MITOCW | 19. Form Models I: Modern and Post-modern Urbanism

JULIAN BEINART: We start the last section. We have about-- there's about a month left. And I want to try to deal with as much of the current understanding of urbanism as we can squeeze into it.

My focus will be very much on architecture and urbanism and not much on urban economics or urban social policy. This class is really about the former cities, and we have to-- I will be relying for today's class on a number of people's writing.

But if you want, in the required reading, there's a piece from Eric Mumford's book. I don't know if you know or ran into the book at all. The CIAM discourse on urbanism 1928 to 1960, it's an excellent book.

Eric Mumford, I think, did his PHD here and teachers in St. Louis at Washington University. For those who don't know what CIAM stands for, it was the assembly of modern architects starting in [? Lazzaro's ?] in 1928 and meeting regularly until they disbanded in 1960.

A great deal of information comes from the attitudes of these people towards modernism, and I will quote from a number of them. My own connection is that I studied history at [? Gearheart ?] Harvard and the Giedeon-- Sigfried Gideon, who wrote *Space, Time and Architecture*-- probably the most important book of modern architecture-- and was a key figure with Corbusier and [INAUDIBLE] to become dean at Harvard in CIAM.

Whatever [? happened ?] to just a fragment of some of the topics. My ambition today is to give you some idea of the content of modernism. So I've broken it down into 10 categories, or 10 thematic ideas, which are part of modern urbanism, or were set forth as ideas which were important to urbanism.

The second page deals with the response to [INAUDIBLE] plan in Barcelona by modern urbanism. The third page is a page of drawing by Gropius characterizing how you delimit the space between buildings by virtue of light, or the presence of light.

How it didn't strike Gropius that, in Manhattan, nobody cares about which direction your building faces? I suppose, if you have a lot of money, you can choose a building that faces south or your view faces south as you can choose the building which faces onto Central Park or whatever.

But that's an option for very few people. I don't know people in Manhattan talking about light. Now what is the-- how is this diagram of any use to anybody?

AUDIENCE: Well, I mean, it is-- I know people in Manhattan that talk about. Like, people still [? renting ?] private apartments there are curious about the light it gets.

JULIAN BEINART: Good.

AUDIENCE: Yeah. And I guess if you're thinking more about rather than design of building but design of streets, you know, this diagram could be useful then.

JULIAN BEINART: Yes. Gropius didn't know that, in the early town planning legislation of Manhattan, light to the streets was always taken into account. The fact is a good thesis done by a British women a few years ago looking at that phenomenon that sidewalks were always important in the judgment of rules about tall buildings in Manhattan unlike Tokyo.

Tokyo, it's very seldom that you find overwhelming density on any of the major streets in Manhattan. Part of my theory is that a grid system articulates people in different ways than linear systems do.

And there's not only one main street in Manhattan. It prevails as a grid system, but it's not true in Tokyo where densities on street level are so overwhelming that you can't walk in the opposite direction to traffic at 6 o'clock in the evening particularly trying to get your subway station.

This is city stuff. But Gropius was a strange man. He came to speak in our class at Harvard in Gideon's class. Let me just finish going through this. The next page is something that we'll go through a little carefully together.

It's David Harvey's contrast between modernity and postmodernity. I don't agree with the term postmodern. Postmodern really applies to the styling of architecture and literature. And mostly it doesn't have much counterpart in urbanism.

The next page is one of the [? existing ?] minimum systems that CIAM were very preoccupied with that was trying to deduce the minimum amount of space for family along with the notion that minima would contribute to the problem of size-- not size of unit but size of population.

The next page is a summary of 1930 versus 1950 in CIAM discussion. I'll go through that with you as well. What is extraordinary about Gideon's class at Harvard was the absence of what we've been spending all our time on dealing with the origins of modernism from 1750 onward.

There was no notion that there had been changes in demography. You'll recall my quoting the British historian, [? Llewellyn ?] in saying that modernism starts with the increase in the life expectancy of old people and the decrease in infant mortality.

People like Malthus along the way-- these are fundamental aspect of urbanism in my mind. Gideon was only interested in two-- first of all, he hated the 19th century because it didn't produce any architecture of significance.

