

CNU IX: From Neighborhood to Region

DESIGN: A TALE OF TWO CITIES

June 9, 2001

Moderator: Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Duany, Plater-Zyberk & Company

Speakers: Paul Goldberger, *The New Yorker*

Dr. Hans Stimmann, Senate Department of Planning, Berlin, Germany

Introduction:

It is now my pleasure to introduce one of the founders of the CNU who has designed some of the best examples of New Urbanism over the last 15 years. It is particularly important to understand and realize that she has designed infill projects in cities like a very wonderful neighborhood she designed and has been built in Cleveland, Ohio. It's my pleasure to introduce from Miami, Florida, Lizz Plater-Zyberk.

Moderator: Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk

I'm grateful to the Congress for allowing me to take advantage of the opportunity New York City provides to address two pet concerns which I believe need further attention from us all. The first is the design of beautiful buildings for dense urbanism. And the second is learning what our European colleagues already know about building and rebuilding dense cities and regions and learning what they can teach us.

[Slides shown] Private sector buildings of varying types. The beloved public monuments of the city. The Public Library in this case. Rockefeller Center -- a very conscious effort to make a different kind of urban space in the city. Some new efforts. This in Battery Park City. And, of course, the larger open spaces of the city. These buildings that I showed you embellish the public spaces of streets and in some cases squares and the parks of New York. Not just Manhattan, although I'm focusing on Manhattan. Central Park which provides so many different ways for the residents of the city to take advantage of the outdoors is, as many of you know, a totally manipulated natural environment in what is perhaps some of the most interesting juxtaposition of open space and high density built form. And I close with this slide just to remind you that the city rewards you for scrutiny. You can learn a tremendous amount about how to build high density buildings just by examining the buildings of New York not only in terms of their overall size and silhouette, but even the detail.

So, why is it important to design beautiful buildings? Just because some architects like to look at them? After all, isn't it enough to have an interconnected street grid with a good transit system and a high density of mixed use buildings? Isn't that what we spend most of our time talking about after all? And if beautiful buildings are an important goal, why might it seem elusive to the point that we need to focus on it?

In several of yesterday's presentations, we were reminded of New York's enviable transit system and of the struggle other regions are experiencing to retrofit their existing metropolitan areas for rail and other kinds of public transit. The kind of transit systems that San Francisco, Miami and Dallas are inserting into their cities (sometimes through the efforts of members of the Congress) are not assured successes. Build it and they will come is not an assured experience in a place like Miami or Dallas. Yesterday, shoe leather was a term that was used focusing on the needs for pedestrian friendly urbanism to support transit and to convince people to walk in order to use transit.

I would shift the focus from the foot to the eye and suggest that the goal be eye friendly or viewable as well as walkable urbanism. To paraphrase the Charter: public spaces, street squares and parks that are safe, comfortable and interesting to the pedestrian. Well, those of us who are out there trying to make such places are finding that it's not as easy as it sounds. I, for one, am aware of what a bad impact on new urbanist goals a large, ugly or even merely banal building can have on our efforts to densify suburban areas -- where resident NIMBYs wait to ferociously pounce on new building proposals. Density is considered a bad word in cities like Ft. Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, Cincinnati and Los Angeles. Probably all over the country you've had similar experiences. As investors and developers have begun to see the folly of their suburban sprawl ways, they have turned their attention to older city centers. Codes are being rewritten. Political support is being put in place. There's great excitement and anticipation all around as people look forward to remaking their cities.

However, all too often, the initial surprise and pleasure in observing this phenomenon (certainly a victory if you think about it from any point of view) is often replaced by the disappointment of a clumsy, ill-proportioned and unpleasant at street level office or apartment building. The glass box is just fine across the parking lot as seen from a highway at high speed in suburbia. It really is not a great building to walk by on a sidewalk in a city. In some cases, these have been off putting enough to generate public resistance to continuing the urbanization. One might speculate: whose fault is that? The architects? Or perhaps the developers who are hiring the wrong architects? The history of cities like New York and Berlin shows us how a profession was uniformly capable of designing interesting buildings worthy of long term reuse and restoration -- a kind of professional ability that obviously went on for years and years. We have some question about whether we're capable of this any more. Today, these two cities do have the advantage of new building competing with an illustrious history. There is a culture, an expectation, a high standard. Some of our newer cities don't have this to help us along.

So, this morning's speakers will be telling us about the ongoing efforts in their two cities to maintain the high standards set by history for building and public space design. I will introduce

each of the speakers at the beginning of their talks. So, I'll start with Paul Goldberger and then I will introduce Dr. Stimmann after Paul speaks.

