ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE: THE MATERIAL REALIZATION OF FRAMING AND DISCOURSE IN A UNIVERSITY BUILDING

by

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Using a multimodal social semiotic perspective, this article presents an analysis of the University of Southern Denmark as a *text* with particular focus on *discourse* and *framing* (cf. van Leeuwen 2005). The university consists of an original part and more recent extensions. The article examines how the original and the new parts of the buildings respectively realize different discourses related to education and the educational system more generally, and in particular how framing plays an important role in this respect. While employing van Leeuwen's system network for framing (2005: 18) for the analysis, the analysis also points to potentially useful adjustments.

1. Introduction

In the impressive course of his career, Professor Carl Bache has held a number of important positions such as Head of Department, Head of Institute and Dean of Humanities at the University of Southern Denmark – a university which is in many ways *his* university. In addition to this, Carl is the founder of the research group, *Choice and Text*,[1] which has the concept and nature of "text" as one of its central foci. In this article, we wish to honour Carl by analysing *his place* (the University of Southern Denmark) as a *text*. The article is a first explorative journey into analysing the communication that takes place between the material realization of the institution and its users, *in casu* a student making her way from the main entrance,

down the corridors, into classrooms and via various secretariats, to a meeting with her supervisor in his office.

The methodological approach employed and discussed is that of social semiotic multimodality as proposed by e.g. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2001), van Leeuwen (2005), O'Toole (1994), Baldry and Thibault (2006). In particular, the article will focus on the applicability of the concepts of *discourse* and *framing* (e.g. van Leeuwen 2005) to the analysis of architecture, and it will be suggested how our architectural data may help to fine-tune van Leeuwen's system for framing of space in offices and schools (2005: 18).

The Odense campus of the University of Southern Denmark (formerly Odense University) was designed by Knud Holscher (from the firm of Krohn og Hartvig Rasmussen Arkitekter) and was built in stages from 1971 onwards (at the time of the present writing, the university is still expanding, and new buildings are going up all the time). Its original basic form consists of two parallel long main corridors faced by classrooms, canteens, the library and the student book shop, as well as smaller transversal corridors leading to quieter zones with offices for academic and administrative staff. The last couple of decades have witnessed major extensions of the buildings, carried out with due respect for the original architectural design of the university, yet at the same time reflecting the time of their construction (cf. Lind 1997; Miles 2002). As a result, the original and the more recent parts of the university appear to realize different discourses, impacting in different ways on the communication that takes place between the university buildings and their users.[2]

In this article, we will focus mainly on the parts of the university that are used by students and staff in the humanities. Further observations and conclusions would obviously result from analysis of laboratories, dissection rooms, etc. in the natural sciences – spaces which differ radically in both material form and use. Closer examination of those parts of the university discourse must await further study.

2. Methodology

Over the years, the social semiotic approach to communication has branched out from a purely linguistic focus (Systemic Functional Linguistics; Halliday 1994 etc.) to a multimodal orientation towards a large range of diverse fields such as visual communication (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996), visual art (O'Toole 1994), sound (van Leeuwen 1999), typography (van Leeuwen 2006), moving images (Bateman 2011; Boeriis 2009), literature (Gibbons 2012; Nørgaard 2010), etc. One of the fields that so far has only been sporadically explored from a social semiotic multimodal perspective is that of architecture (cf., e.g. O'Toole 2004; Ravelli 2005); yet as we write, interest in that field is growing, too (cf. e.g. McMurtrie 2013).

Most central to Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics is the idea that language always – and simultaneously – creates not just one, but three major types of meaning: ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning. *Ideational meaning* concerns the representation of the world in terms of processes, participants and circumstances; *interpersonal meaning* concerns what we use language for in relation to other people (e.g. give or ask information, express politeness, etc.); *textual meaning* concerns the organization of words and sentences into text. Following Halliday, scholars in other semiotic areas have explored how the three types of meaning are realized in their respective fields of research. Most prominently amongst these, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) have developed an analytical framework for describing and analysing ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning in visual communication. As to ideational meaning, Kress and van Leeuwen analyse visual images in terms of represented participants, processes and circumstances. Their analysis of interpersonal meaning involves the systems of gaze, (horizontal and vertical) perspective, social distance and modality. Finally, textual meaning, which is referred to as *compositional meaning* in a visual context, is analysed through the systems of information

value, framing, linking and salience. Many of these systems are not confined to visual communication, but are also applicable to other objects of analysis such as spaces, rooms and buildings, for example. In the present study we wish to explore, and elaborate on, van Leeuwen's work with regard to the framing of interior space in offices and schools (2005: 14-25). While van Leeuwen's own research is based on floor plans, descriptions and photographs of offices and schools from the extant literature on the topic, we here follow his suggestion to personally collect data "by visiting [the buildings] and documenting their design by means of floor plans, photographs and written notes" (van Leeuwen 2005: 15), rather than relying on second-hand material.