Gideon would fly in from Switzerland to give our lectures. And he'd say on Sunday afternoon he walked around Boston and looked at the terrible neoclassical furniture in the windows of the department stores. He couldn't understand why modern furniture wasn't available in Boston.

Of course it was available, but it wasn't particularly popular. But instead of talking about his-- for Gideon, modernism in architecture had two important 19th century ancestries. One was in the adventure of painting-- the fact that painting in impressionism took account of lack of light-- according to him, took account of the lack of light in the industrial city and through pointillism and through opening up the canvas to light, a preoccupation that Corbusier also with his [INAUDIBLE] therapeutic interests emphasized.

The second one was the advent of modern engineers. Gideon spoke endlessly about [? Myer's ?] building bridges in Switzerland. And there were two themes to modernism which architecture had bypassed in the 19th century.

Later on, the history of London, or Paris, or Haussmann, or [? Engels ?] in Manchester of the growth of population because the taking over by the state of many of the social functions of the church that the advent of social housing by the state for the first time in history and so on and so on and so on.

It was just a blank. And much of urbanism in architecture has followed that style of rhetoric that you skip from the 18th century to the 21st century. Whereas my argument, I hope I've convinced you that the 19th century as significant in our understanding a number of issues.

That is still relevant. Anyway, what I'd like to do is just go through these 10 items and make some comments on each and quote from sources. The first is the scientific origin. There was a sense that science was emerging in a way which could not only play a role in individual design decision but provide a collective understanding, which art perhaps didn't have.

For instance, many architects of the time adopted Venetian nurturing of an elite community of artists who would discover spiritual truth in the uniting of art and science and then reveal the truth to the rest of mankind.

So it's both art and science that are necessary for an elite group of thinkers to come to a conclusion. Man brings into place unlimited power for the calculating, planning, and melding of all things. Science says research is an absolutely necessary form of this establishing of self in the world.

It is one of the pathways upon which the modern age reaches toward fulfillment of its essence. The [INAUDIBLE] scientific study of space. Corbusier writes in the CIAM conference in Frankfurt in 1929.

He writes about the [? minima ?] house problem in his book. The talks stretched the biological nature of dwelling, the poverty and the insufficiency of traditional technique, the need for standardization, industrialization, and tailorization-- a phenomenon with modern architectural science [INAUDIBLE] the exact.

It's curious that this notion of science really was in contrast to what science was dealing with-- uncertainty, relativity, stochastic ideas, indeterminacy-- at a time when these people were trying to use science as an ally in making formal decisions about urbanism.

In Germany-- I mentioned their names before-- the great theorist, Baumeister 1833 to 1917, his book in 1876 credited with orienting city building around traffic problems. Traffic engineering, or the system of movement, would be seen as a scientific measure whereas today we are interested in relativistic relationships between public transportation and private transportation.

In this discourse of modernism, public transportation doesn't appear to have been a phenomenon worth taking into account. [? Stuben, ?] the traffic systems and direction flow form the basis for the construction of cities.

Germany played a role in the development of public health-- also in the origins of zoning. Learning was a necessary device to maintain some sense of order and to protect the general public in a period of uncontrolled growth and [? on ?] [? bridge ?] [? learned ?] speculation.

Well, that sounds very German. But this notion that science could be an ally was very deeply rooted in the idea of the scientific study of space. The second was the breaking up of life into categories.

CIAM 4 in Athens published the charter of Athens, which became the subject of much debate. I quote, "The keys to urbanism were, number one, a place to work, a place for recreation, and the circulation system."

A place to live, a place to work, a place for recreation-- and the circulation system linking all three. Today, the relationship between these is not categorical. Even at the time, Lewis Mumford responded to this Athens Charter.

He was asked by Jose Luis Sert to be a then-- he later became dean at the GSD at Harvard. To write a foreword to Sert's book, *Can Our Cities Survive? Can Our Cities Survive* is about as perfect a document of modern urbanism that exists.

And if you're interested in the subject, you should look at it. Mumford replied-- wrote a letter to Sert. "The four functions of the city do not seem to me to adequately cover the ground of city planning. Dwelling, work, recreation, and transportation are all important.

