

BUILDING IDEOLOGIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDING AND ITS EMBODIED IDEAS, IDEALS, AND VALUES

Building upon the notion widely held among communication scholars that architectural “objects” are a form of cultural communication, or the concrete embodiments of ideologies, this dissertation will address how these ideologies come to be “written in stone,” whose ideologies, and the process through which these ideologies are not only embodied but are themselves brought to consciousness, negotiated, and constructed in the discourses surrounding an architectural project. I will argue that the ideologies that come to be codified in public architecture do not entirely precede the process of architectural design but are, so to speak, *constructed*, along with the buildings. This process of “building ideologies” is particularly important to illumine in an era such as ours, when many of our conceptions and values are rapidly changing as a result of new communication technologies, their uses, and their consequences for such institutions as churches, schools, and libraries.

By examining the architectural design process for Rem Koolhaas’s new Seattle Public Library I will explain how the institutional identity of *library*, the identity of the public, and the civic identity of the City of Seattle are constructed along with the building. Through a discourse analysis of the designs themselves and the communications involved in and surrounding the design project, I will identify variables and phenomena that influenced the deliberations and, consequently, shaped the design. Among these variables are individuals’ and groups’ communication styles, personalities, and approaches to collaboration; critical acclaim and celebrity; the persuasiveness of particular communication media—including written texts, blueprints, physical models, and animation—employed throughout the design process; and

political, economic, technological, financial, cultural, and other social forces. In addition, I will analyze the rhetoric, particularly the metaphors, used in discussing the project. By matching particular communication events to the evolutionary stages of the design I will explain how particular ideologies of library, public, and place were brought to consciousness, deliberated, and ultimately codified in an aluminum and glass structure. Ultimately, this study will demonstrate that these ideologies of library, public, and place are intertwined and mutually constructed—and that the work of building ideologies depends upon the interaction of myriad “publics.”