In *Reading Images* (1996: 214-218), Kress and van Leeuwen introduce the concept of *framing* as a compositional system. According to Kress and van Leeuwen,

> The presence or absence of framing devices (realized by elements which create dividing lines, or by actual frame lines) disconnects or connects elements of the image, signifying that they belong or do not belong together in some sense (1996: 183).

The system of framing is developed further by van Leeuwen in *Introducing Social Semiotics* (2005), where he initially applies and refines it in relation to magazine advertisements. With the aim of examining the extent to which framing may be seen as a common semiotic resource working across modes, he subsequently applies it to the interior design of schools and offices. Central to this work is the development of a system network which provides an overview of the systemic resources – i.e. the choices – involved in framing. Based on his work on magazine advertisements, where the basic choice is one between *connection* and *disconnection*, his analysis of school and office design focuses on, and further develops, the node of discon-

nection. In van Leeuwen's system, elements can be disconnected either by means of empty space (i.e. *separation*) or by different kinds of partition devices such as walls, lines, counters, screens, etc. (i.e. *segregation*). Segregation, in turn, may be full (or *sealed*), or totally or partially *permeable*. When *total*, the frame may be *lockable* or contain *gaps*. When *partial*, the permeability is either *auditory* or *visual*. In van Leeuwen's system network, two further choices must be made simultaneously with the choice between segregation and separation. One is the choice between *permanent* and *temporary*, since segregating walls, for instance, may be permanent (as in the case of a brick wall) or temporary (such as partitions that can easily be moved). The other choice is that between *rhyme* and *contrast*, reflecting the fact that elements can be connected or disconnected by means of visual and material similarities or differences (cf. van Leeuwen 2005: 17-18; see Fig. 1).
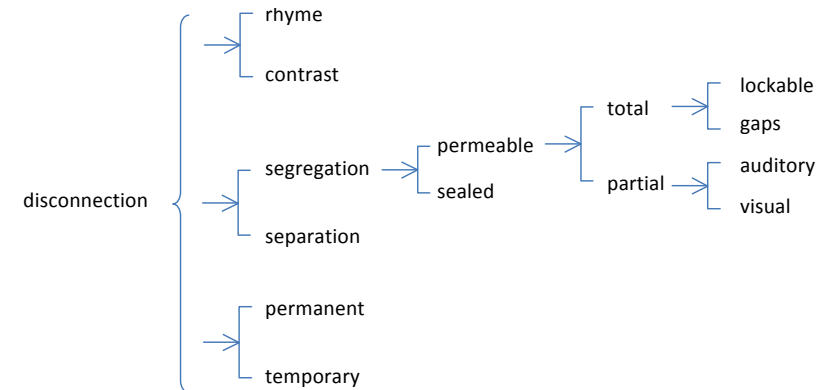

Figure 1: *van Leeuwen's system network for the framing of space in schools and offices (2005: 18)*

Having approached the University of Southern Denmark with van Leeuwen's system of framing in our methodological tool box, we

believe the system could benefit from a fine-tuning of the nodes related to the permeability of a given frame. Based on our analysis below, we would like to suggest that segregation be divided into three types, reflecting whether the segregation concerns sight (the *visual* node), sound (the *auditory* node) or physical movement (the *movement* node) (see Figure 2). These choices must necessarily be simultaneously possible (indicated in the figure by curved brackets, replacing van Leeuwen's square "either/or" brackets). These three choices – visual, auditory, movement – in turn involve an "either/or" choice between *sealed* and *permeable*. If the frame is *permeable*, it must furthermore be specified whether the permeability is *total* or *partial*. We see this as a choice from a continuum rather than a choice between two discrete entities. As a consequence of this, the continuum running from *total* to *partial* embraces van Leeuwen's choices of *lockable* and *gaps* as *degrees* of permeability.

