

# Modes of communication in artistic research: on Americanness and Architectural influence on semiotic grounds

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## Abstract

In relation to traditional modes of research within academic context, there is a recent interest in research methods where artistic practices set a larger part of the managerial guidelines, i. e. where the artist or artwork is not the subject of investigation, but rather the operative agent for the carrying through of a project and for the dissemination of results. These methods are by necessity tied to more idiosyncratic and more experimental ways of communicating research. From a «pure» conveying perspective this may seem controversial: Why introduce new interpretative layers into the academically formalized frameworks of communication? However, from an «empirical» art perspective, as well as from the semiotic perspective of the pervasive presence of «vagueness» (Peirce), it is understandable that certain qualities in artistic work, as well as in empirical research, might get lost when conventional methods of investigation are setting the norm. When artistic methods – like practice-based investigatory techniques, critical institutional intervention, unforeseen technologies of information processing, and experimental modes of dissemination – are brought into traditional academic modes of investigation, the benefit seems to be of a reciprocal sort: both academia and art world may conquer pre-conceptualization in their respective knowledge traditions. The conventional terminology by which research applications, as well as art projects, are generally described generally include notions like «background», «theory», «method», «relevance», etc, and these are used to reach an understanding from experts as well as from non-expert readers. It is in this paper suggested that such basic concepts could be discussed also in relation to another set of terms, less frequent but relevant for this field: «ground», «wit» and «margin». «Ground» relates to the abstract correspondence between two distinct phenomena, as in iconic and indexical ground (Peirce, Sonesson, a o). «Wit» stands for the conclusive logic mechanism of a humorous or non-humorous creation (Freud, a o). And «Margin» is here thought of as the reduced or neglected surroundings to a thematic context that nevertheless influence the focus of thematic attention (Gurwitsch, a o). An underlying question is to what extent the common terminology is also decisive for the communicational performance of research within creative arts.

In relation to traditional modes of research within academic context, there is a recent interest in creative, or art-based, or practice-based, research methods. This is of course especially the case in what is traditionally labelled creative subjects, like Fine Art, Music, Theatre, Dance, Literature, Architecture and Design. In these domains the artistic practice itself has recently come to set part of the academic guidelines, meaning that the artist or artwork is not necessarily the subject of investigation, like it has been in Art History, but rather the operative principle for the actual carrying through of a project and also for the mode of dissemination of results. These methods are by necessity tied to more idiosyncratic and more experimental ways of communicating research. It should be said here that this is not an altogether new order, there are examples within the tradition of poetics for instance, where the form for research itself has artistic qualities. From the perspective of accessibility and understanding within a community of interest, like a scientific community, this artistic/experimental way may seem controversial and unnecessarily intricate: Why introduce new interpretative layers into the academically formalised frameworks of communication? However, from an «empirical» art perspective, as well as from the semiotic perspective of reality's pervading «vagueness» (Peirce), it is understandable that certain qualities in artistic work, as well as in empirical research, might get lost when conventional scientific methods of investigation or dissemination are setting the norm. When artistic methods — like practice-based investigatory techniques, critical institutional intervention, unforeseen technologies of information processing, and experimental modes of dissemination — are brought into the traditional academic frameworks for research, the benefit may be of a reciprocal sort: both academia and art world may conquer its own pre-conceptualisations, in their respective knowledge traditions.

The conventional terminology by which research as well as art project applications are generally described include notions like «background», «theory», «method», «relevance», etc, and these descriptions are often kept general enough to reach an understanding from experts as well as from non-expert readers.

We suggest that these commonly spread descriptive frameworks do not always sufficiently cover intentions in art and art-based research. An underlying question in this paper is to what extent the common terminology is also decisive for the communicational performance of research within creative arts. The recurring descriptive domains — theory, method, relevance, etc — could with advantage be complemented with other «basic» terms, or domains, relevant for the fields that claim an artistic element as essential. We will in the following like to suggest a set of concepts — ground, wit and margin — in relation to which an art-based research could be discussed, and consequently, practically proceed, or as it were, methodologically develop. The first of these concepts is «ground», here meant as the abstract correspondence between two distinct phenomena, as in iconic and indexical ground (Peirce, Sonesson, a o). The second concept, or instance of measure, is «wit», which here stands for the conclusive logic mechanism of a humorous or non-humorous creation (Freud, a o).

