic three-dimensional chess set' and the baths as 'a living organism with visible functions' all embrace notions of human life and society. The expressions expand the perception of the design proposals by creating associations to references which the reader can apply to the context of the design. 'No office shall face north' persuades us that it is an advantage to avoid the unpleasant *cold* and *dark* and *unhealthy* north. (The rhetorical thrust is stronger in the Norwegian *Intet kontor skal ligge mot nord* because of the rhythm and rhyme of *kontor* and *mot nord*.) The 'liberating interior', the 'environment which flows' and 'the very good spatial configuration which flows further' direct our thoughts to *freedom* and *movement*; the highly appreciated atmosphere and enriching rhythm of Karl Johans *gate* extended in a boundless interior space; people flowing like blood through the arteries, like breath in the body, or floating weightlessly on softly undulating and ascending, free ocean waves.

The first of these expressions indicates a rather static, ideal situation with respect to space and use, while the latter introduces the idea of openness, change and movement which would come to be central in the competitions for the rest of the period.

The chess metaphor

The chess metaphor used by the jury in their praise of the 1st prize project for the Bank of Norway is interesting on two different levels: first the concrete prefigured structural system itself, and second the prospected use of the building. Both applications operate with a very free analogy in relation to the limitations implicit in chess.

The construction unit in the bank is regarded as a square on the *chessboard*. But the adjectives 'dynamic' and 'elastic' indicate a liberation from and an stretching of the limitations laid down by the fixed size and shape of the

⁸ Stein Haugum Olsen, 'Understanding Literary Metaphors', in *Metaphor: Problems and Perspectives*, editor, David S. Miall, (Sussex, 1982), pp. 36-54, (pp. 37-38).

chessboard. The size and shaping of the 'bank chessboard' imply that a particular *preliminary game* can be played between 'the bank' and 'the planning authorities'. The three-dimensional grid offers the possibility of 8 x 8 squares on the site (including the existing buildings) and a potential for this basic grid repeated 8 times in height (storeys). The bank chess game involves the degree of preservation of the existing buildings as well as the configuration of the complex with respect to open spaces and height of the volumes. Thus the project invites the bank and the authorities, and indirectly the public, to participate in the dynamic and elastic game, the purpose of which is to make the shaping of the bank on the site appear to be a democratic procedure.

The second level of chess analogy refers to the future *use* of the building, implying that changes in organization and activities can occur in a flexible manner analogous to the chessmen that can be moved about on the chessboard. The grid equips the spaces with an open and homogeneous character; the entire structure can be occupied and shared in a manner which can be compared to a friendly 'game' between different groups of people in the bank: what spaces to occupy by whom, and for what purposes, where should walls be put up and so forth. The moves can occur horizontally and vertically. This 'match' or 'game' is prescribed by the rules of the tectonic pattern and its system of supplementary components, and it is designed to go on infinitely in response to changing needs.

On both levels the adjectives 'dynamic' and 'elastic' reinforce the intentions of flexibility and adaptability: changes and expansion are legion, but the elasticity also implies a flexibility both ways, of having the capacity to return to its original size and shape after being stretched or squeezed.

The chess game is an *embellishing metaphor* which acts in contrast to the trivial. It suggests something exciting and incredibly beautiful, associating to the ornamental patterns that emerge in the chess game: perpetually different, coming into flower like roses; the multiple different openings, the 'Sicilian opening' and many others. The games are as beautiful

and fascinating as the possibilities are infinite and incredible. This fascinating multiplicity implicit in chess is persuasive as it compensates and transcends the limiting and reductive function which is inherent in the rules and the rigid simplicity of the board. There is a difference, however: when one is tired of chess one can put the set away, but if one is dissatisfied with the chessboard architecture it will still determine the framework of the activity connected with it.

In Calvino's *Le città invisibili*, Kublai Khan complained to Marco Polo about the reduction of his immense empire to the movement of small men on a planed piece of wood. Polo answered by plunging into a vivid and detailed description of the chessmen and the chessboard as *things*: the sort of wood they were made from, the refinement of the work behind, then all the references to the material world that are entailed, and suddenly their minds were back to the vast empire of the great Khan.⁹

In addition to the invisible beauty of the chess game, there is the beauty of the board and the men. Similar analogies may underlie the focus on refining the structural system in the case of the Bank of Norway project. In any case the chess metaphor is plausible within the context of the construction system, the site and the use. There is an order, a geometric rationality which is agreed upon, and which can be extended beyond the actual site, to any similar projects in society in general. The order of the chessboard is represented in the visible, permanent architectural structure. Moreover the metaphor implies live actors, people who act consciously in relation to the given framework; the metaphor is a homage to reason and intelligence and to man's *Gesellschaft*.¹⁰

The 'living organism' and nature metaphors

The chess metaphor is an *inorganic* metaphor referring to variety, change and movement as important aspects of architecture. By contrast 'organic connections' and the 'building as a living organism' connote to biology, to the world of living plants and animals. Nature and living organisms constitute a source of metaphors frequently used in architecture, in architectural texts and teaching. Admittedly, in addition to *any living thing*, organism, derived

9 Italo Calvino, *Usynlige byer*, (*Le città invisibili*), (Oslo, 1982), pp. 119-121, 129-130.

10 Dag Østerberg, *Sosiologiens nøkkelbegreper*, fourth edition, (Oslo, 1994), pp. 15-20. Discussion of Tönnies' concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

from Greek *organon* for instrument, implement, engine, also means 'anything resembling a living thing in complexity and functions'.¹¹ References to living organisms vary, depending on whether they refer to the social life in the building, the ordering pattern and design of the building, physicochemical metabolism or the 'living spirit' of the work of architecture. It should be pointed out right away that the organic analogies in the Oslo competitions as a rule do not refer to anthropomorphic architecture or spontaneous, free, so-called organic forms, although this is to a certain degree the case in the interior of the Aker Brygge baths, the design of which resembles landscape formations. In general the terms 'organic' and 'natural' in the competition material refer more abstractly to the organization of the spaces in terms of the human life and movements that are preconceived.

One type of metaphor relates to the '*organism of social life and use*'. The jury's phrases 'the building as a living organism', and 'the living edifice which spurs the imagination and reflects the joy of bathing' clearly point to the vivacity of people enjoying the activities in the baths. The metaphor describes the physical edifice, the building, but creates a symbiosis between the spatial materiality, the interior void and the people using the spaces. Visible behind glass walls, the bathing guests would, through their activity and presence in the baths, overtly signal the *attractiveness* and *accessibility* of the bath to the outside. The social openness and informality of the 1980s are described as 'living', and exhibiting this liveliness and exuberance increases the 'living' impression. 'Living organism' in this context is an embellishing metaphor which is used to create a contrast to the old, 'dead' institutions and massive buildings in the environment. Moreover it compensates for the plain and rigid shape of the baths building itself. The function of the metaphor is to advocate to a broad and unpredictable public the project as a socially very attractive place; a unique, inclusive and exuberant institution in the urban setting.

But is not the analogy sinister? One of the essential characteristics of most living organisms is that their vital functions (organs and

processes) are not visible, they are protected by a non-transparent skin or shell which is an integral part of the organism. The inner functions would suffer if they were exposed and visible. Many important functions in living organisms are not even understood or explained by science. (New discoveries in biology and medicine inevitably seem to uncover or generate new problems and new questions.) To a certain extent the functions of an organism can be made visible by an autopsy, but then the organism would not be living any more. A dead organism is not a very attractive metaphor. The use of the 'visible organic functions' as metaphor exaggerates a clarity of scientific knowledge and human behaviour which is doubtful; in the tradition of modernity it pretends that everything ought to and indeed can be screened and exposed.

Furthermore the metaphor very vaguely implies a synergy between the 'organic' life housed in a building and the tectonic structure itself; the 'living functions' in this case as a fluid assembly of individuals held within a firm glass 'shell'. Healthy living functions are not turned off and on like a machine, or according to the opening hours of the baths, and outside opening hours the building would have to be perceived as without its 'life'. The 'humanly living environment' and the 'organic connection' of the Karl Johan *kvartalet* and the aqua-leisure centre as a 'living organism' indicate social life and human activities in a vague relationship with the architectural forms. The reference lacks figurative correspondence. However, looking at the corresponding designs we see that a typical feature is a high degree of spatial continuity which encourages the free movement of people and visual openness and control. The intention of the metaphorical rhetoric is to reinforce the legitimation of the designs by emphasizing boundless social vivacity which is publicly visible.

A similar use of the terms 'organic' and 'natural' can be observed in the Oslo competition material as a whole. The references in terms of architectural arrangement are vague; they generally imply a continuity of spaces which permits a flowing movement of people. Since organic metaphors are frequent in architectural speech I would like to pursue the issue

¹¹ Webster's, (1983), p. 1260. Østerberg comments that the Greeks did not have the mechanistic concept of nature or *physis* we have today.

a little further and thus sketch an outline for this kind of thinking in architecture.

A second, but related category of metaphors embraces *organisms as an analogy of organizational patterns and structural configuration*. Aldo van Eyck is more figuratively concrete than the jury in the baths competition in his biological reference as he attempts to clarify his view in response to Christopher Alexander's thesis claiming that 'a city is not a tree':

I tried to replace the current 'organic' city-tree analogy, because it is based on the sentimental, though well-meant, assumption that, ideally, the man-made city should behave, and hence also be 'planned', according to a similar kind of system of ascending degree of complexity (with a similar one-track reference sequence from small to large – many too few – and from part to whole) as is the case with the tree. The analogy is false (the way all such analogies between different categories are false – and unpoetic) because it overlooks the real meaning of tree and city. I replaced it, therefore, by two separate autonomous, though intersuggestive identifications: leaf is tree – tree is leaf; a house is city – city is house.

Nevertheless, he ends up with a similar confusion due to his selective, and yet amazingly imprecise interpretation of the real meaning of city and tree as he continues:

By their inclusive ambiguity they preclude a city being a semi-lattice. Also that a city is chaotic and necessarily so (when we say city we imply people). Cities, moreover, as Shakespeare said of man, are 'of such stuff as dreams are made on'. The dream, of course, implies infinite reference, and so does the city, for both are as man is. This is why cities neither should, nor can ever reflect the kind of order a tree wrongly suggests: wrongly, because a tree is not a tree without inhabitants. They – the birds, beasts and insects – see to it that a tree is also not a semi-lattice. Still a city is no more a tree than it is not a tree! That goes without saying; hence also without mathematics.¹²

To understand the *real* meaning of a tree and a city is a truly ambitious project. It appears to be typical that ambitious analogies in architecture tend to 'melt into air' under closer examination. Architects are concerned with designing physical structures, chiefly buildings for people. Van Eyck expands the analogy beyond the anatomical pattern to include different life processes, among which he chooses to mention external inhabitants in trees – birds, beasts and insects. I think that the real meaning of a *city* is definitely closer to being a host for human inhabitants than the real meaning of a *tree* is to be host for external inhabitants, although that is of course one of its functions. (A dead tree can also host external inhabitants, but would a city be dead by similar criteria as the tree as long as it had inhabitants?) The primary principle of a tree is its self-generating life process (in interaction with its environment of course) whereas a city is built by men; it is not the pebbles of the concrete that generate the buildings. The crucial difference between a living organism and a building is that in an organism the 'living', the life functions are inseparable constituents of the physical mass that we perceive from the outside; whilst the people using the buildings and participating in the building processes are definitely something other than the building. In biology the materiality of the organism itself is 'living', and this state of being alive is contingent on an incredible variety of different functions and their mutual interdependencies.¹³

These critical remarks do not imply that biological metaphors should not be used when talking about architecture. On the contrary biology constitutes a realm of analogies which are irreplaceable because of the manner in which they convey *images* which express the fundamentals of architectural ideas. It all depends on the judgement involved in the application and the interpretation of them.

Arne Korsmo stressed that learning from nature was a matter of training one's sensibility to relations and totalities through an understanding of 'material and structure in nature's workshop'. The microscope enables us to see the plant; 'its structure, which makes it a plant, is the edifice.'¹⁴ There are two main types of

12 Aldo van Eyck, in *Team 10 primer*, edited by Alison Smithson, (London, 1968), p. 98.

13 Another kind of analogy to attempt to express the complexities of architecture on a more abstract level could have been found in modern systems theory: a society is one system; a society renews itself differently from an organism which is another kind of system; in society symbols correspond with the genes in organisms (Talcott Parsons). The thinking in the competition for the University of Oslo in 1968 veers in this direction towards systems theory. However, systems-theory analogies do not provide as vivid and easily recognizable images as do organic and natural metaphors.

14 Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Arne Korsmo*, (Oslo, 1986), p. 28. (Original English text.)

organization systems, or structures, embodied in architecture for which biological analogies can be relevant: the organization of *spaces* in relation to each other with respect to the accessibility and functioning of the people in the building, and the organization of the material *constructions*, which implies how the building is built. (In addition sanitary installations, electricity and so forth are organized in different systems within a building.) These two types of system are mutually interdependent but they can be distinguished from each other in a fundamentally different way to the different parts of a living organism. The design of these two systems in relation to each other is what architecture is all about.

I have myself employed a biological metaphor as I compared the high-rise building of the Government Building project with the characteristic structure of a spruce tree in chapter IX. This was to visualize the pattern of *spatial organization* (thinking particularly of the system of circulation of people in the building, to be precise), associating to the simple image which I assume that many Norwegians immediately could recognize as they know the particular features of a spruce tree to be different from those of a birch, an oak or a pine. I could have said that it was similar to 'the bones of a mackerel', the system starting from the head, and it would have been equally relevant. Or I could have said 'TV antenna', remembering comic drawings some years ago in which TV antennas had the form of a stick with side branches. But TV antennas keep appearing in new shapes; I would have had to indicate exactly what kind of TV antenna I was referring to, in which case I might as well have drawn the organization pattern of the Government Office Building itself. By mentioning the spruce tree, I did not specifically think of the flux of nourishment and cells ascending inside the tree trunk as parallel to the people ascending in the high-rise building. However, as I am thinking of pursuing the complexity of this analogy further, I realize that I am now moving dangerously close to the dilemma of van Eyck.

Moreover I said in chapter IX that the umbrella structure roof in the aqua-leisure centre reminded me of the clusters of umbrella

pinetrees in the Villa Doria Pamphili in Rome. This is a different kind of metaphorical relationship as it refers merely to the *shape* of the structure as volumes constituting a particular figurative pattern in space. Woods as analogous with columns and sheltering roofs not only conveys images of how the material components are shaped but also a general feeling of how it is to be among the trees, of how the light is filtered in different kinds of woods, of all the diverse ways one might behave and find one's way about in a forest.

In modern architecture, structural metaphors from biology most frequently refer to organisms or to that part of organisms which can be related to the 'free plan principle'; in general with vertebrate animals or plants. In a lecture recently De Carlo used the metaphor *crostaceo*, crustacean, showing a section drawing of a crayfish with all its other living organs softly arranged and protected inside its shell. The manner in which the shell was analogous to the stone walls of the buildings in an old Italian village, and in principle to all buildings, old or modern, that the post-and-lintel, 'free plan' principle breaks away from, quite vividly conveys a pregnant image. The metaphor also acts as an effective corrective to habitual, modern thinking.¹⁵

The objective of architects is to design a *form*, to shape the supporting and enclosing structures of buildings, and thus to shape the voids that accommodate the lives of human beings. Analogies to organic entities, living organisms that can be easily recognized for their principle of structure and form, are a highly valuable means to grasp the architectural organization. The images that are created, and which are amplified by visual exemplification, enhance the information of the proposal; they activate the imagination of the receiver and thus widen his preconception of the prefigured building.

The *organic metabolism* metaphor constitutes a third category. The buildings are material but *inorganic*; they are dead, not living; they are manufactured, not regenerated through living processes. Although materials wear over time, the architectural changes that are spoken of in the Oslo competitions are thought of as being

15 Giancarlo De Carlo, Oslo School of Architecture, 2 November, 1995.

induced by human beings, not by accident or some intrinsic physicochemical process. In an article on architecture and the global metabolism, the editor of *Byggekunst* compares buildings with organisms, and maintains that the (physicochemical) processes in the buildings resemble those of the human body. He exemplifies his point with an illustration of some essential physiological organs which he calls 'the inner machinery of the body'.¹⁶ However interesting and relevant an ecological point of view may be, it is evident that this physicochemical problem was not an issue in the competitions of this study.

Connoting *organism* with *machine* and machinery reflects a mode of thinking which has survived from early functionalism. Then, in an age optimistic about the prospects of the machine age and machine aesthetics, the general view of organisms was that they were basically a more complex and refined sort of machine; an incredibly efficient machinery in which everything had its place and function. An organism was regarded as a highly adaptable system; it could be taken apart and each function could be studied separately; it may be subject to defects, but could be repaired thanks to scientific analyses and suitable treatment.¹⁷ But science has moved beyond such categorical conceptions. Today scientific challenges are marked by uncertainty and unpredictability; the problem of the multiresistant micro-organisms (e.g. bacteria) is but one example. Even though changes in the physical environment may influence material structures in hitherto unknown ways, the distinction between the living and the not-living is still essential.

Nevertheless, the very specific and technical manner in which Larsen employs the biological analogy is useful as an important supplementary technological criterion that can lead to 'an architecture which is more organic in its essence', Larsen says, and continues: 'this must not be confused with a type of architecture which repeats the forms of nature'.¹⁸ This last remark is representative for the modernist tradition which is represented in the hegemonic architecture in this study: in the creation of architecture the analogies are abstracted from the organic images and transformed to correspond with rational mass construction and

machine technology.

A catchy manner of employing biological metaphors and connoting to nature in architecture is not so specific and technical. Instead it suggests a unity between *spirit and built materiality*. References are made to the intrinsic 'order of nature and the universe' as an unspecified and infinite inspiration for architectural principles that can be abstracted from nature. Evidently numerous valuable examples relevant to man-made tectonic structures can be drawn from geography, geology and botany and so forth. However, buildings are also endowed with a spirit and a will of their own. Louis Kahn used to conduct conversations with the building materials: "What do you want, brick?" Brick says to you, "I like an arch." If you say to brick, "Arches are expensive, and I can use a concrete lintel over an opening. What do you think of that, brick?" Brick says, "I like an arch." And in more general terms he asked: 'What does this building want to be?'¹⁹ With this kind of *naïviste* rhetoric Louis Kahn, one of the canonical architects and widely recognized professors of this century, had great success in imparting his architectural techniques and skills. Obviously he provides the answers himself; he maintains his own views, pretending that they are on behalf of something other that cannot speak for itself. On the one hand this kind of demonstration reveals a profound affinity to the building material, to exploring its nature and possibilities. But on the other hand it also implies a high degree of absolutism as such a thing as 'the will of the brick or the building' is never unambiguous. The speaker relies upon intuition and mistakes intuition with infallibility and ambiguity.

Kahn's prerogative was to search for 'a deeper order to be found beyond rationalism', and he emphasized 'the unmeasurable' aspects in architecture.²⁰ Indeed I admire his highly sensitive, imaginative and thorough approaches in architecture, and I do not doubt that his influence as an architect can still bring forth invaluable new approaches in architecture. He was also right and wise to point out that brick is a material that is employed easily and beautifully in three quarters of the world, whereas

16 Bjørn Larsen, 'Om arkitekturen og stoffskiftet', *BK*, 76, no. 7, (1994), pp. 400-405.

17 See also Bo Dahlbom, 'En vetenskap om artefakter', *VEST*, 6, no. 4, (1993), pp. 53-75.

18 Larsen, (1994), p. 403.

19 John Lobell, *Between Silence and Light*, (Boulder, 1979), pp. 40, 63. See also Jan G. Digerud, *Louis Kahn*, (Oslo, 1982).

20 'The unmeasurable' seems to me similar to the term 'aesthetic' in its widest sense. In general architects have tended to avoid the term aesthetic, among other reasons because it is often narrowed in to refer only to the outer lineaments.

concrete is a highly sophisticated material which is not as widely available as one would think. But the argumentation as presented by his followers, for instance of equalling his conception of Order in nature not only with oriental Tao but also with Heidegger's 'Being',²¹ is vague and gratuitous.

There is a problem with this and similar kinds of rhetoric: it implies an almost paralyzing privatization of the architectural discourse as it increasingly and rather exclusively relies on the subjectivity involved in the architect's act of mediating the hidden 'universal order'. The technique involves a projection of the will and the skill of the architect onto the material structure that is intended to be the product of his professional work. The framework of expressions is thus confused and obscured. It makes the vague even vaguer, *obscurans per obscurius*. The refuge of the speaker can be a terror to the audience who is excluded from participating in an intelligent, discursive way.

As it invokes the universal infinity and complexity of phenomena outside our conception, this kind of rhetoric tends to mystify the realm of feelings beyond common recognition. In our secularized Western society, a similar animism of architecture can be but disconnected and superficial; there is no cultural basis which could serve as common reference for the concrete architectural proposals. The attitude is vitalistic but the spirituality is diffuse. The saga of the creation of the world which according to ancient Nordic mythology was made from the different parts of the corpse of the giant *urjotnen* Ymer, is a pleasing and captivating story, as is also the creation of the first human beings Ask and Embla out of two pieces of wood.²² The saga can be stimulating to the artistic imagination, but it cannot be decisive in the discussion of current issues in architecture.

Nonetheless, the tendency to confuse the material construction with the life in it, to speak of the building and the activity in it or the human perception of it as synonymous, is typical. To speak of the material as if it were alive, 'the edifice as a living organism', reflects the tendency implicit in all creative work to identify with the physical objects and look upon ourselves from the point of view of the object. This

phenomenon becomes particularly salient during phases of intense creativity as in the case of one of the greatest biologists of this century, Barbara McClintock, who wanted to experience the cell from within, to creep inside it, and feel that she was the cell herself.²³ In principle this is not so different from Louis Kahn's conversations with the material. But this state of creative unity between architect and object makes it difficult to grasp what aspect of *me*, of *us* and our totality, has actually been mirrored or responded to in the shaping of the object. One is mesmerized by the object. It is necessary to reverse the process in order place due responsibility where it belongs, i.e. with human beings, which implies the obligation of architects to be aware of the consequences of their creativity.²⁴

The use of organic and natural metaphors permits a high degree of freedom with regard to the figurative connections between the concrete design proposal and the organic reference. The metaphor widens the range of imagination with reference to the building itself and the perception and use of it. They place the project in an atmosphere of artistic creativity and originality, and thus strengthen the conceptions of the project as an object of art with its own identity. By avoiding reference to existing buildings they support the ideas and goals of newness.

These kinds of metaphor are crucial to architectural work and also to imparting and discussing architecture. But like many crucial ideas they can be misused and/or used to great advantage. They can reflect a sincere humility towards and respect for nature and human life, but they can also entail an incredible arrogance and self-deception. They can be used to lay smoke screens over architectural issues, isolating the debate to private mystifications and the cult of paternalizing elitism. Alternatively they can enhance the potential and prospects for architectural exploration and improvement by using the expanded freedom of visual and conceptual reference to encourage an open and creative discussion between the parties that are involved. It should be possible to include both the intuitive, spiritual aspirations and reflective thinking in architecture.

21 Lobell, pp. 62-63.

22 Ivar Mortensson-Enund, 'Voluspá', in *Edda-Kvæde - Nornene fornsongar*, third edition, (Oslo, 1944). See also Tor Åge Bringsværd, *Vår gamle gudelære*, 1, (Oslo, 1985).

23 Georg Klein, 'Är viten-skapsmän kreativa?', in *Om kreativitet och flow*, editor Maj Ödman, (England, 1992), pp. 58-61. See also Finn Werne, *Den osynliga arkitekturen*, (Lund, 1987), pp. 152-155, and Tostrup, (1995), p. 47.

24 In a similar way, the 1995 Nobel Peace prize-winner Joseph Rotblat maintains the importance of scientists questioning the consequences of their research.

Both 'the organism' and the 'spirit of nature' contrast the dominating points of view which are characterized by technological and instrumental reason, and they refer to unity, wholeness and pleasure. They are *contrastive metaphors*. Typical of an organism is the mutual interdependence between its parts and the totality; it is a model of harmony and synergetic activity. Thus organic analogies forward the idea of *Gemeinschaft*, as do the metaphors from nature.

By emphasizing use and activity in the hegemonic competition proposals, metaphorical rhetoric seeks to create unity and coherence between the unique and independent project and the environment, especially from the point of view of urban life and society. Its purpose is to make the project appear indispensable. This is in keeping with Giedion who in surprisingly general terms speaks about architecture as 'an independent organism', 'a growing organism . . . it has a life of its own, grows or dwindles, finds new potentialities and forgets them again'. On the one hand the organic aspect seems to indicate the freedom and the objective of architecture to 'reflect the conditions of the age from which it springs' in an autonomous manner as part of a historical continuity. On the other hand he maintains the importance of how works of architecture function in their environment; the organic aspect stresses the unity between architecture and all sorts of external conditions: 'It is the product of all sorts of factors – social, economic, technical, and ethnological'.²⁵

Sennett treats the intentions of modern architecture of organic connection between the work of architecture and its environment extensively, speaking of the ideal of wholeness and the difficulties of creating unity between the one architectural identity (the self-sameness) and the others.²⁶ As the physical references to the environment in the Oslo competitions were predominantly abstract and general, organic and natural metaphors amplify the intentions of unity and connection from a comprehensive, but also vague, point of view.

An organism regenerates itself, and reproduces itself, unconsciously by instinct. The 'living organism' doubly stresses the aspect of vitality since an organism by definition is living; other-

wise it would be a carcass or a dead plant.

Organic metaphors convey a *healthy* impression, and thus correspond to the importance of *health* in the contemporary world. As contrastive metaphors, organic analogies glorify technology and science, and at the same time they are dependent on the natural sciences as their framework of references, imaginative thinking and visualization.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The spaces in the hegemonic competitions architecture are marked by plain and homogeneous order, predominantly arranged in orthogonal patterns. Given qualities such as rationality, clarity and simplicity as a general 'sound-board' of spatial principles, light and spatial openness are focused upon as central themes, and change and movement are focal ideals.

By contrast the verbal advocacies amplify the impressions of *varietà* by using metaphorical expressions which create vivid images of harmonious and pluralistic human life. The frequently mentioned 'enriching' qualities, 'variety' and 'humanly living' aspects refer to the prospective *use* of the spaces rather than the visual perception of the concrete configurations.

Both inorganic and organic metaphors are employed, chess and the living organism. As they appear in the competition material, the two types of expression have two features in common. On the one hand both a chess set and a living organism are limited entities; they are well-defined physical totalities with their particular *identity* and integrity. Underlying the metaphors, then, is the conception of a work of architecture as a unique object with a character of its own. On the other hand there is the indication of *complexity* and *vivacity* which appeals to imagination: in a highly evocative manner the metaphorical expressions suggest infinite possibilities of enjoyment of the spaces. The *chess metaphor* indicates a more rational, scientific and controllable approach; an external body has to move the 'men' in the context of the agreed rules. The *living organism* is more romantic, hinting at self-generating interaction and the incredible complexity of organic life

25 Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: the Growth of a New Tradition*, ninth printing, (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), pp. 19-23.

26 Sennett, pp. 78-89. In his view one of the problems relates to the avoidance of design; of vagueness.

and nature which to most people appears obscure and beyond comprehension. Organic metaphors are more obsessional in their invocation of suggestive images. Simultaneously they are reassuring: in the common conception, organic life changes in correspondence with certain familiar patterns; there is a relative stability since strange and disquieting mutations take an extremely long time to occur.

These simple metaphors possess just that persuasive power which, on the one hand convinces us of the *integrity* and potential of the design, and on the other hand of vital *wholeness* and *unity* with the environment. The analogies can be easily recognized and thus incite the public to participate in imaginative conceptualizations and pre-perceptions of the architectural spaces. While seemingly infinite options are suggested, the implicit inaccuracy and vagueness involved tend to obscure the inherent contradictions and shortcomings.

Both metaphors introduce a *poetic* dimension, of embellishing technology and the increasing technification which is believed to liberate man. They add a human touch, romanticizing the utopia of human possibilities offered by technology. The metaphorical rhetoric amplifies the *optimistic* dimension of the competition architecture: it advocates change and movement, human vitality and progress, infinite variety and harmonious coexistence in freedom. This is quite a striking contrast to, for example, the type of metaphor used in Charles Dickens' *Little Dorrit*, in which the leading metaphor is 'places of imprisonment'.²⁷ In the period of postwar consensus, as well as after the 'cracks' had appeared in Norwegian architecture, the metaphorical rhetoric acts as a persuasive agent which links the competition proposals to other generally optimistic projects in society.

27 Olsen, pp. 36-54.



XI

FAÇADES AND INTERFACES A STORY OF SAMENESS AND CONTINUITY

The elevation drawings show the appearance (the façade) or the outside of the building as it presents itself to the beholders and passers-by. Or more precisely these drawings, which are orthogonal projections viewed from a vertical plane in front of and parallel to the wall, give a correct representation of the relative proportions of a wall if it is straight and vertical. Models, perspectives and other drawings of the building provide supplementary information.

'Façade' is derived from Italian *facciata*, as 'face' is from *faccia* and L. *facies*.¹ The façade is held to be a relatively new concept, dating back only to the 18th century, and an issue about which remarkably little has been written, according to Rudolf Zeitler and Werner Oechslin. The awkwardness of defining it as the 'result' of different circumstances or as an 'architectural form' is reflected in the explanations given. In the glossary of the *Accademia della Crusca* in the 18th century the façade was defined as 'that part of the building which usually contains the entrance'.² When Blondel defined the façade as 'le frontispice ou la structure extérieure' in the great encyclopaedia of 1756, he referred to the similarity with the physiognomy of the human body: 'the latter reflects the spiritual qualities, whereas the first allows a judicious judgement of the inside of a building'.³ This definition serves to emphasize the expressive function of the façade in architecture, a function which gained increasing importance under the heading of 'character', according to Oechslin.

The following is based on Rudolf Zeitler's outline of the history of the façade from ancient Rome and onwards. He mentions that Vitruvius employs the terms *frons aedis*, front end of a temple, and *scaenae frons*, wall backing the stage in a theatre. This rear wall, which

usually was several storeys high and elaborately furnished with architectural features such as portals, tiered columns, niches and statues, faced the auditorium and thus looked out on an *inner court*. Similarly, the few decorated frontages in Graeco-Roman architecture did not face the street but inner courts or *fora*, and then only the portals were elaborated, not the entire façade.

Quite different to edifices adjoining to other buildings in the streets of an urban fabric, are the elevated buildings of the Acropolis in Athens and the palaces on the Palatine hill in Rome or the mighty sanctuary of Fortuna on the hill-side at Praeneste (modern Palestrina). They could be seen for miles around and were furnished with architectural ornaments as were the villas of wealthy Romans, which, when built on sloping ground, also provided magnificent views of the surrounding countryside.

In complete contrast to those of the ancient world, the façades of the medieval towns permit the activity in the house, of merchants, artisans and dwellers, to be displayed directly on the *street* or the marketplace and vice versa through the elaborate arrangements of arches, doors and windows. By contrast, magnificent cathedrals, huge monasteries and handsome palaces stood apart together with their service buildings, enclosed by solid walls in their own precincts. It was the combination of court rooms and banqueting halls developed in these palaces that set the pattern for both the representational buildings in the imperial castles and bishops' palaces, and also for the town halls and dwellings of the citizenry from the 12th century on.

When the two-storey court room or banqueting hall and its ornamental façade was fetched out from behind the enclosed walls of

1 The corresponding Norwegian terms are *fasade* and *ansikt*.

2 *Dictionary of the Accademia della Crusca*, II, (Naples, 1747), ('Facciate, Le Parte degli edifici dove per lo più è l'entrata') p. 201, quoted in Werner Oechslin, 'The Façade - a Recent Concept', *Daidalos: Berlin Architectural Journal*, no. 6, (1982), p. 33.

3 Jacques-François Blondel, *Encyclopédie*, VI, 1756, p. 355, quoted in Oechslin, p. 35.

the castle and put on the street or the marketplace its intrinsic significance as a symbol of the inhabitants' rights and authority must have been taken along with it. Thus, the town hall of the citizens was doubtlessly the first urban building to combine the representative functions of administering justice and staging festivities. Soon the councillors furnished their own houses with a scaled-down version of the same symbolic features, and then the guilds, and subsequently the more prosperous master-craftsmen also built houses with the proper *representational frontage*. The façades of town halls and town houses symbolized a participation in power and jurisdiction or public affairs. The design of these façades reveals both their structure of solid walls and openings and their double function of contact with the outside world and festivities, with ornaments and decoration around the openings, in particular the windows of the upper storeys.

The *Palazzo Rucellai* in Florence built in 1446 by Alberti marks the advent of a new type of representational façade which is a dressing on the wall surface made up of pilasters and entablatures in the classical style. The sources are obvious: two ancient Roman buildings, the Marcellus theatre and Colosseum, the amphitheatre, both of which had structures of a superimposed Greek order of pillars and arches on the outside looking onto the street. Alberti provided the *palazzo* with a representative *mask*.⁴ However, as in the ancient buildings, the structural conception behind admirably fulfils its different functions. The façade furnishes these functions with a beautiful and dignified front. The conjunction of Roman utility and Greek beauty was revived, and with it the particular façade features symbolized power in terms of non-clerical dignity and humanist culture as well as material prosperity.

These façades were then masks and remained so for as long as the ruling classes in Europe still believed in, or kept up the fiction of, a connection between power and culture, i.e. in effect until the beginning of this century. Thus, following Alberti and the great Renaissance architects, the architecture of the façade continued to flourish even in its baroque and neo-classical permutations. When, towards the end of the 19th century

technical and scientific education became dominant among men of power, humanist culture lost its significance. Architects wanted to eradicate historicism from the façades, they wanted to start afresh, taking as their point of departure the basic structure (walls, openings and roofs) and the many new functions that had emerged along with the far-reaching social changes.⁵

The matter of the façade, then, spans from the independent architectural mask to the faceless buildings of contemporary towns which Zeitler describes briefly at the end of his article. On the one hand the façade as a mask, a deliberate creation formed to express the character of the building to its public environment, also implies the possibility of deception, of concealment, of falseness. On the other hand the notion of the façade as a pure result of the inner structure has pretensions of an honesty or authenticity of expression. As long as buildings have outside surfaces this notion does not eliminate the representational function of the façade, but it avoids expressing it in terms of a particular, independent architectural objective. What is false and what is true from this point of view becomes to a certain extent a question of relative value, not only in terms of historical period but also cultural.