In our adjustments, we have rearranged the order of nodes in van Leeuwen's system; however, our most significant changes concern the introduction of the *movement* node and the substitution of "either/or" brackets by "both/and" brackets. The introduction of the movement node allows us to describe how certain types of frame regulate not only sight and sound, but also movement. "Both/and" brackets enable us to capture the fact that a given frame may regulate sight, sound and movement (or any combination of the three) at the same time. Furthermore, the regulation involved by the individual nodes may differ in terms of permeability, since a given frame (e.g. a window) may be totally permeable in terms of sight, but partly permeable in terms of sound, while being sealed with respect to movement. A counter, for instance, allows both auditory and visual contact, as well as some movement around or across it, even if movement around a counter is invited less than is auditory and visual contact, not to mention movement across the counter (which would be a very marked choice). Figure 2 shows our suggested adjustments to van Leeuwen's system network. In addition, the suit-

ability of placing *rhyme* as a choice following the entry condition of *disconnection* lends itself to discussion, as logically, rhyme would appear to connect rather than disconnect. Due to space constraints, however, we will not pursue this possible inconsistency here.
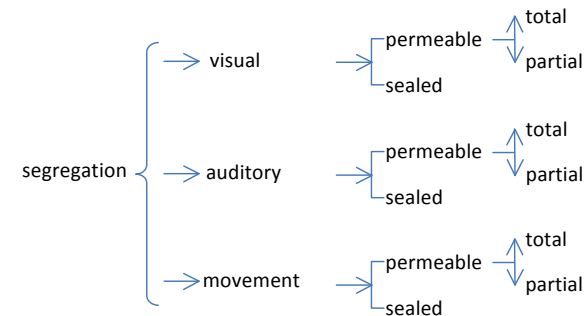

Figure 2: *Boeriis and Nørgaard's adjusted system network for segregation*

Another concept of importance to the present study is that of *discourse*. In this article, we follow van Leeuwen's definition of discourse as "socially constructed knowledges of some aspect of reality" (van Leeuwen 2005: 94). He exemplifies this by reference to a number of different discourses of war – a special operations discourse of war, an ethnic conflict discourse of war, an economics discourse of war, etc. – and concludes that

> there can be and are several different ways of knowing – and hence also of representing – the same 'object' of knowledge. That object exists of course. There *are* wars and they *do* cause enormous suffering. But our knowledge of them is necessarily constructed in and through discourse, and is socially specific. This also means that the same individual can have different knowledges of the same object, and may well be able to talk

about the same war in several different ways, depending on the situation as well as on his or her own individual interests and purposes. (van Leeuwen 2005: 94)

While "discourse" is often employed in relation to verbal language, the social semiotic multimodal approach to communication induces us to acknowledge that discourse can be realized by different semiotic modes such as sound, images, typography, etc. In relation to the present study, a broad variety of discourses about university education obviously occur in student magazines, books about university pedagogy, the annual speech of the Vice-Chancellor, political statements about education, student recruitment videos, etc.; yet, our claim is that even the very university buildings may realize discourses about university education, and more generally about the university system itself. Where van Leeuwen (2008), for instance, examines the semiotic resources available for representing space in discourse in a corpus of texts, in the present context we are more interested in the discourses that are realized by the buildings themselves, by their interior as well as their exterior design. One example of this is the way the dominant materials of the university buildings – concrete, glass and Cor-Ten rusted steel – lean on and realize an industrial discourse, signalling 'modern' and perhaps also 'functionalist' (cf. Skov 1980; Larsen 1984). In an article from 1980, Professor Søren Mørch suggested that the University of Southern Denmark (then Odense University) may be seen as a cultural symbol, or monument, of university politics and the educational situation in Denmark in the 1960s – a monument of a democratic Denmark, and more specifically of a social democratic Denmark (cf. Mørch 1980: 21). In the present article, we wish to pursue this idea further by considering whether the buildings themselves may be seen to realize a more general discourse of equality and democracy, or even a social democratic discourse as suggested by Mørch.

Since it is not the aim of the present article to consider discourses

about architecture, we will not take into account Knud Holscher's architectural visions and inspirations for our university, references to his other works, the recent history of architecture, and so on. Instead, we will look at the *buildings as discourse*. That is, we wish to follow Barthes (2004/1971) who suggests that cities, places and buildings are texts and may be analysed as such. To us, reading and analysing a building means describing and interpreting the signifiers of which it consists – "the material realization of systems of signs" (Hodge and Kress 1988: 6); consequently, our approach does not differ radically from reading and analysing any other text, be it writing, photography, speech, music, clothing, etc.

3. Analysis

3.1. The entrance

The student frequenting the university prior to the year 2001 would be met by a number of entrances with equal status, apart, perhaps, from the fact that one of the entrances was designated by "A", the first letter. The position of these entrances is almost conspicuously non-prominent, placed as they are under the facade of the building and being only sparsely lit. If we take entrance A as a representative example (cf. Figure 3), this entrance leads to a comparatively small and darkish hall which, in turn, leads to a classroom, a number of toilets and, to the left, a relatively narrow staircase whose U-shape means that the person entering the university cannot see where the second flight of stairs ends. When climbing the stairs, the student enters a transitional area between a canteen and one of the two main corridors, Gydehutten, which is thus accessed from the side, not unlike the accessing of a busy motorway.