Paul Goldberger has been speculating on the current state of the art and architecture in Gotham in a series of *New Yorker* magazine articles which I have been reading in the last few years. He is currently the architectural writer for *The New Yorker*. This follows many years of experience and memorable writing of books as architectural critic for The New York Times and as editor of the Times' Art and Leisure section. While he was at the Times, he won the Pulitzer Prize. His eminent qualifications to address the subject include a degree from Yale University and teaching experience there. But, most importantly, he lives in one of Manhattan's most memorable buildings. Please welcome Paul Goldberger.

Paul Goldberger

Thank you very much, Lizz. Good morning. I think in some ways this session should have been at the very beginning of the conference since the whole notion of exploring the connections between New York City and New Urbanism is something that could have set the tone for the days to follow. But, of course, with Dr. Stimmann also here to talk about Berlin, I think we're going to have a sort of implicit theme of urban context and the whole idea of urban context and what it has meant historically and what it means today.

So, for the next few minutes I would like to try approaching New York from that vantage point. To think about New York as an example of context and to try to figure out from that what relevance it may or may not have to the New Urbanism. Since Lizz and Bob Stern in absentia and Lizz here gave us that initial gift of slides, what I would like to do is not so much give you a tour of New York as talk about some ideas. Ideas that I think we can actually talk about conceptually almost better than visually. I'm not going to show additional slides. You'll see the reality of these ideas not by looking at the screen but by going outdoors as you did on the first day of this conference as I'm sure you'll be doing again given that we yet again have the sort of weather that we have 52 weeks a year in New York.

The reality of the urbanism of New York is that it is right outside this door at almost every door in Manhattan. Its strengths and weaknesses are on this street, and let me start out by talking about them. New York is not New Urbanism as we've come to think of it, but old urbanism, of course. It's not quite as old as some of what we see on this continent. Old enough to have had its fundamental form fixed nearly two centuries ago in 1811 when the Commissioners' Plan for Manhattan which we all know as the numbered grid of streets and avenues was put into effect. The grid is profound. It is at once the least assertive piece of planning in the world and the most assertive. It is certainly not the most imaginative thing you can do -- running a grid up the whole island. It disingenuously pretends to neutrality. But in fact, it is anything but neutral in the way

that it ignores typography, running rough shod over hills and valleys and (with a few exceptions) paying little heed to the waterfront. It ignores history other than preserving the ancient diagonal of Broadway -- once the road to Albany. It suggests arrogance, absoluteness and inflexibility. It was designed to maximize the value of real estate and to make the division of land into saleable lots quick and easy. It sends a cynical message that the city is nothing but a commercial pie to be divided up. It makes no allowance for public space. The great public spaces that New York has (Central Park the noblest) were added later and were not part of that plan.

So, why is it then the street pattern of New York yields a remarkable level of urbanism -- perhaps the finest of any old city in the United States? Why does this arrogant piece of simple minded planning work so brilliantly? There are several reasons. The first (and the most obvious) is clarity. It is easy to understand. It is easy to navigate and most important easy to locate yourself on. You always know where you are and how to get where you are going. But this is far from the most important virtue of the grid. Clarity is a necessary but hardly sufficient condition for decent urbanism.

I think the grid provides the basis for urbanism for several other more subtle reasons. The straight streets provide a remarkable number of stunning vistas -- not great axial views like the boulevards of Paris, but neat, tight, ramrod straight views that stretch sometimes from river to river. From almost every part of Manhattan one can see a river at one end of a street canyon. And every now and then (like 57th Street) there is a view of both rivers from different ends of the same street. The grid has also made the New York street wall (the even line of buildings extending block after block) a crucial part of the city's visual identity. A period of flirtation with set back plazas -- a result of the 1961 zoning ordinance's misguided desire to see the successful Seagram Plaza Building on Park Avenue replicated all over the place -- led to broken street walls all over town. But now, planners and architects have come to the realization that every building has a responsibility encouraged by the grid to line up with its neighbors and be part of a greater whole.

The grid makes the fundamental idea of urban design (that the whole is more than the sum of the parts) seem logical and natural, even inevitable. But the grid has functioned most importantly in an even more subtle, symbolic way. It is really a frame. An enclosure. A Cartesian anchor for the irrational impulses of this impulsive and active city. It is like an abstract drawing sketched not on a plan but on graph paper. The grid of the graph holds the abstraction, defining its lines of force and keeping its movement in check. It is the subtle balance of the rational and the irrational. Without the grid New York's intensity and its idiosyncrasy would be uncontainable. New York is often misunderstood as having a clear, strong character. The city itself is strong, but its character is not. It's changeable and malleable. Like all great cities, New

York takes on a different character for each of its occupants. And what it does that no small city can do is provide them with choice. The graph paper is there for each of us to write on.