Returning to the analogy of human physiology, 'face', in addition to implying the surface of a thing or the front of an animal's head, also includes the expression of the face as indicative of favour, disfavour or anger and so forth. Studies of human facial expressions (in the presocialized infant as well as cross-cultural experiments) indicate that there are both cross-cultural or universal and culture-specific patterns of expression. To some extent facial expressions have different meanings according to the culture they appear in; there are even some indications that cultural variables may result in modifications of universal facial expression.⁶ Nonetheless, the terms employed in describing and evaluating façades of buildings frequently associate to terms used about the appearance and facial expressions of a person: the building looks 'friendly' or 'unfriendly', 'unthreatening' or 'rejective', 'oppressive' and 'authoritarian'. The building (its

4 Mask, (Fr. *masque*, from Ar. *maskharah*, a buffoon), a covering of the face or part of the face, to conceal or disguise the identity; a protective covering; mask used by ancient Greek and Roman actors on the stage to identify a character or amplify the voice. The word 'person', from L. *persona*, refers to that kind of face mask used by actors on the stage, from *per sonare*, to sound through.

5 Rudolf Zeitler, 'The Façade - A Historical Outline', *Daidalos: Berlin Architectural Journal*, (December, 1983), pp. 31-41.

6 Campos, Barrett, Lamb, Goldsmith, Stenberg, 'Socioemotional development', in *Handbook of Child Psychology*, Paul H. Mussen, editor, fourth edition, (New York, 1983), pp. 784-826, (pp. 787-799).

appearance) is said to be 'calm' or 'disturbed'. 'Varied' or 'vivid' are positive whereas 'disturbed' and 'untidy' are a negative expressions for practically the same quality, and reflect the relativity of art-value and value orientation in this matter too.⁷

Norberg-Schulz speaks of the figurative appearance as essential in the spatial world of the Mediterranean, displayed in architecture and painting, and even reflected in the *far figura* of the daily behaviour of Italians: 'by means of this the individual is liberated to perform extrovert deeds, and society becomes a "meeting"'.⁸ The particular conventions of meeting may vary from culture to culture. Anyhow, in architecture this meeting is to some extent a function of the façade, which is the outside of the *interface*, interface being the surface that lies between two parts of space and forms their common boundary.⁹ In a simplified manner, the physiognomic analogy is indicative here too: as the outer surface represents, expresses and communicates the inside, the same boundary surface perceives and receives signals from the outside (through the eyes/windows, nose/open windows and vents, ears/openings, mouth/doors). However, as argued in chapter X, analogies to biology should be drawn with great caution, whether from the point of view of physicochemical processes or qualities of social and cultural meaning.

The Swedish architect Lars Jadelius is concerned with the problem of user interfaces in the context of spaces and places and territoriality. Referring to the linguist Walter J. Ong, he calls 'the place at which independent systems meet and act on one another or communicate with one another' an interface.¹⁰ In the context of façades of buildings, the concept of interface expands the perspective of interpretation, as it not only includes what is perceived or viewed from the outside but also the articulation of conditions and possibilities of communication and interaction between inside and outside. The architecture of the Antiquity, of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Baroque and so forth dealt with this interfacing function as part of the external expression, in different manners according to the corresponding *Kunstwollen* and technologies, as is also the case

in modern architecture.

The physiognomic analogies (and the origin of the term) relate the façade function to a concept of the *front*, a priority of one side above the others when it comes to decorative components and differentiation of the interfacing function. This becomes a problem in a modern architecture which aims at creating independent and free objects. In keeping with these goals and their implicit reactions against historicism, the term façade has sometimes been avoided and replaced by the neutral *oppriis*, elevation. However, the brief for the Aker Brygge Aqua-Leisure Centre requires 'all façade elevations', and the majority of briefs ask for 'all façades'. The concept of the roof as the fifth façade finally exposes the point, though in a dual manner: either the ultimate detachment and perhaps ironical connotation to the physiognomic origin, or the principle that all sides, all surfaces and all interfaces should be treated with equal sincerity. The fact that a term is used which refers to an exceptionally expressive and sensitive part of the human or an animal's body, instead of saying *this wall* or *that side*, indicates that an expressive or representational function is still attributed to the outer surfaces of a building.

Hence, aided by plans and section drawings as well as perspectives and models, the façade drawings together with the texts shed light on the problem of façades and interfaces in the hegemonic competition architecture.

ASSERTING A NEW AESTHETIC IN THE 1940s

A representational problem

The brief in the competition for the new Government Building in 1939 requested a *dignified* and distinguished design in keeping with the purpose. In addition, the new edifice should constitute a *whole*, together with the old granite building from the turn of the century.¹¹ This is all that is said about the appearance in the excerpt from the brief, and the jury's general remarks do not add anything apart from stating that the architecture of the old building cannot be easily adapted to the modern demands, which require good sunlight

7 The Norwegian words are as follows: *vennlig, uvennlig, trygg, avvisende, undertrykkende, autoritet; rolig, urolig, variert, levende or livfull, rotete*.

8 Norberg-Schulz, (1993), p. 13, *far figura*, to appear, show (*vise seg*) In modern architecture the figurative plasticity of Le Corbusier and the smooth ambiguity and transparency of Mies van der Rohe suggest a cultural difference on this matter. "*Et møte*": "meeting" or "meeting place".

9 Webster's, p. 957.

10 Lars Jadelius, 'User interfaces of spaces and places' (unpublished paper, Chalmers Tekniska Högskola, 1994), pp. 1-15. He discusses the individualistic and abstract sociability which forms the basis for the functionalist open-space concept.

11 *BK*, 22, (1940), p. 34.

conditions in the offices as the primary function of the façades. Here we are faced with the possibility of a different and unusual use of the term *representativ*, which in Norwegian employed in an aesthetic context means distinguished, having a certain dignity. A similar, common use of the word *representativ* is employed in the brief for the competition for the Central Office of Storebrand insurance company in 1956, in which the promoter wants to manifest the great national importance of the company in one of the most demanding sites in Vestre Vika, and thus calls for a distinct and *representativ* building.¹²

So deeply ingrained is the understanding of the word *representativ* design or appearance as something distinguished or dignified, that it was only recently that I came to pursue the other meaning of *representativ*, that of whether a spokesman is representative of the people or the interests that he represents in a certain context, that of a reasonable and traceable correlation with the content. It is not said explicitly that the façade should visually or figuratively represent *the idea* of a modern office building, but the references to the old architecture as unfit and the priority of sunlight to the offices yield some indications. The emphasis is on *what* a modern office building *is*, not on how it *appears* in the urban context. As the dissent expressed by the laymen in the jury (who preferred the more classicist design) suggests, most people would think of a *representativ* design as one which by means of its materials and composition of form could symbolize the dignity and authority of the National Government including the office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Cabinet Meeting Room.

Notwithstanding, a central idea of functionalist thinking was that the exterior of the buildings should correspond with the functions of the interior; the appearance should 'express' the inner functions. It is conspicuous that in the later debates and publications of the project in the 1940s and 1950s the building is referred to as *Statens kontorbygning* (the State Office Building), like any state office building for telephone or road-system administration, and not as the Government Building (*Regjeringsbygningen*) as it is usually termed.

For the first time as a free and independent nation, after more than 500 years of Danish and later Swedish rule, the Norwegian State had the opportunity to erect an edifice for its highest authority.¹³ It is curious, then, that this factual sovereignty is negated, and its unique function is equated with a standard and ordinary office building.

Similarly, the term *representativ*, suggesting connotations to former power structures and the bourgeoisie, was rarely used in postwar competitions. It was replaced by fresh, neutral words such as 'harmonious, calm, firm (*fast*)',¹⁴ or the issue was omitted, that is the façades were neither commented specifically in relation to the inner functions nor to the outer context. (An exception is the Bank of Norway in 1973 in which the promoter asked for a 'rational and *representativ* building', meaning dignified or distinguished. *Representativ* used in this sense implies exquisiteness and solidity in materials and refinement in details rather than a particular, formal style.) Nonetheless the term *representativ*, and the avoidance of it, provide a clue to understanding the architecture from a representational point of view; it is a *universal, modern, egalitarian* principle that is manifested.

Graphic highlighting of the façades

The jury's criticisms of the shared-prize designs are extremely scarce on the matter of appearance, and façade drawings are only shown of two of the prize-winning designs; one of each. Praising motto 'U' the jury says that

the façades are skilfully solved, and yield the monumental attitude that such a building ought to have. As a whole the proposal reveals architectural imagination.¹⁵

This façade (fig. 80), which is faithful to the symmetrical order of the old building and is also arranged in an approximate symmetry with the Deichman library, responds to the common meaning of *representativ*. But this project did not solve the problem of the site plan according to the modern standards.

In the case of motto 'Rytme' it is said:

The architecture is simple, even somewhat

¹² K, no. 31, (1957), p. 23.

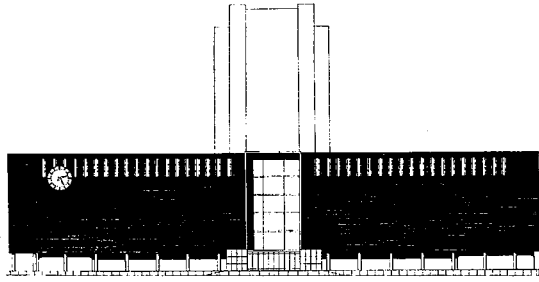
¹³ The old Government Building was erected (1904, competition in 1891) during the union with Sweden under the reign of King Oscar II. The union was dissolved in 1905 after a period of struggle, negotiations and a popular vote/plebiscite.

¹⁴ *Fast* is an adjective much used to indicate a positive quality. The word *fast* means firm or solid as opposed to fluid.

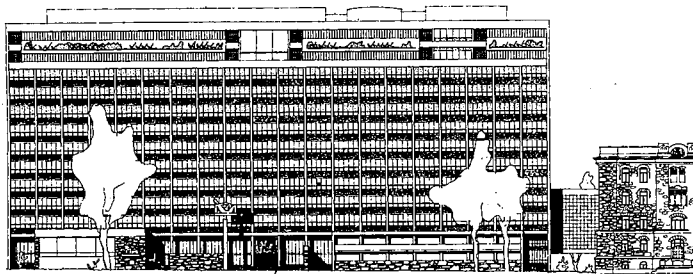
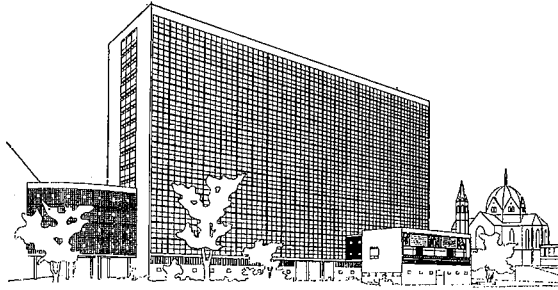
However as an architectural term here it does not imply specifically solid volumes or appearances, but rather straight and simple geometrical forms; a certain degree of grand, continuous lines as opposed to plastically broken shapes. The façade constructions themselves (which constitute the 'firm' overall impression) may be light and 'optically dissolving'.

¹⁵ BK, 22, (1940), p. 39.

80. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'U', ELEVATION



81. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'RYTME', PERSPECTIVE



82. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MOTTO 'VESTIBYLE', ELEVATION



schematic. The short façades do not attain the architectural quality of the long façades.¹⁶

The perspective (fig. 81, the elevation is not published) shows one of these 'long façades' with the low cube of the Foreign Ministry in front and the huge 'graph paper' façade of the office complex. The elevation of motto 'Vestibyle' (fig. 82) features a façade with a greater degree of material concreteness, suggesting the kind of roughness which Grønvoold refers to as typical of the rustic or rough Norwegian postwar modernism, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, a movement in which Erling Viksjø, the architect of 'Vestibyle', was a leading figure.¹⁷ The jury said that the architecture was somewhat 'schematically' indicated, and that

the façades, particularly those facing Akersgata, have a certain firmness but are disfigured by a series of artificial effects such

as the top floor and the oblique recesses in the gables.¹⁸

The clean, anonymous and schematic 'graph paper' façade is more highly valued than the oddities and variations of 'Vestibyle'.

With reference to the exterior, the author of 'Vestibyle' writes that he is aiming at a *contrastive* effect which at the same time interacts with the old building through the choice of materials, proposing the same kind of stone in the rough ground-floor rubblework walls as in the polished parapet panels in front of the ordinary offices. The contrast to the old building is striking, an inevitable fact also due to the great difference in scale and dimension. Considering this difference and the declared principle of aesthetic contrast, the representation reveals certain *graphic features* that cushion or *subdue* the visual effect of contrast, and moreover it tends to make the edifices appear smaller than they are. Emphasizing and enlarging the granite blocks in the drawing, and showing only 10 courses of blocks in the base of the old building instead of 18, disturb the sense of scale. The main entrance doors of the new prefigured edifice appear very broad, but only a little more than 2m high, the doors can be visually mistaken for the bottom part of much larger doors; and furthermore the sculpture of a 6m long human body reclining on a 10m high pedestal graphically reduces the impression of a truly huge, imposing edifice. (In comparison, the building which was erected in 1958 on the basis of the competition design, is radically smaller, both shorter and narrower, see chapter VI.) These graphic exaggerations, which ruthlessly disclose the practical difficulty of architectural correlation and adaptability, show that the visual representation of 'Vestibyle' attempts to create an impression of connecting the new façade aesthetically with the old.

Nonetheless, the typical visual representation of the façades in all these projects reinforces the impression mentioned in chapter VI of the new edifices as independent, *self-sufficient* or *self-assertive objects* against which the environment plays merely an abstracted and vague role as a featureless, background appendix. In spite of the vague verbal comments on the

16 BK, 22, (1940), p. 41.
17 Grønvoold, (1991), p. 409.
18 BK, 22, (1940), p. 43.

issue of façades, the visual rhetoric clearly focuses on the exterior appearance of the new edifices; its function is to manifest and assert a *new aesthetic* in a manner which claims objective and universal validity rather than giving a public 'face' to a particular institution in a particular physical environment.

SOPHISTICATED AND DIVERSITY IN THE 1980S

The competitions of the 1980s feature a diversity of façade principles which, in short, embrace the extremely clean regular curtain-wall as well as more figurative compositions of solid continuous walls, and 'hole-in-the-wall' windows or larger glass sections. The distinctly marked, repetitive grid façade which prevailed from the late 1930s is 'dissolved' in various attempts to refine and articulate the outer surface.

The 'invisible' façade and the 'frameless mirror'

The Aker Brygge Aqua-Leisure Centre competition displays some striking examples of this diversity. The jury's general remarks treat the appearance from a general and abstract point of view: 'the formal challenge' is a matter of mass geometry and 'directions and lines' in the urban pattern. As mentioned in passing in chapter VI, 'a natural, determined and firm [location and]. . . a calm, cultivated form' is preferred 'rather than an extreme, dramatically exposed edifice'. The 1st prize design is praised as

a living edifice which spurs the imagination . . . an expression of the building as a living organism.¹⁹

On the matter of the façades, the criticism of the 1st prize project reads as follows:

The contrast between the sober, airy shell around the functions of the space and the soft curves of the fjord landscape outside, seems exciting.²⁰

In other words: little concrete is said, but little is enough to grasp the idea of *transparency* and

formal *simplicity*. The text is integral, it treats the inside and outside at once. The outer representation should be both a firm shell and invisible as air; the inner functions should represent themselves by exposing their commodities and activities with the least possible boundary; apparently *without façade*. But since there must be a boundary between the outside and the inside of the building for reasons of climate and property control, this boundary should be modest and plain; rather abstract than concrete and distinct in its appearance.

In the case of the 1st prize project in Aker Brygge, the façades are 9m high consisting of a separate structural system with double glass layers, some 50cm apart, with air-conditioning and sun-screening in-between (fig. 83).

Visually separated from the roof, the double glass walls appear to be continuing towards the sky with no definite boundary. A supposedly attractive effect from certain angles outside could be the full view of the ceiling and the steel umbrella structure supported by the solid-looking round columns and struts. Moreover, the interior spaces, the pools, the recreation areas and guests would be visible from the sea; a view which would be modified by the inaccessibility caused by the sea. Anyhow, this effect relies upon the transparency of the building: upon the quality of the glass and the design of the wall construction. If the common problem of overheating was met by using reflective glass which reduces the transparency from the outside, a totally *contrary effect* would be achieved; the building could not be perceived as open and friendly, extending its functions, but as rejective and closed. Thus the façade becomes that of a *frameless mirror* reflecting the incessant and infinitely varying images of water and sky. Then, the transparency would be exclusively available to the people inside the building, and the façade expression could be regarded as an offence similar to that of a psychiatrist's one-way mirror-window.²¹

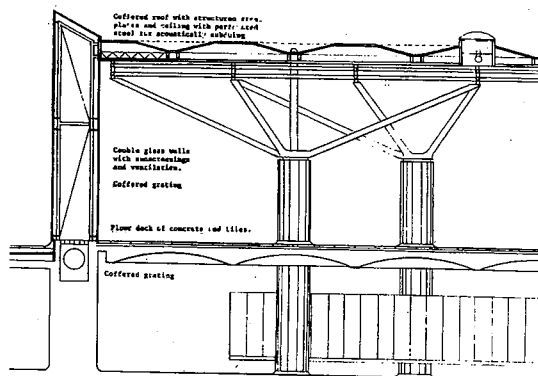
The structure that is proposed in the 1st prize project indicates a type of glass wall which, due to its thickness, is likely to appear visually protective from the outside: the structure and the distance between the layers are likely to create multiple reflections which

19 NAK, no. 277, p. 3

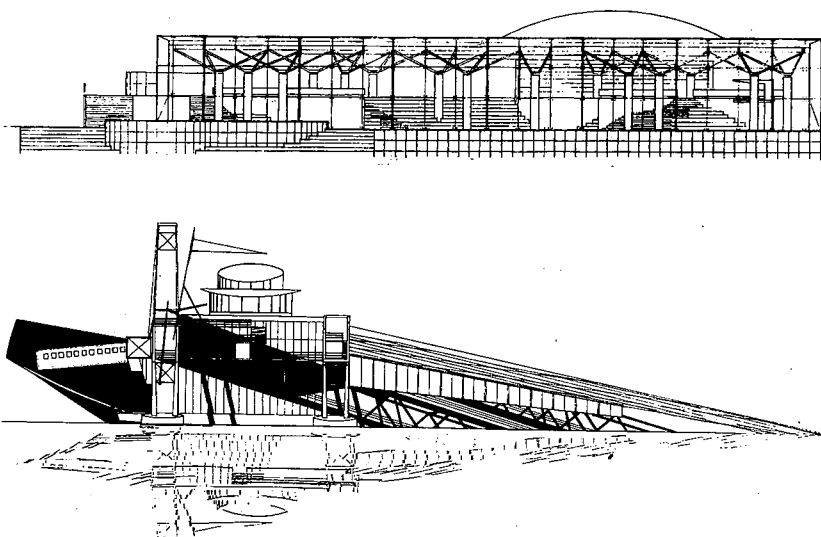
20 NAK, no. 277, p. 4.

21 Today, 8 years later, relatively colourless glass which can reduce over-heating quite effectively is available, but at a vastly higher price than reflective glass which is copper-coloured or black.

83. AKER BRYGGE BATHS, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, DETAILED SECTION



84. (BELOW) AKER BRYGGE BATHS, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, ELEVATION



85. AKER BRYGGE BATHS, 3RD PRIZE PROJECT, ELEVATIONS

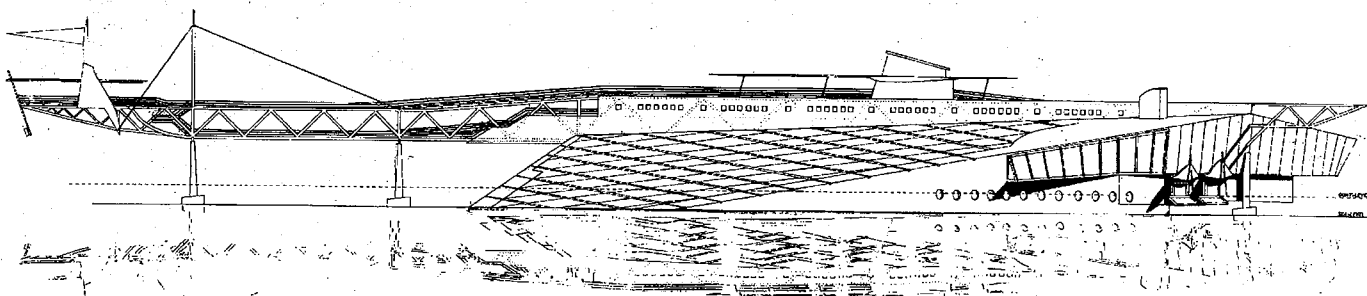
reduce visibility. Perceived from a distance, the perpetually reflecting façades would give the building the appearance of a large *clean, smooth, impenetrable* box be it colourless, silvery grey or copper.

The *visual* representation of the project enhances the duality, or mediates *two contrary* façade concepts or intentions: on the one hand the solid, reflective glazed walls shown in the plans and section drawings which protect the bathing guests and permit them to see the surroundings, and on the other hand the non-existing façades, the illusive invisibility and lack of boundary as are shown in the elevations

and the model. Figure 84 displays the façade with its repetitive subdivisions as completely dominated by the constructions inside the building, behind the façade wall. The *rhetorical effect* of this presentation is quite subtle as it enhances the attractiveness of the bath interior and negates its outer representation which, from some distance could in fact simply be utterly dull. However, artificial lighting could probably create a spectacle of dim transparency with sparkling lights and dark shadows during hours of twilight and darkness. The question is whether this can justify the everyday appearance of the volume in the environment: the huge, plain box which the rhetorical representation so cleverly fragments and dissolves.

As in the competition for the new Government Building 48 years earlier, the initial concept of the façade here is also the creation of a clean, regular and simple external appearance which expresses the inner functions. In the case of the Government Building the graphic representation underlines the *façade* as a major architectural asset; the façade is an *ordered image* of a vast number of efficient workplaces; a kind of mask. In the aqua-leisure centre the façade is repetitive and plain as well, but it is presented as abstracted and negated, made into an *invisible* film that at close range completely exposes the inner functions. The 'invisible' glass façade is an extreme expression of direct, rational, objective and 'honest' external representation; it appears without mediation or interpretation as it graphically annihilates itself. At the same time, the transparent façade in principle represents a sophisticated kind of *ambiguity* since the transparency is unreliable and unpredictable.

The façade as a more complex narrative
The elevations of the 3rd prize in the Aker Brygge Aqua-Leisure Centre, motto '88888',

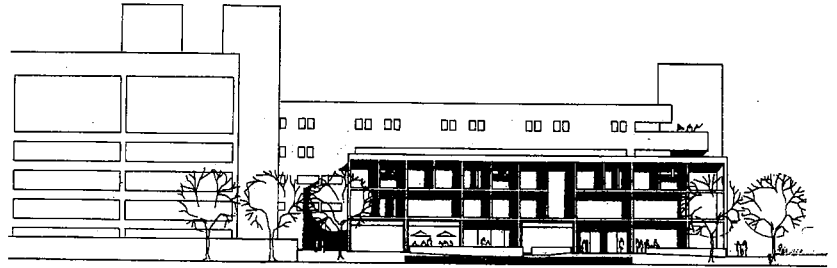


display a fundamentally different approach: a vivid sculptural composition featuring figurative connotations to nautical technology and crafts (fig. 85). The shapes are oblique and suggestive, not repetitive and plain. Closed walls are distinguished from open trusswork structures and different types of window constructions in an exceptional design. The building is exceedingly introverted, the bathing functions are definitely isolated from the surroundings. Accordingly, the façades do not in any simple, straightforward manner represent the inner functions; neither do they in any easily traceable way correlate with the structural system. Thus their representational function is more complex, and less artlessly pragmatic. In principle the representational function of the façade resembles that of constituting a mask as a self-contained outer expression, a symbolic personification of something that may or may not be occurring inside.

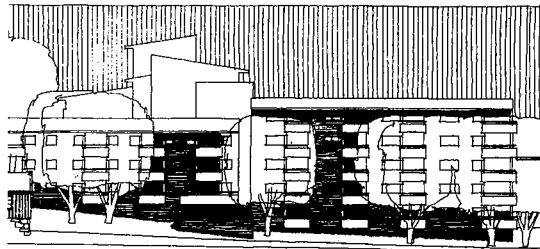
The figurative character however, in which this symbolic representation is executed, is different from the pre-functionalist patterns: here the images from a century of technological progress freed from the historicist orders are promoted. A familiarity with the early functionalist and constructivist ideals is evident; that of composing free façades with aesthetic lineaments and images which like icons or visual symbols connote the technical inventions of the *modern shipbuilding industry*. Compared with the plain and square features of the architecture that for decades had prevailed in the competitions, this architecture and its expressive façades represent a new, avant-garde line, the so-called *deconstructivism*. Thus the Danish jury member who dissented (he voted for motto '88888' to win) was able to state:

The project is profoundly original and includes that nerve and force which, in connection with the city and fjord of Oslo, yields that extra suspense which in my opinion is essential. Its richness of experience in the exterior as well as the interior displays a dignity which can be an important architectural element in Scandinavia.²²

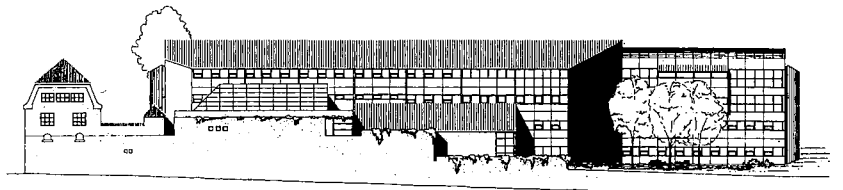
Notwithstanding the prospect of being ranked among canonical Scandinavian designs, the



86. (ABOVE) THE STATE COLLEGE OF MUSIC, WINNING PROJECT, ELEVATION



87. (LEFT AND BELOW) HEALTH AND SERVICE CENTRE FOR THE DISABLED, MOTTO 'COR', ELEVATION
MOTTO '52.50', ELEVATION



question of *dignity* in terms of richness and suspense in the particularly sensitive context is open to discussion, since the official jury criticism laconically remarks that:

the project is questionable with respect to the view of the fjord from the City Hall Square.

However, more specifically the jury continues, stating that:

the façades are exciting and skilfully worked out with reference to the maritime features.²³

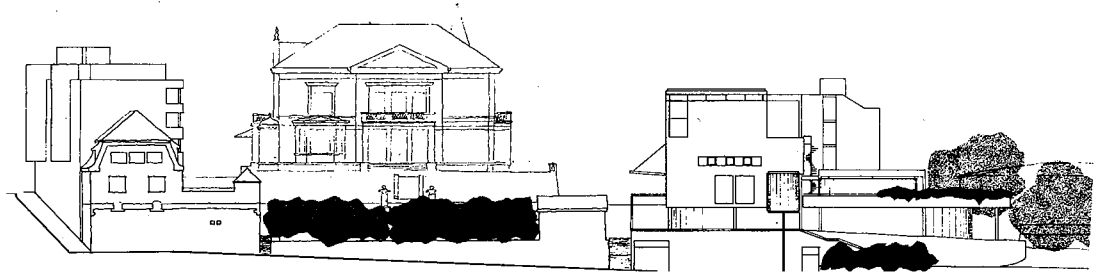
This latter statement comments the design disconnected from the reality of the social and physical context and places it in the inter-professional arena of ideas and drawings in architectural publications.

The principle of conceiving the façade as a self-contained aesthetic composition, with continuous solid parts and different forms of openings, is present in a few other competitions from the 1980s. The State College of Music competition, 1985, and the Health and

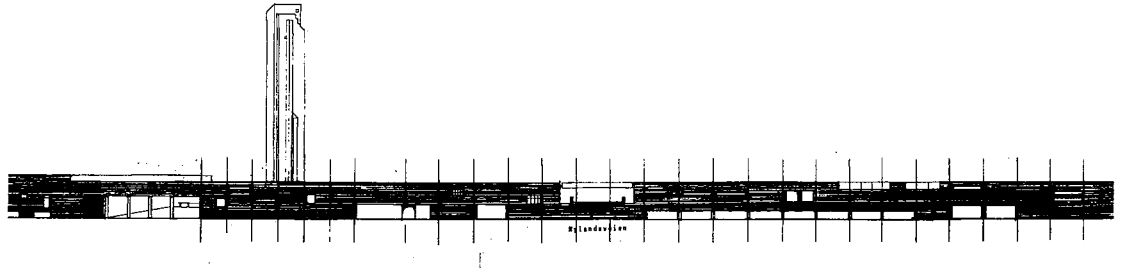
²² NAK, no. 277, p. 3.

²³ NAK, no. 277, p. 10.

88. MOTTO 'REPRO REPPEN',
ELEVATION



89. VATERLAND AND
GRØNLAND MARKET, 1ST
PRIZE PROJECT, ELEVATION



Service Centre for the Disabled, 1982, feature largely more conventional arrangements. The façades of the former (fig. 86) appear partially inspired by Le Corbusier's *brise-soleil*, and four of the five shared-prizes in the latter demonstrate standard Norwegian architecture (fig. 87). The fifth shared-prize design however, motto 'Repro Reppen' is different: the façade composition is worked out particularly in relation to the exquisite functionalist houses across the street.²⁴ Instead of further fragmenting the environment by introducing a third different aesthetic, the design enhances the local *coherence* by bringing together an interesting juxtaposition of the two existing aesthetic modes; the functionalist and that of the residential buildings from the 1890s. This is done in a manner which is up-to-date with respect to the technological aspects as well as the spatial organization of the institution (fig. 88). Here the representational aspect is more a question of *communicating*, of responding to the environment and at the same time of providing a public 'face' with relevance to the inner functions, somewhat in the spirit of Alberti's *varietà*. There are rows of repetitive windows as well as large continuous glass sections, some windows are small and some are larger; thus the façade contributes to a spatial differentiation and characterization within the very same organizational unity.

The Vaterland and Grønland Market 1st prize project is characterized by a continuous solid-looking wall of extreme dimensions with ope-

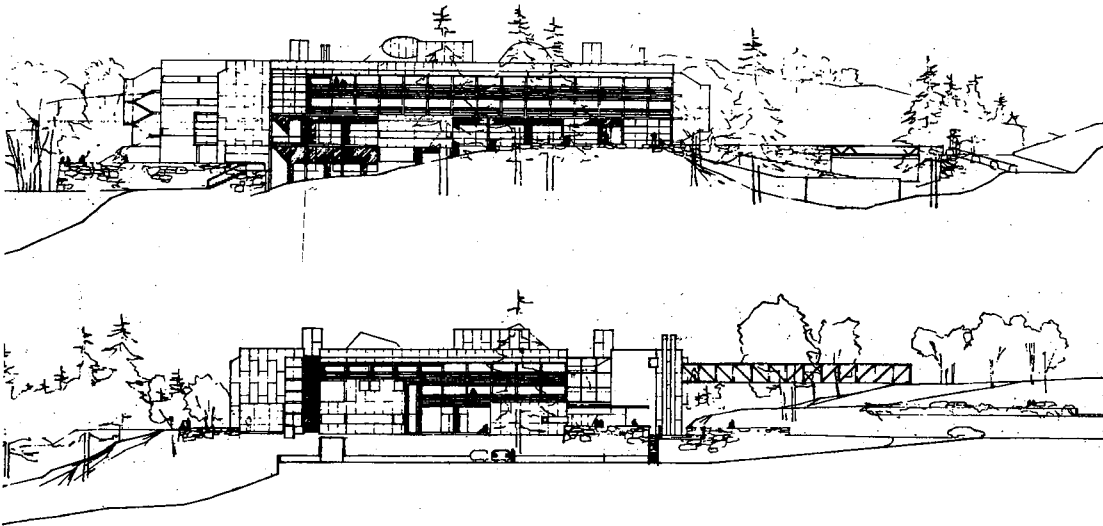
nings arranged as 'holes-in-the-wall' of various sizes from the exceptionally large to narrow slits. This 660m long rim building curves around the western corner so that it appears 480m on the elevation drawing (fig. 89). Great *graphic emphasis* is put on this façade. 'The wall' (*muren*),²⁵ as the author calls this very long and narrow building in his report, is not explained in detail with regard to the spatial conditions for use; but the *image* of its façade is a striking feature in the prefiguration. It is also a mask. The jury does not comment this long 'wall' building specifically, but it is reasonable to deduce that it is an important factor when the jury calls the solution captivating and concludes that 'the project displays a striking assurance and originality',²⁶ as mentioned in chapter VII.

This highly praised *conceptual simplicity*, however, proved to be a problem after realization owing to this very relationship between the wall or the outer mask and its connecting *interface* of spaces and functions. Similar to the representational spaces in the medieval castles and palaces which were protected by external walls and faced inner open spaces and courts, the 1st prize 'wall building' was proposed as a narrow structure, only 10m wide with one-sided spaces facing the inner area of the site. After the competition the 'wall building' had been dramatically enlarged: it now contained spaces on both sides of a central top-lit corridor or 'pedestrian street'. This enclosed pedestrian street has ended up as an insufferably long dead-end since the renewal in the next

24 Erected in 1931, architect Fritjof Reppen. There are a number of fine functionalist buildings from the 30s in the neighbourhood: terraced houses by Nicolai Beer, and several blocks of flats of red brick or painted plastering designed by various architects.

25 *NAK*, no. 246, p. 6. *Muren* in Norwegian means a solid wall of masonry or stone work or concrete, and connotes to the solidity of fortification walls or confinement walls.

26 *NAK*, no. 246, p. 6.



block it was intended to join has not yet occurred.