Figure 3: *Entrance A*

The discourse of 'withdrawal' and 'non-prominence' which is characteristic of entrance A is subverted by the new entrance (cf. Figure 4) which has been added to the northern end of Gydehutten and is consequently now the first thing that meets the student's eye on approaching the university. Unlike the original entrances with equal status, this new entrance is clearly a *main* entrance and hence a 'privileged place'. These are meanings which are realized by a number of material and compositional choices. In front of the entrance is a large open space, paved with square-headed cobblestones, which sets it apart (i.e. creates *contrast*) from Campusvej, the internal asphalt carriageway, the bicycle paths and the parking lots, and thus provides a salience that underpins this entrance's special status. The open space in front contains a large sculpture, Jørn Larsen's *Inter-*

stitiel, which further adds to the special status of the space and the entrance.[3] In itself, the choice of a large and expensive work of art is a powerful signifier by means of which the university inscribes itself in a material discourse of 'power' and 'self-confidence'. The black granite of the sculpture and the graphic pattern cut into its surface furthermore create cohesive links (i.e. *rhyme*) to the use of the same material and pattern in works of art throughout the university, as well as in a floor decoration inside this new part of the building and in its decorated ceiling.

The facade that holds the new main entrance is executed in raw concrete, which gives it salience against the backdrop of the other, rusty red exterior surfaces of the university that are visible to the visitor who approaches the university from Campusvej. The entrance itself is characterised by large glass surfaces which contain two pairs of sliding doors and extend as a wall of windows above the entrance. In terms of framing – segregating the outsider from those inside – the visual permeability of the large glass surfaces seems to signify openness and insight, yet closer scrutiny reveals that the tinted nature of the glass somewhat impedes one's gaze into the inside, such that the visual permeability only is partial. This results in reflections from without, including those of Jørn Larsen's sculpture, visually linking the university to the world outside (see Figure 4). From the inside, in contrast, the glass surfaces clearly signal openness, symbolically as well as literally inviting glances at the world outside. The material discourse of concrete and glass which realizes the entrance resembles, and hence connotes the idea of, a 'business headquarters' – contrasting its cool grey and glass surfaces with the somewhat warmer rusty red surfaces of the original buildings.

Figure 4: *The new main entrance*

The recent placement of a very luminous big screen next to the entrance testifies to the university's wish to establish closer contact, and communicate more extensively, with the students than what is allowed for by the architecture, the sculpture and the open space in front of the university. Due to its size, brightness and prominent placement (taking up nearly one fourth of the wall to the right of the entrance), the screen is almost a monument in itself, with a signification that is not unlike the one conveyed by the Jørn Larsen sculpture. But unlike in the case of the sculpture, less care and consideration appear to have gone into the mounting of the screen, resulting in a rather poor quality of the finished work, with switches and cables visibly sticking out from behind the screen. As to the screen itself, it allows the university to present different types of information to the students in the dynamic form provided by alternating stills, text and moving images. However, in contrast to the far more static sig-

nification of the Larsen sculpture, the complex semiotic affordances of the screen necessitate a contextually professional and accurate communication, which, in turn, requires continuous investment in the planning and production of that communication. From an analytical perspective, what is displayed on the screen clearly adds complexity to the description and analysis of the entrance as a text, since (moving and other) images make up a semiotic system in itself. Consequently, while the contents of the screen may be analysed as a separate semiotic unit, it must also be seen as playing a role in the larger text of the university entrance (cf. Boeriis 2012 on ''analytical zoom''). Unfortunately, limitations of space prevent us from further considering this complexity. It should be mentioned, though, that the screen's poor mounting, combined with its somewhat unfocused (not to say irrelevant) contents during its first months of use, indicate that the screen may have been perceived by those in charge as being an important sign in itself[4] (as a monument signalling 'modern' and 'dynamic'), while little attention was paid to the fact that today's students, being experienced consumers of moving images, may well decode the screen and its contents (unless managed professionally) as empty and trivial.

The doors of the new main entrance (like those of the university's original buildings) are placed at ground level (actually the basement level in the overall architectural design). Unlike what is the case in many other Scandinavian universities, such as (the older parts of) Copenhagen University and Lund University, a student approaching the University of Southern Denmark is not met by an exterior flight of steps leading to the main entrance. Instead, an impressive stairway leading to the new entrance hall (the *campus square*) at ''ground floor'' level (physically the first floor) meets the student right inside the entrance doors (see Figure 5). The indoor stairway stretches out beyond the immediate field of vision, arguably resulting in a thematization of the ascent itself, not unlike (though obviously at a much smaller scale than) the steps leading to the Danish architect

Jørn Utzon's famed Opera House in Sydney, Australia, which the architect himself describes in the following manner:

> Here the trick was to get people up. When you go up the steps you see no buildings. You see the sky and you get separated from being between houses. I like procession very much: sky – foyer – windows – sea. It takes you to another world. That's what you want for an audience: to separate themselves from their daily life. (Utzon in O'Toole 2004: 11)

While the difference between being faced by the monumental buildings of the Sydney Opera House and the entrance hall of the university is obvious, the stairs' delimitation of the visitor's field of vision and the gradual revelation of the campus square allowed by the ascent are, in fact, not unlike the affordances allowed by the stairs of the Sydney Opera.

