

Cities for people, the society and the future

Urban Lab Conference 'The future of Urban Development – rethink solutions' at the former Horsens State Prison, 21.09.2017

1.

A GOOD HOUSE CAN NOT CARRY A BAD URBAN PLAN
BUT A GOOD URBAN PLAN CARRY SEVEARL BAD HOUSES

A city plan requires a vision for the city, that is designed for the people, society and the future.

In the post-war era in the '80s it was all about the the Welfare State. Please read Kaj Ove Petersen's book about the Competition State, that tries to describe the actual facts.

The vision of the Welfare State is the dream of a society that requires a commitment from an enlightened and an idealistic citizen.

In the early 1970s, this vision gets into trouble, while the neo-liberalist vision is growing and during the '80s and '90s Corporate governance, new public management, etc are spred to every layer of the society. Especially Margeret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, later Blair and Lykktøft had a great import on this.

The Competition State is a vision development in our time, which requires the individual opportunistic person to put Self-Interest first, since the state has been degraded to be a company. A company that has reduced expenses to maximize the PROFIT. It is not the democratically elected who creates visions any more, but people like Mckinsey and Goldmann Sachs.

That's why the city today looks like it does.

Karl Marx and Adam Smith are mixing action with production according to Hannah Arendt (Adam Smith believes that artists are useless parasites, Karl Marx does not believe in anything).

Today the experience and the craftsmanship, ie. manufacturing (work, work, work) are not part of the construction. Today a house is produced as a consumer goods, bought and thrown away as a is short-term investment.

2.

CITY PLAN – URBAN SPACES – CHICKEN OR THE EGG

CITY PLAN – HOUSE – HEALTH AND DETAILS

CITY PLAN – SHELL – PROFIT AND PEOPLE

The city plan and the urban spaces that it has created has changed dramatically over time (as seen by the following quick and random image series).

The next step is now to consider all this talk about the urban spaces, including the silence about city plans, that no one likes to talk about. Not to speak about the national plans. First the competition states built its own area and makes a profit. Maximised districts. Afterwards this »accident« must be validated by some architectural and artistic aesthetic with some exercises ...

What should come first? A good city plan involves good urban spaces, right?

The city plan outlines the framework for the houses and the houses outline the framework for the urban spaces.

When all the cities are competing with each other the houses made by the architects must accommodate as many square meters as possible. The Expression is quantity and spectacular the house also has to be as original as possible. Herning must have the tallest house, Aarhus the most special houses built next to the harbour, and Copenhagen is greater than both of them.

To the sculptor, it often looks like overgrown sculptures from the '50s and '60s, and the city scape one big warehouse.

The difficulty is not to make an iconic and special house, but the challenge is to make a normal good house of high aesthetic value, that looks like it has always been there.

A house that you can both pass without losing your own thoughts or stop and admire.

(When I made the work for Tørring Highschool the principal told me: It has to be something special, but I do not want to hear about it every morning at the bakery).

The city plan in the municipality of Copenhagen currently consists of filling out spaces in a very violent way that breaks the entire cityscape. The tall buildings in Nordhavn, Sydhavn and in Ørestaden can create different local environments, but as one united city it needs a bigger plan.

In particular one of the main problems is that the houses are being built in front of a computer screen so that they lose the sense of materiality and proportions. They hit street level like they start from the top facing the street with the people walking around. We have to built cities for the people and not from the ambitions of the many agencies/builders.

3.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIALS – LIFESPAN / EXPERIENCE
ENVIRONMENT – INDOOR CLIMATE – MENTAL / PHYSICAL
ENVIRONMENT – ASTETIC – THE BEAUTIFUL / THE SOUL

A thermo house, high tech, to calculate for a better world.

In the '50s there were a small amount of materials on a construction site, today there are several thousand.

Through generations The on-site craftsmen would judge the quality of wood, stone, mortar, paints etc. Today everything is being organised and calculated at the office of the engineer in his data sheet. Through generations suppliers have produced building materials from experience. Today the names of the suppliers change, open and close the business faster than the house is being built.