But what of the political education and cultural function of the city? What of the part played by the disposition plan of the buildings concerned with these functions in the whole evolution of the city design? The organs of political and cultural [INAUDIBLE] are from my standpoint the distinguishing marks of the city.

Without them, there is only an urban mass. I regard their mission as I find their mission as almost inexplicable. Unless some attention is paid to this, I have to decline writing the foreword." The third is the modern spirit.

Modernism was associated with a different way of thinking about the world. It was not linked to anything before it. Gropius didn't teach history at Harvard when he was dean. No advocacy of the dynamic role of what exists and what is to be modern, but most of all the zeitgeist, the essential quality of being modern, was what became culturally associated with architecture and urbanism although much more with architecture.

The idea that buildings made of mechanical material painted white or white in intrinsic systems [? three ?] [? years ?] [? Lewis ?] [INAUDIBLE] postulated free of declaration was a system of expression that required an anti-historical and a zeitgeist phenomenon.

This proposed schismatic distinction between the past and the present was we've now learned to accept a diachronic view of the relationship between the past and the present. But at that time, there was a notion that, in many of the protagonists, modernism was a shared phenomenon, which it was.

It was shared with other cultural forms, but other cultural forms didn't have the obligation to deal as CIAM in 1928 at its first conference spoke about urbanism. It was possible in Vienna for Brahms to die in 1894 somewhere around there.

But for revolution, modern revolution, to take place, which included Mahler's [? Schoenberg ?] and a number of people. But he went in modernism and didn't have much continuity. The Boston Symphony orchestra still plays, perplexedly to me, music which was written in the late 18th century and early 19th century in the mid 19th century.

Modern music has not persisted for reasons which are not that associated with urbanism. But modern literature has had a much more successful penetration. As for the advent of new forms of cultural expression-- the film, for instance, television, and so on-- these are postmodern.

I mean, in 1928, there were fewer cars in Europe than they were in Los Angeles per capita. I'm sure. I haven't checked my figures, but I think it's around about true. So the notion that modernism was a permanent exercise and added dogma associated with its presence gave the sense that to be modern was a unique time and one that was endless.

Or if it wasn't endless, you didn't care that it wasn't. Space-time was selected out of the spirit of time and not related backwards nor forwards. The idea of change was not a significant function of modernism.

We'll go into some of these changes. Let me get through this more quickly. There was much more belief in believing that the world could be made differently, or not be made differently but behave differently.

The notion of constant improvement, the utopia of European social democracy, the polities of equity, the Russians, the extraordinary that in 1924, El Lissitzky, the Russian painter and constructivist [? Aaskov ?] [INAUDIBLE] to join him to form an international European organization of modern architecture.

Corbusier didn't agree. But in 1928, [INAUDIBLE] was organized by [INAUDIBLE] Hannes Meyer, and Hans Schmidt-- three Swiss socialists. Hannes Mayer became the head of the Bauhaus for a short period of time. But there were three socialists.

And the first declaration at [INAUDIBLE] was very much in a kind of interest in urbanism of a kind. Let me just-- [? Lazaro's. ?] This is a statement from that meeting. "Urbanism is the organization of all the functions of collective life."

Collective life? Why collective life? "It extends over both urban agglomerations and over the countryside." God. This sounds like Los Angeles. 1928. "Urbanization cannot be conditioned by the pretensions of a preexisted aestheticism."

Forget about history. "Its essence is of a functional order." the third point under urbanism insisted the chaotic division of land resulting in sales, speculations, inheritance must be abolished by the collective and methodical land economy.

So throughout CIAM's musing for 40 to 52-- no. 40 to '28 to '60 is only 32. 32 years it wrestled with this business of what its political identity or its attitudes towards politics should be. We'll touch on this again in a bit.

The technological imperative-- making things as if they look as if they're made by machine. Standardization. Corbusier says, "I propose one single building for all nations and climates." Prefabrication.

Buckminster Fuller's envelopes-- automobile. It's interesting the influence of Henry Ford in this debate. Henry Ford in 1933, or in 1930 somewhere, tried to buy from Congress the first dam that later became the Tennessee Valley Authority in Muscle Shoals in Alabama.