The controlling force in New York's architecture has always been theater, not theory. Actually, that is not completely true. The controlling forces have been theater and money which is to say the forces of entertainment and profit. This is a city in which the values of commerce have always superseded other values save for the desire to entertain. To show off with a certain panache. Ours is a theatrical urbanism. And it's also a mundane (squeeze as much square footage onto the site as you possibly can) urbanism. You have to understand that it is these two things at once and that they coexist in New York's identity however much they may seem to be contradictions.

What is not in New York's tradition is ideology. Chicago may have been built on the idea that new technology and the new program of the skyscraper demanded a new style. But such modernist theory meant little in New York. We built plenty of modern buildings, but more for the sake of pragmatism than any serious belief in the remaking of the world in a new way. A lot of our modernism here, after all, was art moderne. Streamlining stuff that was about the imagery of the new more than about being truly new and different. And in the 19th century, too, we built pragmatically. New York's gothic was hardly a yearning for the middle ages as in the gothic revival in England. It was a way of achieving visual effect. New York's Beaux Arts architecture was in search of grandeur imported from Europe. Once again, visual effects more than theory or idea. New York did not really invent any kind of architecture except perhaps for extraordinary cast iron industrial architecture of the mid 19th century.

What it did, for the most part, was take things that had been developed elsewhere and turn them into something powerfully its own. Vincent Scully has written of the American tradition of taking a rigorous European model and making it looser, more picturesque, more indulgent. And while he first made that point in connection with the Boston Public Library which McKim, Mead & White designed as a more picturesque version of the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in Paris. New York is really the home base for that attitude toward architecture. Our greatest buildings are theatrical exploitations of European models. The Woolworth Building where Cass Gilbert merged gothic architecture with the notion of the skyscraper more perfectly than any architect has before or since. The Plaza Hotel, Henry Hardenbergh's French renaissance chateau blown up to monumental civic New York scale. Napoleon LeBrun's redo of St. Mark's tower in Venice as the headquarters and symbol of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. The Beaux Arts monument of Grand Central Terminal and the New York Public Library which we saw a few minutes ago.

When we got deeper into the 20th century, the models weren't always European, but they were still loose and picturesque -- not particularly rigorous in terms of any architectural ideology.

William van Alen's Art Deco Chrysler Building. Shreve, Lamb & Harmon's Empire State Building. Schultze & Weaver's twin towered Waldorf Astoria Hotel and Rockefeller Center which you also saw. None of these invented an entirely new form of architecture, but all of them were brilliant, powerful new syntheses of things that had come before put together in a new way that combined New York's pragmatism with New York's imperial ambitions. And, in every case, a strong dose of New York's theatrical flamboyance.

New York is not, however, a city made up primarily of great buildings. It is a city of many, many wonderful buildings. But the whole is always more than the sum of the parts. Because the context, grid, the street pattern, the nature of the streets and the power of the vernacular of each and every period always seems to hold sway and to mean more than the buildings themselves at least for all but the very greatest buildings. Another way to say this might be to say that the places in between always mean a lot in New York. And for me, this is one of the key definitions of an urbanism that works. Are you focused only on the destination? Or is there something to see along the way? Is the journey between point A and point B as interesting or nearly as interesting as where you were going? I don't mean to suggest that urbanism is as simple as this. But I almost do believe that it could be reduced to this. New York does not have particularly good public space save for the unquestionably great Central Park -- one of the truly great urbanistic achievements of any city in the world and one of the only things 19th century New York did that was a model for all that followed that truly changed the way we see things. Central Park was not only an artistic masterpiece but a social one. A tightly organized mix of different kinds of landscape experiences intended to further the democratic ideal by encouraging the mix of different social classes who generally lived in isolation from each other. It was not only far seeing, it was radical. And Frederick Law Olmstead who with Calvert Vaux is truly one of the great heroes of American history. The only thing in New York (or at least 19th century New York) to equal it in terms of making us see the world in a different way was the Brooklyn Bridge -- John Augustus Roebling's triumph of engineering, architecture and civic symbolism and also in its way a great public space as you know if you have ever walked across it. And, if you have not, do so.