The plan was to sell off sections piecemeal to individual shopkeepers and businesses, like condominium shares. Several factors led to the bankruptcy of the promoter shortly after the inauguration in 1989: the general economy was weakened after the boom in the mid-1980s. Moreover, contrary to the initial preconditions, the City Authorities had allowed a huge new shopping centre, Oslo City, to be erected on the adjoining site, thus crucially influencing the market in the area, and it proved difficult to sell the condominiums. As one community representative said: 'people don't go there, there are hundreds of metres of nothing (cars and buses are below on the ground level) between the very few points where you can enter the spaces'. This statement plainly expresses the limitations of the structural principle to adapt to various, quite probable situations. The conceptual simplicity which was promoted by a seductive competition rhetoric, was simply too oversimplified.²⁷

The resurgence of more figurative and solid façades is found in the Soria Moria education centre competition in 1978. The juxtaposition of solid walls, plastic modulation and the rather free, informal way of combining modular geometry in the façades, indicate an intention of creating a complex featured by solidity and plasticity rather than strict, modular grids (fig. 90). As mentioned in chapter VI the author of Soria Moria describes the project with a historical, typological alle-

gory (a castle) as:

easily identified from the outside, protective and secure from the inside.²⁸

Furthermore, this description is one of the few in which the *materiality* and colour were explicitly mentioned:

The rusty red colour [of Cor-Ten steel panels] which has bluish black undertones, can endow the building with an abundantly nuanced surface which is robust and at the same time can age with dignity like the large, old tarred timber lodges in Holmenkollåsen [the neighbourhood].²⁹

These further connotations to tradition and the past are not to be taken literally but as subtle, abstract indications of a general architectural approach or an atmosphere. Nonetheless, the nicely evocative phrases draw much attention to the outer appearance of the building, a fact that is substantiated by the concreteness of the façade drawings as well.

Although the Soria Moria project seems closed and protective, the façade is shaped to mediate various forms of interaction between inside and outside. The interface is well thought out and carefully designed for both close range use (e.g the terrace by the entrance and by the conservatory), and longer views from the lounges and dining areas and the individual guest rooms.

²⁷ In 1994, however, the situation seemed happier: after a financial restructuring, the owner was able to lease out the premises at a low price; most of the spaces are now occupied among others by the County Administration Offices.

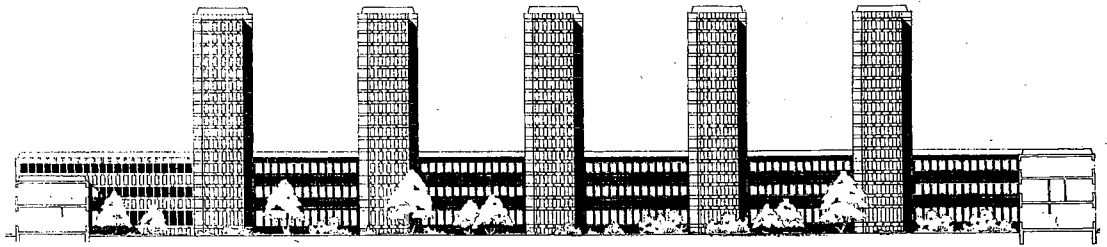
²⁸ NAK, no. 215, p. 4.

²⁹ NAK, no. 215, p. 6.

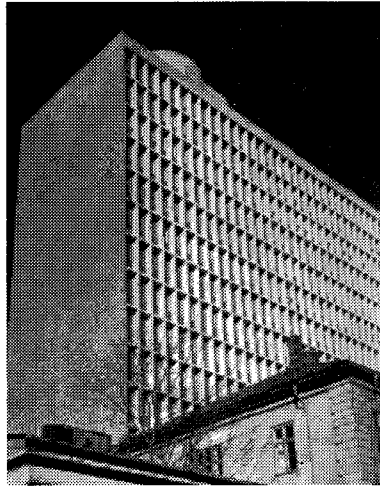
91. (RIGHT) NEW TECHNICAL COLLEGE, WINNING PROJECT, ELEVATION

92. THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING EXTENSION, NILS HOLTER

93. THE GOVERNMENT BUILDING, ERLING VIKSJØ



92



93

As shown in the examples above the international postmodernism that was influential in the same period, especially in the United States of America, is not explicitly present in the competitions of this study. The hegemonic competition architecture is sooner marked by a more figurative elaboration of modernist principles. A number of clearly postmodernist-inspired buildings were erected in Norway, especially in the 1980s and early 1990s. However, the general impression is that the popular aspect of this movement influenced the adoption of architectural forms from abroad, whether they were classical forms, symmetry or other typical features. Inspirations from vernacular and traditional architecture supplemented the Norwegian consensus with figurative elements such as for instance slanting roofs, gables and bay windows. In the ideas competition 'The City and the Fjord' in 1983, the prize-winning designs feature such qualities, often associating to a typical small town idyll.

SAMENESS OF MODULAR HOMOGENEITY

In spite of the emergence of figurative designs

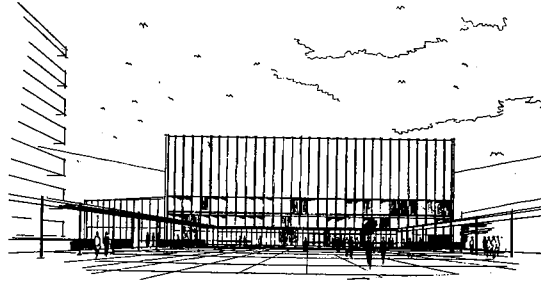
in the 1980s, the façades of the 51 years of prize-winning designs appear conspicuously *homogeneous*: light-wall constructions with square, *modular grids* dominate the picture. The walls are not designed to look as if they are made of one coherent, plastic structure, but consist of numerous, rather identical components which are assembled in or filled into a rectangular pattern. However, the typical features of the façade design, that is the proportioning and particularities of configuration, change over the period.

During the first 15 years, the layout of windows and closed parts underlines the definiteness or the *shape* of the cubic volumes. The edges form a material continuity, a frame, which follows the contours of the building. The entire façade composition of solids and openings is often asymmetrical and underlines the shape as an indivisible whole. The windows are frequently closely juxtaposed and appear as continuous bands of glass (a kind of *fenêtre en longeur*) across the façade; thin coverings of structural parts such as columns and floors stress the regularity of the secondary subdivision. The Government Building designs, the Central Station and the Parliament Building, the New Technical College (fig. 91) and the Central Offices of Storebrand are typical examples. 'Hole-in-the-wall' windows occur occasionally in these buildings, but then as an accessory feature adjusted within the façade panel grid. Although radically different in its basic conception from the point of view of inserting a new building in an existing environment, the new Government Building and the Parliament Building extension are remarkably similar to each other. If one looks at the latter facing Akersgaten today, one sees a modern edifice, its façade principle is essentially the same as the Government Building, *Høyblokka*, as it is realized based on the 1939 project. It features the

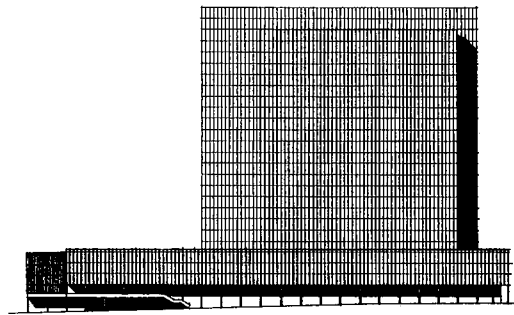
same clean grid pattern of vertical units, consisting of equally dimensioned concrete bars in precise regularity; a sort of modified *brise-soleil* (figs. 92 and 93).

There is a line of competitions that followed in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, in which the façade 'skin' becomes *lighter* and *thinner*; the distinction between solid and light, closed and open, is erased and the façades appear evenly homogeneous. The figurative function of windows assembled in bands or larger sections is abandoned; instead windows and closed panels fill in the continuous web of a uniform curtain-wall grid as equipollent, often optional components. (Actually motto 'Rytme' in the Government Building competition is a predecessor to this line.) The Oslo Concert Hall, the State College of Sport, the University of Oslo, the Karl Johan *kvartalet*, Oslo Police Headquarters, the SAS Hotel, Tullinløkka, the National Theatre, the Bank of Norway, Christiania Torv and finally the Aker Brygge Aqua-Leisure Centre are featured by grid webs which spread out like an independent *membrane* smoothly enveloping the structures.

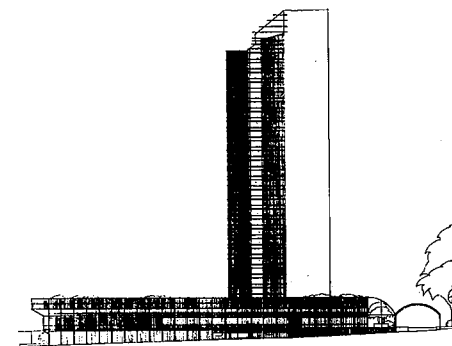
There is a high degree of visual *ambiguity* in the prize-winning designs as to whether the membrane is transparent or not: the grid lines merely indicate modular rhythms for subdividing of the façade. This ambiguity was often intended since the optional possibility of windows or closed panels was an ideological asset. In the prize-winning designs such as the Oslo Concert Hall (1957), the Karl Johan *kvartalet* (1962) and the SAS Hotel (1969), the façade wall basically features its proper endlessly *repetitive* pattern (figs. 94-96). Look at the immaculate, anonymous, business-like, blank 'faces' of the SAS Hotel and the Karl Johan *kvartalet* prize-winning projects. The façades of motto '13831' in the latter appear with exceptional bareness and simplicity: an *infinitely continuous* grid of identical, single-storey rectangles, the rhythm of which is altered in the ground floor in order to allow larger window panes while simultaneously increasing the effect of lightness and openness, so that the entire building appears to be floating above the ground. With reference to the Royal Hotel in Copenhagen, designed by Arne Jacobsen (1960), one can imagine the walls as



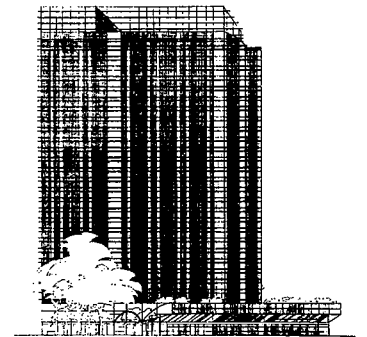
94. OSLO CONCERT HALL, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, PERSPECTIVE EN FACE



95. KARL JOHAN KVARTALET, MOTTO '13831', ELEVATION



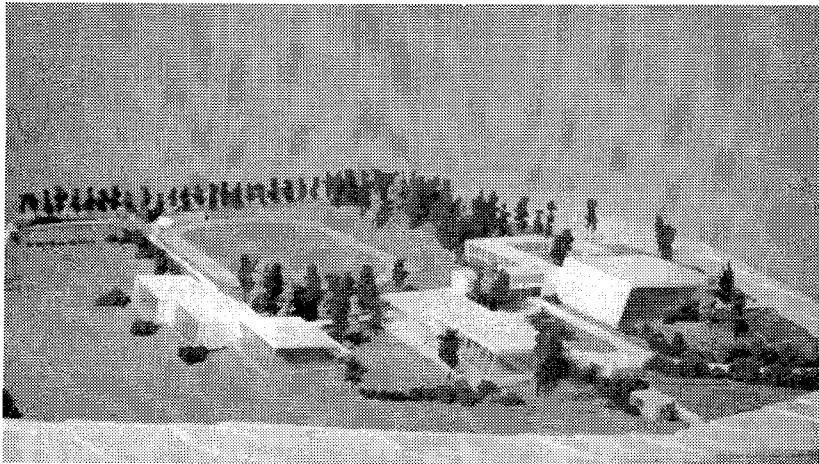
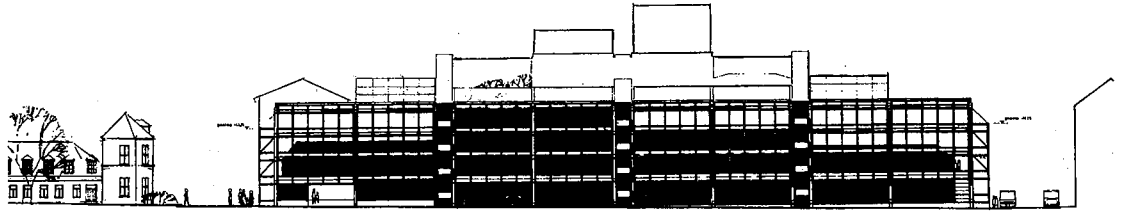
96. THE SAS HOTEL, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, ELEVATIONS



thin glass panels precisely outlining the plain and bare building shapes, yet at the same time displaying a material ambiguity due to the shiny material, which as they reflect the changing lights and clouds of the sky apparently dissolve the impression of mass. The Oslo Plaza Hotel built nearly 30 years later displays similar features.

The façades of the prize-winning projects for Tullinløkka, the National Theatre and the Bank of Norway, are square grids as well, but they are articulated according to a *hierarchy of subdivision* corresponding with the structural hierarchy of load-bearing and non-load-bearing structures. Though repetitive and uniform, this hierarchy yields a certain figurative effect compared with the continuously enveloping membranes mentioned above: certain elements in the façade pattern can be perceived in an even, *rhythmical order*; a modu-

97. BANK OF NORWAY HEAD OFFICE, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, ELEVATION



98. THE STATE COLLEGE OF SPORT, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT

lation of scale. The façade principle here is based on the design of the inner structural unit; the façades can consist of any composition of possible additions of an infinite number of identical units. The figurative *plainness* of the secondary components visually substantiates this principle; in order to distinguish the primary structure it is important that the secondary system is subordinate and neutral (fig. 97).

Although there is an evident aesthetic difference between the two principles, i.e. the continuous, homogeneous curtain wall and the additive-construction-system façade, I doubt that this distinction is crucial in a wider aesthetic perspective: in both cases the façade appears as a uniform repetition of smooth and light squares, and in practice many of these façades came to resemble those of the first group with windows assembled in bands between bands of non-transparent panels adapted to the grid.

The façade as a thin and 'invisible' membrane is most purely employed in the College of Sport in 1957 (fig. 98) and particularly in the Aqua-Leisure Centre in 1987, which appears as a very sophisticated relative of the Sports College.

ENTRANCES

The *entrance* is a fundamental part of the archi-

tectural interface; it marks the manner in which the building receives visitors from the outside and the way out from the building to the public space. The entrances shown in the competition architecture depend on the special situation of the site, of the nature of the building and the adaptation of the architectural mode to this.

As a reflection of the general priority of coherence between the inside and the outside, and of good accessibility, the majority of entrance doors are directly on *ground level* or within a very few steps' range. The few exceptions are Voksenåsen³⁰ and motto: 'U' in the Government Building competition in which there are five steps in the symmetrical, slightly curved entrance arrangement; a distinct classical touch. In the other projects the ground is arranged in order to create a smooth transition from the outside to the inside of the building. This smooth transition is further shown as the entrances in general are connected to lobby areas on the immediate inside of the wall, that is, in most cases, after passing through a *vindfang*,³¹ a small 'windbreak' room of 2-3m depth.

The vast majority of projects feature some kind of *roof cover* outside the entrance door, for protection from the elements and as a manner of signalling where the entrance is in the homogeneous façade. In most cases this is done by a separate roof construction - a canopy - supported by posts or cantilevered from the façade. In a few cases, such as the Central Station, Christiania Torv and the Bank of Norway, the roof shelter occurs as the entrance wall is pulled in at the ground level underneath the floors above. Obviously these pulled-in solutions, especially if they are broad, enhance the *anonymity* of the entrance, makes it less visible and more hidden than if a separate canopy is placed in front of the door. In the Karl Johan *kvartalet* prize-winning designs no entrances are actually shown: there are inlets (big 'openings') in the ground floor walls providing broad access to the inner pedestrian area

30 The proposal had a one-storey-high outdoor flight of stairs, which was criticized by the jury.

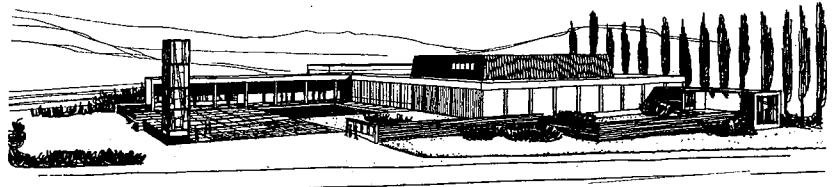
31 *Vindfang*, 'an instrument with which to catch the wind', Falk og Torp, p. 986.

which is laid out on the ground and first floors of the building complex.

There are other situations in which the entrance seems *broader* and larger than it actually is. Neutral doors which are not distinguished from the large glass walls they are part of, appear as any one of the modular units in a grid façade in the prize-winning designs of the Concert Hall, the College of Sport, the Police Headquarters and the SAS Hotel as well as in Tullinløkka and the Bank of Norway. The Concert Hall and the Police Headquarters have canopy roofs in front of the entire façade, many times as wide as a door, which mediate this kind of generous but also ambiguous entrance solution. Other rather anonymous entrances in grid pattern walls are shown in the Storebrand building and the New Technical College.

Finally, a way of articulating the entrance to a building is by guiding the movement alongside *vertical limitations* of the outdoor space next to the entrance. In the 1st prize project for the Edvard Munch Museum this is done by means of a half-closed colonnade (fig. 99). In Høvikodden and Tullinløkka for example, the building volumes form inlets in which the adjoining walls direct the visitor towards the entrance. The various architectural means which are employed in the shaping of entrances may also be combined or juxtaposed in the designs: recesses in the building volumes can also have a canopy roof in front, for instance.

Two extreme proposals for an entrance are shown in the material covered in this study. Firstly, the purchased project motto '10001' for Tullinløkka has no entrance at all to the new buildings on the large central site. The narrow alley which intersects the volume diagonally does not provide access to the building which appears as a secretive, inaccessible enclosure in the urban space. Footbridges connect to the surrounding historical buildings through which one enters the new 'secret' spaces (see fig. 67 in chapter IX). Secondly, the 3rd prize design for the Aker Brygge Aqua-Leisure Centre features a complex in the harbour basin which is disconnected from the shore. The entrance which occurs by means of two narrow gangways is a very particular and unique kind



99. THE EDVARD MUNCH MUSEUM, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT

of approach.

The entrances in the prize-winning projects, thus, are in general plain and not particularly marked in relation to the walls in which they are set. Some entrances are designed as a specific place or feature, and some as ambiguous zones in which it might be possible to penetrate the wall somewhere. As a whole the tendency to tone down the entrance is consistent with the tendency towards homogeneous façades, the intention of spatial continuum and the minimization of physical interface.

Owing to the nature of the representation of the façade problem in the competition material, that is the relative architectural homogeneity or sameness on the one hand and the relative scarcity and also diversity of verbal and visual representation on the other, I will pursue the different rhetorical aspects of this issue further in the following.

VERBAL AND VISUAL RHETORIC CONCERNING THE FAÇADES

The issue of façades in the competition texts

The variation in extent and thoroughness of the competition texts is salient on the issue of the façades. The general brevity of verbal comments on the façades is a striking feature; extremely little has been written about the exterior appearance in the majority of publications in the material. In the publications of a number of competitions such as the Karl Johan *kvartalet* and the SAS Hotel, the development plan for the University of Oslo in 1968 and the State College of Music in 1985, comments on the façades of the prize-winning designs are entirely *omitted*; in the University of Oslo (1968) the façades are not even shown in drawings or model. In these cases the written evaluations concentrate on the spatial organization, on structure and circulation problems, and the question of the external appearance is

treated vaguely, as a general matter of volumes and masses. Thus, the principle 'Good architecture is not made from the outside',³² as Ove Bang stated in the debate that arose after the competition for the Government Building in 1939, seems increasingly to have become taken for granted in the 1960s. The exterior appearance and the representational aspect is something that follows as a subordinate consequence of the spatial and sculptural organization, and does not merit mention as an independent architectural problem.

In cases where the exterior is discussed, the prevalent type of verbal comments on the façades are remarkably *general* and vague. For example, the exterior of the Edvard Munch Museum

makes an exceptionally harmonious impression.³³

and the Oslo Concert Hall

has a natural and harmonious design displaying the desirable accentuation as a House of Music towards the town.³⁴

In spite of a 'somewhat surprising character', the New Technical College

makes a good architectural impression as a whole.³⁵

However, in the University of Oslo, 1958,

the impression of the 1st stage is less favourable. The façade elevations do not possess the same assurance as shown in the site plan, but are plain and without exaggerated effects.³⁶

These quotations comprise the entire comments on the prize-winning façades in the respective competition publications. *Simplicity* is a favoured quality for which also *harmony* and *naturalness* are practically synonymous. Matter-of-factness is regarded as positive, and excesses or exaggerated effects are to be avoided.

In complete contrast, the texts in the competitions for Tullinløkka, the National Theatre

and the Bank of Norway treat the external appearance with great *thoroughness*; in both the authors' reports and the jury statements. In his report for the Tullinløkka competition the 1st prize-winner writes about the scale and the importance of introducing

. . . a modular system with certain references to the axial dimensions of the existing buildings. Furthermore the question of whether certain formal elements in the architecture of the existing buildings can motivate an implementation of related formal elements in the new structure can be considered.³⁷

In the more technical text on the structuring of the building it is said that

the exhibition spaces have side lighting, which can be shaded as required (by external blinds, internal light filters, textiles etc.).³⁸

The *jury's* criticism responds to the tone of the author's report, praising the

. . .convincing manner . . . by the proposed subdivisioning of the new building complex into smaller units, which will accentuate the monumental character of the two museum buildings and simultaneously adapt to the scale of the university buildings. . . In addition to the consideration it shows towards its surroundings, the exterior of the building has great qualities. Although the perspectives exaggerate the expressiveness of the buildings unfavourably, the museum extension can, on the basis of the façade drawings and choice of materials, achieve a considerable architectural intrinsic value.³⁹

The text in the Bank of Norway competition treats the appearance of the building with great thoroughness, too; here in the jury's remarks:

In the opinion of the jury it is a mistake to erect buildings in the formal style of former ages. . . the greatest demands must be made to heights, proportions, materials and details.⁴⁰

and

32 Quoted in Hallset, *BK*, 22, (1940), p. 56. See chapter VI.

33 *K*, no. 9, (1954), p. 2.

34 *NAK*, no. 38, (1957), p. 5.

35 *K*, no. 12, (1955), p. 6.

36 *NAK*, no. 48, (1958), p. 6.

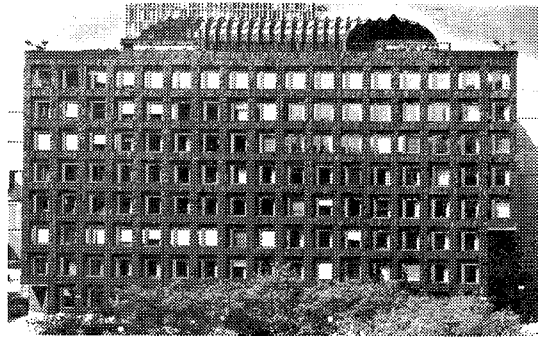
37 *NAK*, no. 183, (1973), p. 5.

38 *NAK*, no. 183, (1973), pp. 7-9.

39 *NAK*, no. 183, (1973), p. 10.

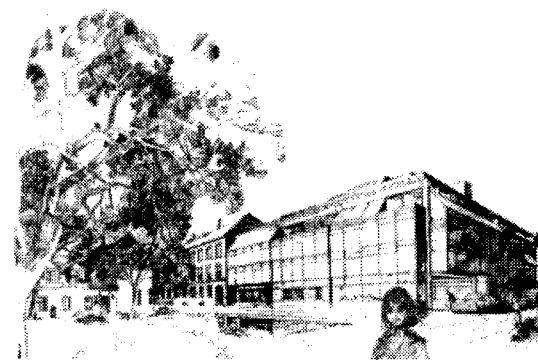
40 *NAK*, no. 192, p. 3, the jury's general remarks.

In the same way that the present bank building has a monumental appearance in accordance with its era, the new bank building must express the particular character of its function. The identity of the building ought to be based on the 'frank' and natural overall form of the construction. It must be possible to perceive the building as a continuous, distinct whole.⁴¹



100. BANK OF SWEDEN HEAD OFFICE, STOCKHOLM, PETER CELSING

The 1st-prize winner's report is exceptionally extensive on the issue of aesthetics. As mentioned earlier he praises many of the existing buildings generously, as 'the magnificent buildings', and 'a grand exterior space'. The author invokes a rich and vivid image of the environment and of how the new edifice is designed to enhance and refine the qualities that are already there. Although this is done in considerable detail with respect to the individual buildings, the emphasis remains general, on dimensions and overall scale, rather than materiality. The text subsequently adheres to a *general* tone, including nice, but rather suggestive terms as in



101. BANK OF NORWAY HEAD OFFICE, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, PERSPECTIVE

the human dimensions and charming formal elements (oblique/curved, straight/slanted, plain/profiled etc.) of the historical built environment can be recreated in . . . the furnishings. . . and by adapting variants by the cantilevered units in the façades.⁴²

More specifically the author also writes:

Once completed the competition block will contain complex references to the environment. . . While the outer units primarily refer to the immediate surroundings in the streets, the higher, central section is important from the long-distance perspective. The outer units appear as a symbolic 'external protection for the inner functions of the Bank of Norway'. Through sectioning, cantilevered oriels and pulled-in sections, as well as façade materials of steel and glass, this 'protective barrier' will nevertheless appear open and accessible.⁴³

The 'protective' function of the façade is achieved

by creating an intermediate zone of about 2.5m between the public outside (the streets) and the inner spaces of the bank. Thus the author is able to advocate a façade aesthetic, and a façade tectonic which are *modern*, and consistent with the prevailing architectural mode at the time which favoured *lightness* and *transparency*. But why does he mention the aspect of protection? A reasonable explanation would be in order to respond to the natural assumption that the central bank, endowed with the important responsibility of safekeeping the Nation's 'assets', in addition to the factual and practical security problems, also requires an *aesthetically* protective *image*, a kind of mask. The aesthetic and symbolic protection in this case is a 2.5 m thick transparent 'filter' constituted by glass walls, thus definitely lighter and more 'unprotective' than for instance the equivalent Bank of Sweden building in Stockholm, which features solid granite walls with individual windows (fig. 100).

The jury's criticism on the façades goes as follows:

The treatment and articulation of the façades are interesting and well worked out. This is the case in particular with the façade facing *Bankplassen* where the proposal is sufficiently powerful to complete the square.⁴⁴

41 NAK, no. 192, p. 28.
42 NAK, no. 192, pp. 4,8.
43 NAK, no. 192, p. 8.
44 NAK, no. 192, p. 9.

This statement illustrates the *relativity* of terms usually employed to characterize such concrete aesthetic matters as façades. Today, 20 years later, one would hardly call the prize-winning bank façade *powerful*; its potential powerfulness cannot be understood in terms of materials or formally impressive grandeur, but possibly in terms of possessing a uniform, broad and plane frontage which aligns with the neighbouring old buildings, and which repeats the theme of slanting roofs in the upper storeys (fig. 101).⁴⁵

In the context of the 51 years of Oslo competitions, the interesting point is firstly the sudden emergence of a *verbal emphasis* on the problem of the external appearance starting, rather overwhelmingly, with the competition for Tullinløkka. Secondly, the *manner* of dealing with this issue is noteworthy: most of the text is concerned with the surrounding buildings in the area, establishing guidelines for the new edifice by extracting information about overall features such as dimensions, heights and widths, axis lines and general morphological traits. Thus, a *context is created* which, by forwarding sufficiently convincing logic and care, theoretically connects the new structures to the existing; it tones down the issue of aesthetic contrast and makes the new proposal appear indispensable.

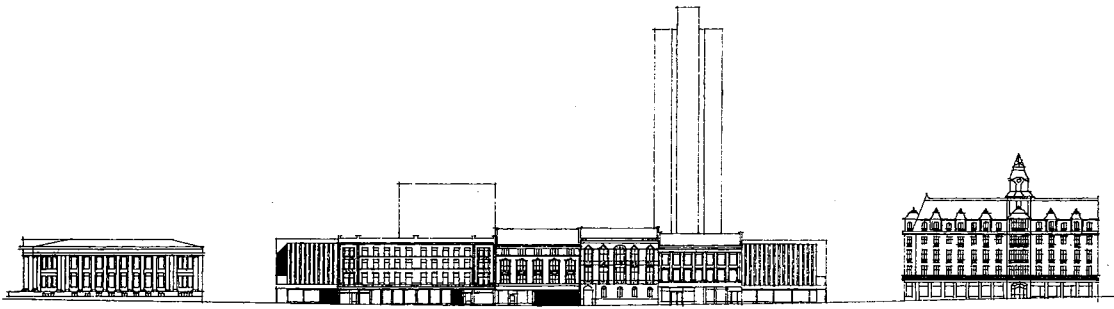
The new façade is first of all presented as dependent on the *abstract geometric references* to axes and heights; the actual quality of the façade is subordinate in this verbal context, it is judged by another kind of standard; that of the modern, simple and homogeneous transparency and apparent accessibility. The reverberations from the architectural postmodernism across the Atlantic were at this time met by verbal eloquence and architectural toning down of the formal aspects: in the name of user participation and egalitarian moderation the prevailing virtues of aesthetic frankness and homogeneity were continued, although in decomposed, additive versions. As demonstrated in chapter VI this extensive consideration of the aesthetic environment occurs in the competitions at a time when the *public awareness* of and influence on environmental matters had become decisive. This was one way in which the architects could meet the public

conscience and commitment well-prepared with descriptions and analyses. They placed the new designs convincingly within the environment, the age-value of which was commonly appreciated, but the façade principles of which they regarded as too obsolete, and irrelevant to be repeated. As a consequence the façade zone was given the role of the logically optimal, but vaguely defined, *interface* between the modern, inner functions and the outer surroundings; as if it was the result of having erased the conflict and the boundary between the two.

The approaches that were employed in the texts of these three competitions set a standard with respect to aesthetic considerations, which was to be continued throughout the rest of the period of this study, though in less extensive forms. The first three competitions represent a distinct peak with regard to thoroughness and eloquence, but the same principles and approaches were modified and implemented in for instance Vaterland and Grønland Market, Christiania Torv and the Aker Brygge Aqua-Leisure Centre.

To conclude this section: the competition *texts* treat the façade, or the external appearance, of the proposals *superficially*: as a rule, little concrete is said on the matter. In the early 1970s, a distinct *change* occurred as the texts became conspicuously extensive and thorough; the aesthetic problem was included, however still in quite abstract terms, and a large part of the text described and analyzed the existing buildings in the vicinity. This astonishing verbal emphasis on the architectural appearance concurs with a shift in the general political climate; it occurs at the same time as the consensus of the long Labour-Party-ruled State is cracking, its technocratic hegemony was crucially reduced, and different popular movements and political fractions had gained important influence in planning procedures. Notwithstanding this dramatic textual change, the architecture of the façades in the competitions remains in principle the same; light, homogeneous structures with anonymous grid patterns. The technocratic attitudes continue in the hegemonic competition architecture. Only later, in the 1980s, does this prevalent sameness bifurcate: on the one hand into the further elaborated, glazed

⁴⁵ Note that I am speaking about the *competition design*; this aspect is altered in the realized project which features a firm façade structure of granite.



sophistication of Aker Brygge Aqua-Leisure Centre in 1987, and on the other into the more complex configurations of solids and openings.

The visual rhetoric of the façade representations

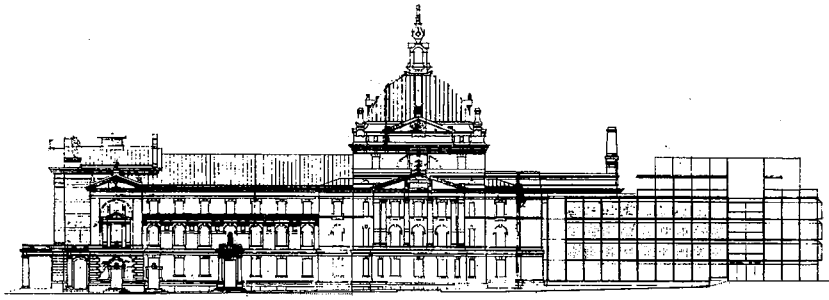
The façade drawings, or the *graphic modes* of representing the façades, appear more disparate than the façade architecture they represent. In the early competition publications, such as the Government Building, the Parliament Buildings Extension and the Central Station, the *key* drawings are the perspectives. As mentioned in chapter VI the new buildings are emphasized in contrast to the existing ones with dramatic effects, sometimes by using the so-called 'night-perspective' in which the buildings are fully lit inside; they beam with light through the windows giving the building the appearance of a dynamic artefact or engine, spreading its inner energy to the surroundings.

The façade drawing of motto 'Vestibyle' in the Government Building competition was treated above: on the one hand the graphic rhetoric tends to exaggerate the coherence between the new and the old building, but on the other the perspective (see chapter VI) displays a fierce alienation from the old. Façade drawings are, however, lacking in the publications of several of these early competition projects. The common feature with regard to the graphic representation, as shown in the perspectives, is that the new edifices are presented in a geometrically precise manner, they have a certain material concreteness, explicitly distinguishing the openings from the closed sections and precisely outlining the shapes whilst leaving the environment vague and abstract.

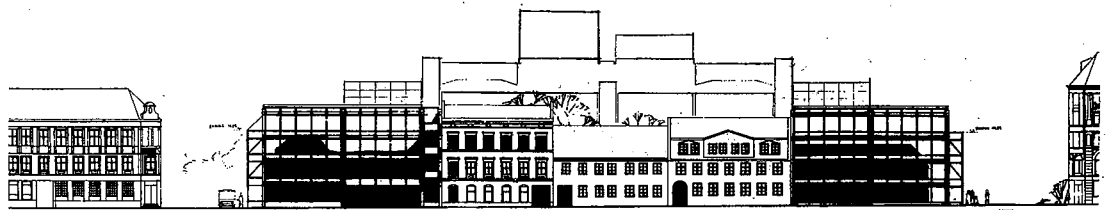
This typical clean façade graphic, which treated the new edifices 'objectively', with geo-

metric precision, but abstractly detached from the environment, prevailed throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and into the 1960s. The perspectives became less dramatic, and their role was frequently replaced, or supplemented, by models. The façade drawings of the Karl Johan *kvartalet* and the SAS Hotel (see figures above) represent the most exquisitely pure, machine-like façade graphic; the peak of technocratic self-sufficiency, representing its product as the evident solution to a problem whose essence is considered intrinsic, and not subject to external influence.