He advocated a linear city of 75 kilometers-- 75 miles perhaps. I don't recall-- based upon a machine like image of a conveyor belt system, which he developed in Detroit, coupled with an agricultural component, so people who worked in the industry could at the same time be associated with agriculture.

He's architect of a [? kind-- ?] took part in over 300 projects in Russia. Henry Ford was revered as a god of industrialization together with FW Taylor of the Harvard Business School. Modern efficiency. These were fundamental claims for the organization of a city.

Henry Ford was fascinated by the linear adventures of [? Captain ?] [? Chambers. ?] You will not remember that I showed you the image of his plan to link New York and Baltimore. I think it's New York and Baltimore with a linear ongoing structure.

AUDIENCE: Baltimore in DC?

JULIAN BEINART: Was it Baltimore in DC? Yeah. Not New York. Yeah. So it was the Russians and Henry Ford were fascinated by this new way of processing industrial material. The open-ended CIAM took this as instructions for thinking about modern urbanism.

It's an extraordinary time. And the capitalism of Henry Ford could be associated with the communism, the emerging communism, or Soviet Russia. And all of the conflicts which emerged in that situation were never taken as important expressions-- important themes in the construction of cities.

Henry Ford was an anti-Semite. Albert Kahn was a Jew. Henry Ford believed that the American worker should have access to nature as the same time as being part of an industrial system. Nature was never a preoccupation of CIAM at all.

It never appears in the debate. Nature was taken for granted. It's curious that nature only appears in the urban dialogue either through the work of great landscape architects like Olmsted in this country but only through a late recognition of nature as being multilayered as having ecological consequences.

If you look at the-- as I said before-- history of the Tennessee Valley Authority, first of all, Roosevelt is rejected by the Southern urbanist, the Southern Agrarian Community, because he doesn't understand their way of living.

Roosevelt's modernism is based on a mixture of water, green, and rebuilding, and resuscitation. The Tennessee Valley Authority runs out of [? endured ?] electorate-- by virtue of its success, runs out of the capacity of its water supply to provide enough electricity for industry, so it switches to coal.

Coal is a ruthless energy system. It is the largest ecological disaster in the United States. Coal strip mining is slowly prohibited. The snail darter controversy set in motion the whole opening up of the American interest in rare species and in the preservation of nature.

The atomic bomb is conceived of and manufactured. At least one is manufactured in the Tennessee Valley Authority. That's another anti-natural phenomenon. So the conflict between nature as it emerges from about 1930 onward to 2020, the time that we are now in, indicates the absence of the negative consequences of denying nature a certain kind of presence.

Roosevelt was very interesting in that regard. His people, like his advisors like Martin, Lewis Mumford, and Benton MacKaye stressed the reconstruction of nature in the state of great poverty and setbacks and destruction of nature.

But the conception of nature as having more ecological consequences remained late. Number five, universalisation of modernity. When asked to remember that the notion that the world could be one system was much more powerful at a time when CIAM was in its infancy.

You remember that Woodrow Wilson in 1919 went to the peace conference in Paris and was greeted by the largest crowds in the history of Paris still even larger than any event today. So hungry was the world for the most brutal-- after the most brutal war in probably in modern times, the 14-18 war, that the notion of a league of nations, agnosticism, Esperanto, a universal language.

The problem of universal identity and culture-- the internationalization of style, politics, religion, language. Central to the idea of modernism at that time was if there was a formula which was correct, you remember Corbusier talking about his Algiers plan as denouncing the public for not accepting what he thought was correct.

But when a plan is correct, an item is correct, it must have universal significance. This is before the internet, before many of the avenues of internationalism that we now have. And yet, if anything, the opposite is true.

Local identity is revered more strongly today than-- how could there not be? There wasn't. CIAM never spoke about poverty. It spoke about the poor condition of housing but never examined the issue of resource distribution in the world.

It took from 1950, which was virtually the end of CIAM, for the first book to appear on the third world city-- Charlie Abrams's book, *Man's Struggle for Shelter in an Urbanizing World* using a notion of universalism which was very parallel to the conditions that were operating in Europe and America.

The new client-- number six. The new corporations. Corbusier referred to a parallel between governments and corporations. His position, like Henry Ford, held that because the code of mass production was natural.

