

Laudatory Speech by Prof. Dr. Georg Vrachliotis, Architecture Theory, KIT  
Schelling-Prize in Architecture Theory  
November 16, 2016

Dear guests and colleagues, dear friends and students, dear Doug Saunders,

How can architecture open the perspective to socially relevant topics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and create new spaces of possibility for thinking and designing? Which spatial, political and economical concepts are of relevance? These questions remind us of the immeasurable value of architecture as a cultural pattern of thinking and knowledge for society. Its creative potential is found in the interdisciplinary character integrating social, technical and political processes.

‘Architecture as medium for cultural integration’ – it is this feature that the board of trustees of the Schelling Foundation sought out as a point of departure and as basis for discussion. The topic is both rooted in the tradition of previous years and functions as a self-contained contribution to the exigent discussion considering the current political situation. This debate is not limited to the German setting but will shape the social self-understanding of 21<sup>st</sup> century architecture fundamentally.

‘Architecture as medium for cultural integration’ is also the theoretical credo, which Doug Saunders unfolds and develops in his books and essays. Early in his career, he quickly gained reputation as a journalist and author for the Canadian daily paper “The Globe and Mail”, for which he later became the correspondent in Los Angeles and eventually head of the European Office in London.

The Shelling Foundation honors Saunders not only for his precise observations and brilliant theoretical essays, but moreover for his cosmopolitan thinking, publishing and acting, which is methodically original, forcefully eloquent as well as vibrantly courageous and intellectual.

His courage manifests itself through his influential publications such as „The Myth of a Muslim Tide – Do Immigrants Threaten the West?“ as well as „Arrival City“. The questions posed and topics chosen are not only of pressing relevance but also of

political explosiveness: How do we handle global migration movements? How can we enable migrants to participate in society and grant more autonomy in respect to creating one's own housing conditions and for integration? How can we create a flexibility of space to master these tasks?

Rather than falling into alarmism and cultural pessimism – simplistic methods of disposing oneself of the complexities of the social fabric – Saunders reveals new paradigms and optimistic narratives for an open and pluralistic society.

In addition, let me add a personal comment: I have seldomly witnessed that ONE publication serves as the theoretical basis for so many student designs as “Arrival City”. Seldom was I involved in so many discussions with students concerning the theses of one publication.

The Board of the Schelling Foundation believes that Saunders embodies the ideal of the engaged “public intellectual” in the best possible sense. His contributions ask us to permanently reformulate the question of the social objective of architecture and its communal space. Before this backdrop, a fruitful discussion on architecture and society can unfold its theoretical vibrancy and explosive force.

Dear Doug Saunders, hardly anyone could release this discursive vitality and fearless debate better than you, which is why we are very happy and proud to award you this year's Schelling Prize in Architecture Theory.

Congratulations!

Translation by Bernita Le Gerrette