We take «wit» then to mean something more than simply the spirit of a pun or a joke, but rather, in accordance with the German «Witz», to bear also upon what a philosophical aesthetical tradition has thought of as the making of consecutive conclusions. The third research-guiding concept suggested in the following is «margin», here thought of as the reduced or often neglected surroundings that nevertheless influence the thematic focus and its immediate

context. (This in line with the phenomenology of consciousness, (Gurwitsch,) or the psychology of attention (Arvidson).

This paper is devoted to the concept of Ground, and the main examples are taken from current American influences on architecture.

## WHO'S «AMERICA»?

In *Fast Food Nation*, the journalist Eric Schlosser states that Germany is today the most Americanized country in Europe, and that Germany has become one of McDonalds' most profitable overseas markets (Schlosser, 2002: 231). He cites the anthropologist Yuanxing Yan's investigations about the formative attraction that lies in USA-related products, such as «in the eyes of Beijing consumers, [where] McDonalds represents 'Americana and the promise of modernization'.» (Schlosser 2002: 230). Similar statements about the impact of American ideas in different cultures appear from time to time, because of the global American impact on goods, routines, advertising, etc. Taken together, domains like these influence whole cultures, but often we recognise these influences as more of a sub-cultural kind, i.e. as significant for a derived part of a culture, such as group's interest in cars, food or music. As an ingredient of modernity, the dissemination of American imagery has for a century or so stood out as an ever increasing and (seemingly) unending process.

Leaving aside the rather unverifiable statement «the most Americanized country», we may more profitably ask how and in what areas do such influences take root? Americanisms come in a broad range of varieties, and the conditions affecting their adoption are correspondingly complex. In what follows, it is suggested that to delimit the complexity of the problem one could discuss these cultural implementations in terms of a semiotics that have its origin in C S Peirce's general theory of signs. Our approach recognizes the the value-based cultural semiotics that departed from Lotman and was developed by Sonesson, where the mutual comprehensions of two cultures about each other is seen as important for the constituting of cultures a such. Our Peirce-based approach, which is situational, could be seen as a complement to the Lotman-based approach and can in a first rough take be explained as dealing with the succession of impressions. When facing another culture, for instance in a first visit to a foreign country, or in an initial contact at home ground with a foreign religion or a sub-cultural phenomenon, the contact inevitably involves successive procedures of recognition. Added aspects, meetings and interaction provide a deeper understanding that subsequently modifies the first, fragmentary, impressions. This succession, or supplementation, could in terms of semiotics be regarded as process of signification where factual links and implications (indexes) as well as culturally based habits and conventions (symbolicity) support, or modify, the more direct and initial (iconic) impressions. In the following we will to a lesser extent pay attention to the difference between Peirce's three basic categories, but first of all concentrate on the notion of ground», or as it were, the correspondence that constitute iconic as well as indexical impressions.

One could always make the scientific claim that a semiotic approach to cultural and political phenomena serves an ambition towards a «neutral» handling of a «non-neutral»

circumstance. Also, the semantic delimitation of real world attributions always carry the risk that something is excluded. A wellknown geographical dilemma is that whenever the word «American» is used, at least here in Europe, the culture and geography referred to is most often USA rather than the complete American continent(s). This text shows no exclusion to that reduction simply because our aim is to study the recognition of the material presence of USA-related matters in other parts of the world, especially as a global issue of architectural style and production. What follows is first a general and speculative suggestion of ways to approach such a study, followed by a preliminary set of cases of architectural development, chosen from the city of Malmö in the south of Sweden.

