

This must also ring very true to any architect who has designed for a committee client. I have found that one of the most effective ways of making apparent the disparate needs of groups in multi-user buildings such as hospitals is to present the client committee with a sketch design. Clients often seem to find it easier to communicate their wishes by reacting to and criticising a proposed design, than by trying to draw up an abstract comprehensive performance specification.

This discussion has oversimplified reality by implicitly suggesting that primary generators are always to be found in the singular. In fact, as Rowe points out, it is the reconciling and resolving of two or more such ideas which characterises design protocols. However, we must leave further discussion of this complication, and of the rejecting or resolving of primary generators, until a later chapter.

In summary

This chapter has examined the design process as a sequence of activities and found the idea rather unconvincing. Certainly it is reasonable to argue that for design to take place a number of things must happen. Usually there must be a brief assembled, the designer must study and understand the requirements, produce one or more solutions, test them against some explicit or implicit criteria, and communicate the design to clients and constructors. The idea, however, that these activities occur in that order, or even that they are identifiable separate events seems very questionable. It seems more likely that design is a process in which problem and solution emerge together. Often the problem may not even be fully understood without some acceptable solution to illustrate it. In fact, clients often find it easier to describe their problems by referring to existing solutions which they know of. This is all very confusing, but it remains one of the many characteristics of design that it so challenging and interesting to do and study.

Our final attempt at a map of the design process shows this negotiation between problem and solution with each seen as a reflection of the other (Fig. 3.7). The activities of analysis, synthesis and evaluation are certainly involved in this negotiation but the map does not indicate any starting and finishing points or the direction of flow from one activity to another. However, this map should not be read too literally since any visually understandable

Figure 3.7

The design process seen as a negotiation between problem and solution through the three activities of analysis, synthesis and evaluation

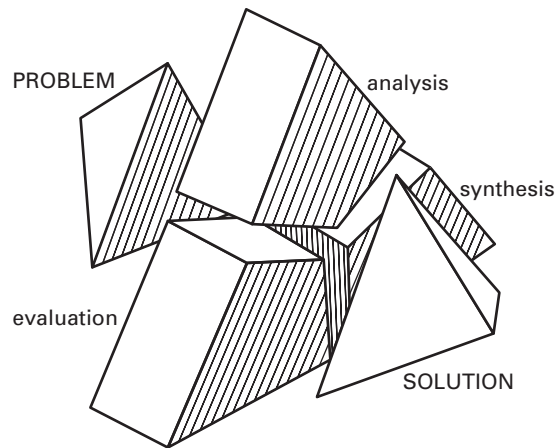


diagram is probably far too much of a simplification of what is clearly a highly complex mental process.

In the next section of this book we explore the nature of design problems and their solutions in order to get a better understanding of just why designers think the way they do.

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