Overall, the choice to omit external stairs, together with the construction of a conspicuously big inside stairway, seem to signal that no upward movement is needed to enter the university, but that the climb only begins when once inside the building – an aspect of the university's material discourse which appears to suit the institution's self-perception as a regional university for the masses[5]: the university welcomes everybody and subsequently facilitates the climb up the academic ladder. As regards the architectural discourse, the impressive entrance area, the voluminous stairway and the spacious, well-lighted entrance hall that it leads to contrast strongly with the original entrances, as exemplified by entrance A (Fig. 3). In itself, the mere existence of a main entrance is a radical departure from assigning equal status to all entrances, as it was done in the original design. In addition to this, the large dimensions of entrance, stairway and entrance hall invite users to appreciate and revel in greatness – meanings that are clearly absent in relation to the entrances of the original architectural design and which appear to manifest a change
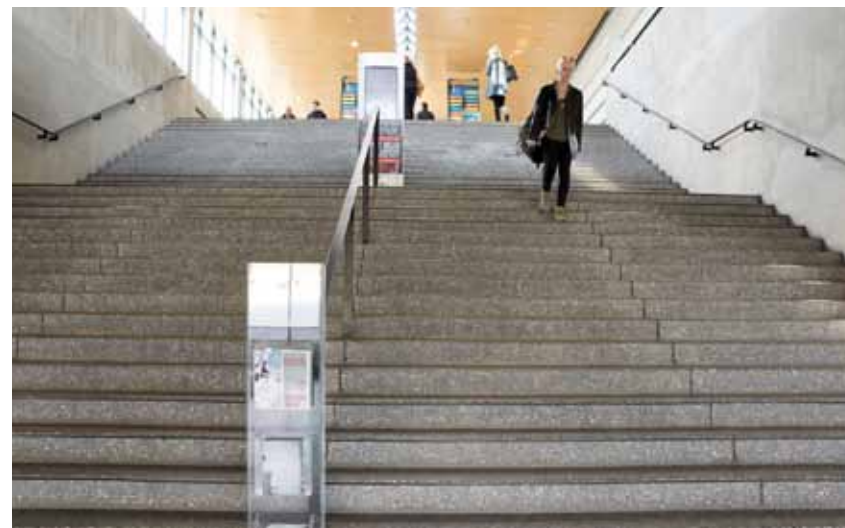

Figure 5: *The stairs leading from the main entrance to the campus square*

in the university's self-perception and self-presentation. Even if the new entrance thus subverts the material discourse of 'equality' by introducing a discourse of 'hierarchy', the new entrance arguably also realizes a social democratic ideal of equal (educational) opportunities for all by placing its entrance doors at ground level.

3.2. Classrooms

The most essential part of the university for a student is probably the classroom.[6] The students attending classes in the original parts of the Odense campus of the University of Southern Denmark will find themselves in rooms where significant choices have been made in terms of framing. Not only are the rooms sealed off from the main corridor by thick walls and double doors – thereby trying to offset the otherwise partial auditory permeability of the doors

Figure 6: *Classroom in the original part of the Odense campus*

Figure 7: *Classroom in a more recent part of the university*

segregating the classrooms from the often noisy corridor. The rooms furthermore have roof windows only, which means that their visual permeability is somewhat subverted by a control on gazing outside, enforced by their high placement. As a matter of fact, the position of the windows would seem to indicate that they function more as providers of light than as visual openings to the outside world. Altogether, these framing selections largely regulate the focus of students' (and teachers') aural and visual attention, signalling that this is a place for complete immersion in teaching (see Figure 6).

Interestingly, different choices have been made in the case of more recently built classrooms. These rooms have windows at eye level so that users can see more than the sky when gazing outside; the doors are single, not double, and often even have a glass panel inserted next to them. By allowing for larger visual (and partly also

auditory) permeability, such choices realize a completely different architectural discourse of 'openness', 'comfort' and 'perceptual freedom', no longer signalling control of the students' visual and auditory perception, but rather insisting on the ideal of ''freedom with responsibility'' that has gained ground in many segments of contemporary society, including education (see Figure 7).