### FROM PANZANI TO GUANTANAMO

The current fundamental changes in an ecological, political and cultural process of globalisation have an impact, of course, on the discourse of semiotics itself and its relation to the issue of how to handle the «weight» or «charge» or «intensity» of a signification. Cultures bear connotations that have different ontological intensity. Furthermore the intensity fluctates: images and clichés that had an original connection to a specific culture may either disperse and circulate later as neutral load of properties, or increase and gain cultural intensity. In Roland Barthes' (2002: 135-138) essay about a Panzani Pasta advertisement in *Rhetoric of the Image* from 1964 — a seminal as well as criticised text for the semiotic analysis of visual presentations — the notion of «Italianicity» as one of the connotations evoked by, or fabricated by, the iconology of this particular advertisement. The type of connotation that Barthes had in mind when he suggested Italianicity as the mediation of a specific food culture and a specific flag colour combination (red, yellow, green) in this ad of pasta, probably still has a certain common validity, even when the national and EU politics of Berlusconi have marked in somewhat new ways the common comprehension of what represents Italy.

To reflect on Americanness today, without also considering the contemporary political role of the United States would be to neglect a state of immediate impact that comes to persons' minds when the adjective «American» is mentioned. One such resent series of episodes are those related to the Guantanamo Base, changed from military camp to hosting prisoners from all over the world, placed there on legal grounds disputed by other countries. Compared to Barthes' original notion of «Italianicity», as it was once presented in connection to a nice food arrangement, the idea of what constitutes «Americanness» seems, apart from raising other types of associations, to bestow a different set of cultural or ontological values, values perhaps even connected to the very presence of iconicity, values that from a Peircian semiotic point of view of course brings also symbolic features into the picture, but that can be discussed also as part of the very ground by which an iconic sign can be said to exist. An inter-cultural relationship inevitably mirrors also political temperatures.

## AMERICAN INFLUENCES IN ARCHITECTURE – ON ICONIC AND INDEXICAL GROUND

None of the three concepts «American», «influence» or «architecture» — can be delimited in a self-evident way. We may, for instance, ask ourselves: Is «Americanness» defined by the fact that an idea or product originates from USA (rather than the whole continent), or is «Americanness» first of all produced to an equal degree in the receiving culture as a typical style or principle of organisation? In congruence with Lotman's and Sonesson's cultural semiotics. «Architecture» is not an easier one, confined either to the construction of (a specific choice of) houses, cities and landscapes, or being a general principle of organisation, applicable to other artefacts too? And «influence» — has it mainly to do with visual fabrication and appropriation of images, styles, and manners, or is it something that makes itself present in more absolute, yet perhaps less visible, links of, for example, a political or economic kind?

To take these three concepts — «American», «influence» and «architecture» — a bit further, one could invoke a cornerstone of Peircean semiotics, namely what Peirce and some of his interpreters have termed *the ground* for signification. In congruence with this stream of interpretation, here represented by the contemporary semiotics of Sonesson<sup>[1]</sup>, we may also take account of the difference between *iconic ground* and *indexical ground*. A ground, in this particular sense, is not a naturally (or earthly) conditioned background against which a sign (such as an icon or an index) appears. It is rather, as Peirce stated it some hundred years ago, an «abstraction» — or, perhaps better, an *excerpt* from a perception that is shared with another perception. Peirce (1931-1958), 1.293) exemplified the notion of ground in this sense with the blackness that connects two different black things. Evidently, two black things, however different they may otherwise be, could represent the same quality, such as invisibility during a dark evening. They may even represent each other in this aspect (A as invisible as B). But what should we say about entities more culturally complex than colours? In one of his discussions of the concept of iconicity Peirce brought forth another example (coincidentally serving aptly our present interest in Americanness) in which two well-known Americans, Franklin and Rumford, are seen as not only representing America in a declared (or symbolical) way. They also represent each other (and Americanness) in a comparative and cognitive as opposed to a merely pictorial aspect of iconicity. When it comes to indexicality, and indexical ground, the corresponding entities are instead of different, not similar, type.<sup>[2]</sup>

If, by the term *ground*, we accept what Peirce and various interpreters of his work have suggested, namely that in any sign production one particular aspect of the reference is active (i.e. one aspect of an object corresponds to one aspect of a sign representing that object), then we will automatically accept also a type of semiotics that is based on recognition in a very broad sense. We will, as it were, automatically enter a cognitive comprehension of sign

[1] Sonesson (1999), p. 64. Sonesson re-draws and emphasise the concept of ground in Peirce's writings, while discussing also its differentiation in an iconic and indexical type of ground.