Many of these materials affect the householder in both a mental and physical way. The interest in economic growth is extreme. The interest in a good life for the human well-being is modest.

I will now show you some pictures with houses that were built from experience, insight, crafts, traditional materials and methods.

Of course art and architecture must take advantage and use the latest technology and digital options, but since more than 50% of the total CO₂ comes from the construction of a house, it

is obvious that a house with a long lifespan will lower the consumption.

We make a lot of research on new materials – people want to invest in this and it has a status of something good, but we should also researce the traditional technologies and materials, in both art and architecture.

A house built of earth will return to earth.

At the art academy we discuss the beauty as being the truth, not understood as being nice or the right, but to acknowledge the world and ourselves through the our senses.

The digital technologies and their consumer-driven production interfere our senses and the world we live in – between the houses and the art we create. We must conquer life back with our senses. We must take back control of our data. Of earth we were made, and into earth we return together.

4.

POLLUTION – NOISE – HEARING

POLLUTION – UGLY – SIGHT

POLLUTION – BODY – SENSES

(THEREFORE, THE CITY SHOULD ALSO SMELL AND TASTE
GOOD AT THE SAME TIME)

Pollution is something political with CO₂, particles, agrochemical agriculture, micro-plastic etc. and it is important! But for a human being's daily life the impact of noises, sounds, ugly big commercials, bad buildings and urban spaces, and the materials that our bodies meet, is of crucial importance, here art and architecture have a great responsibility.

In short, the pictures have shown us that what we call art and architecture come from ritual mysticism, following ancient times and the Renaissance, continuing into the Age of Enlightenment and »national romance«. Finally it arrives in this modern space, that we are still somehow part of.

In Europe through time art has been a part of the public space on extraordinarily different premises, ideals of different times and the zeitgeist give what we now call artistic expressions, yet it still makes sense to »calibrate« over time, without knowing how the concept of art has been shaped, we cannot develop the concept further so that it still has its own form and substance.

Nevertheless, it makes sense to leave the term open, because art has its own form and substance.

Ignorance is not a virtue, it has been written that »knowledge is power« hence the dominant forces of our time, the global monopolies, wage war against memory, the dumber we become the more we consume.

The visual arts' path from being integrated in myths and rituals, to the ideals of the Antique, to the deep interaction with the churches of the Middle Ages, and in a representative role with kings and princes, to becoming an independent form of cognition with classicism and the enlightenment, which became the nationstate's most important way to create a national democratic identity, before the truly modern detaches art from everything.

What is the role of art in the competition state's global financial market, countless people think that we should serve this or that good cause, the beautiful as a particular way of knowing the world has become unclear and hazy.

When we talk about the function of art in urban spaces and in interaction with the architecture, we can mention monuments, commissions, art in the public sphere, site-specific art, contextual art, relational art, integrated art, temporary art, event art, and lately identity art.

Soon there will be educated more curators, art historians etc. will be educated than artists, together with the market they define a still tighter framework for art, the concept of the readymade has been exhausted beyond all of the concept's possibilities.

The concept of the social sculpture, first defined by Joseph Beuys, rests on an English translation – »The social sculpture«, but in German Beuys uses the expression »Die soziale Plastik«, and in German the concept »Plastik« is where the sculpture is shaped in wax, clay or plaster, it is the moldable principle of art, to model society on the basis of art's intuitive aesthetic concept of form, he does not mean that all manner of political labels should be attached to art.

He got the idea when the sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruch before his suicide ahead of World War II stated that »the form of art arises when society presses art;« then Beuys reckoned that art could press back, this pressure on society from art is »Die soziale Plastik.«

The sculptor's material is the physical shape, here the laws of classical physics apply, weight, height, length, width, hardness, softness, etc. It is also the physical laws that govern our body and senses.

The most important task of art in the urban space is to follow »Die Soziale Plastik« to create this unpredictable urban space to fight back these inhuman infrastructures.