But I'm getting away from my point which is that New York is not a city of conventional public space. There are few squares, for example. This no Savannah. It isn't Paris either. There are few great vistas to important buildings. It is not easy to see Grand Central from afar and only the back of the Public Library facing Bryant Park has any kind of space around it. Columbus Circle is a mess. Of most of the more recent plazas done through zoning bonuses, the less said the better. Until recently we ignored our waterfront, but for a couple of tiny exceptions like the Promenades on Carlsheards Park and the one in Brooklyn Heights overlooking lower Manhattan. We have begun to change that finally. The waterfront promenade at Battery Park City itself an

important event in the history of New York urbanism is spectacular. Now, waterfront bicycle ways and promenades and piers have been opening up all along the Hudson soon to be connected as part of the Hudson River Park going from the Battery in lower Manhattan up to the George Washington Bridge and beyond.

I'll get back to that in a couple of minutes since I'd like to say a word about Battery Park City. But for now, what I'm trying to say is that even these splendid new waterfront amenities are not the central thing in New York urbanism. It is the street. It is almost all about the street. Louis Kahn once said in his gloriously poetic, cryptic way: "the street is a room by agreement." And that is so. The street is the real New York room -- the one we've made by agreement of architects and planners and people who occupy buildings and people who walk past them and never go in. All of them share this agreement -- the social contract that the street is.

Louis Mumford, my great predecessor at *The New Yorker* had a somewhat timid view of the city since he seemed to fear crowds and congestion a little more than necessary and I think deep down really preferred the rational order of the garden city more than the difficult, complex and impossible to control metropolis. But if we can put that aside for a moment, let me quote a couple of wonderful things Mumford wrote that are relevant here. In talking about the gridiron plan in the culture of cities, he observed that the principal effect of the gridiron plan is that (and I quote): "Every street becomes a thoroughfare and every thoroughfare potentially a commercial street. The tendency towards movement in such city vastly outweighs the tendency towards settlement." Movement, of course, is essential to New York. The street is a place, yet it is not a place of tranquility or leisure. We can saunter or we can rush, but we do not stand and stop in the public space of New York. It isn't in the DNA of this kind of public space because the street is central to the idea of public space in New York, and this becomes an essential aspect of the nature of the city. Yet the street is also a place of desire -- of the sensual joys of the buildings themselves, of the material pleasures of what can be seen in the windows and of the allure of the people we see. Movement and desire combine. Perhaps that is the special nature of the street and those of its aspects surely reach their apotheosis in this country on the streets of Manhattan. They are not always the grandest streets, and they are surely not the widest or the most interestingly shaped. But they are the most coherent or the most (if I may say so) urbanistic ones in this country -- the ones that possess the deepest and most intense qualities of streetness and which contribute the most to the overall identity of their city. Whatever Boston is, we do not think of it primarily in terms of its streets. The same can truly said of Washington and Dallas and most other cities in this country which we tend to think of more in terms of destinations or specific places or perhaps overall ambience than streets and places in between.

Louis Mumford also, by the way, offered an exquisite definition of what the city at its best can mean. Maybe the most eloquent explanation of how the city can function as a common

place, how it can be common ground and as such support and stimulate us. He wrote (I quote) that “now the great function of the city is to permit, indeed to encourage and incite the greatest possible number of meetings, encounters, challenges between all persons, classes and groups providing as it were a stage upon which the drama of social life may be enacted with the actors taking their turns as spectators and spectators as actors.” It’s worth noting that Mumford spoke of the city not only in terms of meetings and encounters, but that he used the word “challenges.” But, he knew that the city is difficult and did not attempt to pretend otherwise. He knew that in meeting challenge there is also a kind of satisfaction that can’t come from the easier routes and that the challenge the city represents can, at its best, be ennobling.

I want to say quickly before we close a couple of other things about the urbanism of New York and how it has changed and how much of it can and should continue to change. This has never, of course, been a city of *laissez faire*. The grid itself is the first and most powerful piece of planning in New York. The city zoning laws which were the first in the nation are its second most powerful piece of planning. They began in 1916 in response to the Equitable Building, an immense mass on lower Broadway which blocks sunlight and led the city to assert its right to tell building owners what they might put on their sites. Eventually, these laws, the first code of their kind anywhere, expanded to the point where now they resemble less one of the codes of New Urbanism than say the Internal Revenue Code. And they are about as comprehensible. But that is another story -- the story of well intentioned codes becoming not too restrictive but simply too intricate to be workable.

But my point right now isn’t that. It’s to say that against the backdrop of the grid and the zoning laws, we have New York’s powerful economic and cultural pressures pushing harder and harder for more and more all the time and in the balance between these things, we have gotten the city of remarkable contained and sustained energy.