[2] Sonesson (1999), p. 69, makes, in an interpretation of Peirce's example, this distinction between iconical and indexical ground.

production as being the result of correspondences shared between any two entities.<sup>[3]</sup> Peirce (1931-1958: 2:228) suggested that we are not able to comprehend a correspondence between two things except as a correspondence *in some respect*. We will here not dig further into the specific problem, in Peirce's distinctions, of when a correspondence of this type approaches the more culturally conditioned, thus also more epistemologically loaded notion of «convention», an approach that would raise the issue of when an icon should instead be regarded as a symbol.<sup>[4]</sup> It is only too obvious that when dealing with Americanness we cannot avoid symbolic meanings and actions, and it can from case to case be disputed whether an impression is charged or not with symbolic meaning. We will however in the following, despite the obvious connection between culture and symbolicity, try to stay with the issue of the ground of iconicity and indexicality. To raise the issue of «ground» is also to follow a line of interpretation of Peirce, where iconicity is acknowledged not merely as a form of likeness tied to images, but also as having basic «cognitive» features.

Within contemporary architecture one may run into the recognition of an American «avant-garde»<sup>[5]</sup> — meaning influential American architects such as Frank O. Gehry, Peter Eisenman and Greg Lynn, and the way their methods have established various principles of design in which new «form families» have emerged. Formal experiments like these have been launched and discussed as having a transgressive relations to earlier architecture. In some cases they have also been recognised as meta-architecture, or featured in discussions of architecture as preferably non-metaphoric, or even as non-representational, in the specific sense that new architecture may deliberately try to avoid a transferred literal meaning, or refuse to recall an architectural style tradition. Today, these recent American schools influence the practice, and sometimes to a significant extent the education, of architects.<sup>[6]</sup> However, when we set out to address the issue of Americanness in architecture we have to proceed without thinking solely in terms of formal experiments. What about, for instance, the spatial arrangements — camps, roads, fences, vehicles, etc. — conditioned by the American military forces, and recently established in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq? This is a kind of spatial ordering that not only has direct consequences — intended or non-intended — for the region where they are imposed. Such military architectures also, as we know, function as a figure to imitate or to

[3] As always in Peircian semiotics, we are dealing with a number of possible semiotic worlds. Thus, «correspondence» may occur between two parties in a social world, but could also be an establishing moment in any perceptual or cognitive event.

[4] It is worthwhile to be noted that iconicity may, in fact, itself be considered as a ground, namely a ground in any production of signs. This, since iconicity in the Peircian semiotic universe constitutes the primary ground without which the second and third forms of signification — namely indexicality (based on actual junction between two things) and symbolicity (based on the virtual existence of a third confirming convention) — could not exist.

[5] See for instance Speaks, Michael, «It's Out There...: The Formal Limits of the American Avant-Garde», in *Other Spaces: the affair of the heterotopia*, Graz, 1998, for a comparison of the importance of American and Dutch «schools» of architecture.

[6] As in the title of Speaks's article, and in much common description of the latest streams in architecture, the term «avant-garde» might be tempting, but seems to us to be usable today only in a specific traditionalist and «statistical» perspective as describing the fact that certain movements influence others. The term is otherwise misleading because of the difficulty of postulating a first and a second «garde» in an incalculable world experienced as a network of influences.



overturn and may even become prototypes in the organisation of terrorist (or «terroristic»<sup>[7]</sup>) activities. Moreover, they probably also work as models for the organising of strategic activity in general, in daily life, outside these places, for anyone exposed to a media account of training-camps, warfare and occupation. History, not least design history, is full of transferred military «looks» and principles.