What is natural about mass production? It could be and was, of course, applied under any political regime. Hence, for Corbusier, it was above politics. You will recall that I claimed that Corbusier in his various plans associated him with different but often highly conflicted political systems even to the extent of asking Mussolini for help in order to get his Algiers plan put into place.

This was a world in which public authorities were developing their own strength-- new kinds of ideas of bylaws, codes, standards. The same time that these were being developed, the modern urbanists had a few other [? contradicted ?] ideas to whether-- many of them were influenced by what was happening in Russia and believed that the universality of the state was a modern phenomenon which would detect for the first time the quote natural law of distinction between poor and rich.

Marx talks about the lack of a natural law, which suggests that some people should have resources and others not. There was an ambiguity about the role of the state. Corbusier made no bones about appealing to Mussolini as head of a fascist state.

He made no bones about in his appeals to Moscow when invited to do a revised plan in Moscow to the politics of the situation as Henry Ford built forts and tractors in Russia, built Ford automobile structures in Russia, and had no notion that the politics of Russia was inimical to his own political positions.

The finite program, the fundamental proposition about the master plan which was a picture with no change, no adjustment. The fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture.

The word picture or build now means the structured image that is the creation of man's producing which man represents-- which represents and sets before. In such, producing man contains for the position which he can be that particularly [? yard ?] so on and so on and so on.

This is from Heidegger-- the notion that somehow the world is best conceived as a complete picture. Urbanism according to Camillo Sitte is a set of truncated visions and visual experiences of the world.

Modernism implies as a struggle with that image. There's a question as to whether that image is appropriate for modernism. [? After ?] Wagner claims, and so do the modern composers, that music is not noise, the world of urban experience, to be conditioned by limited structures but by continuity.

Music concrete is really not broken up into beginning into fours movement as the classical symphony is. These are Alban Berg's music and Schoenberg's music. There's much more of an attempt to use tonal structures which are not located in time according to precepts but are flowing and free and can be experienced with difficulty.

Jazz has gone through the same program-- Charlie Parker's great playing in the 1950s. I think he died. When did Parker die? Has the same classical quality which then gets lost with Cecil Taylor and others as free music becomes more possible.

For the earlier modernists, they were on the edge of this trying to understand this freedom but trying still to stick to control aspects of planning in the finite program. Number nine, the self-image of the architect. Oh heavens. This is a long story.

The sanctity of the creative object, the separation of high and popular realms, the value of silence and obscurity in art. Number 10, the spatial [? photo ?] [? cavity, ?] spatial isolation, separation of uses, automobiles and pedestrians.

I mean, when Christopher Alexander wrote the city is not a tree and argued that the city is much more like a ladder system, he was debunking a popular modern conception. Gropius goes on about, and CIAM as well, about the need for a core.

A core is a place where everybody comes together voluntarily. The single center of a city is conceived of as the only way in which that can happen. Gropius goes on and on about the core. CIAM, in one of its conferences, also goes on about the core.

Is a multicore city not feasible? Is Toronto or Los Angeles-- are they not modern cities? The recreation of the core implies a kind of clarity of form, the absence of multiplicity and conflict, the lack of diversity, the benignness of open space, the eradication of distinctions between public and private space.

This is what Corbusier says about the traditional street. A street is a roadway that is usually bordered by pavements narrow or wide as the case may be. The sky is a remote hub far, far above it. The street is no more than a change of deep cliff to narrow passage.

Our hearts are always oppressed by the constriction of its enclosing walls. The street weighs us out. And when all is said and done, we have to admit it disgusts us. Then why does it still exist? How do you explain the preoccupation with the street as one of the urbanistic slogans of cultural urbanism?

AUDIENCE: That kind of is the street is the main perception of urbanistic experience, because when you're not on the street, you're either in-- you know, when you're not in the street of a plaza, then you're in a private space.

JULIAN BEINART: I understand. But these people that we're talking about, all of these people sitting around these conferences, CIAM, weren't fooled. They were some of the smartest people of their time. They had adequate sensibility about the street.