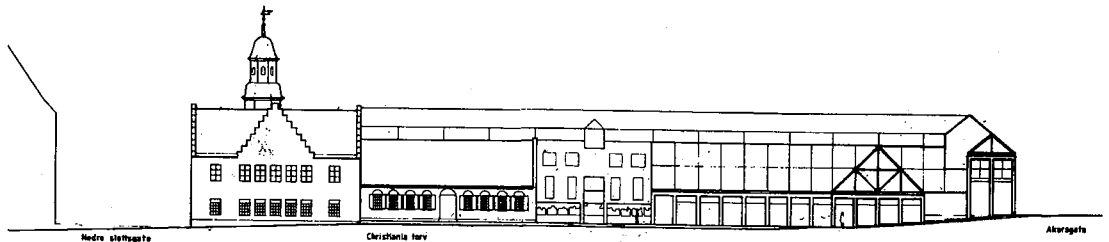
Nevertheless, the published façade of motto '13831' towards Karl Johans *gate* (fig. 102) is *not* the new structure as it is shown in the model. Instead, the façades of the old houses (except the corner buildings) remain, although severely distorted and penetrated by huge openings. We remember, from chapter VI, that the historical value (age-value) of this particular environment and the street atmosphere was stressed in the jury's statements, but the way in which the old façades are preserved in this project is not particularly credible or realistic. The graphic thus *conceals* the aesthetic impact of the proposed design in the environment; the façade along the street gives the image of being more or less as it was before, and the new corner edifices inconspicuously repeat the overall dimensions. In a way similar to motto 'Vestibyle' in the Government Building, 1939, the façade drawing graphically attempts to connect the new, gross and essentially different complex architecturally to the existing surroundings. On a superficial level, one could believe this approach to be realistic. There is no evidence that these graphic adaptations or exaggerations in either case had any influence in the process of obtaining the commission.



103. THE NATIONAL THEATRE
EXTENSION, 1ST PRIZE
PROJECT, ELEVATION



104. BANK OF NORWAY HEAD
OFFICE, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT,
ELEVATION



105. CHRISTIANIA TORV, 1ST
PRIZE PROJECT, ELEVATION

Nonetheless, it is peculiar that, in both cases at a stage when the commission was not yet decided, the competition publications show illustrations of the projects which are specifically aimed at making the new appear adapted to the old environment.⁴⁶

There is an important disparity, then, between the graphic manner of representing the main architectural characteristics of the project (modern, clean, consistently homogeneous) and the attempt to adapt them, or at least make them appear adapted, to the lineaments of the historical environment. Nevertheless, when we start looking at the competitions of the 1970s, we will see that the rhetorical, graphic acknowledgement of the historical Karl Johan environment (however ambiguous) is worth noting as a sign of an emerging awareness of the issue.

The *graphic* representations of *Tullinløkka*, the National Theatre Extension and the Bank of Norway 1st prize projects emphasize the *existing buildings* with great detail and precision;

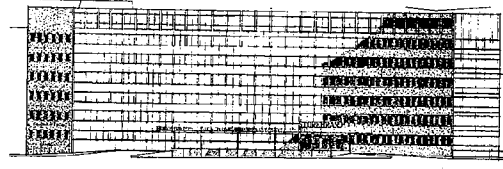
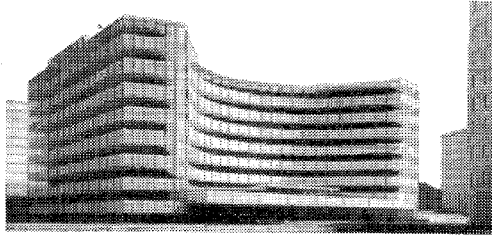
they are presented as important elements of the projects whereas the new edifices tend to appear more abstract. There is of course the problem of how to represent graphically the ambiguous material nature of glass. In the National Theatre for example (fig. 103), the grid lines correspond with axis dimensions that can be found in the existing building; the façade appears as a composition of lines and grids relating to the old façade with an almost 'immaterial' lightness. In the Bank of Norway competition, the jury criticized the winner on account of the elevation drawings, saying that:

Model studies as well as perspective drawings are illustrative whilst the façade drawings appear somewhat flattering because of the artful mirror effects.⁴⁷

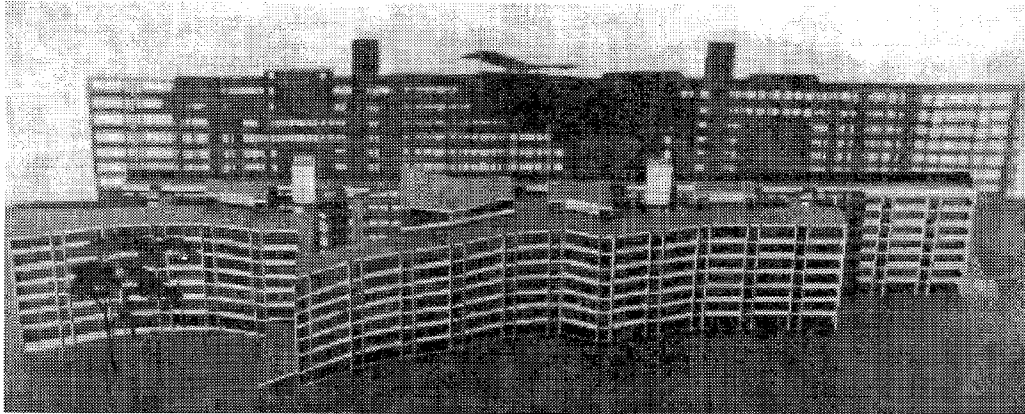
The graphic technique emphasizes the figurative and material lineaments of the existing buildings and displays the light, ambiguous transparency of the new walls as well. But most importantly, the shading featuring reflections

⁴⁶ In the case of the Government Building, a decade passed before a new assessment of the shared prize projects was conducted.

⁴⁷ *NAK*, no. 192, p. 9.



106. CENTRAL OFFICE OF STOREBRAND, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, MODEL AND ELEVATION



107. OSLO POLICE HEADQUARTERS, MOTTO '7.62', MODEL

of the buildings across the street *graphically distort* the actual uniformity of the façades, making them (i.e. the façades) appear to have smaller dimensions and a more varied image than probable (fig. 104).

From that time onwards, the existing environment, whether non-built landscape or buildings, was usually adequately included in the graphic representation of the competitions that followed, see for example the 1st prize project for Christiania Torv (fig. 105) in addition to the ones already shown. In fact the entire façade representation tends to be more concrete, more realistic and less ambiguous.

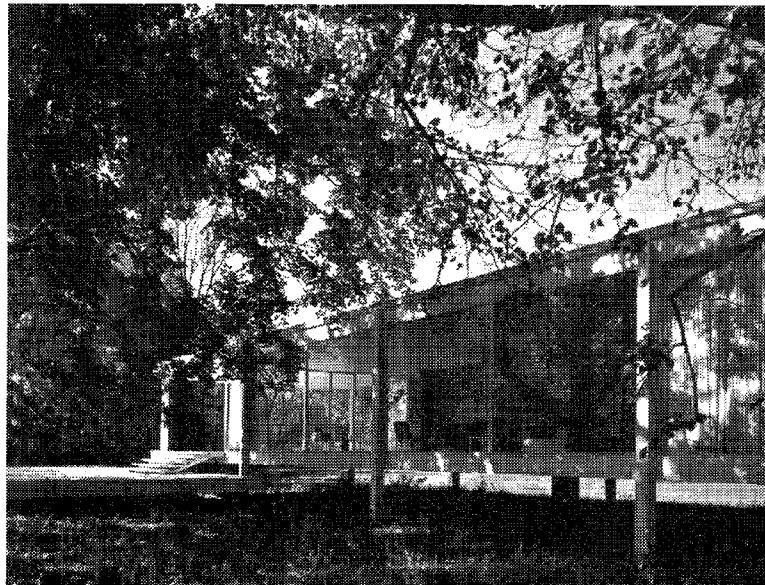
Disparity of model and graphic rhetoric

The relationship between the *drawings* and the *model* representation is an interesting topic for further study of the rhetorical aspect of the competition design material. There are three types of model: the site model, usually showing the proposed buildings as compact masses on a small scale, then a larger scale model showing the structures and internal spaces of the building. The third type of model is a combination of the two.

In the model of the Central Office of Storebrand the façade is shown to be far more transparent than in the elevation drawing which indicates the separate windows and

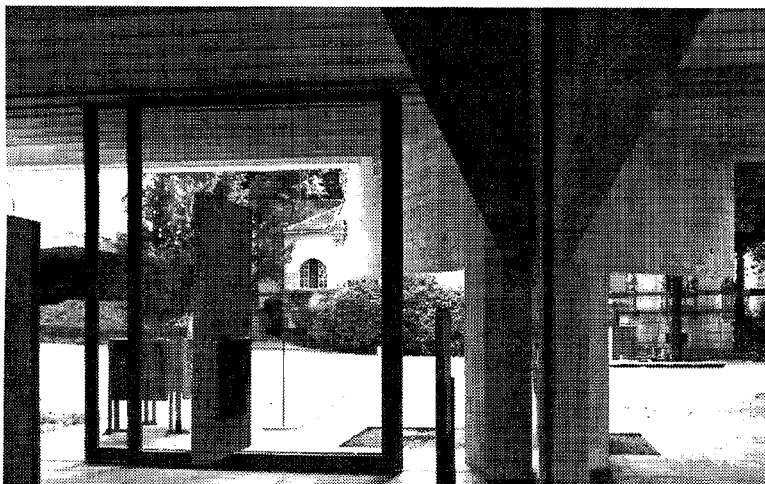
window bars. Thus the model yields quite an incomplete image of the building (fig. 106). At the same time, because of its three-dimensional concreteness, the model mediates an idea of the edifice more effectively and interestingly than the elevation drawing does; the *rhetorical power* of the model is much greater. This would particularly apply to laymen who are not trained in visualizing three-dimensionally from orthogonal projections. The façade wall, then, is mediated as more transparent and 'invisible' than it can possibly be.

Competitions in which the drawings display the façades as ambiguously transparent or non-transparent grids, often include models in which the edifices appear even more transparent and open. The high-rise building shown in the model of motto '13831', Karl Johan *kvartalet* (in chapter VI) is one example: there are simply thin floors protruding from the central vertical core. With no indications of walls, the rhetorical effect of this technique yields an illusive impression of lightness and openness; the block appears lighter and smaller in the environment: yet another understatement, and possibly a concession to the public concern about the environment. However, the interface between inside and outside of the building is mis-represented.



108. FARNSWORTH HOUSE,
MIES VAN DER ROHE

109. NORDIC BIENNALE
PAVILION, VENICE, SVERRE
FEHN:



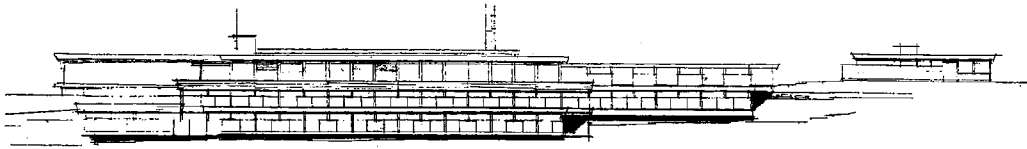
There are good reasons for saying that the disparity of representation between models and drawings is beneficial; there is the advantage of displaying different aspects of the project, and thus enabling a better and more complete understanding of the inherent potential. The sum, the total image, created in this manner by the various techniques should mediate the most important aspects of the design, from an internal as well as an external point of view. It is in such a context that the *joint visual rhetoric* of drawings and models together becomes increasingly interesting.

The Oslo Police Headquarters, Tullinløkka and the Bank of Norway publications all include *large-scale models* of the structures and the basic spatial framework in addition to site models. These models are fascinating as they

yield vivid, recognizable images of concrete building structures; they constitute a further step in figurative animation between the miniature drawings and the proposed architectural reality. Thus they have a considerable *rhetorical power*. The Police Headquarters model underlines the entire building complex and the overall layout of the structures and spaces; the shadows in the photo enhance the impression of an ordered (and transparent) structure, ready to be occupied, which is open inside as well as to the environment (fig. 107). The model of the Bank of Norway (fig. 61) similarly shows the primary structures and indicates some possible sub-structures, such as ceilings and modular façade bars.

In Tullinløkka, however, the structural model is supplemented with secondary spatial components and furnishings: exhibition partitions, top-lit ceilings, paintings and sculptures, and even spectators, inhabit the model which thus appears stunningly realistic (figures in chapter IX). In a similar way the Aker Brygge Aqua-Leisure Centre model very concretely and vividly features the interior landscape, but ignores the delimiting walls, as shown in chapters VI and IX. Since traditional partitioning components are not needed in these large spaces, they look more artistic and interesting than in a model of an office building, in which the many partitioning walls would alter the open spatial image completely. Nonetheless, it is on this very point that the structural models are *two-sided*. On the one hand they vividly visualize the realistic and concrete shapes of the primary spatial structure, its buildability and potential. On the other hand, by leaving out such important spatial components as walls and openings, they become delusive. Their provisional incompleteness yields strong and suggestive indications which draw attention to the internal spaces and leave the façade and the interface open, transparent and neglected.

In this respect the competition for Soria Moria, 1978, displays a different approach as other façade and interface qualities are advocated by the visual rhetoric. The model shows a firm, solid complex with openings carved precisely out of the massive block. In this case the elevation drawings add a lighter impression to this firm plasticity as they are dominated by



repetitive light-wall constructions and balcony railings. The design material of this project, then, suggests a shift towards the more diverse view of façades and interfaces of the 1980s.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS OF ARCHITECTURAL INTERFACE

The mask, whether simple or sophisticated, thin or thick, is not only intended to give a particular appearance and to protect, but is importantly also a device through which to communicate, *per sonare*, and also through which to see, perceive the outside and breathe. *Daylight, view* and *accessibility* are three criteria which together with the idea of continuous open space are essential to the façades and interfaces in the hegemonic competition projects. The majority of the designs are featured by modular homogeneity. In principle these façades are one of three types: either well-defined by grid bars, panels and window openings, or grid patterns which are ambiguously closed-open, or finally the 'invisible' glass walls. This tendency towards dissolution of the façade and the interface merits some further remarks.

The quality of having a good view is a highly estimated aspect in the tendency towards 'invisible' walls in the competitions. From the individual rooms behind the light curtain-wall façades of the prize-winning high-rise projects of the Karl Johan *kvartalet* and the SAS Hotel, the Police Headquarters and the Oslo Plaza Hotel (now Radisson), we can imagine the views as truly marvellous: the city from above, the fjord, the hills, the sky, the seagulls. Outside the façades appear smooth and shiny, reflective and remote; not belonging to the realm of urban street life but to that of the air; in the space of aeroplanes and electronic transmissions. Regarding the realized Oslo competi-

tion projects from a distance today, the Oslo Plaza Hotel in Vaterland has a different appeal from the SAS Hotel: the façade design, with its greenish blue-grey colour, clearly outlines the shape, but at the same time dissolves the volume optically and disconnects it visually from the lower buildings so that it appears to blend with the sky. The SAS Hotel, built as a large, black metal cube, appears more heavily square and different from the surroundings and the sky. From a closer view, however, one gets a certain feeling of tangibility as one is able to distinguish the rooms with their white curtains in the broad windows.

Glass walls can be many different things: there is the Palm House in Kew Gardens⁴⁸ and other buildings in which the steel structures are visible and, in effect, can be optically perceived as a distinct *spatial framework* creating a contrast to the glazed membranes, thus visually enhancing their transparency. Although clearly different, Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House yields a similar effect: the simple and elegant steel constructions outline a space in which the actual glass walls seemingly 'melt' and lose their hard and alienating materiality (fig. 108). Other glass walls are protected and shadowed by cantilevered roofs or terraces which constitute the main features of the façade such as the Fallingwater House by Frank Lloyd Wright. The Nordic Biennale Pavilion in Venice by Sverre Fehn (1962), is another example of minimizing the interface by very subtle means (fig. 109).

In these examples there is a corresponding sense of *territoriality* between the inside and the outside; the outside space 'belongs' in a way to that of the inside. Thus Grete Prytz Kittelsen recalls the incredible fascination of being an overnight guest in the brand new Farnsworth House in the late 1940s: inside the glass house, still without curtains, they witnessed the coming of a furious storm over the

48 Royal Botanical Garden in Kew, London, 1848, architects Decimus Barron and Richard Turner.



111. AARHUS CONCERT HALL,
KJÆR & RICHTER



beautiful park and swarms of fireflies fled to the glass walls where they stuck like a brilliant starry veil⁴⁹

This feeling that the inner spaces extend and embrace the outer is essential in the principle of the 'invisible' façade and open, minimized interface. The 1st prize project in the competition for Voksenåsen, the centre for cultural exchange with Sweden (1956), displays a particular architectural mode based on a thin glass interface (fig. 110). Here, the horizontal spatial continuity is especially underlined as the rhythm of vertical subdivisioning of the glass façade is varied; the spaces stretch out boundlessly between the 'floating' horizontal floors. The architectural asset is that most rooms (individual guest rooms as well as communal spaces) have a *view*; from their individual situations the inhabitants share the magnificent view of the town below the hill. The inner spaces extend beyond the glass wall, on the same floor, and continue into the infinite space-view; inside and outside become a visually coherent space. The transitional zone, the interface, includes cantilevered terraces which

are accessible for use; people can go in and out, or stay there to enjoy the sun, the view and the fresh air of the sloping woods. The users are protected against unwanted spectators, and the interface functions as a series of openings which connect the individual cells to the common outside world.

An interface which permits a visual extension of the inner space is essential in the Aker Brygge baths too: the goal is to enjoy the inside, being amidst pools, terraces and gradins, and the structural 'trees', and *simultaneously* feel that one is part of the fjord landscape. The jury stresses the particular view qualities of the site which

give variations of experience according to the focusing of the sun and rays of light until dusk and night-time darkness take over with the floodlighting of Akershus [Fortress] ...⁵⁰

At street level in dense, urban contexts a very light and thin interface can enhance the sense of the inside and the outside of a building visually sharing the same space. This is the case with the lobby of the Aker Brygge baths project in relation to the waterfront. Moreover, this principle is shown in the 1st prize project for the Oslo Concert Hall which features a high transparent wall between the lobby and the square in front. The Concert Hall in Aarhus, Denmark by the architects Kjær & Richter (1982) shows a similar interface principle done in a very attractive manner (fig. 111). The glass wall of the new VG Building in Akersgata (footnote in chapter IX) facing the old Government Building is also an agreeable example, from the inside as well as the outside. The moderate size of the glass wall and the calmness, colour and texture of the large solid wall next to it, contribute to this effect (fig. 112).

However, it is not necessary that the shared spaces in this kind of interface are very deep; think of the many cafés on the pavements in Paris. Neither is totally continuous transparency necessary; the Grand Café facing Karl Johans *gate* is an attractive example in this respect.

Figure 113 shows an example of intended

⁴⁹ With her husband Arne Korsmo, personal communication.

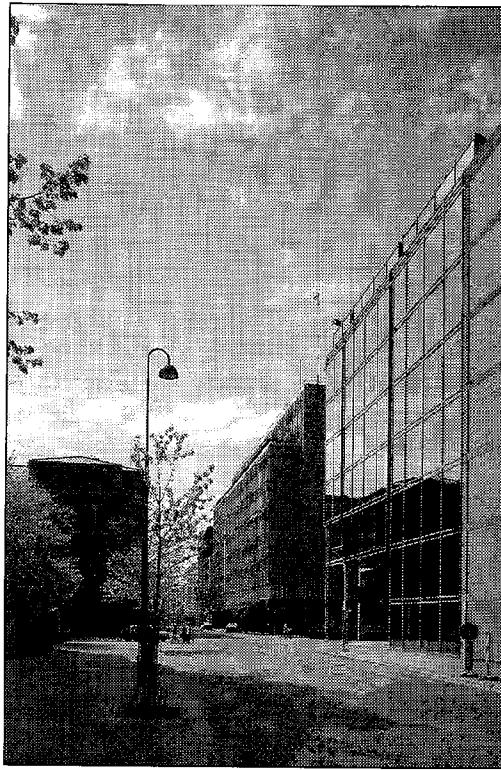
⁵⁰ NAK, no. 277, p. 3.

openness which in my opinion is less successful. The extension to the art museum at Götaplatsen in Gothenburg might be interesting from the inside. However, as it appears in the environment of the square, the glass box extension is also perceived as a hard, inaccessible block which creates a barrier to the old building.

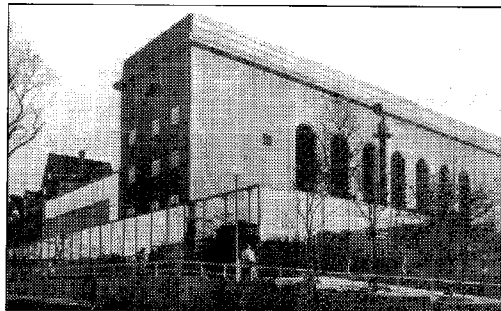
Transparent façades and minimized interfaces, thus, are not good or bad in principle: it all depends on the manner in which they are designed and executed in their environment and in relation to the use they are likely to accommodate. There is however an inherent, strong tendency towards monotony and exclusiveness from the points of view of visual perception and use.

By contrast to the uniform, thin continuous interfaces, consider for example *Palazzo Farnese* in Rome: the solid walls, brick and travertine and large windows placed regularly, bottom window sill at approx. 2m; from the outside one sees the beautiful ceiling of the *piano nobile* whilst the people inside can see the square outside and walk to the window if they want to take a closer look. There are travertine benches attached to the wall outside as part of the wall structure. Here the clients would sit and wait for admission to the patron while at the same time they could participate in the life in the *piazza*, from a rather privileged position. Today people still sit on the benches in the very heart of the town, having a snack, a rest, reading a paper or just participating in public life.

It might seem strange and inappropriate to have benches on the outside of the walls of modern public buildings. People walking in the streets of central Oslo do not have a particularly personal relationship to the majority of buildings, unlike the clients of the former Roman patrons, and nor to the urban spaces, as inhabitants of smaller local communities often have. The smooth design of modern façade walls and interfaces to the streets is intended for another *pace*, another kind of *movement*. One passes by, glances inside or stops to have a closer look before one enters, if it is possible. Thus conceived, benches would be in the way although they are a nice way of



112. THE VG BUILDING,
LUND & SLAATTO



113. ART MUSEUM,
GOTHENBURG, EXTENSION

connecting the building to the use of the place outside, and thereby expressing a function of the interface.

In principle the new homogeneous and transparent façades in several of the competition projects feature just such a kind of monotonous interface: huge showcases, whether for shops or offices. Glass walls are thought to eliminate the boundary between inside and outside, to create a spatial continuity, a shared space. But in many buildings in central city areas, these large window panes do not mediate spatial contact; what they do is to focus on the *objects* that are demonstrated (goods or sales-information posters) as the most important issue. These objects are displayed, deprived of their context of trade and trader's knowledge; the contact between seller and buyer is imper-

sonalized and bears no resemblance to market-places or bazaars, institutions which have inspired the open display of merchandise. Instead there is the impenetrable glass wall to deprive you of all other kinds of sensual impression than the visual at a *non toccare* distance. On the one hand the 'life' of trading, of cash registers and store rooms are separated and hidden inside. On the other hand there are no parts left of the façade for other articulations than providing space for the goods; no columns or walls that were simply pleasant for their architectural and material value. The bigger the premises, the longer between the openings by which to enter and 'activate' the interface. This tendency is increasing owing to security problems and management rationalization. The wall, then, gives no response, only mixed reflections and fragmented impressions.

An alternative interface for shop buildings are smaller windows or more individually shaped window showcases inserted in walls which also have solid wall sections and articulated doors so that the entire façade becomes more varied, firm and less vague. Arcades constitute another type of solution on ground level. In the historical centre of Rome, in Paris and other cities there are many modern shops in buildings which are subject to severe aesthetic (preservation) regulations; openings in the walls are restricted to those of the existing structures. This arrangement seems to function well: the shops are elegant, their windows no less attractive while at the same time a certain sense of non-commercial, aesthetic unity prevails. The surfaces simply activate a greater range of mental and emotional responses than the merely goods-consuming one.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

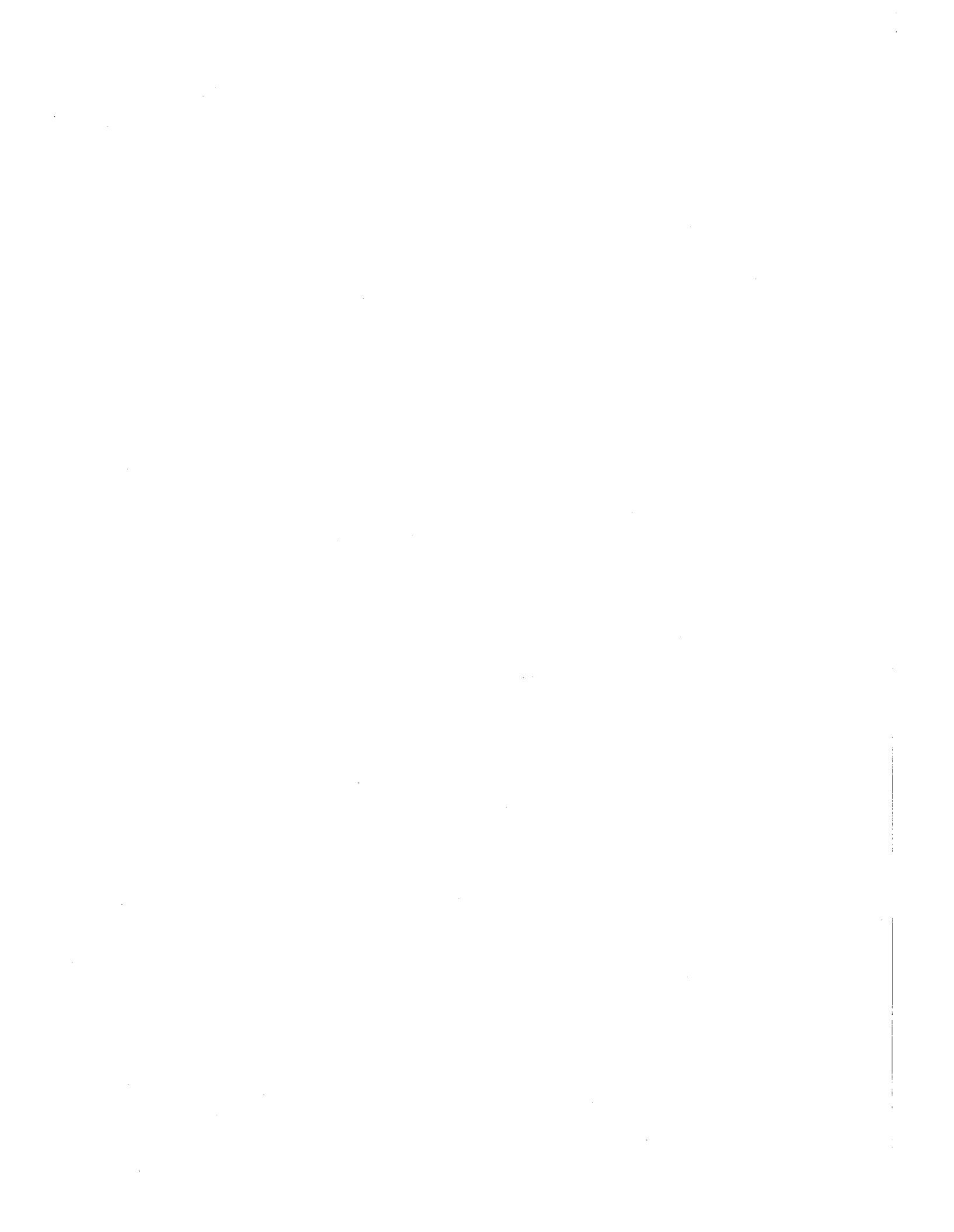
The competition façades and interfaces possess a striking *sameness*. The hegemonic designs are featured by *modular uniformity*, by *squareness* and *bareness*. Within this homogeneity there is a steady tendency towards lighter and thinner, more ambiguous façades. The corresponding tendency to minimize or obscure the interface reflects the idea of spatial continuum which lends weight to the *visual* continuity between

inside and outside. As an overall principle this implies a certain reduction from the point of view of user experience of the façades and interfaces. If there is a shift in the trend, it occurred around 1980, with a certain diversity into more figurative façades on the one hand, and more sophisticated transparency on the other.

The façade problem is treated *superficially* in the majority of *texts*; in a number of competition publications, the problem is entirely omitted. By contrast, the texts from the early 1970s are exceptionally extensive and thorough, especially with regard to the historical edifices involved whilst the new façades remain abstractly considered.

Graphically, the façades appear more *disparate* than the façade architecture they represent; the *visual* rhetoric emphasizes different qualities over the period. On the one hand the graphics underline the striking *newness*, independence and self-assertedness of the new façades, on the other there is a tendency to *subdue* the impact of the outer appearance by exaggerating lightness and transparency, especially in the later decades. The façade representations in the first period emphasize the manifestation of the welfare state, the collective consensus, and in the last period the 'soft' pervasiveness of the liberal market society.

This shift in representation rhetoric coincides with the emergence of the preservation programmes. When progress, implying eradication of the old, was no longer a self-evident collective goal, the 'new' had to be evaluated against the 'age-value' of the old. In Norwegian society, sensitive to popular fractions and 'public opinion' after the 1960s, the appearance of the new architecture was thus promoted with a cautious and delicate rhetoric.



XII

CASTLES IN THE AIR, MIRRORS AND FOUNDATIONS

In the following certain representational aspects of the hegemonic competition architecture will be further elucidated. There is a connection between the façade as an expression of the current ideals of the *building industry* and the views of *society* whether explicitly stressing *equality* or different versions of *diversity*. The ideal of open space runs through the period, manifesting itself with ever more refined images of material *lightness* as advances in building technology make this increasingly possible.

IMAGES OF SOCIETY AND THE BUILDING INDUSTRY

The great homogeneity in the competition façades can be interpreted as representing *equality* and anonymity. A typical feature of the façades is the repetition of a vast number of identical windows or panels assembled in simple and clean, overall shapes. Any number and type of rooms (ministerial as well as clerical) can be found behind the same structure. Thus, impressiveness and *grandeur* can be achieved within an edifice depending upon the size (number of individual units, i. e. sections, windows and panels,) and the distinctiveness of the composition. Figure 114 of the Government Building after its inauguration in 1958 (remember that the length is 2/3 of the competition proposal) features a distinct and firm representational façade: the slim concrete bars separating the windows and the individual units constitute a clean, simple and precise framework. The totality consists of the sum of identical, individual parts (a large number of parts) in its framework. Nothing is emphasized that cannot be explained within the frame of

rational, equal spatial needs, except the ground floor façade which mediates communal spaces, and which by contrast is given a different design.

The old building has a cohesive massive surface that makes up a dominating whole which is plastically and decoratively elaborated, and in which the windows are set. In the competition architecture, this cohesive, whole wall is reduced to the minimum necessary for structural and corresponding practical reasons (e.g. broad enough to meet a partitioning wall). In keeping with the technocratic political rule of the first period of this study, this representational image very adequately expresses the ideals of egalitarian collectivity, enlightenment and clarity with an aesthetic which is explicit, and which clearly contrasts to the historicist aesthetic which was reminiscent of the class society. The new façades visualize the modern democratic society; the repetitive grid expresses the anonymity of private corporations as well as public bureaucracies.

The grids gradually become thinner and more anonymous during the 1950s, 60s and 70s, corresponding with the weakening of the collective class consciousness, and with the increasing consumerism, typical of the discreet ruling techniques and obscuring of authority.¹ In the ultimate transparent and mirroring membrane, expressions of both individual and collective elements are erased and dissolved in an image of total relativism or mass anonymity.

These images of society or contemporary life, the way they are actually designed and shaped, correspond with dominant trends in the building industry. In the majority of competitions the problem of external representation is advocated as a matter of making an *unpretentious*

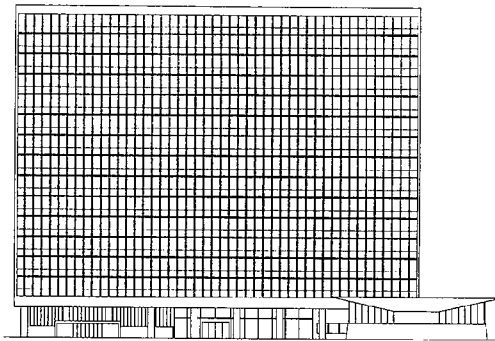
1 Grothen, pp. 41-59.

boundary between the inner and outer spaces; of creating an architectural component which is logically coherent with the inner functions and the structure of the building. Open, adaptable spaces are proposed to accommodate a range of different and equivalent needs. Thus the permanent structural system that forms the spaces is the ultimate visible and tangible object through which the purpose can be expressed. Whether the spaces are meant for people eating or attending meetings, for people sitting at their desks or shopping, is not explicitly legible through the primary architectural structure, but through the furnishing and fittings that are placed in the spaces.

The façades, then, present through their very image the hegemonic *building industry* and ideals of standardization and rationalization which were dominant during most of the period. It is machine industry and the modern, industrialized building techniques that are celebrated; the traditional construction techniques were paid less attention.²

Kjeldstadli describes how the use of reinforced concrete was successfully introduced in Norway in the 1920s, and was one of the technologies that had the greatest impact on the new city image. Years of struggle followed between professional and business interests, between 'the traditional job of laying brick upon brick and the modern restless "mass-pouring" of concrete'. Functionalist architects formed a phalanx with civil engineers and large contractors, supported by the cement industry. Apparently this dispute was solved as the building boom in the 1930s provided sufficient work for everybody: the contractors were engaged for the large complexes, and the master bricklayers for residential projects.³ After the War, in the 1950s and 60s, there was an immense increase in the number and size of contracting firms, and they also gained an important influence over housing developments. The hegemonic architecture of the Oslo competitions favoured the *mass industry* and the standardization ideology of the modern times, and thus rather exclusively forwarded the new trend.

Further developments within the building industry are explicitly apparent in the prize-winning designs. *Concrete* is the main con-



114. NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, REALIZED PROJECT, ELEVATION, ERLING VIKSJØ

struction material, and concrete structures are dominant in the façades in the 1940s and 50s together with various non-load-bearing panels representing the many new materials that came on to the market. Glass dimensions were moderate at first. The development of the metal and glass industries, and the increased availability of these materials was rapidly reflected in the light façade structures of the prize-winning projects. The architectural distinction between the load-bearing structures and light façade walls was at the same time further stressed.

Up until the late 1970s, simplicity and standardization prevailed almost exclusively in the façade image. Simplicity does not mean coarse and unrefined materials; it sooner means a *restraint* in number of variants as well as a certain *bareness* of formal expression. Standardization does not presuppose that already existing mass products necessarily have to be employed; the components were often specially designed for the specific case and intended to be utilized subsequently as a standard product within the context of the project and its potential expansion. Even when destined to be constructed *in situ*, the architecture was made to look as if it had been mass-produced. Thus, one principle underlying the aesthetic of the façades was to create an *image of industrialized standardization*.