New York is at once the most planned and the least planned city. And maybe that’s a better way to say what I’m trying to say. Great urbanism has to allow for surprise and for change. Uniformity doesn’t make for a great streetscape or a great city. But, of course, neither does chaos. It is that difficult to define ineffable balance between the even and erratic. Between the smooth and the rough. Between the solid and the void. Between the light and the dark. Between the deep and shallow. You cannot create this solely by code. And yet you cannot trust that it will happen by itself. The city of perfect order is a dead city. The city of *laissez faire* is a horrible city and somewhere in between lies the magic of the real.

New York. Whatever else we can say about it, it is a city of the real. It is a city in which the magic of the real drives everything. Of course, it goes without saying that in New York sometimes we have been too seduced by the real. Too seduced by the idea of reality to pay enough attention to what we were doing and as a consequence we produced horrendous banality.

We have not managed much good vernacular architecture in New York although I think the 19th century Italianate brownstone is a pleasing and important exception to this. But even the tenements, while historically important, were not good places to live or beautiful presences on the street as so many of the facades in the Europe that housed wretched living places within were. We did better with apartment house design probably and many of the buildings of the 1920s and 30s and in fact Bob Stern's slide group showed the St. Remo the towered building of Central Park West of 1930. Of course, most post-war vernacular apartment construction -- the white brick boxes of the 60s was horrible. There is no question that in the 1950s and 60s there was almost no general recognition of the qualities that defined New York as a physical environment and no real appreciation of them. We built badly and we took a certain arrogant pride in believing that we were building better than what we had done before even as we trampled it.

The failings of modernism were felt here as much as anywhere. We ignored the streets that had been our life's blood. Now, of course, nearly 40 years later, we have a different set of questions and challenges. The modernist anti-urbanism is now largely a part of the past here. We've built Battery Park City where streets and traditionally massed buildings and public squares are a conscious attempt to reject modernist anti-urbanism and return to urbanistic values within the city core. We don't tear down our landmarks as we once did. Indeed, we're so inclined to preservation in New York now that there is even agitation to save many of the worst relics of the 50s and 60s as historical artifacts and examples of a period that people like me grew up hating but younger people occasionally find pleasing. You are supposed to like everything now to want to save it which is appealing on the one hand and rather terrifying on another. It's true that we can get used to almost any kind of architecture. We have to since we see it every day and it would be too painful to go through life if the things in our field of vision were like a knife being cut through us. And yet, there is something wrong if we've stopped being judgmental about anything. I think there's a great difference between learning to tolerate the World Trade Center because it's simply too much trouble to waste that much energy hating it all the time and starting to believe that it's actually good.

We're in a time when preservation has now become so much a part of the culture that the inevitable reaction to it has set in. The charge that preservationists have turned the city into a theme park is one that I'm sure all of you have heard. While there are doubtless cases in which excessive preservationist zeal has denied us examples of the new that we might benefit from -- and I do find the extent to which we fall back in the protective blanket of historicism which once did so much to rescue us from the coldness and cruelty of the modernist world -- now does seem rather too much. But the reason it's too much is that modernism at its best has actually learned the lessons of urbanism. The modern buildings we build today in New York and elsewhere respond to the street. They don't ignore it. They respond to context and they teach us a lesson

absolutely essential that you don't have to imitate context to be responsive to it. There are lots of ways to fit in and looking identical isn't the only one.

These are lessons that were once understood in New York. Like the basic rules of urbanism, they seemed to come naturally in the 19th century and for some of the 20th. They didn't require zoning or codes or rules or even for that matter conferences. If you look at the great streets of New York, they had a coherence and they were not boring. Their buildings did not have excessive similarity, but they did not look like they were put there to defy each other either. On Central Park West or 5th Avenue or Riverside Drive, the whole was more than the sum of the parts. But the parts were pretty good and pretty civilized in their way and they did not want for individual identity. There was a magnificent mix of the planned and the accidental. To repeat a point that I made before in another way, a mix of the planned and the accidental is so vital to a great city and of course you can't completely plan that. And you can't leave it to accident either. Such is the paradox of city building. It isn't all planning and it isn't all accident. And those who think it is either one of those things are doomed to failure.