Why does [INAUDIBLE], one of the sub-group working groups of CIAM, propose the abolition of the street in [? sardars ?] plan and the creation of the Corbusier [INAUDIBLE] system of an elevated highway 5 meters up in the sky and the flat plane of the city being a continuous green space with no distinction between private and public space?

It's a radical change. Corbusier wrote a lot of nonsense as well as being a great architect. So one must deny a lot of these words as rubbish. But it is remarkable that so many people could accept that modernism laid speed for automobiles, untrammelled conflict with automobile, the street as being an outmoded spatial item.

If you deny history, you must easily deny its artifacts as well. And its artifacts are cranky, difficult to negotiate, non-rectangular urban systems. It's difficult to understand, but this is where your heritage starts in modernism-- the complete appropriation of an industrial phenotype, the idea that the world could be made more equal, more efficient, more advanced through science if only it took up the same techniques that produced automobiles.

We live in a completely different time. That's why I go back to start with this dialogue about the advent of modern urbanism. My real estate friends say it's impossible to sell a modern house in Cambridge.

A modern house is rated way below a Victorian house which has decorative systems which are driven out of [? letters ?] [? from ?] the bin. Most interesting to me is the cataloging of culture.

So that we understand where we are, who could have predicted that the quaintness and reconservatism of the new urbanism would have such an incredible market in relation to these advents of modernism? It extends almost in opposition to every aspect of modern urbanism that I can imagine.

It's attempted historicism amongst others. OK. Let's leave Corbusier and this stuff for a moment. Umberto Eco is a very smart philosopher. He says, "I believe the city is a kind of organism which forms haggardly by itself and, at a certain point, acquires certain lines of tendencies.

The architect is the one who can interpret these lines of tendencies to correct the city to reshape it but never globally." This is a post-modern view. "I would conclude, therefore, that my view of the epistemology of architects is the notion of adjustment and conjecture."

The apostle of postmodern urbanism, not post-modern in the architectural sense but in the reconstruction of modernism, you can read Koolhaas. And we can leave this story with "Modernism's alchemistic promise to transform quantity into quality through abstraction and repetition has been a failure, a hoax, magic that didn't work.

Its idea's aesthetic strategies are finished. Together, all attempts to make a new beginning have only discredited the idea of a new beginning. If there is to be a new urbanism, it will not be based on the twin fantasies of order and omnipotence.

It will be the staging of uncertainty. It will no longer aim for stable configurations that for the creation of enabling fields that accommodate processes that refuse to be crystallized into definitive form. It will no longer be about meticulous definition, the imposition of limits, but about expanding the notions denying boundaries not about separating and identifying entities but about discovering unnamable hybrids.

It will no longer be obsessed with the city but with the manipulation of infrastructure for endless intensification and diversification, shortcuts and distribution, the reinvention of psychological space." And one last sentence from this great gentleman.

"How to explain the paradox that urbanism as a profession has disappeared at the moment when urbanization is everywhere?" Brings us to the current condition. To the extent that-- let's perhaps look at.

However, perhaps you haven't got time. We need to look at a few images. Architectural history is never taught, or history is never taught about the present, because there isn't enough evidence come to a conclusion about it.

Koolhaas is as vigorous a use of language as Le Corbusier. Le Corbusier wrote hundreds of thousands of words, published everything he could, documented his work in books that are now very valuable. Koolhaas is trying to do the same trying to articulate a universal attitude when universalism is relatively absent.

We cannot find an international agreement about climate change. So international agreements are-- but what is correct about Koolhaas' proposition that modern urbanism is dead?

All of these propositions that I put forward are not to be taken seriously in the long run. What are we left with? What have we developed on our own? I'll try to articulate as best I can some of these in the next few classes.

The anti-- the development. The urbanistic idea develop after 1960 when CIAM fell apart at Dubrovnik and Otterlo-- at the conferences at Dubrovnik and Otterlo in 1960. It was replaced by a group of young European architects at the 10th congress of CIAM, who called themselves Team 10.

We look at their preoccupations. We look at the rationalist preoccupations of Leon Krier and Aldo Rossi and people of this kind to see whether there's any generation of accumulated wisdom about urbanism. Is there any permanence in our preoccupation with traditional streets?