The framing involved in the interior classroom design (e.g. by the positioning of tables and chairs) is significant, too, with respect to the room as ''text'' and to the regulation of the social practices which take place in it (cf. van Leeuwen 2008). In most university classrooms, the lecturer's table is placed at one end of the room, facing rows of student tables (and chairs). The lecturer and the lecturer's table are typically separated from the students and their tables by an empty space. At the same time, the tables make up physical frames segre-

gating the students from the lecturer, though for good reasons these physical frames are visually and auditorily permeable. Sometimes, the rows of student tables form continuous frames which can only be passed at one or two places (conferring permeability in terms of movement), in other cases, the frames offer gaps of empty space between the individual tables as well. In some cases, the disconnection between lecturer and students is further strengthened by means of *contrast*, in that the lecturer's table is different from those of the students, yet most often, connection – and perhaps some sense of equality – is created by the *rhyme* of similar tables.

In terms of regulating social practices in the room, the frame of empty space separating students and lecturer and the extra space allotted the latter between the latter's table and the blackboard carry high significance. The frame of empty space affords space for movement and allows the lecturer to use the room itself as an additional semiotic platform. She or he may control the interaction by walking closer, turn towards an individual student, withdraw and thereby end the one-on-one dialogue, turn towards the entire class, etc. The students, on the other hand, are physically allocated a multimodally far less flexible position in the dialogue. The dialogue's also otherwise asymmetrical nature[7] is thus underscored by the interior design of the room.

In most classrooms – both in the new and in the original parts of the university – the placement of tables and chairs seems motivated by the classical lecture, in which the lecturer holds a particularly central and authoritative position and is consequently faced frontally by all students at all times (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 140-146). Consequently, an interesting discrepancy exists between the material discourse of the interior design of the classrooms and prevailing pedagogical theories emphasising the importance of dialogue, active learning, student team work, etc. (cf. e.g. Biggs and Tang 2007).

3.3. Secretariats

Framing is likewise a significant resource involved in the interior design of various university secretariats and therefore plays an important part in the "text" that meets students seeking information at their programme offices. Ultimately, this design impacts on the communication that takes place between the users of the room. In many secretariats (for instance that of the English degree programme, see Figure 8), students (and other users) are met by a counter, forming a segregating frame which is totally permeable visually and auditorily, but only partially permeable in terms of movement. That is to say, the frame does not hinder sight and sound, but to some extent obstructs one's movement further into the room. The counter is a compositional element which helps organize the room in a way that has obvious interpersonal implications. It regulates social interaction in terms of social distance (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 130-135) and horizontal perspective (ibid.: 140-146); in other words it determines how close visitors can get to staff and limits frontal interaction. (See Fig. 8)
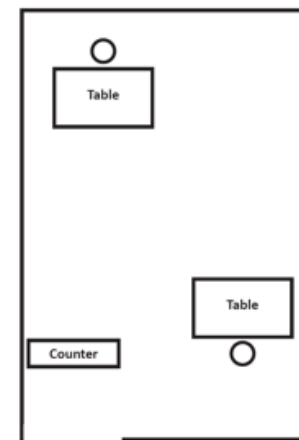

Figure 8: *Floor plan, current secretariat, English Studies*

In the former English secretariat, the use of a shelving unit as a low counter placed differently (see Figure 9) eventually caused secretaries to extend the frame by means of yellow Sellotape on the floor to regulate the social distance between students and themselves with the specific purpose of preventing students from seeing potentially confidential material on desks or computer screens. Even if such a frame is far easier to transgress (i.e. visual and auditory permeability are total, similarly for movement) than is a physical boundary manifested by a counter (where visual and auditory permeability are total, whereas permeability for movement is only partial), the communicative signal emitted by the (improvised) yellow line on the floor is rather strong in this context (where it typically does not belong). This example shows that the communicative power of a frame does not necessarily equal its nature as a physical obstacle. Consequently, the analyst must consider not only how permeable a frame is in its own right, but also how strongly a given frame by convention signals "do not cross" in a particular context.
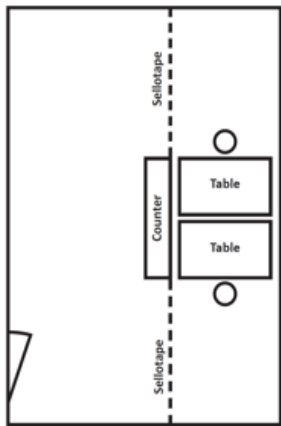

Figure 9: *Floor plan, former secretariat of English Studies*

Until recently, students visiting the secretariat of the Cand. negot. (business studies) degree programme would be met by a notably substantial frame, segregating students from staff. Here, the segregation, likewise manifested by a counter, was enhanced by a screen that could be pulled down to form what seemed a completely sealed frame outside office hours (visual: sealed; auditory: partial permeability; movement: sealed) (see Figure 10). While obviously representing a flexible solution the screen, when closed, produced at the same time a pronounced interpersonal signal, excluding any social interaction (except for cases where a student, ignoring the signification of the screen, started knocking on it or attempted to shout through it). Our adjustments to van Leeuwen's system network for framing help capture the nature of this particular frame, since they include *movement* (in addition to van Leeuwen's visual and auditory nodes) and allow us to describe segregation as "both/and", rather than "either/or" choices (visual, auditory, and movement). Our adjustments thus allow us to capture the fact that the closed screen is completely sealed visually and in terms of movement, but is partially permeable when it comes to the auditory node.

