Theory and history of housing – setting the stage

22. August 2014 – Eli Støa
Why housing theory?
“the production of the built form, in whatever time or place, in whatever shape and for whatever purpose, is irrevocably a human and a social act”
(Bridget Franklin, 2006)
“The first form of architecture was for residential building, people built homes for themselves, then for their gods” ( Förster, 2006)
ARKITEKTUR 4: ‘Housing and Society’:
– The role of housing in shaping society – providing social change
– How housing architecture may be read as a result of social, cultural and ideological changes
– Norwegian housing culture and it consequences for environmental (and other) challenges
The hogan was constructed with five major poles, following Talking God's instructions. First 2 poles came from east and west, next 2 from south and north, the fifth from northeast. The mountains inhabited by Talking God were the first homes; after the blessing rites, they became hogans.

**Southern Pole**

'Standing Word's Leg place turquoise under

The East pole is set first, South second, West third, North last. The builder asks permission for them to be set willingly in position.

The structural pole 'Worlds' or realms are personified as women.

The floor inside was covered with jewels of the 4 kinds that made the posts. The door was curtained with dawn, the blue sky, evening twilight, and darkness.

**Western Pole**

'Water World's Leg place abalone under

First man and First woman requested the hogan be blessed with white and yellow cornmeal, with pollen and powder from prayer sticks. Blessingway songs are addressed to Sky, Earth, Rain. With four songs, the hogan is blessed by marking the four directions with the cornmeal and powder.

**Northern Pole**

'Corn World's Leg place obsidian under

On the roof, where they placed the end of the east pole, they put a white shell. Under the poles, the put white bead, turquoise, abalone, obsidian. Under the fifth pole, they put jewels from all the directions.

Where poles came together at the roof top, they tied feathers of different birds. The log tips are thought to be the 'eyes' of the hogan.
Kroppsvask fram til 1900-tallet

Moderne bad ca. 1930

Boblebad ca. 1990
The influence of the heating system on housing layout

Open fireplace

Central heating

Chimney

Electric heating
What is theory of housing?

• A theory about (housing) architecture aims to say something about what (housing) architecture is
  – In itself (as typologies, as spatial and aesthetic configurations etc)
  – In relation to other societal fields

• ‘Internal’ theories
  – Historic
    • Texts which have been decisive for the professional and theoretical debate throughout history
  – Systematic
    • Texts which aim to describe architecture as a continuum of related phenomena, concepts and issues

• ‘External’ theories
  – Several theoretical traditions which may contribute to throw light upon the question of what (housing) architecture is, how it has developed and what it should or could be

(based on Kasa et al, 2008)
What is “Culture”? 

• A value-based (normative) concept
  
  *culture as something more or less synonymous to “cultivated” (refined)*

• A descriptive concept
  
  “...skills, attitudes and manners that people have acquired as members of a society”. (Thomas Hylland Eriksen, 1993)

  “…the ideas, norms, values, rules, codes and symbols that a person take over from the previous generation, and try to bring forward – usually somewhat modified – to the next generation” ” (Arne Martin Klausen, 1992)

  ...“patterns for behaviour” rather than “patterns of behaviour”. (Gullestad, 1989)
A dynamic understanding of culture

“Culture intervenes in a dynamic way in how we live, produce and build or houses, but it is not way of life, production nor building tradition” (Gullestad, 1989)
The continuous dynamic of Housing culture

Ideas, values, attitudes

Physical structures

Social structures

HOUSING CULTURE
Physical structures

- Localization
- Housing types
- Plan layout - typologies
- Use of space
- Technical standard
- Construction / materials
- Design / aesthetics
Socioeconomic structures

- household structure / family patterns
- lifestyle and consumption patterns
- work and leisure (time use)
- tenure / economic issues
- housing policies

Fotos fra K. Rolness (1996)
Ideas, values and meaning

- ideals and preferences
- attitudes towards nature (rural – urban)
- meanings of home
- relation between private and public
- gender issues
- etc

Foto fra K. Rolness, 1996
The continuous dynamic of Housing culture

Ideas, values, attitudes

Physical structures

Social structures

A useful analytical framework?
AAR Theory and history of housing - Course description

- The objective is to discuss and develop critical thinking when it comes to ideological, theoretical and historical aspects of housing.

- The subject will deal with ideas related to the role of housing in societal and urban development from the modern movement in the early 20th century through various critical voices during the post-war period as well as more recent issues within architectural theories and debate.