You're interested, Michael, in preservation theory. Are we at the height of a preservation phenomenon? How is it that Jane Jacobs in fighting Robert Moses around the future about housing in New York, which Moses wished to dispatch and replace with modern apartment blocks?

We wouldn't allow that to happen now. We wouldn't have allowed the west end to be removed through urban renewal. Why?

AUDIENCE: There's a fairly new-- the value of preservation is a fairly recent phenomenon. For many centuries, cities were just-- they were very. They destroyed parts of the city in order to build something new on top of it.

AUDIENCE: I think the big difference between modern era is scale. You know, I mean, you can't-- it's not just destroying a building. It's wiping out whole neighborhoods and building things that function on a different scale.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: That's the big change between what had happened before.

AUDIENCE: I understand the function of scale. But the notion between an entity having the capability of destroying that value whether it's small or large comes from the appreciation of the value within society, because society ultimately allows for that to happen regardless of the scale. When you go big, it's just can be more scandalous if you want it to.

AUDIENCE: But it's not just the scale of the project. It's the scale of how the resulting urbanism is used.

AUDIENCE: Yeah. I mean, and that's what-- the modernists aren't thinking on a human scale. [INAUDIBLE] [? auto ?] scale.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: And so that changes the function.

AUDIENCE: Yes. I agree with that.

JULIAN BEINART: It's still perplexing, as a young modernist myself, to be living in a culture which has so many dissonances with what I was taught to believe in. Either one lives too long, which is a problem, or one has to try to make some sense.

The new urbanism couldn't have existed in the orthodoxy of CIAM. First of all, they were all mainly Europeans and didn't understand the nostalgia for the small community of the American suburban.

All the new urbanism has done is done cosmetically touching of the phase of suburbia. It hasn't been able to deal with any of the fundamental problems of American urbanism-- race, numbers, social equity, and above all the automobile.

The densities, which the new urbanists continue to proclaim, are automobile densities. They cannot justify public transportation. So the dilemma as to what the notion of density is in the contemporary American city is fundamentally around a number of properties, which the new urbanist just decline to deal with.

Let's look at some of these images. They're only a few. A typical modernist proposition. First of all, the building is an autonomous object. It stands by itself. It is not seen as related to anything else but circulation.

Circulation consists of a high-speed system which feeds with a major intersection down to a local road-- needs an open space in front of this building, which is unaccounted for. Why do you need an open space in front of that building?

There's an attempt to access pedestrians along these white stripes, which presumably are pedestrian routes. There's another highway intersection a few kilometers, or maybe not even that, much too close together.

It is naivete about the design of these systems where one can forgive people for that. I've already discussed Gropius' notion that buildings separated at a certain distance given their height. It needs to be studied next.

The preoccupation with the type. This is an interesting question. [? Jonah ?] [? Braken ?] feels that the type is a necessary cultural phenomenon-- that we need to study it in order that we can maintain continuity in our culture.

Here, type is studied as a scientific system to show that you can create housing for large numbers of people once you identify the essential spatial formal DNA of the plan. We know this one-- the ridiculous assumptions denying the existence of [? Third ?] [? Street, ?] which is one of the remarkable-- these successful pieces of urbanism, late 19th century urbanism, and replacing it with a staggeringly stupid proposition of Corbusier's [INAUDIBLE] or teeth system.

Next. Just a few slides of numbers. They are in Italy, and I put them in a sequence. Traditional poor urban housing would be for the rich as well in Milan on the left. The first attempt in [INAUDIBLE] to build state-supported public housing.

Walk-ups. Next. [INAUDIBLE] walk-ups stretching four floors as much as you can and giving a modern facade to the apparatus. The [INAUDIBLE] project by Giovanni Astengo showing the layout of these blocks in relation to an uncultivated, open space.

The open space is a trivial remainder of the design. next. Antonio [? Milano ?] now building buildings with elevators close together in an attempt to create density, but the density is still remarkably absent of producing a city. Next.

And finally the attempt to deal with numbers by extending the prototype endlessly. This is one project. And I think it's around on the left. And I think it's Genoa on the right. I'm not sure. Koolhaas is correct in looking at this and saying, what have we learned about the problem of number? Very little.