Recalling the 1960s in Britain, Peter Smithson said:

The 'package' pre-fabricated buildings at that time, in the sixties, were regarded as being 'invisible' from the outside. The normal procedure was: an architect from the municipality would be approached by a

2 Traditional construction methods are however employed for instance in the prize-winning projects for *Voksenkollåsen* (later called *Voksentoppen*) Asthma Institute (1966), the Health and Service Centre (1982), and the College of Music (1985).

3 Kjeldstadli, (1990), pp. 350-351. Peter Smithson pointed out to me the rhetorical nature of this statement: 'mass pouring of concrete' is relevant for simple foundation work, otherwise concrete work is difficult and requires patience and skill.

company. They would agree about *where* to put the building. Nothing else. It was absolutely without control. You didn't have to have permission from the authorities. Some buildings collapsed after a while. The municipal architect's committee wasn't interested in what the buildings looked like. They were like supermarkets now, ethically and aesthetically invisible. Nobody was concerned, not even the architects.⁴

Saying this in 1991, Smithson did not mean 'invisible' in the sense that they did not draw the exteriors or consider the design and proportions of the façade with care. His statement is sincere and genuine. Looking back with 'eyes' matured by the time that has passed, he realized that then, in the 1960s, they did not consider the façade as a representational problem in the sense of communicating to and being perceived within the particular context of the neighbourhood. The architects designed the façades with the artistic sensitivity and logic pertaining to the architectural ideology of the era; a logic which advocated the façade not so much as an architectural expression in its own right, but as a constituent which should be structurally and visually coherent with, and rather subordinate to the primary tectonic structure. The façades were promoted as something modest and *unpretentious*, at best something *elegant* in the sense of possessing a refined simplicity.

The title of the book, *Without rhetoric - an architectural aesthetic*, in which the Smithsons recapitulate 20 years of postwar architecture expresses very well the intentions and the reasoning typical for the period. Nonetheless, even expressions which are intended to be non-rhetorical have rhetorical meaning and implications. It is in Østerberg's words a *rhetoric of modesty*.⁵

The Oslo competition texts include comments requesting *rationality* of the proposed constructions: 'rational', 'efficient' and 'economic' are words that recur with reference to the structures, the organization of the spaces (the plans), as well as the construction methods. The general belief was that there was something to be gained from rationalization in terms of large

production series of one type of component, and that what was gained would be of advantage to the general public in accordance with democratic reasoning.

The specific remarks on rationality and efficiency in the competition publications are generally brief, as reminders of aspects which are taken for granted but mentioned as a precaution; a not too rigorously defined guideline. Interestingly, though, rationality here not only implies rationality in the sense that the buildings should be able to be built and function rationally or effectively, but that the aesthetic should enhance the *image* of ordered and modern rationality. For instance, ordinary *bricks* are rational or reasonable, for many reasons, but a brick building does not look rational or efficient in the view of the competition hegemony that favours clean, more explicit images of repetition and system consistency; which favours larger and more distinct units and less permanent (heavy) materials. The implicit aesthetic *purity* or *authenticity* meant that bricks only could be employed with traditional construction methods, which would be in discord with the hegemonic architectural principles.

Only later, in the 1980s, are bricks employed in the new types of rational (from a construction-process point of view) and untraditional structures. (The prize-winning designs, however, do not show any convincing examples of this.) This is partially due to the postmodern or late-modern abandonment of the long-prevailing principle of aesthetic-technological 'purity'; a change that made it possible to comply with the emerging aesthetic and emotional demands for more solid-looking architecture without abandoning the advantages of efficient building techniques. But also inventiveness on the part of architects as well as the building industry now allowed the combination of highly up-to-date steel structuring and traditional bricks used as outside cladding. The Stranden residential complex at Aker Brygge in Oslo,⁶ and Renzo Piano's IRCAM building near the Pompidou Centre in Paris both elegantly show that bricks, employed in an unconventional fashion, can endow highly rational constructions with technically very durable surfaces. At the same time these

4 Personal communication, interview in Urbino, August, 1991.

5 Dag Østerberg, 'Trygg trafikk', *Sosiologi i dag*, no. 1, (1986), pp. 11-25, (p. 21).

6 Architect Kari Nissen Brodtkorb a/s, 1990.

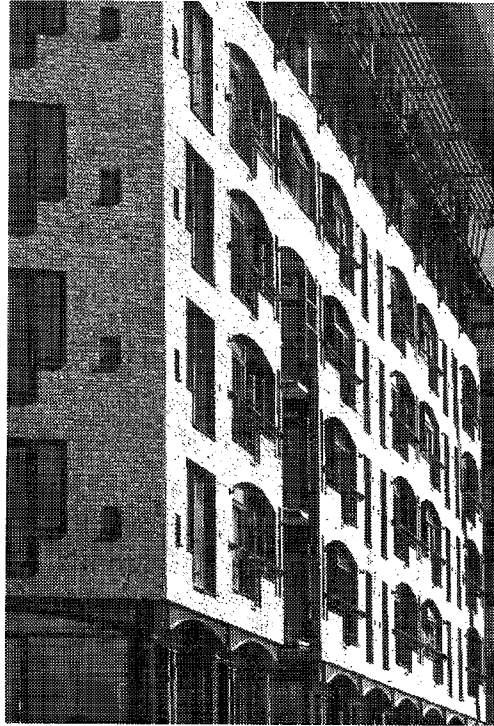
modern façades can have the advantage of being aesthetically compatible with traditional constructions in the environment, as is particularly evident in the case of Stranden (fig. 115).

By the last decade of the period of this study, changes had occurred in the building industry which decisively influenced architectural expressions: mass production and the building industry had developed in a way that permitted a vast differentiation of standardized components. Large series were no longer regarded as crucial, and with an increased variety of materials and modes of application, the building industry could better meet the demands for greater diversity; something that soon became visible in the new building façades. It is difficult, and irrelevant, to say which came first, the general, ideological demand for diversity or the economic-technological possibilities. It suffices here to reiterate the close correspondence between the building industry and architectural attitudes which is influential in the hegemony of architectural competitions.

DISSOLVING AND MIRRORING LIGHTNESS

Behind these conceptions of the façades as pragmatic and interrelated representations of society and the building industry, the joint rhetoric of the competition texts and designs clearly reveals a preference for light interfaces. If architectural spaces are conceived as continuing infinitely, designed for endless and improvisatory wandering, either on foot or by the eyes, what, then, could constitute the image of a boundary to this *spatiari*, this wandering? Have we reason to be surprised that the façade and interfaces are made to appear more 'invisible' than actually realistic? That, as a consequence, the interface is represented as a zone for ambiguous transitions, suggesting ultimate lightness and airiness, yet by its primary function bound to constitute a definite boundary?

As Giedion rightly pointed out in 1941, 'we are no longer limited to seeing objects from the distances normal for earth-bound animals'.⁷ Throughout this century the impact of the



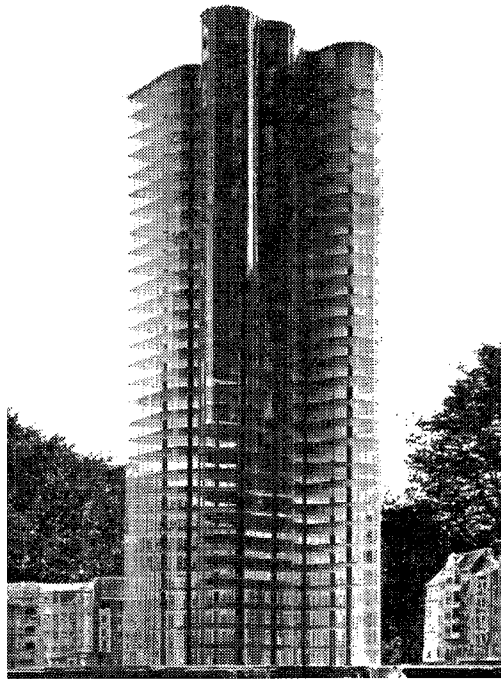
115. STRANDEN, AKER
BRYGGE, KARI NISSEN
BRODTKORB

new technologies has been incredible, perpetually transforming and surpassing the possibilities of experiencing space. In 1941 Giedion was thinking of the constructions and ships and aeroplanes that had transformed his period, whereas now we are also able to explore and experience outer space and electronic 'spaces'. Ancient utopian dreams have been fulfilled, and architectural conceptions and fantasies have been profoundly influenced. Even the local image of Oslo is a visual confirmation of this transformation: Benum describes how the modern office buildings erected since the late 1950s increasingly mark the typical image of 'the information city' (see chapter VII), a tendency which is accelerating at a relentless rate all over the world.

In one of his Norton lectures Italo Calvino treats lightness (*leggerezza*) as one of the six qualities he advocates in his memos for the next millennium. Referring to computer science he emphasizes the *power* of the software lightness, of the weightless bits in electronic circuits over the heavy materiality of huge iron machines:

The second industrial revolution, unlike the first, does not present us with such crushing

⁷ Giedion, (1952), p. 364.



8 Italo Calvino, *Six memos for the next millennium*, (Cambridge Mass., 1988), p. 8. The book contains five of six memos translated by Patrick Greagh from the Italian manuscripts for the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1985-86. The manuscripts were left on Calvino's writing desk as he died just before leaving for the United States to give the lectures.

9 Calvino, (1988), p. 16. ('Il faut être léger comme l'oiseau, et non comme la plume.')

10 Christian Norberg-Schulz, 'Samtaler med Mies van der Rohe', in *BK*, 35, no. 7, (1953), pp. 169-174.

11 Alison and Peter Smithson, (1973), p. 28.

12 Arne Korsmo and Christian Norberg-Schulz, 'Mies van der Rohe', *BK* 34, no.5, (1952), p. 85. The Norwegian functionalists were acquainted with van der Rohe in the 1920s-30s, but as mentioned in chapter VIII international modernism was re-introduced in the 1950s after a period of national consolidation immediately after W. W. II.

13 Gunvor Gjessing, 'Bokgigantenes byggeboom' (The building boom of the book giants), *Aftenposten*, 15 March, 1995, p. 13. The size of (one of) these edifices is comparable with the high-rise proposals in the Oslo competitions. I followed a guided tour on the site on March 26, 1995, when I also visited the exhibition and collected some information material. Jean - Christophe Nougaret, 'La BNF: un nouveau monument parisien', *Le moniteur*, no. 4764 - 17 March, 1995. See also Catherine Slessor, 'Grand Gesture', *The Architectural Review*, CXCVIII, no.1181, July 1995, pp. 60-65.

images as rolling mills and molten steel, but with 'bits' in a flow of electronic impulses. The iron machines still exist, but they obey the orders of weightless bits.⁸

His lecture, which relates to poetics and the Western tradition of poetry, is conducted in a discursive dialectic between lightness and heaviness. His 'lightness of thoughtfulness' implies to rise mentally above the heaviness of the realities which are ever present, to rise above the struggle and striving of life; not by ignoring the realities, but by viewing them in a perspective of interpretation and reflection. In referring to Calvino I do not intend to enter into a discourse on poetics. However, Calvino captures and describes the *ideals of lightness* and swift movement which have played such a dominant role in 20th century architecture, and which are also reflected in the rhetoric of the Oslo competition material. The other 'memos' deal with *quickness, exactitude, visibility, multiplicity*, and the sixth, *consistency*, which was planned but never written, and in fact also focus on themes that have been central in modern architecture. I will therefore use his memos, not as a direct parallel between poetics and architecture, but as a point of departure for a further elucidation of some typical features of the hegemonic competition architecture and the problems that they expose.

Calvino advocates *precision*, control and refinement: 'Lightness for me goes with precision and determination, not with vagueness and the haphazard. Paul Valéry said: "One should be light like a bird, and not like a feather"⁹ That which is complicated and difficult, and inextricably tied to the heavy realities, is made to appear light and strong through precision. The light façades of 'the endless space' represent this very emphasis on precise elaboration and refinement of the *structural details*, in full accordance with Mies van der Rohe and many after him: 'the free plan requires a clear structure'.¹⁰ 'The identifying characteristic of a technological culture', as expressed by the Smithsons, 'seems to be that its key objects appear as a by-product of concentration on perfection of process and of detail'.¹¹ The huge and very light façades were impossible before the very specialized advances which were based on the heaviness of the natural sciences, and refined and applied in construction techniques. The power of this technological culture, and its vulnerability as well, rely upon that very precision.

When Korsmo and Norberg-Schulz presented the architecture of Mies van der Rohe to Norwegian architects in 1952, (showing among other projects the glass and steel high-rise building from 1920-21, fig. 116), they stressed *the optical dissolution of mass*:

The entire outer skin of the building is transformed into a transparent, mirroring plane with a perpetually changing rich life which totally disencumbers the building of massivity and weight. It rises with effortless ease in space.¹²

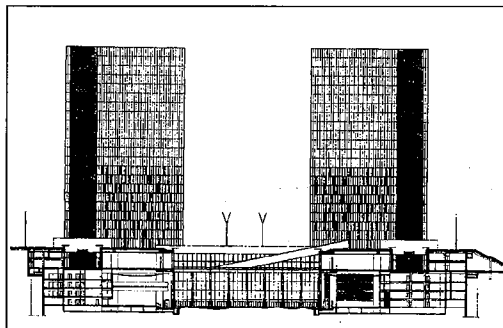
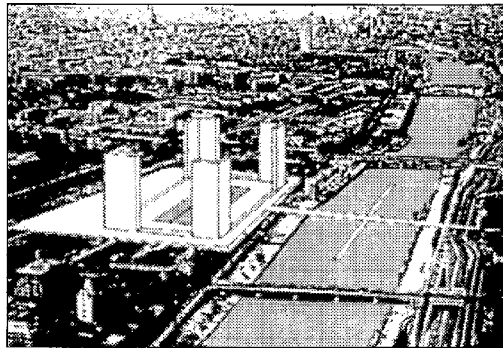
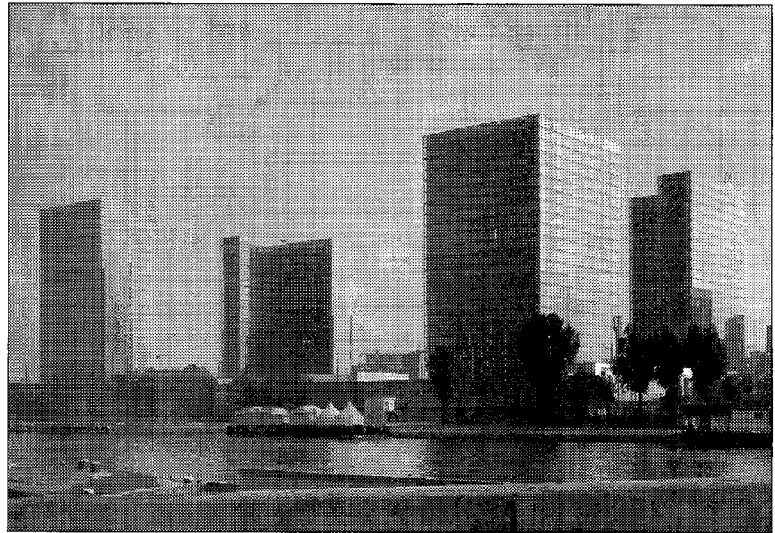
These structural possibilities, which are truly fascinating, have been important ideals throughout the period, since they were introduced by the pioneers of Norwegian functionalism during the interwar period. Their potential for realization however increased with the advances made in construction technology.

It is indeed the same ideal I recognize now, on a very grand scale, in the presentation of the new National Library in Tolbiac, Paris, designed by Dominique Perrault: four large towers

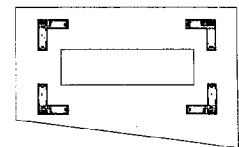
planted at the corners of an immense block by the Seine in the 13th *arrondissement* (fig. 117). The towers were originally planned to be 100m high and totally transparent, using special Japanese glass. As this turned out to be too expensive, the constructions are now 80m high edifices of glass that require additional climate protection. The majority of the high-rise spaces are storage rooms for books. The *okoumé*-veneered panels inside, needed for the protection of the books, thus yield a more closed impression than the prospected transparent glass towers. 'Elegance was sacrificed to economy'¹³ (if one accepts the equation of elegance and transparency). The blocks vaguely allude to 'the shape of an open book' which they are said to have; a rhetoric attempting to soften the enormity of the bare and precise L-shaped volumes.

Since it appears so much as a materialization of long-prevailing modern ideals, consistently clean and rational, and moreover, since it is a project of international importance, I will make some further references to this new library of France. Perrault himself says that he is profoundly interested in an architecture which *disappears*, 'Cette recherche d'effacement, de disparition de l'architecture m'intéresse fondamentalement'.¹⁴ As in the Oslo competitions, the ideal is to make walls and façades appear more invisible and more weightless than realistic: to create large and technically perfect structures, and at the same time make their solidity appear to melt into air.

This ideal resembles the modernity manifested in Ibsen's character the master builder Solness who wants to build a castle in the air upon a foundation. He fails to bridge the gap between the utopian and the real world as he dreams of erecting a castle in the air with a foundation underneath. The symbolic goal, in the view of the historian of ideas Eivind Tjønneland, is 'artificial' and 'unrealistic'. Referring to Calderwood and Kierkegaard he demonstrates the contradiction in terms of erecting a castle in the air upon a foundation; a castle in the air implies building in the air without foundation. The master builder Solness represents a *private mythology* based on the modern secularized world; he attempts to



117. LIBRARY OF FRANCE, PARIS, DOMINIQUE PERRAULT, PHOTO, CONCEPT SKETCH, SECTION, PLAN



mediate the concrete and the metaphorical in a universe without limits, in which he himself is the absolute yardstick:

He loses all sense of reality, the juxtaposition between 'the foundation' and 'the castle in the air' becomes what Kierkegaard calls 'an untrue exaggeration'. . . Solness and his wife are alienated, confined within the murky attics of their minds.¹⁵

Tjønneland discusses the *architectural metaphors* that Ibsen employs poetically for existential, and partially metaphysical, conditions. Architecture, unlike poetry, manifests itself in

14 Dominique Perrault interviewed by Gilles Davoine in *Le monde*, no. 4764, 17 March 1995, p. 15. The project won an international competition in 1989.

15 Eivind Tjønneland, *Ibsen og moderniteten* (Oslo, 1993). p. 80 f.

concrete physical structures, but metaphysical or poetical metaphors play an important role in architectural conceptualization. Once the ideas have been cast in concrete form however, this *materialized lightness* and airiness are likely to run the risk of becoming more reductive than the lightness of poetic expression. Architecture means *artistic* and *practical* creations constructed in permanent, material structures.

Metaphorical images transformed into physical architectural realities mark a new condition.

Architecture manifests reality in another sense than does poetics. This intervention alters the equilibrium of material and immaterial conditions, which constitute the kind of reality that the poetic inclusiveness of Calvino and Ibsen encompasses. Thus, in architecture, one has to examine the new (in competitions, proposed) relationship between material and immaterial life conditions in order to identify the different kinds of realities or foundations that are implied. (For the purpose here I consider

Calvino's realities and Ibsen's foundations to be related.) Visible, architectural lightness might very well include heaviness in the sense of constricting societal interdependencies.

One aspect of the realities in the context of idealized architectural lightness relates to the *limited* technical realities, or 'foundations', that is, the building structures. Although unfortunate side-effects of new construction techniques and new materials keep appearing (e.g. toxic gases), the building structures and fittings largely fulfil their purpose due to the technical precision in modern tectonic structuring.

Quite another matter are the mental, emotional and societal 'foundations'; the implications of the physical realization related to human existence in a wider perspective. It is here that the technical sophistication and the technological conquest of space assume a *mythological* and illusive character, when they constitute the main goals of aesthetic endeavour and of rhetorical adoration.

Calvino speaks of *perrification*, not literally limited to the earth or heavy buildings, but of the obscure 'perrified' conditions in human civilization which include societal constrictions as well as physical ones, both public and private. Moreover, he thinks that the link

between the 'levitation desired and the privation actually suffered'¹⁶ is a constant anthropological entity. In the modern and postmodern world, the constraint of system rationality and the macrosystems of politics and economics become more and more solid and impenetrable; constituting powerful forces of petrification. Thus, in a society which leaves less and less to the individual, says Tjønneland, there is a yearning among people to create a 'free room' for themselves. A typical feature is *privatization* of the public sphere which results in a new mythology. Manfred Frank, Tjønneland quotes, maintains that

. . . the new mythology is collective fantasies which oppose and imaginarily attempt to compensate pathological features in the processes of modernization and rationalization. Thus, the new mythology is an expression of the failure of secularization.¹⁷

This privatization of the public sphere can be sustained by architectural idealizations being realized in the socio-material fabric. New huge edifices tend to *dominate* the surroundings significantly, both visually and by the congestion they cause, but the rhetorical goal is to veil this experience of them, to make us perceive them as transparent illusions of lightness of life.

Inside the transparent cubic towers, the employees are seated at their computers, in more and more narrow and identical, rational and economic workplaces. The inherent ideology predicts that their relations will be increasingly dominated by the lightness of electronic circuits than personal interaction; in private remoteness yet connected by invisible machine systems. Even the function of transporting our bodies can be reduced and partially replaced by electronic networks. When architectural conceptions focus on this still not all-consuming aspect of human life which is spent with the electronic intermediaries, the foundations in the realities of human life are misrepresented. Illusions of one-tracked technological utopia are petrified in steel and glass. Cyberspace adds simulated spatial qualities to more conventional communications, but does not replace real space in the local communities on earth. New techniques of visual representation of organs in

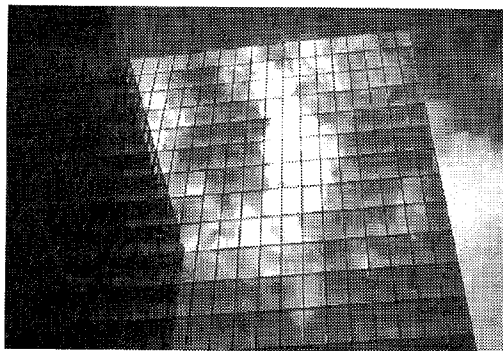
¹⁶ Calvino, p. 27.

¹⁷ Quoted in Tjønneland, pp. 14-15.

our bodies are important tools for diagnosis. Other tools and artificial components may help heal injuries or deficiencies in our bodies but do not replace us as physiological and social beings. We still walk on our legs, buy food in shops and eat real food; we like to experience real places and be with friends and family.

The Library of France is a nationalistic gesture, *le plus grand* in a series of grandiose projects promoted by President Mitterand. However, Anne Haila speaks of a similar architecture based on 'sign value' appearing as symbols of the new global cities' strategy. Architects of international repute are invited to create a proper international image for the city, 'the same worldly superstars design the landscape in every global city'.¹⁸ Global city politics is even more international than modernism in architecture, as jet-set architects implant their ideas and multiply the same forms around the world. In addition to use value and exchange value (on the investment market), Haila points out three categories of 'sign value'. *Trophy* buildings give a name, fame and prestige to the owner, *image* buildings are built as landmark buildings in order to attract foreign investors, and *exclusive* buildings are built to exclude those not wanted inside, to accommodate the need of global real-estate investors for a safe place of investment.

Architecture can conceal the stringent system of power it represents behind a benevolent façade and a friendly rhetoric. The mirroring façades obscure the relentlessness of the inherent expansion which has manifested itself as a major consequence of what Calvino calls 'the ruthless energies propelling the events of our century, both collective and individual'.¹⁹ The more relentless the expansion, the more common seem the anonymous, 'invisible' and even 'impenetrable' interfaces. Pretensions of transparency become an excuse for increasing expansion. Our eyes can wander without rest in the endless spaces, our minds can float among the reflections which, bringing together clouds, sun and the optically dissolved fragments of constructions, create an illusion of the heavens coming closer. Thus, the architec-



118. LIBRARY OF FRANCE

ture seems to offer us, our minds, a flight into a 'free room' if we cannot bear to confront the power of the technocratic rationality. As a principle of urban development, the façades mirror similar façades rather than people; they mirror *images of technical perfection* repeated in an airy confusion. They respond to our dreams of levitation with a rhetoric which at the same time pretends a sublime modesty, almost of non-existence in the earthly context. They are in fact impossible to confront. They do not meet us, they cannot be touched, and their images disintegrate in a perpetual disappearing act (fig. 118).

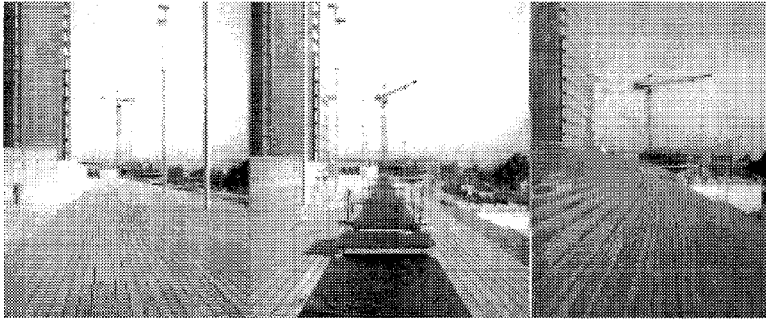
Edifices mirroring themselves in each other is an adequate expression of a narcissistic culture; as if the technological creations were man's projections of himself, perpetually mass reproduced, while he himself retreats further into the privacy of modernity. The production of goods and the consumer mentality bring about a world of mirrors, intangible images, illusions ever more impossible to discern from reality which leave man not so much surrounded by things as by fantasies. But the *heaviness* of the economic and technological forces seems to continue. We keep accepting its relentless expansion, at every new turn expecting the novelties of technological invention to make the lightness of the world even lighter, and our lives even easier.

On the ground

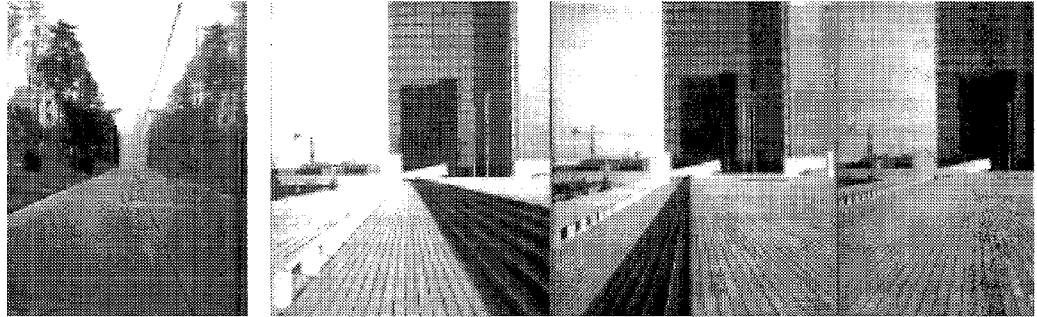
It is at its juncture with the ground that the kind of smooth and fashionable architecture tends to fail; an interface designed for aesthetic communication on a global scale, on the higher levels in the infinite space of the sky, does not necessarily satisfy local people and pedestrians on the ground. I remember the

18 Anne Haila, 'The Neglected Builder of Global Cities. Examples of Helsinki, Los Angeles and Singapore', presented at the Conference *Power Struggle in the City - Social and Symbolic Transformation of Urban Space*, Stockholm, Sweden, June 26-28, 1995, pp. 1-24, (pp. 10-13).

19 Calvino, (1988), pp. 3-4.



119. LIBRARY OF FRANCE,
PODIUM AND COURTYARD



film 'Traffic' by Jacques Tati from the early 1960s, which illustrated the lack of aesthetic and textural response, the total incompatibility between typical glass and metal architecture and the man in his coat and hat smoking a pipe.

The public presentations of the Tolbiac library are highly preoccupied with making *le socle*, or the base, appear attractive to the public: a huge monolithic flight of stairs runs the full length of the block, rising two floors from street level to an elevated podium above the Seine. This vast *esplanade*, of approximately the size of Place de la Concorde, is paved with exotic *ipé* wood from the Amazonian rain forests. Some green, climbing plants placed as hedges in cubic metal cages create an orderly impression of nature on the short ends of the bare, desolate podium. The rhetoric of the promotion emphasizes the *natural* aspects, the use of wood introduces soft and natural qualities in an attempt to persuade us of the friendly inclusiveness of the project, similar to that of a public park (fig. 119).

The large open courtyard with different sorts of trees in a well gouged in the podium, deep in the interior of the block, however, is only accessible to internal users for security reasons. However pleasant this piece of real woodland may appear to the users of the lower

reading rooms, the experience from the *esplanade* is surrealistic: a group of tall estranged trees surrounded by what appear to be six-storey-high reflective ice cubes. From a rhetorical point of view it is noteworthy that the model presentations emphasize the trees with vivid green imitations, whereas the large, dominating buildings are represented in transparent acrylic. The modernistic virtues of clarity and simplicity, and of dissolution of architectural masses, converge in the Tolbiac library, but its invariable consistency and gigantic scale evoke as much doubt as admiration.

The architectural *interface* between buildings and the urban spaces involves the issue of the environment for human experience and social interaction beyond the mere utilitarian, and beyond the distant aesthetic impression. The Oslo competition texts express a concern for life in the streets, the streams of walking people enjoying the environment that architecture has as its objective to provide and enhance. Since the Karl Johan *kvartalet* competition in 1962, this concern has been expressed with increasing rhetorical intensity in the competitions, particularly in those for central city areas. This seems to a certain extent to constitute a verbal, rhetorical compensation for unrealistic values, but some projects show approaches in which

20 The Minister of Culture, Åse Kleveland, recently emphasized the importance of city buildings as 'walls in the public space' (open, publicly accessible interfaces) as she advised against the new huge shopping malls being established outside the towns, their exclusive architecture and their impoverishing effect on the existing city centres: 'Kjøpesentre i kulturpolitisk perspektiv', *kronikk, Aftenposten*, 9 December 1994. There are numerous examples of modern spaces intended for public use, which end up closed and exclusive such as the glass-covered pedestrian street in the centre of the town Bodø which had to be prohibited for persons under 18 years of age after 8pm because of violence (in the autumn 1994).

human participation in urban life is given weight in concrete responses.²⁰

I have dealt extensively with the issue of *lightness* and endless space, because of their intriguing rhetorical implications in the competition material as well as in celebrated contemporary architecture of international significance. The problem illustrates a general dilemma of contemporary architecture related to the doctrine that the artist or architect should express or *mirror the age* in which he works, as if any 'age' is unambiguous, harmonious, and can be intuitively grasped and materialized into non-conflicting, benign products. It is of crucial importance, naturally, to be sensitive to the reality of the 'age', and critical too, as this doctrine so easily can be misused for senseless experiments in the name of progress and creative innovation. The question is how the architect interprets, how he identifies the different realities of his age, and moreover how he conceives the autonomy of his influence in relation to the totality of construction enterprises.

The mythological model (from Ovid) for Calvino's lightness is Perseus who flew with winged sandals and succeeded in killing the gorgon Medusa because he saw her *mirrored* in the reflection of his bronze shield. Calvino stresses that Perseus' reflective power does not imply a rejection of the *real* world of monsters in which he lives, a reality (represented by Medusa's head hidden in a bag) which he carries with him:

Perseus' strength always lies in a refusal to look directly, but not in a refusal of the reality in which he is fated to live; he carries the reality with him and accepts it as his particular burden.²¹

Perseus used the mirror of his shield to spot the monster and defeat it, and his constant awareness of this hidden power continues to enable him to confront new monsters, new obstacles and challenges. He does not create a vast forest of mirrors to confuse the perception of reality or to conceal a petrification or expansion of power. The purpose of Calvino's search for *lightness* is to rise above the world, into

another level of perception, in order there to gain strength to change his approach to the world. He does not mean to escape into dreams or into the irrational: 'The images of lightness that I seek should not fade away like dreams dissolved by the realities of present and future. . .'.²²

There is a fundamental difference between Solness' castles in the air and Calvino's lightness, since the former remains a utopian dream while the latter implies a strategy for an operative and imaginative interchange between dreams and reality; between lightness and heaviness in different forms. Without pursuing the mythological complexity of monsters, we can make some allusions to monsters as a symbol of difficult and challenging, unpleasant and enigmatic aspects of reality. The monsters in Ovid,²³ as Calvino makes clear, are not unambiguously atrocious, neither are they once and for all extinguished, but the relationship continues in a complex intercourse of transformations. Perseus' coexistence with the gorgon, his 'delicacy of spirit' paying attention and respect to the terrifying bodiless creature, which also in a sense is fragile and perishable, brings about a series of beautiful and astonishing events. He is not caught in a one-tracked utopian pursuit. Similarly, taking his example from Perseus, Calvino's lightness means 'to look at the world from a different perspective, with a different logic and with fresh methods of cognition and verification'.²⁴

One problem in contemporary architecture consists of not getting caught in the dissolving and mirroring illusions of technological supremacy, but of returning the focus back to the earth and dealing with the neglected realities of human needs. Master builder Solness' desire for utopian lightness made him ignore the crack in the chimney that caused the fire which took the lives of his twin sons; he wanted the house to burn so that he could build a new and more magnificent construction. This is an extraordinary example of a socio-material interrelationship expressed poetically. In the context of architectural ideals and architectural problems I would see this as a failure to tend to the interrelationship between the concrete physical reality and the psychological and inter-human relationships of life. And I would see

21 Calvino, (1988), p. 5.
22 Calvino, (1988), p. 7.
23 Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso), *Metamorphoses*, translated by Mary M. Innes, (London, 1955).
24 Calvino, (1988), p. 7.

the 'crack' in a wide sense as something essential, whether light or solid, which is lacking; as a reminder to consider carefully the possible and various aspects of architecture in relation to human, earthbound life. These implicit architectural and socio-material realities, the neglect of which in the case of Solness killed the children and 'petrified' his marriage and social life, are relevant not only in the immediate environment, but also in a larger ecological and global perspective.