Even when open, the presence of the rolled up screen signifies its possible closure. In the design of the secretariat's new abode, the screen was dropped. Whether this was a matter of practical design or a deliberate communicative choice, the communicative signal remains the same, viz., one of greater openness to interpersonal relations than in the case of the screen, even when open.

Figure 10: *The counter of the former Cand.negot. secretariat: Open vs. closed screen*

3.4. Offices

The student who proceeds to be supervised by her professor will be met by different types of offices and corridors depending on whether these are located in the original or the newer parts of the university. As a rule, office sizes are the same no matter whether they are occupied by a professor or a research assistant. This equality of size is clearly semiotic and adds to the overall egalitarian discourse realized by the university buildings in general. It should be noted, however, that some Ph.D. students and teaching assistants do share an office, and that in recent years, some professors, heads of institute, and others have been assigned double module offices; in this way, an element of 'hierarchy' has been introduced into the egalitarian discourse which originally permeated the university.

Before entering her supervisor's office, the student is again faced

by different types of framing, each having significantly different signal values. In the original parts of the university, the offices are segregated from the corridors by walls and doors; this kind of framing is somewhat permeable as to sound, but not (unless the doors are open) as to sight and movement. Convention has it that an open door means "you are welcome to come in", while a closed door typically signals "do not disturb (unless you have to)". This alternative may be described systemically as total permeability in all three nodes versus being sealed off visually and movement-wise, but partially permeable auditorily. This significational system is not un-ambiguous, however, since doors may also be kept closed in order to stave off the cold and draughts emanating from the corridors. Doors may furthermore be closed to keep out noise, yet the occasional sign asking people to be quiet in the corridors seems to indicate that the closed doors' partial permeability to sound at times interferes with the inhabitants' comfort. The part of the wall above the doors is made of reinforced glass, and stretches the width of the room. The glass enables the outsider to see whether the lights are turned on inside the office; a possible, but not decisive signification of this may be whether or not there is someone in the office. Though visually permeable, the glass portion of the wall, owing to its location, does not allow outsiders to peer into the office (and vice versa for those inside the room), unless conventions are broken and either party scales the wall to glance in or out of the room. This aspect of the architectural design allows for the rooms' inhabitants to immerse themselves into research and other private activities; it somehow reflects the immersion invited by the design of the classrooms in the original parts of the university. In addition, the glass may have an aesthetic function, by breaking the somewhat monotonous surface of the uniformly coloured walls and doors and bringing some daylight into the otherwise rather dim corridors.

In the more recently built parts of the university, a larger degree of openness is signalled by glass panels next to the office doors (total

visual permeability vs. partial auditory permeability, sealed off as to movement). In this case, however, the material discourse of 'openness' appears to clash with practical usability and the kind of social interaction preferred by the users. In many of the newer offices, blinds have been added to the panels in order to keep people from looking in, and possibly also keep faculty from being distracted by outside sights (vision sealed off, partial auditory permeability, sealed off as to movement). As we write this, a new alternative is being introduced in some of the offices by their users, indicating that the blinds are not an optimal solution. Instead, frosted window film is being affixed to the glass panels (partial visual and auditory permeability, sealed off as to movement). This choice of a visually partially permeable frame does not block the light or undermine the architectural design to the same extent as do the blinds; even so, it hinders unwanted gazing into the office by passers-by, just as it prevents the inhabitants of the offices from being distracted by what they see through the glass.

As mentioned above, an office door may be either open or closed. Even when closed, it is partly permeable by sound so that a knock on the door can be heard from the inside, just as the professor's "Come in" will be audible to the student outside. On entering the room, the student is not met by any physical frame and consequently finds herself occupying the same space as her supervisor. The meaning thus created compositionally may, however, be somewhat undermined interpersonally by the horizontal perspective involved in the supervisor's position (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 140-146), as the latter may be facing his computer or be busy with other things on the desk (he may, for instance, be on the phone, or be busy writing or reading before turning to the student). Alternatively, he may choose to turn completely towards the door before the student enters, or even get up and walk towards the visitor, in this way using the space to signal various degrees of accommodation through

horizontal perspective and (decreasing) social distance (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 130-135).

