

Society's Blueprint of Architecture

-an analytical reading of national building laws as canonical text on the object of architecture.

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Abstract

Building regulations are the main, most formalized outline of our shared, societal interest in the object of architecture. This paper examines how national legal textbooks define and describe the object of architecture; with contemporary Norwegian building regulations as case.

The regulations are read as descriptive texts. Based on societal consensus, this text forms the structural stability of how we understand our architecture. Laws represent embed the social and political components of architecture, expressing what society at large considers as necessary requirements to the built environment.

By carrying out a content analysis of the regulations, along two sets of parameters, we present a comprehensive map of the Norwegian Planning and building Act as well as the corresponding Technical Regulations (TEK10). One parameter is the items, or themes covered by the law. The other parameter is the modal force of the normative descriptions; from recommendations via advice to explicit, quantified regulations.

Visualized as a diagrammatic plot distribution, the analysis combines quantitative (number of plots per theme) and qualitative (modality of statement) perspectives.

By analysing the figure produced by the plot, we are able to read how the blueprint juxtaposes quantifiable (technical) and qualitative (aesthetics etc.) values with the modalities of description.

Finally the paper discusses the cultural, philosophical and eventually political implications of the law-text on the understanding and definition of the Object of Architecture.

Keywords

Building regulations, object of architecture, diagrammatic representation, modalities, text analysis, social content