The examples above illustrate some of the problems of reflecting universal desires and dreams directly in extensive material structures. The infinity of space is generally acknowledged today, but the applicability of infinitude as a spatial reference for human reality is quite another problem.²⁵ Lise Bek points out that the Renaissance idea of an environment (milieu) could be depicted as a direct reflection of the ideal, a more or less symbol-laden vision owing to its metaphysical character. In modern architecture which is a-metaphysical, the spatial ideal asserts itself without reference to the metaphysical dimension. Instead of merely revealing itself as a visualized possibility for existence, it manifests itself as materialized existence: the milieu becomes identical with its physical appearance in the *limited* sense, rather than with its psychological significance. What remains is the quantitative and materialistic spatial concept disconnected from its metaphysical reflection, and with it, the space-consuming pattern of horizontal perception.²⁶

'If the modern concept of space is to be rescued from megalomania and the dream of paradise to be other than hallucination, a revaluation of the visual aspect of man's situation as equal to the cognitive one is needed', Bek maintains, 'and that must be the concern of the faculty of vision itself, and not the conceptual formulation adhering to it.'²⁷ This visual aspect concerns the optical and physical acquaintanceship of man with his surroundings; surroundings which are comprehensible and in which he can appropriate space to himself, orient himself and interact as an individual with other individuals. The design and organization of façades and interfaces are essential in an architecture which seeks to structure

and enhance man's immediate interaction with his environment, both perceptually and as an active participant in his socio-material reality.

I have gone a long way from the façades and interfaces of the Oslo competitions, from which I departed to pursue some implications of the architectural ideals which have been forwarded by the threefold competition rhetoric. In the Oslo competitions, however, counter-currents emerged which have acted against the purest modernist ideals being whole-heartedly celebrated in their most consistent and radical form such as are exemplified in the Library of France in Paris. This common-sense, or perhaps local Norwegian peculiarity,²⁸ which influences the framework of Oslo architectural competitions, may be conceived as tediously commonplace; as brake pads on creative architectural achievement. However, the same common-sense has played an active role in accepting and adapting the architectural expressions to other aspects than the pure progress of technological rationality. Protests against extinguishing all traces from the past, wishes for greater inclusiveness and diversity and for conservation of nature, are explicit in the last 25 years of the period, not only rhetorically but also in the fundamental framework of the competitions.

The idealizations of open, infinite space expressed in façades and interfaces have been challenged during the last decade of hegemonic competition architecture with proposals for forwarding figurative façades and more highly differentiated interfaces. The allusion to a 'protective castle' was important in the case of Soria Moria, the shielding 'wall' in Vaterland and Grønland Market, and more solid interfaces were proposed in the College of Music, the Centre for the Disabled and the 3rd prize in the competition for the Aqua-Leisure Centre. For different reasons several of these proposals are not entirely convincing: e.g. the Vaterland and Grønland Market because the façade as an interface lacked correspondence with its interior, and the Aqua-Leisure Centre 3rd prize project because its significance and impact within the architectural context were misinterpreted. 'Personal', figurative façades of solids

25 Lise Bek points out that the pictorial art has explored this problem and shown its impossibility; modern pictorial art 'has functioned as a catalyst for change in the visual convention without thereby having contributed essentially to the resolving of the actual problems of modern architecture', Bek, (1980), p. 244.

26 This latter is in Bek's view the most absurd consequence of Alberti's definition of space as a comprehensible mathematical formula and of the milieu as reality, pp. 244-246.

27 Bek, (1980), pp. 246-247. An important issue in her thesis concerns the interface, in terms of the relationship between the building and its surroundings, the spatial arrangements as experienced by the host and the guest.

28 Commented by Peter Davey and Hans Magnus Enzenberger, see chapter VII. Davey expresses further interesting observations on Norwegian architecture in various of his writings on the subject in *AR*.

and voids can be visually space-demanding; they are visible and tangible in another manner than the mirroring, transparent façades.

Moreover, the artistic convention of modernity is not essentially to blend with the environment, but implies a high degree of architectural expressiveness and uniqueness. Thus, new figurative façades inserted in an existing matrix may contribute to disintegration and segregation rather than to the coherence and wholeness that is called for.

Grothen describes the official concept of culture around 1990 as nostalgic, and he discerns the politics of 1991-92 from the value-conservatism of the non-socialist government in 1983-84. The new orientation, he says, differs from the former in being definitely more secular, and moreover in the manner it seeks to use the new emphasis on 'quality' and 'aesthetics' as an integral, instrumental tool in the strategies for future development of the economy and production.²⁹

This new politics of culture goes beyond the period of this study of architectural competitions. The signs are, however, that architecture within the context of competitions for public projects cannot expect to be relieved of the basic conditions related to the complex of economy, technology and politics. Nonetheless, the official concern with aesthetics and architectural quality should be appreciated by architects. The nostalgic elements implicit in this concern and in the public debates are evident as are also the perpetually progressive forces. To a certain degree, these nostalgic elements are natural reactions against the ruthlessness of modernization, as was also expressed in the question of age-value in chapters VI and VII. But it would be a depressing misconception if architects were to interpret these signals as a matter of merely reproducing images.

Transformation is inevitable. Therefore the example of Perseus seems valuable here too, that is, his sensitivity of spirit. He displays an exceptional affection and respect for both the existing and the new, when he engages his inventiveness in the transformations that he induces. Merely following the fashions without regard for the underlying and crucial problems is like the lightness of the feather, whereas the

keen awareness and precision of the bird is what is really needed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The typical façade in the competitions is an image of rational and effective order which corresponds with the prevailing views of society and the dominating features of the building industry. Simultaneously the idea of the *boundless space* is prevalent, and the rhetoric idealizes the *lightness* and transparency of façades and interfaces. The competition rhetoric reveals a striving towards utopian goals. My main concern in this chapter has been to pursue these goals and some of the problems that they expose.

Italo Calvino devoted one of his Norton lectures to the principle of *lightness*, to rise above the heaviness of life; not by ignoring the realities but by viewing them in a new perspective of reflection and interpretation. He points to the importance of *precision*, control and refinement. This precision corresponds with exactly that concentration on technological progress and sophistication which appears in the competition ideals and their reliance upon refinement of production processes and structural details. The goal of transparency or 'invisibility' is an architecture that melts into air, resembling the *castle in the air* of Ibsen's master builder Solness. But, as the historian of ideas Tjønneland demonstrates, Solness fails to bridge the gap between the utopian and the real world: a castle in the air upon a foundation is a contradiction in terms, and represents a private mythology based on the modern secularized world.

Idealization of 'invisible architecture' responds to the human desire to levitate, to flee the bondage and privation of earthbound life. But architecture is material and earthbound. Instead of meeting us with tangible sociability, the transparent façades of technical perfection dissolve themselves in images reflecting and multiplying their perfection in a confusion of dim fragments; as projections of man's self onto his products. And behind the 'invisible' reflecting façades, huge masses celebrate the power of technology as monuments to the

29 Grothen, pp. 87-102.

long-distance, air-borne network of the global economy.

The competition rhetoric reveals the problem of architecture regarded as a direct reflection of ideas into tectonic materiality. The infinity of space is generally acknowledged today, but the applicability of infinitude as a spatial reference for human reality is quite another matter. In modern architecture which is a-metaphysical, the spatial ideal manifests itself as materialized existence. As a consequence the environment becomes identical with its physical appearance in the limited sense rather than as a visualized possibility for existence with its psychological significance. As long as the quantitative and materialistic spatial concept and the space-consuming pattern of horizontal perception dominate, man remains alienated from his surroundings.

The architectural and political context of the Oslo competitions have prevented these modernistic ideals from being celebrated in their most radical and extensive forms. In this context the hegemonic Oslo competition architecture seeks to a certain degree to adapt itself and balance its rhetoric to both the prevailing architectural ideals and the dominating, complex trends in society.

As an alternative to the direct reflection and materialization of ideals such as the dissolution of solidity (lightness, mirroring and precision, expressed poetically by Calvino) one could also attempt to apply the same 'memos' as guidelines to the wider context of architecture: *lightness* of mind to enhance the understanding of human realities in relation to architecture; *mirroring* as the sensitivity and concentration to perceive and interpret the relevant conditions at a mental distance, which in turn renders possible the *precision* needed to create an architecture that can ease and improve man's interaction with his immediate, concrete surroundings.



FINAL REMARKS

This study has shown that there is a distinct continuity and homogeneity in the competition architecture over the period of 51 years. The series of prize-winning designs features good and also exciting projects, many of which have been carried out with elegance and consistency. As a whole this series of selected competition designs is not characterized by the exceptional, brilliant 'threshold' designs, neither does it appear as an institutional 'barrier' that has rejected epochal or the 'best' designs. It supports the notion of competitions sustaining the core value orientations of the prevalent energies in the profession, which they, the competitions, serve by a continuous publication of the ideas and codes that are being developed.¹ The competition architecture reflects a certain hegemony, a certain layer of these codes.

The threefold rhetoric which consists of the architectural design, the verbal and the visual rhetoric of the competition publication, allows a broad advocacy of the hegemonic competition architecture. It mediates the implicit value orientations both as a response to the major energies and immediate issues in society, and as a more specific expression of the underlying artistic drives, and codes, within the profession of architecture. I have studied the competition material and its rhetorical advocacies from three angles: the overall attitudes with respect to the *new* versus the *old*, the *spatial* aspect including conceptions of use, and the *façades* and *interfaces*. These aspects, which together constitute the architectural totality, follow different rhythms and lines of development. As the development of the different aspects have their turning points or breakthroughs at different points in time, important changes in the hegemonic architecture can occur while, at the

same time, a continuity is manifest.

The competition rhetoric relates the *new* architecture to the current and most urgent issues in society, supporting the fervent belief in progress in the first period, and the more pluralistic energies embraced by the market consumerism of the later years. Both verbally and visually the rhetoric manifests the *new* welfare state and alienates the *old* architecture in the first period, whereas later, adaptation of the new to the old is emphasized. At the same time the question of *monumentality* elucidates the more subtle alienation of the old, by which the rhetorical advocacies perpetually legitimate the artistic liberty to create *newness* and contrast. The relative valuation of the old, whether attributed with negative connotations such as 'crooked and ugly' and 'unpleasant monumentality', or positive as 'magnificent' and 'humanly living', hits the general soundboard in society of egalitarian ideals and goals for the new, regardless of whether better hygiene or general attractiveness and accessibility are stressed.

With respect to *space* and conceptions of *use* the threefold rhetoric illuminates the complex problem of creating permanent, physical structures in an era (in which major energies are) devoted to the cult of *movement*, change and expansion, in both a technological and a social sense. The rhetoric appears with a dual advocacy: on the one hand the new architectural spaces are clear, simple and rational and on the other great emphasis has been placed on invoking a sense of vitality and multiplicity. The rhetoric tones down conflict and attempts to persuade its audience of a *harmonious* unity, suggesting an infinite and inclusive interplay

¹ This is in keeping with Lipstadt's findings in her study of American competitions, see Lipstadt, (1989a), p.11.

between life and architecture. Verbally this advocacy is achieved by using metaphorical expressions which create vivid images of harmonious and pluralistic human life, as the 'chess metaphor', the 'living organism' and 'nature' connotations persuasively suggest. A certain *confusion* of the architecture and the prospected use is apparent. The most striking feature of the visual rhetoric is the degree to which it exaggerates the openness and boundless movement in the spaces; a rhetoric which in this respect is clearly illusive.

The *façades* and *interfaces* present an image of great sameness, of the new architecture as simple, bare and matter-of-factly in contrast to the old, historicist architecture. They provide images of an ordered, egalitarian society and of the hegemonic building industry, as these two fields develop from the firm, unanimous manifestation of the welfare state to the diversity and vagueness of the society of market economy; from the distinct and plain tectonic structures to the lighter and ever more sophisticated technologies. Remarkably little is said on the issue of the *façades* apart from favouring a calm, harmonious or skilful design without exaggerated expressionism. A particular feature of the visual rhetoric however, amplifies the ambiguity and dissolution of spatial boundaries, and thus confuses the perception of the concrete visual impact in the environment. The study reveals some aspects of the problem of trying to reflect ideals and utopian goals directly into architectural forms.

The rhetorical nature of competition projects and their verbal advocacies act persuasively by enhancing the altruistic and optimistic aspects. Simultaneously and inherently this rhetoric also enhances the relativity and ambiguity of communication and interpretation. The advocacies vividly invoke the imagination while at the same time laying down stringent directions for the concrete architectural structure they refer to. The visual codes mediate one kind of image, expressing the main ideas with relevance to the concrete design proposal and its environment. By way of their general and

vague character, the verbal advocacies amplify the relativity and ambiguity of mediation further.

The question may, however, be posed whether this kind of rhetoric can unambiguously promote fruitful debates on architecture in society, or whether the implicit vagueness also serves to prevent the discussion of fundamental, underlying principles. This is a difficult and sensitive question which touches the very core of architectural work and architectural culture. The gap, or the blind spots, between the actual proposed architecture (with its inherent principles) and the project's representation, and in particular the verbal presentation and discussion of it, seem to be a typical feature in architecture; an implicit aspect of the profession.

On the one hand, the role of the architect presupposes that the creation of architecture can occur in a situation of mental freedom and spurred on by images and ideas, as if every case was new and unique.² The explorative nature of the design process implies a fundamental state of uncertainty and expectancy. Looking ahead towards something that can be created, the architect's exploration implies the complex process of visualization on a miniature scale of prefiguration all while maintaining reference to the full-scale realization on the site. In addition to the visualization, the verbal rhetoric vastly expands the framework of imagination and interpretation. Thus, by evoking images that make people 'see' the projects within the intended perspective, as sincere and innovative responses to important issues, the architects hope to convince the audience of the qualities of the design proposals and gain maximum adherence. This element of imagination is essential in architecture.

On the other hand, a great degree of vagueness of communication leaves vast parts of the design process and architectural discourse unexplored, unuttered and unquestioned. Architectural development depends upon reflection and communication of experience and thoughts both within society and within the profession of architecture itself. The question is whether the oversimplification of com-

² See also Svensson, a comparative study of the professional cultures of architects and psychologists.

munication and its side effects are favourable to architecture in the long run.

Firstly, with regard to society, if architecture is not to continue its existence as unrealized projects hidden away in private drawers, it must respond to human needs and aspirations as well as relate to economic, technological and political realities. Architectural work is in this respect different from the other arts, and implies that the artistic and innovative aspect from the very beginning includes an element of compromising, of aiming at practical solutions. The very purpose of architecture is indeed to be public. It is here that the role of creativity, of artistic freedom and intuition, confronts a major challenge: that of responding with sensitivity, sincerity and respect for people and nature, without giving in to the ephemerality of fashion that often results in disconnected, easy solutions, or deceptive arrogance. The tendency to leave the core professional values open to mystifications and prophetic pretensions may sustain the traditional structures within the profession,³ but does not suffice to advance the authority of architects in a world which is constantly subjecting architecture to ever more complex, demanding and stringent conditions.

Secondly, the challenge of architecture being a public phenomenon, thus, requires of the architect a great awareness of his professional work; an awareness that enables him to view his role and the nature of his work in a wide perspective. Such a professional self-awareness involves in my opinion an expansion of or supplement to the realm of intuition with a heightening of the reflective, questioning and discursive elements within the professional culture.

The vague ways of talking about architecture are often compared with poetry. But good poetry is precise, and distinct; it is pregnant and rich, not vague or slippery. Architecture, too, when it is good, is precise and distinct, pregnant and rich in experience and meanings. An open-minded, conscious reflection on and discursive exploration into the 'blind spots' of architectural mediation could enhance the quality of architecture, making the process more perceptive, and the result more inclusive and more pregnant. It would have to start with the teaching in schools of architecture, where

the students are socialized into the culture of the profession, and where the internalized professional skills, techniques and attitudes are handed down. It would imply a sharpening of the awareness of the faculty of vision, the hand and the mind and their mutual relationships, while aiming at widening the perspective of comprehension. It would imply using the means of articulation and communication, no less imaginatively, no less artistically, but with a higher degree of inquiry and precision in making clear the motivations and the consequences of the architectural work.

3 Here it can be said that it is this charismatic, prophetic style which indeed makes architecture known, and which is associated with good architects and good architecture. This raises new, complex and serious questions as regards the cults of power and elitism and the implicit elements of fear and incomprehensibility, versus egalitarian communication and reason.

APPENDIX 1

THE COMPETITIONS IN THE MATERIAL

- 1 1939 **New Government Building, *Ny regjeringsbygning***
open competition, 49 submissions
Jury J. M. Colbjørnsen, M. Ormestad, architects Fr. Crawford-Jensen, Herman Munthe-Kaas, Fritjof Reppen
Prizes 4 shared prizes:
motto 'Fri', architects Morseth & Wiel Gedde
motto 'U', architect Nils Holter
motto 'Rytme', architects Ove Bang and Øivin Grimsgaard
motto 'Vestibyle', architect Erling Viksjø
purchase (one of four purchases), motto 'Tone', architects Arne Korsmo, Gunnar Fougner, Odd Gengenbach
Published *Byggekunst*, 22, (1940), pp. 34-56. The project, based on motto 'Vestibyle', has been realized.

- 2 1946 **Oslo Central Station, *Oslo sentralbanestasjon***
open competition, 10 submissions
Jury Otto Aubert, Kr. Løken, architects Gudmund Hoel, Mads Wiel Gedde, Nils Holter
Prizes one 1st prize, two shared prizes,
1st prize, motto 'Grønt lys', architects John Engh and Peer Qvam
Published *Byggekunst*, 29, no. 1-2, (1947). The project has been realized.

- 3 1947 **Land-use plan for Vestre Vika, *Vestre Vika, regulering***
open competition, 46 submissions
Jury C. E. Mathiesen, Realf Ottesen, E. Offenbergh, architects Erik Rolfsen, Thorleif Jensen
Prizes one 1st prize, 7 shared prizes,
1st prize, motto 'Åpent hav', architect Sven Nicolaysen
Published *Byggekunst*, 30, no. 2, (1948). The plan has been modified and reduced.

- 4 1949 **The Parliament Building, *Stortingsbygningen***
open competition, 34 submissions
Jury Chrisian Fredrik Monsen, Otto Lous Mohr, architects Johs. Th. Westbye, Fr. Konow Lund, Gudolf Blakstad
Prizes one 1st, one 2nd, one 3rd prize,
1st prize, motto 'Ex', architect Nils Holter
2nd prize, motto 'Skulptur', architect Erling Viksjø
Published *Byggekunst*, 31, no. 12, (1949). The project motto 'Ex' has been realized.

- 5 1950 **The Palé Hotel, *Paléhotellet***
open competition
Jury E. Sundt, Andreas Andresen, architects Gudolf Blakstad, Knut Knutsen, Helge Thams
Prizes one 1st, one 2nd, one 3rd prize,
1st prize, motto 'Insula urbana', architects Preben Krag and Jens Selmer
Published *Byggekunst*, 32, no. 11, (1950). The project has not been realized.

- 6 1953 **Land-use and development plan for the Akershus area, Akershusområdet, utnyttelse og regulering**
open, Nordic¹ ideas competition, 46 submissions
Jury Lars Walløe, E. Grøstad, Egil Storstein, architects F.C. Lund (D), Paul Hedqvist (S), K. M. Sinding-Larsen, Erik Rolfsen
Prizes three shared prizes:
motto 'I park', architect Per Andersson
motto 'Vi kan 1958', architects John Engh and Peer Qvam
motto 'Slottet - slätten - vägen - staden', architect Per Åke Friberg (S)
Published *Konkurransen*, no. 1, (s. a.). The plan has not been realized.
- 7 1954 **Manglerud School, Manglerud folkeskole**
open competition, 13 submissions
Jury Gottfred Hauge, Olaf Solumsmoen, architects P. D. Hofflund, Finn Bryn, Fredrik Winsnes
Prizes one 1st, one 2nd, one 3rd,
1st prize, motto 'Mangle - 3', architects Turid and Kristen Bernhoff Evensen
Published *Konkurransen*, no. 7, (1954). The project has been realized.
- 8 1954 **The Edvard Munch Museum, Edvard Munch-museet**
open competition, 50 submissions
Jury Rolf Stranger, Rolf Hofmo, Johan H. Langaard, architects P. D. Hofflund, Sigurd Lewerentz (S)/replaced by Fritz Schlegel (D), Guthorm Kavli, Reidar Lund
Prizes one 1st, one 2nd, one 3rd,
1st prize, motto 'Rondo Amoroso', architects Gunnar Fougner and Einar Myklebust
Published *Konkurransen*, no. 9, (1954). The project has been realized.
- 9 1954 **New Technical College in Oslo, Ny yrkesskole i Oslo**
First stage open, 15 submissions, second stage closed, 5 submissions
Jury Hallgrim Thoresen, Klaus Torgård, architects P. D. Hofflund, Paul Hedqvist (S), Fredrik Winsnes
Winner Architect Karl Grevstad
Published *Konkurransen*, no. 6, (1954), and *Konkurransen*, no. 12, (1955). The project has been realized.
- 10 1955 **Land-use and development plan for Vålerenga, Vålerenga, regulerings- og bebyggelsesplan**
open competition, 29 submissions
Jury Rolf Hofmo, Rolf Stranger, O. D. Lærum, architects Erik Rolfsen, Frode Rinnan
Prizes one 2nd, two 3 prizes,
2nd prize, motto 'Uten høyhus', architect Nic Stabell
Published *Konkurransen*, no.19, (1956). The plan has not been realized.
- 11 1956 **Voksenåsen, centre for cultural exchange with Sweden, Nasjonalgaven til Sverige, Voksenåsen**
open competition, 22 submissions
Jury Alf Biering, Lars Esmark, Axel Gjøres, architects Sven Markelius (S), Ulf Snellman (S), Esben Poulsson, K. M. Sinding-Larsen
Prizes one 1st, one 2nd, one 3rd prize,
1st prize, motto 'Scherzo', architects Hans Kjell Larsen and Terje Thorstensen
Published *Konkurransen*, no. 22, (s. a.) The project has been realized.
- 12 1956 **Central Office of Storebrand (Insurance Company), Storebrand, administrasjonsbygg**
open, Nordic competition, 28 submissions
Jury Per M. Hansson, Alf Major, architects Arne Ervi (F), Georg Eliassen, Odd Borgund Pedersen
Prizes one 1st, one 2nd, one 3rd, one 4th prize,
1st prize, motto 'Konkavt kompleks', architects Rune Lund and Alf Valentin (S)
Published *Konkurransen*, no. 31, (1957). The project has been realized.
- 13 1957 **Oslo Concert Hall, Konserthus i Oslo**
open, Nordic competition, 48 submissions
Jury Knut Tvedt, Rolf Stranger, Rolf Hofmo, architects P. D. Hofflund, Eyvind Moestue, Birger Lambert Nilssen, Nils Einar Eriksson (S)
Prizes one 1st, three 2nd prizes,

1 Includes members of the associations of architects in Denmark (D), Finland (F), Iceland (I), Norway and Sweden (S).

- 1st prize, motto 'Agora', architect Gösta H:son Åberg (S)
 Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 38, (s.a.) The project has been realized.
- 14 1957 **The Norwegian State College of Physical Education and Sport**,
Norges idrettshøgskole på Sogn
 open competition, 26 submissions
 Jury Rolf Hofmo, Harald Wergeland, Gunnar Wejke, architects Frode Rinnan, K. M. Sinding-Larsen
 Prizes one 1st, one 2nd prize,
 1st prize, motto 'I det grønne', architects Chr. Pran and Otto Torgersen
 Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 40, (s. a.). The project has been realized.
- 15 1958 **University of Oslo, Faculty of Arts**, *Universitet i Oslo, historisk-filosofisk fakultet*
 open competition, 15 submissions
 Jury Sjur Brækhus, Alf Sommerfelt, E. N. Hylland, architects K. M. Sinding-Larsen,
 Finn Bryn, Per Cappelen, Preben Krag
 Prizes one 1st, one 2nd, one 3rd prize,
 1st prize, motto 'Campus', architect Leif Olav Moen
 Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 48, (1958). The project has been realized.
- 16 1962 **Karl Johan kvartalet**, development of a central site on *Karl Johans gate*, *Karl Johan-kvartalet*
 open, Nordic competition, 60 submissions
 Jury Halvor Eika and Bernt Boring, architects Aulis Blomstedt (F),
 Reidar Sveaas, Nils Haugstveit
 Prizes two shared 2nd prizes, one 3rd, one 4th prize
 shared 2nd prize, motto '13831', architect Håkon Mjelva
 shared 2nd prize, motto '27059', architect Erik Møller (D)
 purchase (of three purchases) motto '26439', architect Sverre Fehn
 Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 93, (1963).
 The author of motto '13831' was commissioned; the project has not been realized.
- 17 1964 **Art Centre at Høvikodden**, *Museumsanlegg, Høvikodden*
 open ideas competition, first stage 95 submissions, 6 in closed second stage
 Jury Nils Onstad, Sonia Henic, Gunnar Reegård, Alf-Jørgen Aas, architects Trond
 Eliassen, Olav Hallset, Herman Krag, Eyvind Moestue, Vilhelm Wohlert (D)
 Winner motto '8990', architects Jon Eikvar and Svein-Erik Engebretsen
 Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, nos. 99, (1963) and 105, (1964). The project has been realized.
- 18 1966 **Forsikringens hus**, an office block, *Forsikringens hus*
 closed competition, 4 submissions in first stage, 2 in second stage
 Jury Per M. Hansson, architects Eyvind Moestue, Per Cappelen
 Winner motto 'Innfatning', architect John Engh
 Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 126, (1966). The project has been realized.
- 19 1966 **The Norwegian Red Cross, Institute for Asthmatic and Allergic Children**, *Norges Røde Kors, spesialinstitutt for astmatiske og allergiske barn*
 closed competition, 7 submissions
 Jury J. C. Heuch Bugge, Kjell Aas, architects P. A. M. Mellbye, Einar Arnborg, Jens Selmer
 Winner motto 'Vern', architects Henrik Sommerschild and Halvor Berg
 Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 127, (1966). The project has been realized.
- 20 1967 **Oslo Police Headquarters**, *Politihus i Oslo*
 open competition, 27 submissions
 Jury Harald Winter-Hjelm, Johan Gjerde, Svein Lund, architects Kaare Holbæk-Hansen,
 Christian Norberg-Schulz, John Engh, Aulis Blomstedt (F)
 Prizes two 2nd, one 3rd, one 4th prize
 2nd prize, motto '7,62', architects Are Telje, Fredrik A.S.Torp, Knut Aasen, Niels A. Torp
 2nd prize, motto 'Bod', architect Erling Viksjø
 Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 146, (1968). The project motto '7,62' has been realized.

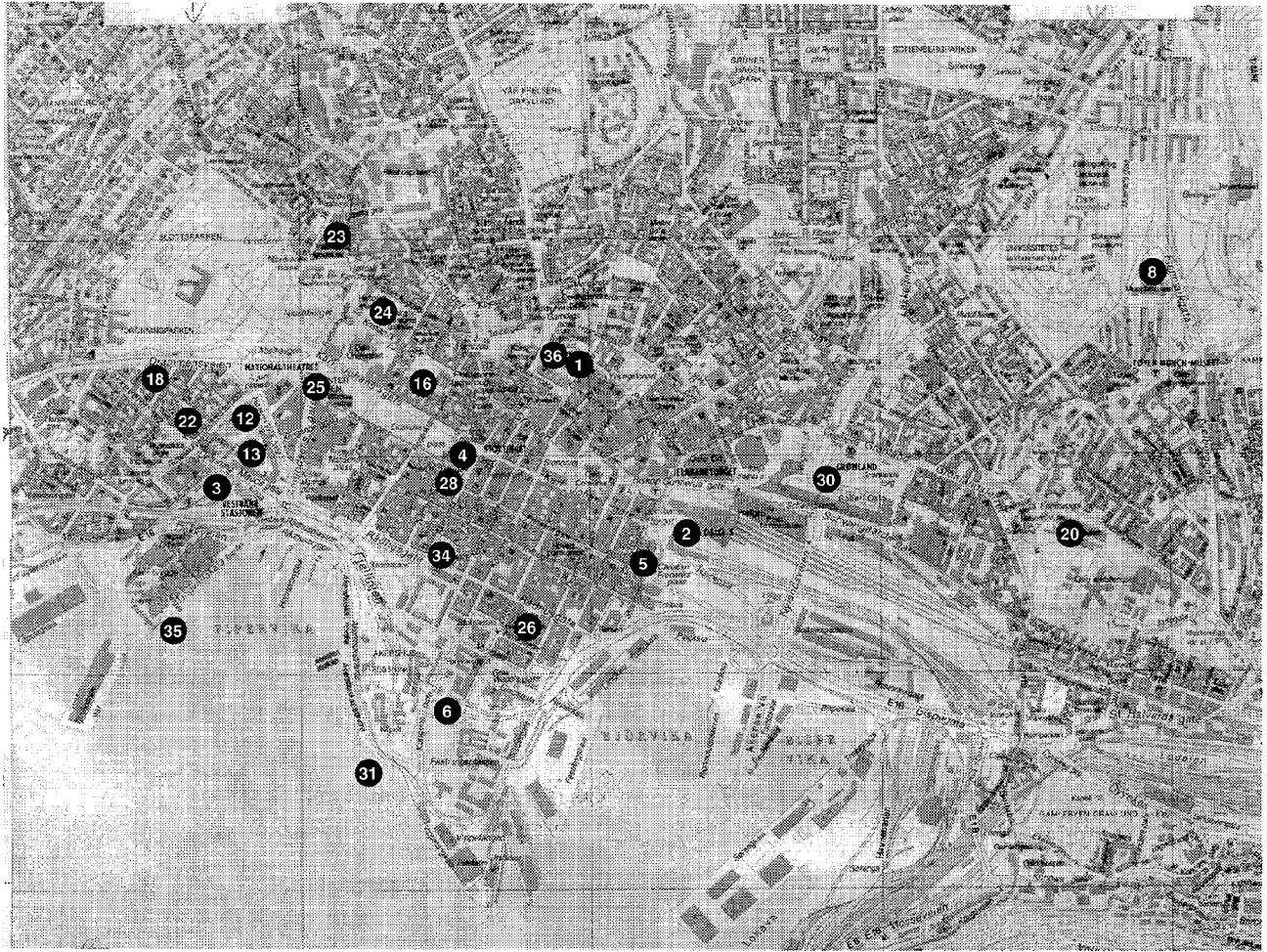
- 21 1968 **Development plan for University of Oslo, Blindern - Sognsvann,**
Blindern-Sognsvannområdet, utbygging til universitetsformål
open ideas competition, 15 submissions
Jury Harald Winter-Hjelm, Dag Omholt, Christofer Lohne Knudsen, architects Dag Brønne, Einar Myklebust, Are Telje, Unnleiv Bergsgard
Prizes one 1st, one 2nd, one 3rd prize,
1st prize, motto '12144', architects Hultberg, Resen & Throne Holst a/s
2nd prize, motto '01010', architects Ulf Harald Lyngar, coll. Elisabeth Tostrup, Tom Granlund, Knut Eide
Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 156, (1969). A very small part of the plan has been realized.
- 22 1969 **The Head Office of the Society of Norwegian Chartered Engineers, Ingeniørenes Hus i Oslo**
open competition, 21 submissions
Jury Jacob Skau-Jacobsen, Chr. Norman, architects Helge Abrahamsen, Eyvind Moestue, Ulf Harald Lyngar
Prizes one 1st, two shared prizes,
1st prize, motto 'Katt bland hermelinerna', architects Kjell Lund and Nils Slaatto
Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 168, (1970). The project has been realized.
- 23 1969 **The SAS Hotel, SAS-hotellet**
open, Nordic competition, 58 submissions
Jury Per M. Hansson, Erik Palsgaard, Kai Sørtorp, architects Kaare Holbæk-Hansen, Nils Slaatto, Bent Severin (D), Sten Samuelson (S)
Prizes one 1st prize, three 2 prizes,
1st prize, motto '59480', architect Jan Lunding (S)
Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 169, (1970). The project has been realized.
- 24 1972 **Tullinløkka, National Gallery Extension, Tullinløkka i Oslo**
open competition, 50 submissions
Jury Rolf Holth, Enevald Skadsem, Olav Meidell Trovik, architects Gaute Baalsrud, Gunnar Fougner, Tore Sveram, Tobias Faber (D)
Prizes one 1st, three shared prizes,
1st prize, motto '10101', architects Kjell Lund and Nils Slaatto
purchase (one of three), motto '10001', architect Sverre Fehn
Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 183, (1973). The project has not been realized.
- 25 1973 **National Theatre Extension, Tilbygg til Nationaltheatret**
open ideas competition, 29 submissions
Jury Leif J. Wilhelmsen, Arild Brinchmann, architects Dag Brønne, Christian Norberg-Schulz, Peter Celsing (S)
Prizes one 1st, two shared prizes,
1st prize, motto 'NB', architects Kjell Lund and Nils Slaatto
Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 190, (1973). The project has not been realized.
- 26 1973 **New Head Office of the Bank of Norway, Nytt hovedsete for Norges Bank**
open competition, 21 submissions
Jury Erling Petersen, Per Mjelve, architects Bernt Heiberg, Fredrik A. S. Torp, Aarno Ruusuvuori (F)
Prizes one 1st, one 2nd, two 3rd prizes,
1st prize, motto 'N.kr. & øre', architects Kjell Lund and Nils Slaatto
Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 192, (1974). The project has been realized.
- 27 1978 **Soria Moria, Education Centre of the Norwegian Medical Association,**
Den Norske lægeforening, utdannelsesenter på Soria Moriatomten
open competition, 80 submissions
Jury Dagfinn Gedde-Dahl, Odd Bjercke, Otto Ruge, architects Nils Slaatto, Rolf Ramm Østgaard
Prizes one 1st, two 2nd prizes,
1st prize, motto 'Ask', architects Are Telje, Fredrik A. S. Torp, Knut Aasen
Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 215, (s. a.). The project has been realized.

