The Art of Placemaking and the Future of New Urbanism

Ax:son Johnsons Foundation and KTH-ABE Event – Victor Dover, Stefanos Polyzoides and Elizabeth Moule, Emily Talen, Charles C. Bohl, and Ethan Kent (Speakers), with Peter Elmlund (Coordinator) and Tigran Haas (Moderator).
The Art of Placemaking and the Future of New Urbanism
10 Years of UCR (Urban City Research) and 20 Years on New Urbanism (CNU)

“Good urbanism has these three basic principles: human scale (which has to do with designing public spaces around the pedestrian rather than the car), diversity (you have to have a range of uses mixed together) and conservation and restoration (both in terms of the environment and in terms of culture and history)” – Peter Calthorpe, 2012

The Stockholm (Engelsbergs bruk) One Day Seminar & Debates on Placemaking and New Urbanism will feature in-depth, one-on-one debates designed to explore a specific nexus between social life and urban form, that of placemaking and its relation & importance to – and within New Urbanism. Seminar will also focus on the future of urbanism(s). The day will feature talks and panel session by world-renowned urban design theorists and/or practitioners and advocates, carefully chosen to bring together the right mix of personalities and positions: Victor Dover, Stefanos Polyzoides, Elizabeth Moule, Emily Talen, Chuck Bohl and Ethan Kent.

The discussion will explore what makes a place livable, walkable, vibrant and enjoyable for people, through the perspective of the revival of lost art of placemaking, which New Urbanism sees as essentially a re-ordering of the built environment into the form of complete towns. New Urbanism promotes the creation and restoration of compact, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods, towns, and cities. Aside from the planning & urban design perspective, another is also very dominant in the everyday discourse – one that views placemaking as advocacy and citizen input activity through the fostering of public dialogue in everyday urbanism. Finally, the public spaces in cities are becoming an agora for creating and engaging, interesting, and exciting spatial experiences which foster urban vitality and creativity for all the residents of the community. As our cities are increasingly becoming complex arenas and are compounded by the current economic and ecological crisis, there is a strong belief that the deepening global wide social inequality is translating itself spatially. This is manifested as increased social-economic segregation in residential but also in the public realms. In recent years it has become ordinary to hear everyday claims that many public spaces in cities worldwide are becoming more and more the exclusive domain of the rich and privileged, at the expense of the needs of wider society. In many respects the public spaces have become the battleground for the “right to the city”. Our cities and communities are made up of many layered, complex and overlapping public spaces, good and bad and also influenced by economic, political, cultural, and other processes that are happening.

The seminar will foremost explore the complex, and often ethereal, ambiguous and intangible concept of placemaking, one for which there is no real or universal definition or consensus among the academic or practitioners’ community. It is clear that there is a strong predilection for all things associated with “good urbanism” and preoccupation with the “livable and vibrant public realm” within the framework of “building sustainable communities and places”. What is less clear, or has been sidelined, is the linkage between specific urban forms or – and public spaces and social life & behavior, i.e. - combination of physical characteristics of places, the activities performed there, and the significance (or meanings) that these places have for people.

The seminar will be held on March 21st, 2013, from 13 pm - 18 pm, at Engelsbergs bruk (Engelsbergs Ironworks), a UNESCO World Heritage site, ca two hours from Stockholm Downtown. Moderator will be Tigran Haas, KTH – Royal Institute of Technology and organizer is Peter Elmlund of Ax:son Johnson Foundation. The event will be recorded for Axess TV – Axess TV offers current Swedish and international debate of ideas in the social sciences and humanities and is broadcast in Sweden (http://www.axess.se/tv/).
★PROGRAM: 13:00-18:00 (Engelsbergs Ironworks)

Thursday 21st of March

10:00       Bus from Stockholm to Engelsbergs
12:00       Lunch for all Participants
13:00-13:15 Peter Elmlund, Coordinator
13:15-13:30 Tigran Haas, Moderator

★THE ART OF PLACEMAKING

13:30-14:00 S. Polyzoides/E. Moule “Canons of Sustainable Architecture and Urbanism”
14:10-14:40 Victor Dover “Great Cities, Great Streets, Great Placemaking”
14:50-15:20 Coffee & Sweets
16:05-16:45 Ethan Kent PPS “Localism, shared responsibility and citizen empowerment”
16:50-17:00 Leg stretcher/Coffee

★THE FUTURE OF NEW URBANISM

17:00-18:00 Panel Discussion: “The Way Ahead and the Lessons of the Past”
             (Dover, Polyzoides/Moule, Talen, Bohl, Elmlund)
18:00-18:30 Q&A from the Audience
             Panel Moderator Tigran Haas

★Social Activities

18:30-19:00 Cocktail & Snacks
19:00-      Dinner for all Participants
22:00       Bus leaves for Stockholm
MARCH 21ST STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS: Victor Dover, Stefanos Polyzoides and Elizabeth Moule, Emily Talen, Charles C. Bohl, Ethan Kent (Speakers), with Peter Elmlund (Ax:son Johnson Foundation, Coordinator) and Tigran Haas (KTH-ABE, Moderator).