The strategy of probing into another territory for the sake of establishing military bases may result in a spatial production that is not necessarily a resemblance of the probing part, but rather a fact conditioned by the probing activity itself. The architectonics of camps, for instance, would thus in a semiotic framework probably be easier to associate with indexicality than with iconicity, more with actual traces from the presence of a foreign nation, than with a resemblance with the artefacts of that nation. However, if we focus on the common ground from which an iconic signification can be drawn, in the manner of Peirce and several of his interpreters, then Americanness could be found in various disguises, images and architectures, as long as there is an analogy «in some respect». One may for instance hypothetically think of acts of geographical segmentation, financing politics, or military training programs where correspondence might occur, without it being plain likeness.

When it comes to the general issue of architectural influence on remote territory one could refer to a much-debated warfare issue, namely the building of infrastructure in connection to the Israeli settlements in the Gaza strip and the West Bank. Without here raising the political question of whether there is both support and resistance from the USA in these cases, one may instead point to the general issue of remote strategic financing of architecture. These settlements have a direct governmental financial support that is much larger than the local support given to settlers.<sup>[8]</sup> The construction of new super-modern roads and highways, and the consequential blocking of old ones, serve here as a warfare strategy run without lethal arms.<sup>[9]</sup> An established general fact of planning is here, due to the explicit nature of the political conflict, taken to its extreme: architecture is used to destroy one culture for the sake of building another. In our semiotic context, this seems above all to be an example that lays stress on an indexical type of reference: one fact (national strategic aims and governmental financing) point to another fact (a certain type of architectural structure). On the other hand, iconic references may also exist — do the formal features of design (i.e. the type of extension, inflection, straightness, flatness, etc.) take a shape that depends on who finances the projects? This question is not put here to get an answer, but rather for the sake of illustrating the complexity of the issue of «influence».

When dealing with contemporary architecture, the question has to be asked whether the object of architecture is to be delimited to the construction of buildings, roads, cities, fences — or should it also include organisational bodies such as governments, companies, economies?

[7] Irit Rogoff has made an attempt to distinguish between a «terrorist» activity (tied to the doings of actual terrorist groups) and «the terroristic» (as a principle more general, and transferable, which still have its origin in factual terrorist activity). (Paper presented in connection to the exhibition «Territories», in Malmö, summer 2004)

[8] For information on the financing of the settlements, see the article «Land Grab» at btselem.org (2004-10-05).

[9] This is proposed and illustrated recently in the exhibition «Territories», shown in Berlin (2003), and in Malmö (2004).

In today's political climate, when we say «American-influenced architecture,» questions like these inevitably arise, since in situations of dominance, artefacts of all kinds — from soda cans to court rooms — tend to become charged with significance. Their symbolic value gets intensified and polarised — is it ours ... or is it American?

If we return to the daily mechanisms of influence, not necessarily conditioned by military domination or fatal conflict, but by the fact that a foreign circumstance pervades a certain existing state-of-affairs or certain manners of life, we should examine the reciprocal wills involved when one culture makes itself manifest in/to another. Mechanisms of influence, including the susceptibility and responsiveness of the receiving culture, are a central concern of the branch of cultural semiotics that builds on descriptions of how, for instance, French culture, or «text» (here denoting any matter of semiotic significance) was absorbed into Russian 19<sup>th</sup> century culture. Without here entering deeply into the semiotic modelling of cultural interaction, it suffices to say here that when trying to catch sight of what an influence is, we will inevitably run into processes of interchange, where cultural «texts,» «non-texts,» «extra-texts,» and «intra-texts,» all play a part.<sup>[10]</sup> We will, as it were, find ourselves dealing with accepted cultural matter, with Nature's (or Barbarian) matter, with matter based on the projection of oneself into another culture, and with matter based on the projection of the other into oneself.<sup>[11]</sup>

## A CASE STUDY – LOS ANGELES ISLANDS

When it comes to the presence of Americanness in Sweden there is, of course, an abundance of McDonalds, Pizza Huts and Subway restaurants — just as there is everywhere else. These are evidently designed to convey the particular kind of look-alike Americanness that goes with these brands. But there is also a certain kind of receptivity involved. In a culture-receptive framework, such as Sweden's, we seem to get certain American messages instantly — the popularity seems to be present almost before the imported artefact. Could this receptivity, this virtual in-fill mechanism in a culture, be the prerequisite «abstract», or ground, that Peirce saw as necessary for an iconic sign to occur? Do these types of instant cultural presence suggest linkages other than plain likeness, and beside all the symbolic values and indexical links that are involved in any mediation process? Those are the open semiotic questions asked here, questions that may inform cultural studies.