If I sum up the lessons New York offers in terms of urbanism, I think they would be: first, that the street means more than the building for the street is the most important part of the public realm even more than the greatest of parks and squares. Second, that architecture is always a balance of the sensual and the intellectual and the functional. And that it ought to bring joy as well as serenity. Third, that context is a complicated business and has much more to do with scale and with respect for the streets than with style and materials. Contextualism is not the same as imitation. And finally, this would be at the top of the lesson from New York: urbanism is knowing that planning can do only so much. That architecture can do only so much and understanding the wisdom that sometimes the best planning is to allow for circumstances that develop and change on their own and that allow for surprise and serendipity. The city is not just a marketplace and it is not just a living place and not just a cultural center or a workplace. It is all of these things, but it performs its function and common ground for us all best by being, as Mumford told us, a stage. A place in which all of us function at once in public and in private. A stage on which the spectators take their turns as actors and the actors as spectators. Thank you.

Moderator:

Today's Berlin embodies many of the principles of the Charter for the New Urbanism from its metropolitan vision of open space and transportation to its street and building details. Those of you who have been there have probably marveled at the system of enormous and continuous parks that wind their way through the city as well as the detail of the sidewalk/bicycle lanes into which no pedestrian ever dares step.

In the early 1920s, the height of beautiful city building in the U.S., a German named Hegemann published a book which continues to exert an influence on urban design in this country today. Many of you know it. American Vitruvius: Civic Art. While North American suburban excesses continue exerting their influence globally, Berlin represents a bulwark of city preservation, restoration and enhancement. It is a great pleasure today to welcome the man who has led this city's effort for many years to rebuild itself as a modern city which builds on and celebrates its history. Please help me welcome Dr. Hans Stimmann, the Director of Planning for the State and City of Berlin.

Dr. Hans Stimmann:

[Summary]

For some years Berlin has been hearing the message of New Urbanism. But in Germany, New Urbanism has many times been associated with projects such as Celebration, the Disney model town, in Florida. As a result, New Urbanism has often been characterized as advocating neo-traditionalist, post-modern architecture influenced by architects such as Charles Moore, Robert Venturi, Dennis Scott Brown, Michael Graves, Aldo Rossi and Robert Stern.

Recently that opinion has changed due to the wide range of articles that have appeared in German architectural journals including those of Harold Bodenschatz. New Urbanism is now seen to combine the elements of mixed use, social mix and architectural variety. Town planning seeks to return to traditional city plans, promote local transportation and reduce automobile traffic. This is similar to what has recently been done in Berlin under the motto -- "back to the European city."

Berlin is an Eastern European city located 60 kilometers from Poland. It is a city with a dense inner core and no suburban sprawl because the wall controlled its growth. In fact, green spaces extend from Berlin to Moscow. The city center originates from the 13th century with baroque influences from the 17th century. In the 1920s Berlin's traditional city center included churches, the Stadt Schloss and museum island, including Schinkel's world famous museum. Most of the architectural experiments taking place today involve this historical city center: Potsdammer Platz, Strasse Under den Linden and the Reichstag. In 1940 Berlin was still a dense city -- a banking and insurance center -- with no motor ways and few parking places.

Fifty percent of the city was destroyed in World War II, but in some ways the city still existed even after this destruction. The buildings were gone, but the streets, power, sewer, metro lines and privately owned housing remained intact. So, it would have been possible to reconstruct the city center after the war, but the city planners had other ideas.

Berlin has been totally demolished and rebuilt since the war. While the war destroyed half of the city, 90% of the remaining city was destroyed by planned demolition between 1953 and

1989. Planned demolition was seen as a vehicle of social and political progress. Architects and planners in both East and West experienced a hatred of the past and a belief in progress. After the end of the Nazi regime, there was a desire to get rid of the political buildings associated with National Socialism, to replace private housing with social housing and to superimpose freeways over the medieval city. (West Berlin's sister city is Los Angeles.) As a divided city, East and West Berlin competed in terms of town planning and architecture after the war. What this competition had in common was extensive demolition of the city, both East and West. The list of the buildings destroyed after the war is endless. The Stadt Schloss was destroyed in 1950. Many large railway stations were torn down, and the Romanisches Kafe was destroyed in the 1940s. The Petrich Kirche was demolished in 1960 to make way for a high-rise building. City planners destroyed the city grid, and the line of the city was destroyed by the wall. Demolition occurred for other reasons as well: to create highways through the city, transform private small ownership housing to large public projects and to fill the city with freestanding objects. Thus, Berlin lost many historical buildings, and by the time of reunification the city had lost a large portion of its memory.