- 28 1980 **Wessels plass, a central city square, *Wessels plass***
open to members of the Oslo Association of Architects, 35 submissions
Jury Ove Skaug, architects Fredrik A. S. Torp, Kjell Lund
Prizes one 1st, two shared prizes,
1st prize, motto 'Paloma', architects Petter Bogen and Lars Haukeland
Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 229, (1980). Parts of the project have been realized.
- 29 1982 **Health and Service Centre for the Disabled, *Helse-og servicesenter for funksjonshemmede***
open ideas competition, 54 submissions
Jury Anne Beate Aubert, Karl Hartviksen, Ove F. Brække, architects Jacob W. Nordan, Bjørn Fjoran, Geir Grung, Einar Vaardal Lunde
Prizes five shared prizes:
motto 'Cor', architect Leif Olav Moen
motto '52,50', architects Anker and Hølaas
motto 'Repro Reppen', architects Ketil Moe and 4B v/ Annema Selstrøm
motto 'mennesket og huset', architect Tore E. Leholt
motto 'Votre Santé', architects Sæther and Gythfeldt
Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 243, (s. a.). Not realized.
- 30 1982 **Vaterland and Grønland Market, a complex redevelopment project, *Vaterland og Grønlands torg***
open ideas competition, 15 submissions
Jury Bernt H. Lund, Ole Martin Nilsen, architects Ola Viskum, Tore Brantenberg Ragnar Uppman (S)
Prizes one 1st, two 3rd prizes,
1st prize, motto 'Bill, mrk. sentralt', architects Pål Henry Engh, Lars Haukeland, Ola Aasness
Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 246, (1982). The winner has worked out the land-use plan and completed parts of the project; the hotel and the residential area have been designed by other architects.
- 31 1983 **The City and the Fjord in the year 2000, development of Oslo's waterfront, *Byen og fjorden år 2000***
open, Nordic ideas competition in three parts:
part 1: 52 submissions, part 2: 43 submissions, part 3 (open to public participation): 83 submissions
Jury Sverre Lende, Erik Melander, Øistein Skipenes, architects Bjarne Aasen (MNLA), Birger Lambertz-Nilssen, Per Bonesmo, Sven W. Meinich, Jan Sigurd Østberg, Tobias Faber (D)
Prizes part 1: one 1st, one 3rd prize,
1st prize, motto 'Deilig er fjorden', architects Per-Johan Eriksen, Bjørn Wærenskjold, chartered engineers Eilif Holte, Per Nøklebye
part 2: one 1st, one 2nd prize,
1st prize, motto 'Fint snitt', architects Petter Bogen and Didrik Hvoslef-Eide
part 3: one 1st, one 2nd prize,
1st prize, motto 'Kroken', architects Svein H. Bergersen, Øyvind Gromholt, Arvid Ottar
Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 252, (s. a.)
- 32 1985 **The Norwegian State College of Music, stage 1, *Norges musikkhøgskole, trinn 1***
open competition, 67 submissions
Jury Harald Jørgensen, Helge Hjort, architects Bjørn Fjoran, John Kristoffersen, Johan Richter (D)
Prizes 5 shared prizes (chosen for the second stage)
motto 'Norsk rapsodi', Arkitektfirmaet Arnstein Arneberg
motto 'Lille Frøen', architects Nikolai Alfsen, Ebbe Astrup, Hanne Bauck, Stein Sole
motto 'Cantabile', architect Petter Bogen
motto 'Zoor', Arkitektkontoret 4B
motto 'Amade' HUS', Arkitektkontoret Børve og Borgsenius
Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 261, (1985). The project based on motto 'Lille Frøen' has been realized.
- 33 1985 **Bjerke racecourse, *Bjerke travbane***
open competition, 13 submissions
Jury Arne Onsrud, Lars Sandstrøm, architects Reidar Sølvberg, Kari Nissen Brodtkorb, Truls Thorenfeldt

- Prizes one 1st, two shared 2nd prizes,
1st prize, motto 'Scott'n', Hougen og Solheim Arkitektkontor a/s
- Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 264, (1986). The project has been partially realized.
- 34 1986 **Christiania Torv, redevelopment of a central city square, *Christiania Torv***
open ideas competition, 34 submissions
- Jury Sverre Lidsheim, architects Christian Norberg-Schulz, Jon Kristian Ellefsen, Kjeld Magnussen, Lyder Braathen
- Prizes one 1st, one 2nd, one 3rd prize,
1st prize, motto 'Chrux', architects Erik Haarstad, Torstein Ramberg
- Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 268, (1986). The project is being realized (1996).
- 35 1987 **Aker Brygge, Aqua-Leisure Centre, *Badehus på Aker Brygge***
open, Nordic competition, 69 submissions
- Jury Kjell Wester/ replaced by Arne Engeseth, Kari Diesen d.y., architects Kari Broch-Due/
replaced by Trond Eliassen, Gudmundur Johnsson, Claus Bonderup (D)
- Prizes one 1st, one 2nd, one 3rd prize,
1st prize, motto '36644', architects Theo Bjerg & Palle Dyreborg (D)
2nd prize, motto '54321', architects A/S Arkitektkontoret 4B, Geir Dyrvik
3rd prize, motto '88888', architects Alf Haukeland, Gerhard Mitterberger, Øyvind Mo, Kjetil Trædal Thorsen
- Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 277, (s.a.). The project has not been realized.
- 36 1990 **Landscaping of the Government Offices Complex, *Regjeringsparken***
open ideas competition, 39 submissions
- Jury Per Eikeland, Per Haga, architects Sven W. Meinich and Lyder Braathen, Kari Anne Smith-Kielland (MNLA) and Marit Mihle (MNLA)
- Prizes one 1st, one 2nd, two 3rd prizes,
1st prize, motto 'vev', architects Lunde & Løvseth
- Published *Norske arkitektkonkurranser*, no. 294, (1990). The project is being realized.



120. LOCATION OF COMPETITION SITES ON MAP OF OSLO



121. LOCATION OF COMPETITION SITES ON MAP OF CENTRAL OSLO

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF FIGURES

Illustrations from the competition material are taken from the respective competition publications.

- 1 Villa Almerico Rotonda, Andrea Palladio, (I quattro libri dell'architettura, II), *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, no. 1 (March, 1993)
- 2 Palazzo Signoria, Brunelleschi's perspective reconstructed by A. Parronchi, in Comar (1992)
- 3 Leicester University Engineering Building, *RIBA Drawings Collection: James Stirling* (1974)
- 4 Map of Christiania (Oslo) in 1816, by Colonel Hagelstam, in Myhre (1990)
- 5 Map of Kristiania, 1911, in Kjeldstadli (1990)
- 6 Grünerløkka in 1930, and municipal plan proposal from 1936, in Kjeldstadli
- 7 Skansen restaurant, Lars Backer, *BK*, 43, no.3 (1961)
- 8 New Government Building, motto 'Fri', site plan and perspective
- 9 New Government Building, motto 'Rytme', site plan, perspective
- 10 New Government Building, motto 'U', site plan, perspective
- 11 New Government Building, motto 'Vestibyle', site plan, perspective
- 12 Oslo Central Station, 1st prize project, perspective
- 13 The Akershus Area, mottos 'Slottet - slätten - vägen - staden', 'i park' and 'Vi kan 1958', site plans
- 14 Landscaping of the Government Offices Complex, 1st prize project, model and site plan
- 15 Aker Brygge baths, 1st prize project, model
- 16 Aker Brygge baths, 3rd prize project, model
- 17 Aker Brygge baths, 2nd prize project, perspective
- 18 Vaterland and Grønland Market, 1st prize project, model
- 19 Soria Moria, site and 1st prize project, model
- 20 Karl Johan *kvartalet*, motto '13831', model
- 21 Bank of Norway Head Office, 1st prize project, model
- 22 Karl Johan *kvartalet*, photograph of the site, *NAK*, no. 93
- 23 Karl Johan *kvartalet*, motto '27059', model and perspective
- 24 Karl Johan *kvartalet*, motto '13831', alternative elevation and perspective
- 25 Bank of Norway Head Office, 1st prize project, model, site plan
- 26 Tullinløkka, 1st prize project, model
- 27 National Theatre Extension, 1st prize project, perspective
- 28 Grünerløkka, proposals for urban renewal, model by Dag Rognlien and Robert Esdaile, perspective by Mari and Gullik Kollandsrud, *BK*, 43, no. 6 (1961)
- 29 Proposal for eastern part of Oslo centre, Mjelva, *BK*, 46 (1964)
- 30 Proposal for motor thoroughfare at City Hall Square, Mjelva, *BK*, 42, no. 1 (1960)
- 31 Proposed motor thoroughfare, 1967, in Benum (1994)
- 32 Karl Johan *kvartalet*, motto '13831' readjusted, Mjelva, in Benum
- 33 New Government Building project shown *in situ*, by jury member Reppen
- 34 New Government Building, motto 'Tone', site plan and perspective
- 35 New Government Building, motto 'Vestibyle' and realized project, site plans and perspectives, *BK*, 41, no. 1 (1959)
- 36 The Parliament Building Extension, 2nd prize project, perspective
- 37 Karl Johan *kvartalet*, motto '26439', model
- 38 Vaterland and Grønland Market, 1st prize project
- 39 Tullinløkka, 1st prize project, elevation
- 40 Christiania Torv, 1st prize project, perspective

- 41 Illustrations of the same 'style mentality' by Knut Knutsen, *BK*, 35, no. 8 (1953)
- 42 New Government Building, motto 'Fri', 1st floor plan
- 43 New Government Building, motto 'Rytme' 12th floor plan
- 44 New Government Building, motto 'Vestibyle', ground floor, mezzanine, and 1st floor plans
- 45 New Government Building, motto 'U', 1st floor plan
- 46 The Norwegian Red Cross Institute (Voksentoppen), 1st prize project, plan
- 47 New Government Building, motto 'Rytme', ground floor plan
- 48 New Government Building, motto 'U', ground floor plan
- 49 The Parliament Building Extension, 1st prize project, plans
- 50 New Technical College, winner project, lower ground floor plan
- 51 Department of Arts, University of Oslo, 1st prize project, plan
- 52 Voksenåsen, 1st prize project, main floor and lower floor plans, section
- 53 Oslo Concert Hall, 1st prize project, 2nd and 4th floor plans, section, perspective
- 54 Høvikodden Art Centre, winner project, ground floor plan and model
- 55 Karl Johan *kvartalet*, motto '27059', ground floor plan, section
- 56 Karl Johan *kvartalet*, motto '13831', ground and first floor plans, section
- 57 Karl Johan *kvartalet*, motto '13831', interior perspective
- 58 Karl Johan *kvartalet*, the ground floor today, Paléet shopping centre, by Viksjø
- 59 Bank of Norway Head Office, 1st prize project, ground-floor plan, section
- 60 Bank of Norway Head Office, 3rd floor plan
- 61 Bank of Norway Head Office, construction model
- 62 Bank of Norway Head Office, plan of ceiling, 2nd floor plan with office arrangements
- 63 Permanenten, Bergen, 1st prize project, *NAK*, no. 143 (1968)
- 64 University of Oslo, 1st prize project
- 65 University of Oslo, 2nd prize project
- 66 Oslo Police Headquarters, motto '7.62', ground floor plan, section
- 67 Tullinløkka, purchased project, motto '10001', model
- 68 Tullinløkka, 1st prize project, ground floor plan, section
- 69 Tullinløkka, 1st prize project, plan illustrations, interior model
- 70 Soria Moria, 1st prize project, ground floor and first floor plans, section
- 71 Soria Moria plan with filled-in constructions
- 72 The State College of Music, winning project, ground floor plan, section
- 73 Aker Brygge baths, 1st prize project, plans, section, model
- 74 Aker Brygge baths, 1st prize project, section
- 75 Roman umbrella pines in Villa Borghese, in H. P. L'Orange, *Roma* (Oslo, 1959)
- 76 Aker Brygge baths, 1st prize project, constructions graphically filled-in
- 77 Aker Brygge baths, 3rd prize project, plan, section
- 78 Pienza, plan, (E. Carli, *Pienza* (Siena, 1966)) in Smith (1992)
- 79 Part of Hadrian's Villa, plan, in Marina De Franceschini, *Villa Adriana: mosaici - pavimenti - edifici* (Roma, 1991)
- 80 New Government Building, motto 'U', elevation
- 81 New Government Building, motto 'Rytme', perspective
- 82 New Government Building, motto 'Vestibyle', elevation
- 83 Aker Brygge baths, 1st prize project, detailed section
- 84 Aker Brygge baths, 1st prize project, elevation
- 85 Aker Brygge baths, 3rd prize project, elevations
- 86 The State College of Music, winning project, elevation
- 87 Health and Service Centre for the Disabled, mottos 'Cor' and '52.50', elevations
- 88 Health and Service Centre for the Disabled, motto 'Repro Reppen', elevation
- 89 Vaterland and Grønland Market, 1st prize project, elevation
- 90 Soria Moria, 1st prize project, elevations
- 91 New Technical College, winning project, elevation
- 92 The Parliament Building Extension, Nils Holter, *BK*, 43, no.2 (1961)
- 93 The Government Building, Erling Viksjø, *BK*, 41, no. 1 (1959)
- 94 Oslo Concert Hall, 1st prize project, perspective *en face*
- 95 Karl Johan *kvartalet*, motto '13831', elevation
- 96 The SAS Hotel, 1st prize project, elevations
- 97 Bank of Norway Head Office, 1st prize project, elevation
- 98 The College of Sport, 1st prize project, model
- 99 The Edvard Munch Museum, 1st prize project, perspective

- 100 Bank of Sweden Head Office, Stockholm, Peter Celsing, in Lund (1991)
- 101 Bank of Norway Head Office, 1st prize project, perspective
- 102 Karl Johan *kvartalet*, motto '13831', alternative elevation, Karl Johans gate
- 103 The National Theatre Extension, 1st prize project, elevation
- 104 Bank of Norway Head Office, 1st prize project, elevation
- 105 Christiania Torv, 1st prize project, elevation
- 106 Central Office of Storebrand, 1st prize project, elevation and model
- 107 Oslo Police Headquarters, motto '7.62', model
- 108 Farnsworth House, in Philip C. Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (London, 1978)
- 109 Nordic Biennale Pavilion, Venice, in Per Olaf Fjeld, *Sverre Fehn: The thought of construction* (New York, 1984)
- 110 Voksenåsen, 1st prize project, elevation
- 111 Aarhus Concert Hall, Kjær & Richter, *Arkitektur* (D), no. 8 (1982)
- 112 The VG Building, Lund & Slaatto, in *Arkitektguiden 94* (Oslo, 1994)
- 113 Art Museum, Gothenburg, extension, in *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, 5, no. 4 (1992)
- 114 New Government Building, Erling Viksjø, realized project, elevation,
- 115 Stranden, Aker Brygge, Kari Nissen Brodtkorb, in *BK*, 72, no. 5-6 (1990)
- 116 Glass Skyscraper, in Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe* (Chicago, London, 1985)
- 117 Library of France, Paris, Dominique Perrault, photo, concept sketch, section, *AR*, CXCVIII, no. 1181 (July, 1995)
- 118 Library of France, photo by Steinar Eriksrud
- 119 Library of France, podium and courtyard, *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, no. 300 (September, 1995)
- 120 Location of competition sites on map of Oslo
- 121 Location of competition sites on map of central Oslo

APPENDIX 3

NORWEGIAN ORIGINAL QUOTATIONS FROM COMPETITION TEXTS

With reference to footnote number

Original texts quoted in chapter VI

- 4 . . . sanering av den kronglete gamle falleferdige bydelen . . . moderne krav til lys og luft
- 5 . . . kronglete og stygge.
- 6 . . . store vansker. I første rekke skyldes dette tomta og dernest den nåværende regjeringsbygning, som med sin store masse stenger mot syd, og hvis arkitektur ikke er lett å tilpasse de krav en nå har til den videre utbygging av anlegget.
- 7 . . . stor avstand til omgivende bebyggelse og bedre solbelysning av kontorene . . . Intet kontor skal ligge mot nord . . . Alle kontorer får sol.
- 13 Alt som kan sløre og udviske verkan av Akershus mäktiga byggverk må tagas bort, t.o.m. träd!
- 14 Det må tas alt mulig hensyn til det nære naboskap med Akershus slott, parken og murene omkring dette. Bygningshøyder og masser omkring må ikke virke skjemmende hverken fra sjø- eller landsiden.
- 15 Skansen restaurant. . . kan forlanges revet om få år.
- 24 Sammenbindende elementer eller slektskap med det sentrale plassrom er nødvendige for å skape helhet innen området. Konkurransen har til fulle vist hvilken krevende oppgave det er å binde sammen de svært ulike bygninger og plassrom.
- 25 . . . juryen mener det er lite ønskelig og realistisk å fjerne alléen i nærmeste fremtid.
- 27 . . . vil bakenforliggende bolig- og forretnings- bebyggelse være videreført frem til Tingvallakaia, som en tett og fast utbygging i et balansert samspill med Akershus festning og Rådhusets store massiv. Det er i kraftlinjene mellom disse tyngdepunkter at badeanlegget skal finne sin plass som en selvstendig, levende organisme.
- 28 . . . dette indre havnebassenget en midtlinje som avviker fra Tingvallakaia's skrå kaifront. Tørrdokken og utsiktsalléen beskriver en tredje retning i det kompliserte linjespill, som danner utgangspunktet for den formale utfordring. . . området . . . meget følsomt for bebyggelse i vannet foran kaifronten. . . snarere være en rolig kultivert bygningsform enn et ekstremt, dramatisk eksponert byggverk.
- 29 . . . skape et eget uttrykk for huset som en levende organisme med synlige funksjoner bak glassvegger, som en kontrast til Tingvallakaia's mer bastante . . . bebyggelse. . . badehuset som et fantasieggende og levende byggverk som avspeiler badeleden.
- 32 . . . en hovedfunksjon å formidle tusenvis av daglige fotgjengere. . . Det forutsettes en nokså høy utnyttelse av området samtidig som det skal legges vekt på å utvikle et godt og sammenhengende fotgjengerområde.
- 33 Oslo kommunes klart uttalte mål er å utjevne de sosiale og økonomiske skjevheter i byen, bl.a. ved at den østre del av sentrum gjøres mer attraktiv.
- 34 . . . forholdet til omgivelsene, det som er gjort i planområdet, og at utbyggingsmønsteret ikke blir bundet opp.
- 35 Et enkelt og rasjonelt opplegg danner rammen for et rikt sosialt liv ved et vakkert utformet indre byrom med Akerselvas utvidete vannspeil som sentral samlende flate og med en høy, slank hotellbygning som djerv markering i luftrommet.
- 36 På linje med en borg i et åpent terreng eller et gårdsanlegg høyt i dalsiden.
- 38 Bebyggelsen på Karl Johan-kvartalet, som ble oppført i midten av det forrige århundre, er etter hvert blitt foreldet og mindre hensiktsmessig for de mangeartede og tildels nye funksjoner som er ønskelig og som dette store kvartal i hjertet av Oslo gir mulighet for.
- 39 . . . et city-kvartal, hvis kulturhistoriske verdi gjennom situasjon og arkitektur er hevet over diskusjon, samtidig som kvartalet er en organisk og aktiv del av byens monumentale og kommersielle sentrum. . . kvartalet i høy grad har bevart sitt aristokratiske særpreg . . . Miljøet står med hensyn til arkitektoniske grunntrekk ferdig. Det synes bare å tale så å si akkompagnerende arkitektoniske temaer.

- 40 . . . ble konkurransen en ganske avgjørende test på deltagernes kulturelle, arkitektoniske og økonomiske vurderingsevne. . . Det har vært vanskelig for deltagerne å skape et riktig helhetsbilde av Karl Johanmiljøet og akseptere kvartalets underordnede rolle i dette.
- 42 Forfatteren viser også en variant som inneholder en mulighet for bevaring av fasadene mot Karl Johans gate.
- 43 . . . hvis fasaden tilpasses det øvrige bygningsmiljø.
- 44 . . . invitere konkurrentene til å arbeide seg frem mot utbyggingsprinsipper og løsninger som ikke bare ivaretar eksisterende bebyggelse — men også i relasjon til denne bebyggelses-skala, miljø og proporsjoner gir de nye volumer et adekvat uttrykk. . . Kvartalet virker i dag relativt forfallent. Et nybygg for Norges Bank vil ikke bare prege kvartalet, men også føre til en foredling av de eksisterende bygg det er naturlig å bevare.
- 45 En rasjonell og representativ bankbygning vil kunne sammenføres på en naturlig måte med det gamle bymiljøet, slik at områdets historiske dominant — Akershus Festning — ikke forstyrres. Konkurransen har tydelig vist at bevaringen av de gamle bygningene i Rådhusgaten og Kirkegaten ikke har vært til hinder for en god og naturlig løsning for Norges Banks bygning. I konkurransen innkom bare to forslag der man ikke hadde sett noen verdi i å bevare de gamle bygningene. Forslagene har ikke oppnådd noen fordeler med sin frie beliggenhet. Tvertimot, deres uartikulerte og kompakte bygningsmasse passer overheadet ikke til karakteren av den omkringliggende historiske bydel og fremfor alt ikke for dens menneskelige målestokk. I mange forslag, der det gamle er bevart, har de gamle bygningene blitt ført nærmere tilbake til sitt opprinnelige uttrykk, hvilket åpenbart må være riktig. Juryen stiller seg imidlertid avvisende til forslag om bygging av nye bygg i gammel bindingsverkstil.
- 46 Oslo kommune har begått nærmest uopprettelige forseelser innen området de siste 30-40 år, med tillatelse til rivning av eldre bebyggelse og oppførelse av nye bygninger som i målestokk og størrelse fullstendig ødelegger det tidligere bygningsmiljø.
- 47 Anleggets betydelige bygningsmasser bør dekomponeres i enheter som i høyde, målestokk og dimensjoner, form og karakter er beslektet med eksisterende bevaringsverdige bygninger i området.
- 48 . . . som Depotet og Børsen gis det eksteriøre rom som disse praktfulle bygningene krever.
- 51 . . . hvis kulturhistoriske verdi . . . er hevet over diskusjon . . . bevart sitt aristokratiske særpreg . . . i hjertet av Oslo . . . Hvis de tekniske og økonomiske kalkyler viser seg akseptable. . . på den ene side den eksisterende og krevende kulturhistoriske verdi ved Karl Johan-kvartalet, og at programmet på den annen side skulle peke på en løsning hvor grunneiernes økonomiske interesse skulle få en forsvarlig syntetisk løsning.
- 52 . . . innlemme de bevaringsverdige bygg i kvartalet og oppta strøkets bymessige dimensjoner, samtidig som man lar Norges Banks funksjoner utvikle seg fleksibelt og elastisk innenfor den gitte ramme.
- 57 . . . befriende totalløsning.
- 70 Etter den gjeldende regulering ligger gesimsen mot Arne Garborgs plass på *kote 42*. Det må imidlertid gås ut fra at denne regulering kan endres.
- 71 . . . å utnytte tomten, når det kan gjøres med en så åpen og fri regulering.
- 73 . . . sterkt konsentrert og oppdrevne høybebyggelse . . . praktisk for øyemedet . . . et slikt kjempemessig høybygg vil virke trykkende både på den gamle regjeringsbygning og på strøket forøvrig. . . Et frittstående, svært høybygg vil neppe sammen med den gamle regjeringsbygning komme til å virke som et hele, hvorom det er uttalt en forutsetning i programmet.
- 80 . . . sterk opinion mot å bebygge Bankplassen, har Norges Bank foreslått å bygge i høyden
- 81 . . . lille grønnbelte. . . motviljen mot at Oslo sentrum skulle berøves flere av sine få åpne flekker.
- 82 . . . mer enn noen annen løsning lar stortingsbygningen intakt. Samtidig blir parken mot Akersgaten frilagt helt inn til lagtingssalen. . . Tårnets plassering i Stortingsgatens fond er et meget virkningsfullt trekk og gir det samlede bygningskompleks en ny og festlig rytme.
- 83 . . . et høyhus som er høyere og betydelig slankere enn Postgirobygget . . . I fjernvirkning er løsningen besnærende, hvor Postgirobygget i dag står frem med hele sin isolerte tyngde. . . Juryen tror også at nærvirkningen er fordelaktig . . . er det under klar forutsetning at både retningen, høyden og slankheten beholdes . . . massefordelingen som avslører en stor faglig dyktighet.
- 84 . . . et feilgrep som vil medføre at målestokken i bebyggelsen rundt Eidsvolds plass og Studenterlunden blir forstyrret.
- 85 . . . uten tvil mest elegant har utnyttet de muligheter som høyhus gir. . . Miljødannelsen er i seg selv meget vakker, men . . . finner juryen at det her har fremkommet et nytt altfor sterkt utropstegn i Karl Johan-miljøet der den rolige horisontale bevegelse er toneangivende.

Original texts quoted in chapter VII

- 8 Vanskelighetene har vært å unngå en lukket karakter mot byen og en konkurrerende monumental holding til de eksisterende bygninger.
- 9 . . . lykkes å dimensjonere og utforme et nybygg slik at det fremtrer som en selvstendig bygning og samtidig forbinder de eksisterende bygninger reelt og visuelt. Forslaget er et av de få hvor nybyggets skala refererer til de eksisterende bygninger, og i behersket grad viderefører formale elementer og materialer uten å belastes med ubehagelig monumentalitet.
- 10 . . . massive skjønnhet . . . avskrekkende . . . intimisering . . . veldige dimensjoner.
- 11 . . . med et antimonumentalt anlegg.
- 13 . . . tillitvekkende gråsteinsbygning i moderat Jugendstil . . . 1906.
- 14 Norges Banks nåværende bygning vil, såfremt den ikke fjernes, fortsatt fremtre med sitt preg av selvbestaltet monumentalitet. Den nye kvartalsbebyggelse bør ikke belastes med de samme pretensjoner.
- 15 Gir ikke det nåværende universitetsanlegg på Blindern et unødvendig sterkt uttrykk for *forskjellene* mellom funksjoner — mellom fakulteter? Lider ikke anlegget under en nostalgi etter “representative former” — representativt uttrykk? Bidrar ikke bygningenes form og deres organisasjon til å skille mellom disipliner — mellom de mange fakulteter? Det er da av langt større interesse å peke på hva *likhetene* mellom fakultetene er — hva de har til felles, hvordan de kan bidra til hverandre! Er dette ikke et uttrykk for disassosiering — for skillene mellom deler av universitetet! “Se på oss”, sier de stolte frittstående bygninger, “er vi ikke sterke og uavhengige”.
- 17 . . . ikke egner seg for et samtidig monumentalt og praktisk regjeringsbygningsskompleks.
- 23 Avstanden som på denne måte oppstår til Høyblokken sammen med den speilende vannflaten gir bygget en styrket monumentalitet og verdighet i tråd med byggets funksjon . . . prosjektet hadde vunnet både i monumentalitet og styrke dersom . . .
- 25 Programmets første krav er at Christiania Torv skal gjenskapes. .
- 26 . . . et stramt og harmonisk urbant rom. De nye bygningene . . . bør ha noe av renessansens klarhet og rytme.
- 47 . . . en individuell og representativ form som samtidig gir et klart uttrykk for planløsningen.
- 48 Prosjektet er i sitt hovedgrep så godt og i sin kunstneriske nerve så sterkt, at det bør kunne utvikles til å gi et særpreget, karakterfylt og meget velfungerende museum.
- 50 . . . vise hotellets ansikt.
- 51 . . . prosjektet viser et overlegent dyktig grep på hoveddisposisjonen.
- 53 . . . sterk arkitektonisk nerve . . . egenartet, spesielt og stimulerende. . . i pakt med det beste i norsk byggetradisjon.
- 54 . . . en frapperende sikkerhet og originalitet. . . en besnærende idé. . . er løsningen besnærende.
- 55 . . . karakterfulle interne miljø, og karakterfull sett fra luften.
- 56 . . . den miljømessige helhetsløsning.

Original texts quoted in chapter IX

- 16 . . . gode sollysforhold for arbeidsrommene. . . de beste lysforhold i kontorrommene
- 17 . . . intet kontor skal ligge mot nord . . . blokken er vridt i sydlig retning for å oppnå en riktig fordeling av sollyset mellom øst- og vestvendte kontorer.
- 18 . . . moderne krav til lys og luft
- 19 . . . dybde bør helst ikke være over 5m og høyden ca. 3,20 i lyset.
- 20 . . . mere monumental. . . enn den alminnelige forretningsgårds lange, mørke og uendelig kjedelige korridorer.
- 29 . . . arkivplass for lengere tid fremover.
- 34 Av særlig betydning. . . er den virksomhet som finner sted utenom møtene i storting, lagting og odelsting.
- 40 Overlegent dyktig grep. . . asymmetrisk innførte akse . . . en like original som klar deling av arealet i et triangel og et rektangel . . . enkel harmoni . . . innlevelse i oppgaven . . . forsterke inntrykket av salens fornemhet og behag.
- 41 . . . spirituelt aksentuert innenfor den enkle form.
- 44 en øket rikdom i miljøkomposisjonen i dette miljø best og nesten utelukkende kan oppnås ved et befriende arkitektonisk inngrep i kvartalets indre
- 45 . . . berikende tillegg til livet og rytmen i Karl Johan-miljøet . . . tillokkende fornøyles- og butikkliv i kvartalets indre . . . den befriende totalløsning.
- 46 Et betydelig antall deltagere . . . har derfor skapt nye berikende dimensjoner for miljøet, en ny romkomposisjon inne i kvartalet. Juryen har inntrykk av at det avgjørende slag mellom konkurrentene er blitt

- utkjempet her, og det er ikke særlig mange konkurrenter som har lyktes i å skape et menneskelig levende og samtidig økonomisk lovende miljø i kvartalet.
- 47 Kino og teatergruppen i sektorform er vakkert situert nordre hjørne av kvartalet i organisk sammenheng med sine rommelige vestibyleanlegg.
 - 49 Prosjektets hovedidé består i på en naturlig måte å la Karl Johan-miljøet flyte inn i kvartalet og der komponere en meget god plassformasjon, som igjen flyter videre opp og gjennom interessante trappearrangementer og vestibylar frem til Kristian IVs gate. Etter juryens mening kan det indre av kvartalet bli et fint supplement til Karl Johansgate i funksjon, romdannelse og målestokk.
 - 50 De undre etasjer danner på denne måte et enhetlig indre, som etter juryens mening plasserer prosjektet i en særstilling på dette vesentlige punkt.
 - 51 . . . det beste resultat er nådd der de indre større romenheter, plasser og trapper som tjener ulike formål, gjennom sitt arkitektoniske samvirke danner en kontinuerlig serie av større romenheter som — etter terrengets anvisning — stiger naturlig. . .
 - 52 . . . den befriende totalløsning må bli den avgjørende faktor som de enkelte funksjoner må underordnes også kvantitativt.
 - 55 Som den tredimensjonale rikdom i den indre løsning av kvartalet er en betingelse for god løsning, danner den historiske tidskomponent — den 4. dimensjon — et verdifullt tillegg for helheten.
 - 56 I sin dyptgående analyse omkring selve konkurranse-kvartalet utreder forfatteren sine konklusjoner og makter gjennom prosjektet å gi svar på sine målsettinger. Forfatteren tar sitt utgangspunkt i et byggesystem der han kan innlemme de bevaringsverdige bygg i kvartalet og oppta strøkets bymessige dimensjoner, samtidig som han lar Norges Banks funksjoner utvikle seg fleksibelt og elastisk innenfor den gitte ramme . . . Den indre organisasjonen kan enkelt forandres. Av utbyggingsenheten er det utviklet et dynamisk og elastisk tredimensjonalt sjakkspill.
 - 57 . . . gir relativt summarisk informasjon om arealer og funksjonssammenhenger.
 - 58 Den anviste bygningsstruktur bør ha betydelig kapasitet for tilpassing til endret eller uforutsett programmering. Den aktuelle bebyggelse bør baseres på akseenheter som korresponderer med de bestående bygningers hoveddimensjoner, og som kan referere seg til rasjonelle systemer for konstruksjon og tekniske anlegg. Modulenheter kan bestemmes av innretningskomponenter, sekundærstrukturer for fasader m.m.
 - 59 Ved å anlegge en ekstra arealsone langs ytterveggen vil imidlertid et cellekontor også kunne utvides i denne retningen. En slik sone kan brukes til mange formål: kontorutvidelser, konferansegrupper, ad hoc aktiviteter, rekreasjon, vinterhaver, intern kommunikasjon mellom romgrupper og interne trappeforbindelser. Et slikt arrangement vil kunne berike det rigide system av cellekontorer langs en midtkorridor og skape romgrupper med identitet og samhörighet.
 - 62 Det er ikke bare spørsmål om ekspansjon, i studenttallet og et økende behov for gulvflate, men om helt nye bygningstyper og nye krav til nye og tidligere ukjente forbindelsebehov mellom forskjellige fag, forskjellige fakulteter, osv.
 - 63 Universitetet er sammensatt av individer og grupper som arbeider alene eller i samarbeid innenfor forskjellige disipliner. Når individer samarbeider oppstår nye muligheter — individene og gruppene utvikler nye behov. . . Det er da av langt større interesse å peke på hva *likhetene* mellom fakultetene er — hva de har til felles og hvordan de kan *bidra* til hverandre!
 - 64 . . . uttrykker en uautoritær holdning som tillater orden — og tilbyr muligheter. . . et system som tillater at behov er mange og varierende men — innenfor en ramme — en organisasjon.
 - 65 Vi søker derfor etter et system som tilbyr den minimale organisasjon som er nødvendig for å forbinde forskjellige disipliner.)
 - 66 Rask utvikling og krav om løsninger som tillater hurtig oppbygging.
 - 74 Det er viktig for stedets drift at planløsningen gir rasjonelle og gode kommunikasjonslinjer innen hver avdeling (undervisning, internat og kjøkken-/spisesal) og mellom avdelingene. Anlegget skal på alle måter gi muligheter for et effektivt og trivelig arbeids- og kursmiljø.
 - 75 Vestibylen med resepsjon er anleggets sentrale del og må plasseres og utformes slik at man oppnår optimal mulighet for styring og overblikk samt gode forbindelser til de forskjellige avdelinger. Den skal være rommelig og gi muligheter for forskjellig møblering og bør kunne avlaste oppholdsrommene under f.eks. kaffeservering etter middag.
 - 76 Gjennom det indre romlandskap ønsker man også å gi anlegget en intimitet og nærhet som en bevisst kontrast til den voldsomme utsikt som fullstendig dominerer den ytre situasjon. På dette vis kan man både glede seg over det panoramaaktige utsyn og samtidig ha muligheter til å søke innover til de stille krokar og korte siktelinjer. Kvaliteten av det indre landskap søkes utdypet gjennom "vinterhagen" som kan bringe en livgivende impuls til anlegget i lange vintermåneder.
 - 77 Med adkomst rett fra kaikanten, kommer en inn til en rommelig vestibyle og ser utover badeanlegget som folder seg fritt ut med sine veloverveide kurver, innenfor den strenge bygningsmessige begrensning. Fra dette hovedadkomstplanet ligger badeetasjen under og restaurantetasjen over som kurvede balkonger

- rundt badeanlegget. . . Gradenger for tilskuere forbinder de forskjellige plan og faller som rytmiske kaskader ned mot badeanlegget.
- 79 Tredjegerasjonsbadet er ment å omfatte et vidt spekter av badevariasjoner med tilhørende badetilknyttede aktiviteter. Badehuset henvender seg da også til et publikum som varierer fra småbarn til eldre og pensjonister. . . Bading omfattes med glede. Det representerer en rennelse på kropp og sjel, som føles lystbetont enten den foregår i badstuforn, i svømmehaller, som badeferie i Syden, eller i den korte nordiske sommer. . . Fra badeanstaltene, hvor hovedvekten var lagt på renhold, ble det utviklet flere sorter badeformer med et mer sportslig innslag av svømming, frem til tredjegerasjonsbadet som omfatter et større spekter av badeaktiviteter, samt kroppsspleie og rekreasjon i myke omgivelser.
- 80 Sceneplattformer, som utvidelser av bassengkantene, er plassert flere steder, og en egen lukket sal for ca. 400 mennesker er beliggende i forbindelse med restauranten.
- 82 . . . huset som en levende organisme med synlige funksjoner bak glassvegger.

