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Designing Responsibilities: The Role of the Architect in the Development of the Swedish Welfare State, 1930-1980

The research project *Designing Responsibilities: The Role of the Architect in the Development of the Swedish Welfare State, 1930-1980* is a critical study of the role of the architect (roles of architects) in relationship to politics and governmental decision-making in Sweden 1930-1980. The project is formulated out of the conviction that it is time to anew pay attention to Swedish modern architecture's relation to the development of the welfare state. In particular, the recent deregulation of the governmental apparatus calls for a renewed examination of what now is dismantled. During the larger part of the twentieth century, architecture was a field that was formed and grew in symbiosis with the Swedish welfare state. Modernist architecture became the symbol of pragmatic political leadership that had realistic plans for the future. Architecture and building construction was not only central for the physical expansion of the built environment, but also at the heart of a political conviction that building was the means to take command and control of social and economic issues, and stimulate industry and the labor market. Architects and politicians were in agreement on the importance of building construction for the development of a new modern country, but were they in agreement of the aims (ends) of architecture, and in the ways (means) of achieving good? Throughout the studied period, building construction remained an important area in the grand project of the welfare state, although politicians had different priorities and ways of working with architecture and the construction industry towards the advancement of the Swedish model. This research project is a story of the shifting political concerns with architecture as means for developing the welfare state and how architects and architecture then relate to these matters, at large and in specific building projects. The study brings ideological and organizational aspects of architecture to the fore, and, as such, it argues that the comprehension of changes in the organization and functioning of a political-economic system are fundamental for the understanding of an architectural past.