In a newly begun study, called Los Angeles Islands, the City of Los Angeles and some of the writings/discourses connected to this city is used to inform a study of the Malmö region in southern Sweden. We will here briefly mention three areas of interest in this project, linked both to immediate impressions and to chains of political and economical decision. Americanness, or rather LosAngeles-ness, shows up differently in the three spots: 1) as analogies in a comparison

[10] These notions are drawn from the cultural semiotics of Sonesson (2000), which is an interpretation and an expansion of the Tartu model of cultural interchange developed by Y. Lotman and others.

[11] In the case of American architecture of warfare, these types of reciprocal cultural intertwinements should also remind us that it contains elements of other, earlier, warfare cultures, such as European or Arabic ones (as commonly referred to by military generals when they discuss their choice of strategy).



of buildings for the police force, 2) as a transferable discourse concerning the exploitation of land, and 3) as a factual link of consultation in the case of a theme park.

First, let's consider the two main offices of the police forces in LA and in Malmö, respectively. Both of them are currently (and constantly) in a process of reconstruction on the basis of security.<sup>[12]</sup> The police headquarters in both Malmö and Los Angeles are quite «neutral» buildings, somewhat office-like, but they do bear traces of police-specificity, stemming from, for instance, the increasing demand to navigate radio communication, the need to be able to keep people locked inside the building for different periods of time (ranging from minutes to approximately a year), the politics of how to approach a prisoner, etc. The rather open and neutral character of the exterior of these two buildings hides interior activities derived from a strictly regulated social grammar, some rules of which require specific design.<sup>[13]</sup>



POLICE HQ LOS ANGELES, 2004  
(PHOTO LIZE MOGEL)

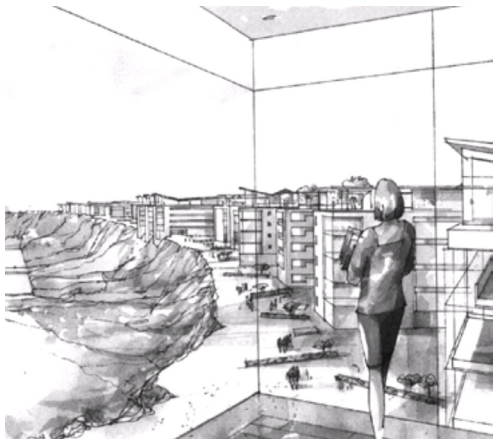


POLICE HQ MALMÖ, 2004  
(PHOTO GUNNAR SANDIN)

[12] When it comes to issues of security, the flow of ideas seems to go from USA to Sweden — the opposite direction would be almost unthinkable, since Sweden is often considered as a rather naive nation as far as security issues are handled. This presumed naiveté is, in comparison, perhaps not only a rumour, but could hypothetically be a consequence of the fact that the nation has not been fatally involved in severe conflicts for more than a century. (During WW2, for instance, the Swedish government maintained a dubious balancing act to avoid conflict, when closing a treaty with Germany admitting a transportation of arms through Swedish territory). More recently, there has been an increasing concern with security policies — beginning with the murder of the Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986, but more intensely so in connection with the violent confrontation between police and activists in connection with a G8 meeting in Gothenburg 2001, as well as with the murder of foreign minister Anna Lindh in 2003. In the aftermath of the Gothenburg riots, the trial of the commanding chief officer of the Gothenburg Police Force was held, during which, among other accusations (of an insufficiently organised response), it was indirectly suggested that his over-reaction against large groups of peacefully demonstrating young people was due to the pressure on him occasioned by the visit to Gothenburg of George W Bush.