Victor Dover was among the founders who established Dover, Kohl & Partners in 1987 and serves as Principal-in-charge. Along with his partner Joseph Kohl, Mr. Dover's practice focuses on the creation and restoration of real neighborhoods as the basis for sound communities. Mr. Dover was cited by Architecture magazine as being among "the country's best urban designers and architects." Victor Dover is the co-founder of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) and current chair and was also the Founding Chair of the CNU Florida Chapter, the first of its kind. Mr. Dover is the founder of the Form-Based Codes Institute. He lectures widely around the United States and internationally on the topics of livable communities and sustainable development.

Stefanos Polyzoides and Elizabeth Moule are architects, urban designers and co-founders of the Congress for the New Urbanism, and emeritus board members, principals of Moule & Polyzoides, Architects and Urbanists. Polyzoides' prominent career covers the areas of architectural and urban design education, design and execution, and theory. He was the Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Southern California and has been Visiting Professor at several prestigious schools of architecture. Polyzoides is a popular speaker on the subjects of new urbanism, transit-oriented development, mixed use development, housing and sustainability and is a frequent guest at academic symposia. Elizabeth Moule is CEO of Meridian Properties, a real estate development company dedicated to new urbanist infill development. Moule is a co-author of the Ahwahnee Principles, the state of California community-planning guidelines authored in 1991 for the Local Government Commission. Moule teaches as a visiting critic at universities in the United States and abroad. She lectures frequently on architecture and urbanism. The work of Moule & Polyzoides has been published worldwide, showcased in various museum and university exhibitions, and has received numerous awards for excellence. Recent key publication is The Plazas of New Mexico - Chris Wilson and Stefanos Polyzoides (co-authors/editors).

Dr. Emily Talen is a Professor in the School of Geographical Sciences and School of Sustainability at Arizona State University. She is the founding co-editor of the journal Urbanism and serves on the editorial boards of Open Urban Studies Journal and Urban Morphology. Dr. Talen teaches urban design, principles of urbanism, mapping urbanism, urban geography, and new urbanism. Her most recent book is Design for Diversity: Exploring Socially Mixed Neighborhoods. Emily Talen is the Director of the Phoenix Urban Research Laboratory. Emily Talen is considered one of the world’s leading urban design researchers.

Dr. Charles Bohl is an Associate professor and director of the Masters in Real Estate Development and Urbanism (MRED+U) program at the University of Miami’s School of Architecture. Dr. Bohl is an expert on place making, community building and mixed-use development. He is the author of Place Making: Developing Town Centers, Main Streets and Urban Villages, a best-selling book published by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) now in its 5th printing. Dr. Bohl currently serves as the Chair for the Congress for the New Urbanism’s Florida Chapter and as a member of the Executive Committee for the ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council.

Ethan Kent, vice president of PPS is an authority in the practice of Placemaking. During over 14 years at PPS (Project for Public Spaces), Ethan has learned from and photographed public spaces in more than 700 cities and 50 countries. Kent has been integral to the development of Placemaking as a transformative approach to economic development, environmentalism, transportation planning, governance and design. Having worked on over 200 projects, he has led a broad spectrum of Placemaking efforts, providing public engagement, planning and visioning for many important public spaces.

Peter Elmlund is the director of Urban City Research (UCR) at the Ax: son Johnsons Foundation, co-founder of Council for European urbanism (CEU). Elmlund has been widely engaged in debates on contemporary urbanism and has been giving 100s of talks around in Sweden and Europe on urban issues. He is also a Guest Researcher in Residence at the School of Architecture and the Built Environment at KTH – Royal Institute of Technology. Elmlund is coordinating a three set conference series in the lead up to Habitat III (2016), with a special emphasis on Public Space and Placemaking.

Dr. Tigran Haas is the Associate Professor of Urban Planning + Design and Sustainable Urbanism at the School of Architecture and the Built Environment at KTH – Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Sweden. He is the Director of Civitas Athenaeanum Laboratory (CAL), an applied social science research platform. He is also a Guest Research Fellow at the Ax: son Johnsons Foundation. Haas’ key works are: New Urbanism & Beyond - Designing Cities for the Future, Rizzoli, New York (2008); Sustainable Urbanism & Beyond - Rethinking Cities for the Future, New York (2012) Rizzoli (editor).

Organizers: Ax: son Johnsons Foundation, Urban City Research (UCR) and KTH, School of Architecture and the Built Environment, Civitas Athenaeanum Laboratory (CAL) – Social Life and Urban Environments Research Platform applying cross-disciplinary research, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation is a private foundation whose principal objective is to facilitate scientific research in general. They have in particular chosen to benefit the liberal arts and the social sciences. It was founded in 1947 by the late Consul General Axel Ax:son Johnson (1876-1958) together with his wife Margaret, owner of the Nordstjernan group. The CAL research platform at KTH's School of Architecture and the Built Environment has its research focus on Urban Form, Human Behavior and Place Making Studies, Sustainable Urbanism, New Ecologies and Landscape Transmutations, Social Processes, Community and Integrated Housing Studies and finally Urban Design Paradigms, Digital Ambient Spaces and Regional City Studies. The School of Architecture and the Built Environment, ABE research and educational program regard the future of our societies; how cities, buildings and infrastructure will be designed and built, how institutions and regulatory systems should be developed to produce a good living environment, and how to provide good development conditions for business.