After the war, both East and West Berlin engaged in an excessive use of many types of architectural planning, programs and experiments. Some of these programs were failures. (Now, people who can afford to prefer to live in sections of the city built before 1920.) But after reunification in 1989, Berlin undertook a policy called critical reconstruction. Critical reconstruction of the city center involves using historical buildings as a resource, preserving and reconstructing a city ground plan with streets and squares. It also intends to reduce the multiple lane inner city motor ways that had been erected after the war to make the city more automobile friendly. Berlin did not need a fundamentally new design plan. Critical reconstruction has been returning Berlin to its historical roots. Berlin has returned to urban planning structures of the past and has been experimenting with squares, streets and buildings. A dialog has arisen between restoring the old and creating the new. Today's plan is a contemporary interpretation of a model of old urbanism of the old European city.

After the wall came down, the city plan was taken from the 1930s. Since Berlin was a poor city, the city garnered the support of international investors. The Inner City Plan of the 1990s has tried to realize a critical reconstruction of the city grid. Architects from all over the world including Rossi and Pei have contributed to the architecture of Berlin. (Critical reconstruction does not necessarily mean traditional architecture.) Images have come from all over Europe, and many of the contributing architects are very young. The Inner City Plan prescribes mixed use, maximum height of buildings and roof lines. But the Plan does not prescribe architecture. Every one is free to experiment architecturally. So, most of the debate in Berlin concerns architecture, not structure.

The elements of the Plan have also been taken to the suburbs to create a new type of suburb.

[Transcription Continued]

Moderator:

Thank you, Dr. Stimmann. I guess you can see there was a self-serving reason to invite Dr. Stimmann to talk about Berlin. We have a few minutes for questions, and I have received a number of cards and will continue to do so. I would like to begin with a question for Dr. Stimmann following up on your description of the freedom of the architect to design. You obviously have urban design controls which require building to the sidewalk to reinforce the street space. Can you just tell us a little bit about the regulations? What you do regulate or what do require the buildings to do.

Dr. Hans Stimmann:

In general we don't control the architecture. It is very often said that we do that, but we don't control the architecture. There's only one area we did that -- that was the Pariser Platz, where we set up sort of guidelines for the architecture surrounding Pariser Platz. It became very famous because Frank Geary was one of the architects, and he said we brought him in the prison because we controlled not only the guidelines but also the architecture. That's true. We brought him in the prison in a way that it is not a typical Geary building. You can't identify it from one kilometer. So, you have to go to the building and then you see it's a Geary building. But it's controlled building, so it's an urban building. Now, the rest of Berlin is in architectural terms is free. Everybody could do what he wants. But what we tried to do is control the urban guidelines. So, nobody is allowed to -- we control the height of the buildings. We control the mixture of the buildings. And we say everybody has to build along the street line. So, that makes a problem for the architects. When you go to architects, they were trained in building objects, as I said. So, as an object you have four façades. When you have to build along the street line, you have only one façade. And when you have to design a building with one façade, it's very, very hard job because all of what you have to say on this building you have to say in one façade. So, nobody was trained to do this. So, this was the basis of the Berlin architectural debate. But again, we only control (as bureaucrats) the urban things and not the architectural expressions.

Moderator:

So, it's height and street lines.

Dr. Hans Stimmann:

Street lines. Maximum height, roof lines. And mixture of using.

Moderator:

Thank you. For Paul Goldberger, there are a number of questions about building style. And I'll just read some of them. So, you might respond to them together. You spoke about the need for buildings to be -- well, they're referring to my speaking about the need for buildings to be interesting and beautiful. But often, what architects find interesting, the rest of the people do not find to be so. I suppose this would be a good question to comment on the difference in the perception, Paul, and maybe it's the high culture, everyday culture question, but the gap between architectural ambition and let's say nonarchitectural perceptions.

Paul Goldberger:

A simple question easily answered. It's a fascinating question because it does get to the heart of the extent to which architects are in sync with broader popular taste or not. One of the things I was saying implicitly, of course, and that everyone in this room knows is that there was a time when high architecture was much more naturally in sync with popular taste, and I think certainly until the modern period that was the case. I think, however, it's a great mistake to assume that modernism is in and of itself not popular or that a sort of architecture is in and of itself not popular and violative of public taste. It's very important if we come back to New York for a moment to remember that in the 50s the Guggenheim Museum was considered wildly radical, but was always a popular curiosity in a certain way. And it remains now not so radical and even more of a wildly respected thing. Not as a model for other things, but just as a thing unto itself. I think we're seeing the same phenomenon exist now with Frank Geary's building and Bilbao which has been astonishingly accepted by a broad range of the public, not simply by a sort of academic or intellectually or sort of a salon architecture community. And I find that a very interesting phenomenon. I hope it does not mean that it will be mistakenly misunderstood as a model for other things. It's not. Or at least we're in trouble if it is. However, if the fondness for it is really representing an unspoken desire on the part of the public for buildings that are more sensual that gives them a kind of emotional connection of a sort that Lizz was actually referring to, then it's all to the good if that desire for an emotional connection to architecture will play itself out elsewhere.