- It seeks to position architectural approaches within a broader interdisciplinary field of theoretical perspectives on housing.
Learning objectives

• Develop consciousness and critical attitude to ideological and theoretical aspects of housing

• Practice in writing texts within the field of architecture
Tasks

- Case studies / discussions in groups
- Reading texts / discussions in groups
- Main assignment: Essay (approximately 10 pages)
### Program (with reservations of minor changes)

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<tr>
<th>Week/ date</th>
<th>Lectures</th>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Casestudies / text discussions / Essay</th>
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<tr>
<td>34 Fri 22.8 10-12</td>
<td>Setting the stage  Essay writing (1)</td>
<td>S22</td>
<td>Presentation of main task: Essay</td>
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<td>35 Mon 25.8 9-12</td>
<td>The social in housing</td>
<td>K24</td>
<td>Case study 1 in groups</td>
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<td>36 Fri 5.9 9-12</td>
<td>Essay writing (2)</td>
<td>K24</td>
<td>Proposal and discussions of topic and question in groups</td>
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<td>37 Mon 8.9 9-12</td>
<td>19th century urban growth  Garden Cities</td>
<td>S22</td>
<td>Discussion of texts (1) in groups</td>
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<td>38 Mon 15.9 9-11</td>
<td>Modernism</td>
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<td>39 Mon 22.9 9-12</td>
<td>Reconstruction and post war planning</td>
<td>R40</td>
<td>Discussion of texts (2) in groups</td>
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<td>40 Mon 29.9 9-12</td>
<td>Critical voices (1)  Essay writing (3)</td>
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<td>Presentation of topic for whole group /Submission of preliminary outline</td>
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<td>41 Mon 6.10 12:00</td>
<td>Critical voices (2)</td>
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<td>Case study 3 in groups</td>
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<td>44 Mon 27.10 16:00</td>
<td>New tendencies / challenges (1)</td>
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<td>Discussion of texts (3) in groups</td>
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<td>46 Mon 03.11 / 10.11 8-17</td>
<td>New tendencies / challenges (2)</td>
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<td>41 Mon 6.10 12:00</td>
<td>Submission essay draft (optional)  (Individual feedback)</td>
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<td>44 Mon 27.10 16:00</td>
<td>Submission essay</td>
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<td>46 Mon 03.11 / 10.11 8-17</td>
<td>Exam: Presentation of essay and critique by examiner</td>
<td>R41</td>
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### Casestudies
Each group selects one project (after short presentation of several relevant) and bring photos, drawings and short description. Discuss questions provided by teacher.
1: A project where there has been high social ambitions
2: A project based on modernist ideology
3: A project raising critical questions towards modernist /functionalist housing
4: A project representing new tendencies / visions

### Texts for discussion
Students read three different texts and prepares for presentations and discussions on one of them.
1: On the social in housing
2: Modernism and Critique
3: Contemporary issues
Casestudies 1: A project where there has been high social ambitions

- Groups of 2-4 students choose one of the suggested projects

- Bring laptops on Monday and discuss 3 questions:
  - How did the architects hope to shape social life / meet societal challenges?
  - How did they succeed in their attempts?
  - Shortcomings and strengths
Essay:

Housing as a Social Agent

- How may housing architecture play a role as a social agent?
- What can we learn from history – and which relevance does this topic have today?

Issues (examples):
- The role of housing architecture and...
- poverty
- social inclusion
- health issues
- loneliness
- mental problems
- cultural integration
- social sustainability
- ...
What do you want to explore?

Three alternative approaches

(1) Choose a specific social issue or problem that you find interesting or particularly relevant for housing and use this as a starting point for a discussion of one or two housing projects.

(2) Choose an architect that has consciously intended to use housing and city planning as an instrument to meet social needs and challenges. Discuss their approach to housing and the role of architecture in relation to one or two selected projects by the same architect.

(3) Discuss theoretically how housing architecture may relate to social life. What does it mean to regard architecture as a social agent and what is the theoretical basis for this conceptualization? Relate your discussion to one or two housing projects in order to illuminate your arguments.

But other approaches are also possible.
Schedule

Friday 29.8: Choise of topic, first proposal

Monday 15.9: Presentation of topic for class

Friday 19.9: Submit outline

Monday 6.10: Submit draft of full text (optional)

Monday 27.10: Final submission of essay

Mondays 3. / 10.11: Presentation and discussion with examiner
Next: Monday 25.8, 9.15-12.00 and 13.15-15.00 in Room K24

Remember to:
• Bring laptops (for casediscussions)
• Select cases (today)

Read:
Awan, N, T Schneider and J Till (2011): “The Motivations of Spatial Agency” in Spatial Agency – Other ways of doing architecture, pp 35-52, Oxon: Routledge (will be distributed on e-mail)

- What are the main social challenges of our time?
- How may architecture make a change?
- Can you think of any examples where architectural interventions have contributed to social change?

Finding rooms: http://use.mazemap.com/

Information, lectures and texts:
http://housingdesignstudio.blogspot.no/p/housing-theory.html