Original texts quoted in chapter XI

- 11 . . . en representativ utforming at det svarer til øyemedet. . . nybygget sammen med den nåværende regjeringsbygning skal virke som et hele
- 12 . . . selskapets store betydning innenfor norsk næringsliv og forretningsverden. . . en karakteristisk og representativ bygning.
- 15 Fasadene er forøvrig dyktig løst, og gir bygningen den monumentale holdning som en slik bygning bør ha. Utkaster i det hele tatt røper arkitektonisk fantasi.
- 16 Arkitekturen er enkel, om enn noe skjematisk. Kortfasadene står arkitektonisk sett ikke på høyde med langfasadene.
- 18 Bygningens arkitektur er noe skjematisk angitt. Fasadene har særlig mot Akersgata en viss fasthet, men skjemmes av en rekke søkte effekter, som toppetasjen og gavlenes skrå innskjøringer.
- 19 . . . den formale utfordring . . . naturlig, bestemt og fast. . . rolig kultivert bygningsform enn et ekstremt, dramatisk eksponert byggverk. . . fantasieggende og levende byggverk . . . uttrykk for huset som en levende organisme.
- 20 . . . kontrasten mellom det nøkterne luftige skall rundt rommets funksjoner og fjordlandskapets myke kurver utenfor synes spennende
- 22 Prosjektet er dypt originalt og inneholder nettopp den nerve og kraft som i sammenheng med Oslo by og fjord gir det tilskudd av spenning som jeg mener er så vesentlig. Prosjektets opplevelsesrikdom i både eksteriør og interiør har en verdighet som kan være et vesentlig arkitektonisk element i Norden.
- 23 . . . kan diskuteres med tanke på utsikt fra Rådhusplassen til fjorden. . . Fasadene er spennende og dyktig utført med henspeiling på de maritime trekk.
- 26 Løsningen er besnærende . . . viser prosjektet en frapperende sikkerhet og originalitet.
- 28 . . . lett identifiserbart fra utsiden, beskyttende fra innsiden.
- 29 Den rustøde fargen som går over mot blåsort, vil kunne gi bygget en rik nyansert overflate som både er robust og kan eldes med verdighet på linje med de store, gamle tjærebredde tømmerhus i Holmenkollåsen.
- 33 Eksteriøret gjør et usedvanlig harmonisk inntrykk.
- 34 . . . har huset en naturlig og harmonisk utforming med den ønskelige aksentuering som et musikkens hus mot byen.
- 35 . . . en noe overraskende karakter, men er allikevel i det hele av god arkitektonisk virkning
- 36 Virkningen av 1. byggetrinn er mindre heldig. Fasadeopprissene har ikke den samme sikkerhet som situasjonsplanen viser, men er enkle og uten overdrevne effekter.
- 37 . . . å innføre et modulsystem med visse referenser til de eksisterende bygningers aksemål. Videre kan det overveies hvorvidt visse formale elementer i de eksisterende bygningers arkitektur kan motivere å innføre beslektede formale elementer i den nye struktur.
- 38 Utstillingsarealer har sidelys, som forutsettes avskjermet etter behov (utvendige persiener, innvendige lysfilter, tekstiler osv.)
- 39 . . . overbevisende dette kan gjøres ved den foreslåtte oppdeling av det nye bygningsanlegg i mindre enheter, som vil kunne aksentuere de to museumsbygningers monumentale karakter og samtidig tilpasse seg målestokken i universitetsbygningene. Bygningens eksteriør har utover sin hensynsfullhet overfor sine omgivelser store kvaliteter. Selv om de viste perspektiver på en mindre heldig måte overdriver bygningens ekspressivitet, vil museumsutvidelsen, ut fra fasadetegninger og materialvalg, kunne få en betydelig arkitektonisk egenverdi.
- 40 Det er etter juryens mening en feilvurdering å føre opp nye bygg i tidligere tiders formspråk. . . det må stilles de største krav til høyder, proporsjoner, materialbruk og detaljer.

- 41 Slik bankens nåværende bygning har et i forhold til sin tid monumentalt utseende, må også bankens nye bygning på en måte gi uttrykk for sin funksjons spesielle karakter. Basis for bygningens identitet bør være konstruksjonens oppriktige og naturlige helhetsform. Bygningen må kunne fornemmes som en kontinuerlig, tydelig enhet.
- 42 . . . praktfulle bygninger. . . storlinjet eksteriørt rom. . . Det by-historiske bygningsmiljøes menneskelige dimensjoner og charmerende formale elementer (skjevt/rundt, rett/skrått, plant/profilert, osv.) kan gjenoppstå i . . . kontorinnredning og møblering. . . og tilpasningsvarianter ved karnappene i fasadene.
- 43 Konkurranseskjemaet har fullt utbygget komplekse referanser til omgivelsene . . . Mens randbebyggelsen først og fremst refererer seg til nærmiljøet i gatene, har det høyere sentrale bygningsparti betydning for fjernvirkningen. Randbebyggelsen fremtrer symbolsk som "en ytre beskyttelse av Norges Banks indre funksjoner". Via seksjonering, utkragete karnapper og inntrukne partier og fasadematerialer i stål og glass vil denne "beskyttelsen" likevel virke åpen og tilgjengelig.
- 44 Behandlingen og artikuleringen av fasadene er interessant og gjennomarbeidet. Dette kommer spesielt til uttrykk mot Bankplassen hvor utkastet har tilstrekkelig kraft til å ivareta plassens avslutning.
- 47 Modellstudier og perspektivtegningene er illustrerende mens fasadetegningene fremstår som noe flatterende på grunn av de utpekerte speilvirkninger.
- 50 . . . gir variasjoner av opplevelse alt etter solens fokuseringer og streiflys inntil skumring og nattemørke overtar med flomlys på Akershus.

APPENDIX 4

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR	<i>The Architectural Review</i>
BK	<i>Byggekunst</i> (The Art of Building)
CIAM	<i>Les Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne</i>
IAPS	International Association of People and Environmental Studies
K	<i>Konkurransen</i> (The Competition)
MNAL	<i>Medlem av NAL</i> , Member of NAL
MNLA	<i>Medlem av Norske Landskapsarkitekters Forening</i> , Member of the Association of Norwegian Landscape Architects
NAK	<i>Norske arkitektkonkurranser</i> (Norwegian Architectural Competitions)
NAL	<i>Norske Arkitekters Landsforbund</i> , The Association of Norwegian Architects
NTH	<i>Norges Tekniske Høyskole</i> , The Norwegian Institute of Technology, University of Trondheim
PAGON	<i>Progressive Arkitekters Gruppe Oslo Norge</i>
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
UIA	<i>Union Internationale des Architectes</i>

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The following

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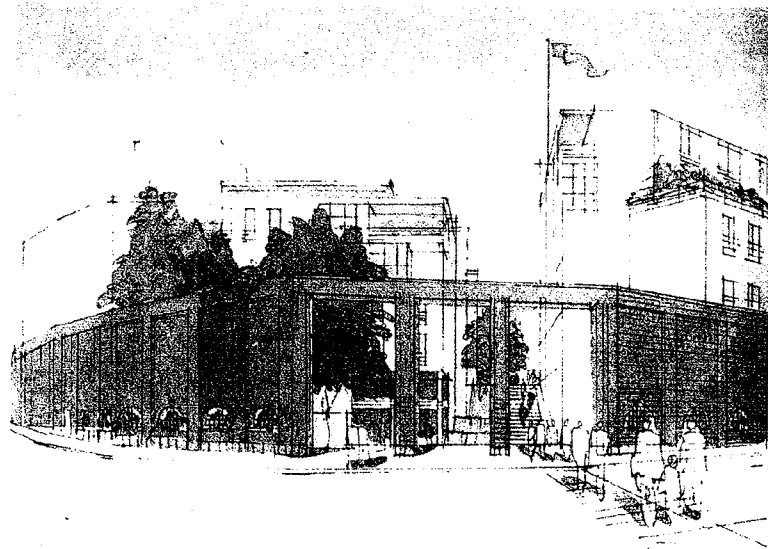
When this project was started in the early 1990s, I defined 1990 as the end of the period to be studied. This provided a body of material which on the one hand was up to date, and on the other hand well defined and belonging to the past. Preparing this book for publishing in 1998, however, the competitions that have been held over the past seven years offer new material that deserves to be mentioned in the view of the study; not in order to analyse it with the same thoroughness as the earlier material but, on a general basis, to draw attention to some common problems that appear in a new perspective. Does this new perspective confirm or invalidate the conclusions of this book with respect to the rhetoric of architectural competitions? The 1996 competition for the extension of the National Gallery and the Museum of History at Tullinløkka¹ in Oslo is particularly interesting in this respect since it triggered one of the most intense public debates on architecture and the role of architects for several decades. It has considerable influence on politics and on the fate of Tullinløkka and other public architectural projects. In fact, this extraordinary event has brought to public attention the very issue dealt with in this book: architectural rhetoric within the profession as well as between architects and the public.

However, before returning to the specific issues raised by the Tullinløkka debate, it would be useful to outline the typical features of the competitions of the 1990s and their rhetoric as expressed in the three different rhetorical fields. What distinguishes the competitions for public building projects that were held in Oslo in this recent period? From mid 1990 there were nine competitions held in Oslo. In addition four

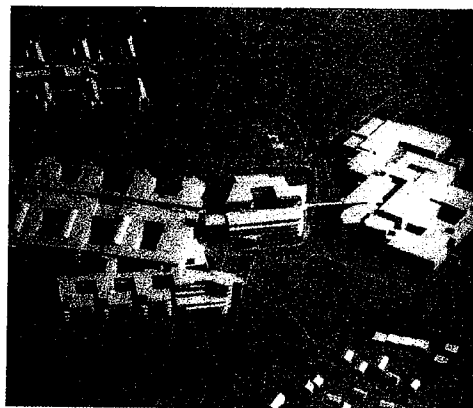
competitions were organised for specific parts of the new airport complex at Gardermoen north of Oslo.² Nearly all of these competitions have been or are being realised. Thus, with respect to Oslo, the frequency of competitions is roughly the same as during the rest of the post-war period. The number of participants in open competitions varies from 7 to 75, but these numbers are extremes and most of the competitions received between 20 and 50 entries, with 37 submissions on average. It was the competition for a rather small information pavilion providing refreshments in Frognerparken, the Vigeland sculpture park, in 1994 that attracted 75 submissions. The competition was local, open to members of the Oslo Association of Architects and students at the Oslo School of Architecture. In the competition for the development of a site at Majorstua (on the edge of the dense urban structure) for housing and commercial purposes in 1994, which received only 7 submissions, the jury did not award any prizes claiming that the level of the entries was disappointing. Three of the Oslo competitions during this period became two-stage competitions because the juries were unable to decide on a winner the first time round. (This led to a debate in the architectural press in which the juries were accused of dithering and of being unable to take decisions. It was damaging for the position of architects and competitions in society, it was claimed.)

The tendency to favour closed rather than open competitions has increased, often combined with a preliminary pre-qualification process after which a certain number of teams are invited to take part in the closed competition (or parallel commission as it is also called).

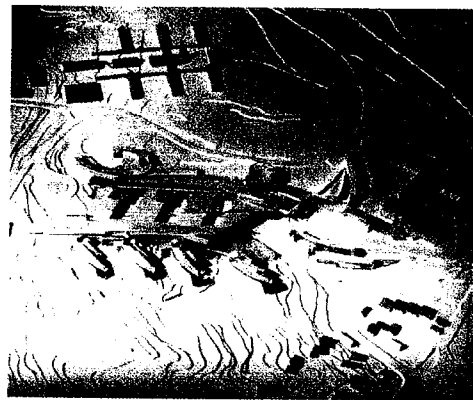
- 1 Tullinløkka, the name of the site: 'the vacant lot', actually the 'loop' of the family Tullien; a parking lot in living memory.
- 2 The team of architects for the main layout of the airport was chosen after a competition in 1989 when it was planned to build the airport at Hurum, south of Oslo. After some political controversy Parliament decided that the airport should be sited at Gardermoen. Three of the following competitions for the latter were closed: five or six teams of architects and consultants were invited after a process of pre-qualification among a wider group.



120. FRYDENLUND BREWERY DEVELOPMENT, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, PERSPECTIVE
121. STATE HOSPITAL, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, MODEL



122. STATE HOSPITAL, ENTRY, MODEL



3 A large part of the complex to the right in the picture is the Preclinical Institute, Faculty of Medicine, University of Oslo, which was erected after the 1968 University competition.

Simultaneously there is a tendency for larger design teams: several architectural firms cooperate, not only Norwegian but also Norwegian in cooperation with foreign architects. This is the case in the parallel commission for the Telenor Office Complex at Fornebu (the area of the old Oslo airport that will be abandoned when the new airport at Gardermoen is ready) in which Richard Rogers (UK), Peter Pran of NBBJ (USA), as well as architects from other Scandinavian countries participated.

An architecture of homogeneity and moderation

With regard to the first rhetorical dimension, i.e. the *architectural* design, the hegemonic competition architecture displays two variants that are related: one is represented by competitions for large, complex projects; the other by those for a single public building inserted in an existing complex.

The winning project in the (two-stage) competition for the redevelopment of the Frydenlund Brewery site in a central area of Oslo is typical of the first variant: rectangular modernist blocks arranged in a regular order but at the same time adapted rather informally to the existing buildings, which are preserved. This adaptation to the masses and heights of the existing buildings is important, and is enhanced by the fact that the surrounding areas are dominated by restored old buildings (fig. 120). The building technique is relatively traditional: bricks in combination with steel and glass. A similar pattern of architectural organisation is present in the winning project in the closed competition for the new State Hospital at Gaustad (fig. 121). In this case, the modification of the structuring system not only occurs in relation to the existing buildings but also to the site and its topography: the structure extends, opens up, and lets the open land into the complex thus creating long façades looking out on former farmland sloping down to a creek on the edge of the woods.³ By contrast, the second prize project features a much heavier, denser and more rigidly structured complex. An alternative project delivered in the first stage by the team who won the competition, displays a radically different architecture that is expressive and avant-garde (fig. 122). This design was praised for its exciting and visionary architecture in

complete contrast with traditional hospital planning but, according to the jury, it incorporated serious functional inadequacies.⁴

Thus, typical designs of the first variant of the hegemonic competition architecture of the 1990s are modern, rational square structures which are conglomerate in the sense that the various parts are juxtaposed and linked using different angles.

The second variant or type of the hegemonic competition architecture, represented by single buildings, is distinctly present in the winning project in the 1994 competition for the New University Library on the campus at Blindern and the winning project for Tullinløkka (second stage) in 1996. These two competitions were won by the same architects, who also received several awards in the Oslo competitions in the 1960s and 1970s (Oslo Police Headquarters, Soria Moria). Moreover, the winning project for the Frognerparken pavilion features a similar clean, rectilinear architecture. In the University Library the architectural squareness and simplicity reveals a familiarity with the existing university buildings erected after the 1958 competition (fig. 123). However, a representational or ornamental function is introduced by the large front façade with its curved glass wall behind the regular, rhythmic pairs of columns, and by the oblique walls at the end of the building. The interior is calmly structured by a grid system with double columns.

The winning project for the 1996 Tullinløkka competition displays a similar calm order: clear-cut volumes, large front columns, glass walls and spatial organisation based on a grid (fig. 124). Some irregular shapes, including semi-circles and oblique ramps, are placed as asymmetrical elements in a basically symmetrical layout. Just as the library to some extent appears as a contrast to the existing university buildings, the quality of aesthetic contrast is definitely in evidence in Tullinløkka, where the old buildings are large historic stone edifices.

Although there is great diversity in the designs that won awards and commendations in the various competitions, the hegemonic or winning competition architecture is remarkably homogeneous – calm and square. In its particular moderate way this homogeneity implies a more figurative touch than in previous decades.



123. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, PERSPECTIVE

Definitely modern, the typical architecture such as that of the Frydenlund and the State Hospital nevertheless employs traditional materials such as brick, and volumes are carefully adapted to the surroundings. Moreover, as shown in the Library and Tullinløkka, the new period features a kind of *grandeur*, a formal hierarchy of order involving large, distinct, often vertical, subdivisions different from the previous period. Simultaneously, and in combination with the solid shapes of permanence, large ‘invisible’ glass walls and the idea of endless open space prevail.

The verbal rhetoric

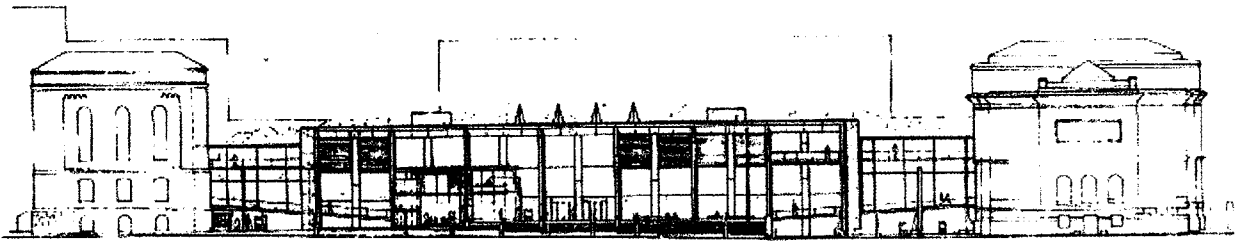
The competition texts of the 1990s are not strikingly different from those of the preceding period. One exception is that the *financial* aspect is more explicitly expressed as, for example, in the jury’s general remarks in the Frydenlund Brewery⁵ and New State Hospital⁶ competitions and in the jury’s criticism of the winning project for the University Library.⁷ This financial aspect includes investment figures as well as the commercial and economic potential of the project; a balance of assumed architectural attractiveness on the one hand, and management costs that are ‘cost efficient’ on the other. In general, the instrumental aspect, or the organisation of the spaces in relation to the projected use, is emphasised, and the subject of detailed comment in the competitions.

⁴ NAK, no. 300, pp.12-14. This team, which submitted two projects consisted of Norwegian and Swedish architects in cooperation with Ellerbe Becket (Peter Pran e. a.), USA.

⁵ NAK, no. 304, p. 2.

⁶ NAK, no. 300, p. 17.

⁷ NAK, no. 328, p. 4.



FASADE KR. IV' OG OT.

124. TULLINLØKKA, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, ELEVATION
125. TULLINLØKKA, 1ST PRIZE PROJECT, PERSPECTIVE

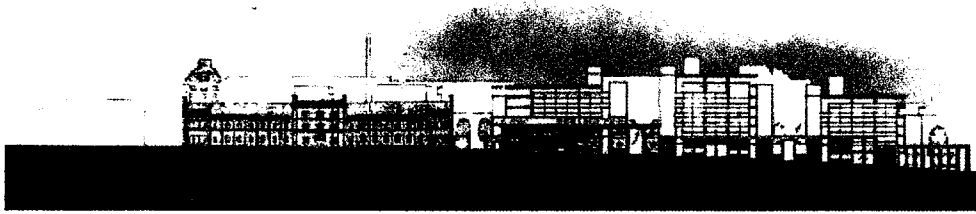


Two *aesthetic* aspects are particularly interesting in the texts: the rhetorical emphasis on adapting the new designs to the existing environment, and the particular rhetorical expressions that mediate the specific architectural features and the façades of the projects of the 1990s. Both Frydenlund Brewery and the State Hospital are praised for their 'local' character and for being organised like a small town, with a central pedestrian area or route. This quality is regarded as user-friendly: it gives 'identity', a feeling of belonging. The old brick buildings and the old brick walls on the brewery site were said to give the place a 'distinctive character' and the new buildings were expected to contribute to the particular built environment of the area, thus ensuring its attractiveness to

users.⁸ An attitude of consideration for the existing environment permeates the texts in all the competitions. If the site is in an area which is not urban but open land, this regard concerns the surrounding nature, topography and vegetation.

In addition, the familiar architectural virtues are promoted in the texts: 'attractiveness,' buildings that are 'beautiful,' 'friendly,' 'open,' 'inviting,' 'alive' and of 'distinctive character.' In the hegemonic architecture this specific character corresponds to qualities such as 'calm' and 'harmonic,' an 'individual design' which at the same time creates a 'coherent environment.' The architecture should provide an 'experience beyond the book and the data base,' as the jury so succinctly put it in the competition for the University Library.⁹

⁸ *NAK*, no. 304, p. 2.
⁹ *NAK*, no. 328, p. 2. The Norwegian word *opplevelse*: experience or adventure.



Bearing in mind the homogeneity of the hegemonic competition architecture in the post-war period, the texts of the 1990s reveal a new kind of appreciation of the representational function. The library is 'an important cultural building' and 'its main functions should be signalled clearly and distinctly from the entrance.' 'Dignity' is a positive quality. A goal expressed frequently by the participants is that the University Library should appear as a 'temple of the book;' a definitely different attitude from the 1968 University competition. Many submissions solved this problem by employing open columns in the façade: 'There are many good solutions to this theme but also some which are exaggerated and uneconomic. Apart from that, the proposals for façades and volumes in the competition are extremely varied.'¹⁰ The jury stated that, in the final judgement, great emphasis was placed on the architectural aspect. The jury's individual criticism praises the winning design as follows: 'The curved wall behind the row of columns enhances the outdoor space and gives the front façade an inclusive, open quality.' The design is also praised for 'enhancing the main outdoor axis [of the university campus] without falling into an exaggerated formalism.' But 'the use of materials (black, polished labrador stone) and the row of columns in the front will be relatively expensive,'¹¹ the jury remarked.

Thus the verbal rhetoric in the competitions sets the tone: a certain degree of grandeur is called for but it must not be exaggerated either in terms of architectural expressivity or financially. Or, one expensive component is specifically justified by its coherence with an appropriate architectural expression. Adaptation and regard for the existing environment continue to be stressed. Notwithstanding these indications, the verbal rhetoric is general and vague when it comes to describing and explaining the actual architecture that is proposed.

'Realistic' visual representation

A few features of the visual representation are worth mentioning. Firstly, the representation of the hegemonic competition architecture appears conventional, manual drawings for the most part. However, there is greater variety in the competition submissions as a whole, which include computer drawings, mixed photo-drawing techniques and also different styles of model design. There is a strong tendency towards realistic-looking drawings, especially perspectives that include existing buildings, trees and people in a balanced representation of buildings and other objects (fig. 125, Tullinløkka). Plans and sections matter-of-factly outline spaces and constructions; the grids do not dominate. By not distinguishing explicitly between outside and inside, these drawings emphasise the spatial continuity. Finally, the elevations in Frydenlund are an example of visually mediating an image of cohesion between the old and the new (fig. 126).

These brief comments on the visual representation suffice here. All together it reveals an emphasis on the part of the competition hegemony to address the public with drawings that are comprehensible. Moreover, a kind of modesty is evident in this respect: one does not want to appear too glossy, too artistically elite or incomprehensible. The hegemonic visual representation takes the audience seriously, perhaps at the risk of appearing dull and ordinary to the avant-garde and the architectural community.

Communication and confrontation

Shortly after its announcement in the winter of 1996, the result of the competition for Tullinløkka was attacked in the press. First by two young architects who criticised the brief and its implicit urbanistic ideologies in the architects' news bulletin and in a major newspaper. They concluded that 'there is no room for a new,

¹⁰ *NAK*, no. 328, pp. 2-3, and 20.

¹¹ *NAK*, no. 328, p. 4.



independent and diverging monumental structure on Tullinløkka.¹² Although the argument was abstract and theoretical it coincided with the vague, elusive feeling of discontent among the public and the politicians who had been in opposition during the preliminary process of preparing the competition brief. In the debate that followed, and which is ongoing, three counter arguments are central: firstly, that Tullinløkka should be developed as a public park; secondly that the volume of the new project is too large; and, thirdly, the postulate that modern architecture is ugly. These three issues have in fact played important part, more or less explicitly, in the competitions throughout the period, beginning in 1939 but increasingly sensitive since 1970.

The intensity of the debate rose saliently when architect Pyotr Choynowski presented a design for Tullinløkka at an exhibition arranged in the City Hall by the international group 'A Vision of Europe,' which is supported by The Prince of Wales, among others. The design (fig. 127), which was promoted by a shipowner, gave rise to an unprecedented debate on architecture, and in particular on architectural style. The problem of 'classicism or modernism' has been discussed in various shades within the brief form of media communication, mostly in a disconcertingly superficial and uncommunicative manner. Especially aggressive are the contributions against modernistic architecture, postulating the arrogance and élitism of architects, claiming that architects employ 'manipulative rhetoric.'¹³ Arguing that modernism is a betrayal of humanistic values, they state that architects have 'hearts of reinforced concrete,'¹⁴ and so

forth. Intellectuals such as professors of history have been active, as have journalists and those involved in real estate development and politics. Architects have written newspaper articles and been interviewed with unusual frequency. They have used various approaches, some concentrating on defending modernism as ideology, attempting to nuance conceptions of style; some loyal to the competition; and some suggesting other solutions from different urbanistic points of view. Several of these are well written, intelligent and informative, but they do not seem to communicate, to convince.

It should be stated that it now seems extremely unlikely that the Tullinløkka project will be realised. The debate seems to have rendered the authorities incapable of action; they are weary and unsure of themselves, and likely to put the project aside in favour of other tasks – there are several worthy building projects for cultural purposes waiting for political priority and funds. Moreover, the former agreement on the principles and regulations for developing Tullinløkka between the State (owner of the site and the museums) and the Municipality of Oslo (the administration representing the population of Oslo) no longer exists, and this has added to the uncertainty.

Since rhetoric is a major issue here, some aspects concerning the promotion of the competition in 1994-95 are quite intriguing, considering the role this had in creating expectations. Firstly, the authorities (the Minister of Culture, the Minister of Education and Research and the politician in charge of urban development within the Municipality of Oslo) employed a rhetoric of sheer understatement as they sought to persuade the audience that the

12 Bård Holland and Einar Saxegaard, 'Feil valg for Tullinløkka', *Arkitektmytt*, 45, no. 5 (1996), p. 14.

13 Erling Skaug, 'Manipulerende retorikk', *Dagbladet*, 10 June 1997, p. 31.

14 Ole Jørgen Benedictow, 'Med hjerner av armeret betong', *Dagbladet*, 21 July 1997, p. 44.

new museum extension would be small and light, like a pavilion. Evoking images such as the Louvre pyramid in Paris, they conveyed the message that most of the site would be open space for public usage. Thus, from the very start, the rhetoric was misleading since the competition brief provided for 8,000 sq.m floors above ground and the Louvre pyramid is an open volume with only a 1,200 sq.m base.

Secondly, an important argument of the promoters was to substantiate this image of smallness by stressing and amplifying the hugeness of the unrealised project of the 1972 competition in contrast to that envisaged by the new brief. As predicted in Chapter IX, a comparison between the winning project of 1972 and that of 1996 shows that the former has approximately 9,500 sq.m of floor space above ground on a 4,500 sq.m site whereas the latter has 7,600 sq.m (reduced from 9,800 sq.m in the first stage of the competition) on a 4,000 sq.m site. The cornice height of the main masses in the two projects is approximately the same, though one twelfth of the 1972 project is two storeys higher. This is not a dramatic difference when it comes to size.

Professionals can clearly distinguish the difference between the architectural lineaments of the 1972 design and those of 1996. However, if what one has in mind is something unique, smaller, perhaps sculpturally more expressive, the calm appearance of the new Tullinlökka project seems like a repetition of 1970s architecture. Architects tend to forget or deny this fact, and thus underestimate the rhetorical effect this kind of architectural image has built up in the back of people's minds for decades, constituting a more or less conscious, compound image of architectural homogeneity which is (now negatively) identified with post-war space consuming structures of 'concrete, steel and glass' in general.

The decisive difference between the two competitions, and their rhetoric in all respects, is neither the size nor the architecture, but has to do with the idea of the public urban space. Whilst the constructions of the 1972 winning design spread out on both sides from the central axis of the site, 'a well designed publicly accessible

urban space'¹⁵ has in the 1990s become an imperative in the brief; this is in addition to the requirement for extending and developing the National Gallery and the University Museums into a modern museum complex.¹⁶

Overall, the similarity between the two competition texts, which were written at an interval of a quarter of a century, is striking with respect to the kind of qualities that are emphasised and asked for. Both competitions require a building that can enrich and contribute to an active environment. It should be an architecturally independent building (stylistically contemporary), carefully joined to the old, and preferably to the central parts of their façades so that the walls of the existing buildings can be exposed as much as possible. In 1996 a slightly greater emphasis is put on the subordination of the masses of the new to the old, and the importance of a 'welcoming façade' is particularly mentioned in the critique of the winning design. While the 1972 project was praised for 'addressing all sides of the surroundings in an attractive manner,' a good urban space was explicitly asked for in the 1996 competition, as mentioned above.

The reason for recalling the similarity between these two competitions is to demonstrate the continuity of architecture and the homogeneity over time in the culture of architects. This homogeneity and continuity of course opposes the image architects have of themselves as constantly starting from scratch, being original, often explicitly in contrast with their close predecessors, whereas continuity and repetition are common, and logical, aspects of our production. It is this homogeneity, and the weight of modernism as tradition and ideology, that has been challenged in the public debate. In their response the architects present interesting arguments and reflections. Nonetheless, confronted with a multifarious and predominantly non-professional audience in an unusual arena, architects appear insecure and unsure of themselves. Their rhetoric is a sort of *chamber rhetoric*, communicating principally with the rest of the architectural community. Some retreat into utilitarian arguments, referring merely to the developer's need for space. Others fall into wordy expositions of professional supremacy, deriding the competence and rights

15 *NAK*, no. 336, p. 3.

16 Apart from this, another alteration, which does not alter the size of the extension but which to some extent changes its image, is that new offices constitute a major part of the new building (and brief) whereas the 1972 extension was dominated by spaces for exhibitions and displays. The developers involved in the 1996 competition had decided not to encumber the intact spaces of the historic buildings with partition walls for offices and corridors but to allocate these functions in the extension.

of others. There appears to be a lack of ability to express the aesthetic qualities of contemporary architecture and to make it concrete and comprehensible to an audience not familiar with the images of the wonderful canonic modernist architecture.

As outlined above, the hegemonic competition rhetoric of the 1990s, by the architecture itself as well as its verbal and visual representation, has truly attempted to address a wide audience. Despite the implicit contradictions and ambiguity when it comes to the architectural interpretation of common goals, the competition material reveals a sincere concern for the environment and its historic heritage, as well as for the people's quest for beauty. Still, the current debate discloses a fundamental opposition of interests inherent in any architectural project. In the case of Tullinløkka this emerges as a deep divide between the two basically different conceptions of the problem: on the one hand, the competition viewed as a legitimate, internal problem – the need of the Museums for a well functioning extension – and, on the other hand, the project viewed as an offence to the unstructured, emotional general requirements of the people with respect to the environment. It is on this point that the rhetoric of the architects is weak and does not convince that the project constitutes a valuable offer to the town.¹⁷

One goal of classical rhetoric is to speak in such a way that professionals think it is good and non-professionals think it is true. Good rhetoric turns the audience into participants in the case. Here, too, the rhetoric of the architects is inadequate; it does not achieve adherence either by informing, or by delighting or by appealing to the emotions of the audience, to mention the three principal objectives of rhetorical communication (Cicero). By understating the significance of the Tullinløkka museum project, the promotion failed to fulfil the rhetorical requirements of clarity, distinctness and credibility. Moreover, the images that were evoked did not give the correct sensory or emotional comprehension with respect to what was actually required in the brief. In the ensuing debate the focus has been on architectural styles in general and the Tullinløkka case in particular,

and on abstract volumes versus leaving the site unbuilt. The debate has been unquestionably valuable in putting architecture on the agenda and bringing forth information, thoughts and points of view on architecture to the public. However, with respect to Tullinløkka, the arguments have appeared increasingly airy, abstract and general. More emphasis could be put on persuading people that the project can be further refined and so become a pleasant, stimulating attribute to the urban centre in terms of architecture as well as activities. Or shall we have to content ourselves with abstract discussions about architecture as a question of exterior style and accept that human beings of late modern culture have been transformed into mere spectators rather than participants?

As regards the question of whether a study of the competitions of the 1990s confirms or invalidates the conclusions of the previous study, the answer must be that it is a reconfirmation: the hegemonic competition rhetoric of the period displays a logical continuation of that of the preceding decades. The broad, threefold rhetorical set enables continuity to prevail while subtly adapting its advocacy to the changing foci of the audience. As a whole, however, the homogeneity of the competition rhetoric over the years is remarkable. This rhetoric, with its implicit vagueness and ambiguity of communication, has reached a crisis of credibility in the current debate on the Tullinløkka competition. To a certain extent this discord is reminiscent of the crisis just before 1970, after the competition for the renewal of the central city block Karl Johan *kvartalet*. It is too early at this stage to say whether the event signifies a similar, or even a more comprehensive and radical change of paradigm.

Every architectural project contributes to the current debate, and rhetoric concerns the art of argument. Architects have been challenged to improve and clarify their rhetoric – rhetoric in the broad sense, including architecture itself. In order to respond to this challenge, architects must increase their self-awareness and their understanding of the role of architecture in the world, if they wish to strengthen the position of architecture in the future.

Elisabeth Tostrup, 1998

¹⁷ It is disconcerting that such a confrontation should occur with respect to a cultural amenity for public use. If it had been a commercial project, the developer would probably have been able to mobilize more support. And, moreover, the alliance between the developer and the mass of consumers might well have been stronger than that between the population and what may be called the cultural elite.