[13] The degree to which policemen in Sweden are actually influenced by the American police force (in terms of technology, strategies, etc.) has not been investigated here, but it comes perhaps as no particular surprise that a well-known Swedish criminologist claims that «American police movies are part of the common pattern of identification among a number of Swedish policemen» (Leif G W Persson, in Swedish Television, fall 2003).

The second type of influence, the transferable discourse, is brought in by the research team itself, and can be illustrated by the interest in exploiting open green spaces and recreation areas south of Malmö, where protests and actions against the local government of the City of Malmö (and its decision to let this area be turned into an area for housing and business) have taken place recently. This process may be analysed, and perhaps influenced, by a similar discourse in Los Angeles. Over a period of thirty years, a wetland area, Ballona Wetlands, in the southern part of the City of Los Angeles has been the subject of architectural suggestions (and protests), initially dominated by proposals in the spirit of New Urbanism, and later to be concretely manifested — as a simplified version of this current — in large scale housing developments known as the Playa Vista area.



ARCHITECTURAL PROPOSAL, KALKBROTTET, SOUTH MALMÖ (UNSIGNED DRAWING IN «THE DEVELOPER'S DREAM COME TRUE...», FOLDER, PUBLISHED BY HEIDELBERG CEMENT, 2003)



ARCHITECTURAL PROPOSAL, PLAYA VISTA, LOS ANGELES (PUBLISHED IN DANA CUFF, THE PROVISIONAL CITY, 2000, COURTESY MAGUIRE THOMAS PARTNERS)

Thirdly, and finally, there are at present plans to establish a theme park in Malmö, close to a bridge connecting the city to Copenhagen, Denmark. The consulting for this project has been handed over to a Los Angeles-based company, Economic Research Associates, which specialises in theme parks and works for instance with the Disney Company.<sup>[14]</sup>

ERA stated in 2002 some «Preliminary ideas/themes [which] have been grouped into the following: «Scandinavian Kingdom; Viking World; Five Worlds/Holy Wood; Human Factor/Fantastic Factory; World of the Car; Film/TV Studio Tour; Music/Music; Other Attractions (Sky Tower, UN Plaza, Sculpture Park, World Train, International River, Visitor's Centre, among others).»<sup>[15]</sup> ERA's investigation was completed and presented to a small group of politicians in 2004, but was not made public, due to purchasing regulations (not-yet-completed-agreements)

[14] ERA was established by Buzz Price, Walt Disney's closest companion, in the 1950s.

[15] ERA - Economic Research Associates Memorandum report, preliminary market assessment of Malmö theme park opportunity - Phase 1, March 2002.



ECONOMIC RESEARCH ASS., MAIN OFFICE, L A, 2004  
(PHOTO LARS-HENRIK STAHL)



EXCAVATION HYLLIE, MALMÖ, 2004  
(PHOTO ANNELIE NILSSON)

that made it possible to resist the principle of public access to official records. The ERA report was followed by suggestions and design programs made by two other American Companies, the BRC Imagination Arts, and Jack Rouse Associates. Enough have been published about this in the daily press, and on the home page of BRC, to suggest that there are a number of types of Americanness to be awaited here.

## CONCLUSION

These embryonic ideas, and the suggestions for further investigation of transcultural influence have led our interest away from evident resemblance of style and immediate visual impressions. The study of Americanness and its presence in the urban design of a Scandinavian region has led us to an analysis of influences based less on visual style and looks, and more into the cognitive, conceptual or pragmatic prerequisites behind such influence. Pictorial resemblance, important as it is, has, as it were, here been put into the background, in favour of a basic establishing of correspondences. The chosen objects of study lead into the mechanisms of what establishes an abstract bond, or an actual link, in planning strategies, and towards issues such as decision procedures based on political contacts and contracts, as well as the temporary chains of corporate relations. These types of determining factors in design processes can, as these preliminary studies have shown so far, benefit from analyses and tests made on the basis of a combination of practice-based research initiatives and a semiotic approach to cultural analysis.

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