While the composition involved in the office design is thus basically welcoming in nature vis-à-vis the student entering the room, the position offered during supervision holds a somewhat different signal value. Here, the student may be invited to sit in a low, soft chair next to the desk (see Figure 11), but even though the chair is far more comfortable than would be, e.g., a wooden chair, the layout of the room appears quite different from the position afforded by the low chair. In this arrangement of the office, the supervisor is seen from a lowered vertical perspective (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 146-148), which places a relatively strong emphasis on the asymmetrical interpersonal relation that holds between student and supervisor. At the same time, the desk itself suddenly becomes a segregating frame between the interlocutors in terms of movement as well as of vision. Altogether, the position offered by the easy chair partly undermines the welcoming nature and the egalitarian signals that the room's general layout at first glance seemed to communicate. From a methodological point of view, this example of contrasting meanings points up the significance of not basing one's analysis of architecture and interior design exclusively on floor plans, drawings and photographs, since the actual interaction of the users with buildings and their interiors may reveal meanings which could not be captured otherwise (cf. also McMurtrie 2013: 109-110). Naturally, the possibly less welcoming and less egalitarian meanings created by positioning the student in the low chair may be counter-balanced by the kind and accommodating attitude of the professor, which is obviously the case when Carl Bache is supervising his students.

Figure 11: *Carl Bache's office.*

4. Concluding remarks

In the present article, we hope to have demonstrated how the exterior and interior design of university buildings may be analysed as a semiotic text, by focusing in particular on the different discourses that the buildings appear to realize: from 'equality' (equal status of entrances and same size of offices) and 'immersion' (old classrooms and offices) to 'hierarchy', 'privileged places' (the main entrance, the campus square, different size offices), 'openness', 'comfort' and 'perceptual freedom' (new classrooms and offices). An important element of our analysis is the role played by the compositional system of *framing* in the material realization of the architectural discourses involved in the original and the new parts of the university buildings, respectively. Here, we were inspired by Theo van Leeuwen's (2005) work on framing in offices and schools, in which he extends

his previous work (with Gunther Kress) on the uses and functions of framing in visual communication (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). Considering the University of Southern Denmark as a ''text'', and using as our analytical tool, van Leeuwen's system network for framing, entailed making certain adjustments to the network so as to allow the description of frames which are permeable or sealed to movement as well as to sound and sight. In addition, our adjustments made it possible to grasp how sound, sight and movement may be regulated simultaneously by a given frame. We furthermore followed van Leeuwen's suggestion that analysis might well be conducted not only on the basis of second hand material such as floor plans, photographs and various texts about architecture, but on first hand observations and interaction with the place. As a result of this, meanings were revealed to us which would not have been so on the basis of second hand material, since such material would not have captured how the compositional meanings involved in the design of a professor's office change according to where the analyst is placed in the room.

Architectural discourses are, of course, not created by framing alone, but in combination with several other architectural systems and the various choices they offer. Further work is needed to describe these other choices and the meanings they contribute to the multimodal architectural text.

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Notes

1. Now *Multimodality, Choice and Text*.
2. Ultimately, others as well (the government which initiated the building of the university, the state of Denmark which financed it, the architect who designed it, the university leaders who decide on changes, etc.) are communicating with the students and other users of the university through the buildings.
3. Reflections of Jørn Larsen's sculpture are visible in the glass surface of the new main entrance displayed in Figure 4. The sculpture is the tall black (chimney-like) shape to the left. It can also be seen here: http://www.sdu.dk/om_sdu/byggerier/kunst/odense/larsen_interstitiel
4. During the screen's first months of use, issues relating to both form and content would seem to support this claim. In terms of form, for instance, the correct screen resolution was not always selected, resulting in text which disappears at the right and left hand margins of the screen. As for contents, one example is the use of the screen for the display of recruitment videos. To do so at the facade of a university as secluded from its social surroundings as is the University of Southern Denmark seems an odd communicative choice. The university is situated outside the city behind a small forested area and is mostly visited by people who have an errand there, such as students who are already enrolled in a degree programme.
5. Cf. the core narrative of the university in which a central element (in the words of its current Vice-Chancellor) is to "offer education to the masses and create more pattern breakers" (Oddershede 2012).
6. The authors are probably idealistically naive here, since the university also holds a café, several canteens and a student bar.
7. Just consider the interpersonal meanings involved in the lecturer's longer turns in the dialogue, his or her power to decide whether to provide or demand information, his or her unquestioned right to use less modality markers than do the students, etc. Cf. Halliday (1994) on the interpersonal metafunction.

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