Having actually mentioned Frank Geary, I want to say one thing that's very important returning to what Dr. Stimmann said. The attempt in the regulations in Berlin at Pariser Platz to rein in Geary was widely denounced by a number of people, and I must say I was somewhat skeptical of it at the beginning. It has actually yielded what I think is one of his most brilliant and important buildings. So, there is a case in which a very strong urban planner and a very strong architect clashed and yet the result has in fact been something that has been the better for everybody. He produced a façade that does meet the regulations and respect Pariser Platz and

then he turned all of his sort of mad forms inward into an atrium and it became an inversion of his other work. And, therefore, in fact, became far more interesting and set him in a whole new direction. So, in fact, in the end everybody came out ahead with that particular thing, I believe.

Moderator:

Thank you, Paul. We have only a few minutes left. Several questions for Dr. Stimmann. How do you control the mix of uses in the plan?

Dr. Hans Stimmann:

By law.

Moderator:

That would lead us to believe there are specific places for specific uses.

Dr. Hans Stimmann:

In general, our guideline is that in every place should be mixed use. But we have different areas in the city center so the majority of the uses are offices and hotels. But, in every [district] should be situated 20% housing. So, the main guidelines....

Moderator:

It's a thoroughly mixed use guideline. There is also the question whether the plan is documented in a book or a website. And I should add that Dr. Stimmann did bring copies of the map he showed and the copies are out in the foyer for you to pick up. But, is there a website or a book?

Dr. Hans Stimmann:

It is. We have a lot of books, but I haven't got it with me. But, if it's necessary, I'll give a list from our.... The inner city plan is on the website.

Moderator:

And finally, to what extent were the community, residents and property owners in the city involved in the planning process?

Dr. Hans Stimmann:

Berlin is a place of permanent debate on architecture and urban design problems. So it is a festival of these things. On the other hand, it is given from the law that the public should be integrated in these sort of debates. So we debated this inner city urban plan more than four years with hundreds of sessions of committees, articles, so it's very close to the public debate.

Moderator:

So, there's a lot of public participation in various ways from meetings to...

Dr. Hans Stimmann:

Meetings, yeah.

Moderator:

Thank you. And finally perhaps we could end with a question for both of you. In your cities, what is the most important current architectural controversy occurring in New York and then Berlin? What should we look for?

Paul Goldberger:

Maybe it would be more interesting if I responded about Berlin and Dr. Stimmann responded about New York. Although I'm familiar with Berlin, I'm not familiar with the very latest events and controversies. You know, it's interesting. New York is always so full of so many issues. The debate over the public realm in a sense is the public realm. Thus it has always been. My sense right now is that our greatest problems in New York are ones that are in fact not even being discussed which is housing and the desperate need for more housing of an affordable sort. The things that are on the surface in New York right now strike me as really not very interesting because the dialectic of ideas in the public realm is working them out anyway which is I think the utterly false debate over whether preservation has become too powerful a force and whether we're building too much traditional architecture and not enough more radical new architecture. We've never really (as I said earlier) built all that much radical new architecture. It is somehow in the nature of New York to be this strange mix of the conservative and theatrical, and we continue to be. I find that a false issue. New Urbanism is in a way, as I was saying, New York's traditional urbanism anyway. And the fear that it is too powerful right now in New York is a false one. So, I would say (for me at least) the great issue right now here is housing and our failure even to have it on the table right now.

Moderator:

Thank you. Dr. Stimmann?

Dr. Hans Stimmann:

As you know, Berlin was a city in the last century -- the city of public owned, social housing. So the whole modern architectural movement was connected with this idea of socialist or social housing building. This movement stopped. So, actually, the architects are searching for new answers for private financed buildings. It sounds very crazy, but it is a very old question, but we don't have answers for this question. So, the architects are at the zero point for this question.

Moderator:

How to pay for buildings.

Paul Goldberger:

That makes it actually the same problem we face in New York. We've stopped building publicly assisted housing too.

Dr. Hans Stimmann:

It's not a traditional architecture problem in terms of façade. It's a problem of the typology of the buildings and how to finance the image of the buildings -- at least has to do with the façade, but it's not the first level the façade problem but the type problem. We are at the beginning and we learn a lot of things from New York. I saw yesterday a lot of very wonderful buildings that would be good for Berlin.

Moderator:

So, if we were to continue this discussion, it would probably focus on housing for awhile.