

planning and urban provision, with an absence of private property entrepreneurship, have also resulted in paucity and vulgarity among urban environments in other parts of the world, impressions about a certain amount of egalitarianism notwithstanding. The appropriate point of balance between these positions, if there can be such a thing, would seem to lie squarely in the domain of how urban property development is societally construed and the extent to which such construal incorporates a broad enough range of communitarian interests together with elective freedoms. Expressive freedom in building, for instance, probably should not be akin to an American First Amendment right, nor should central provision axiomatically rule out any form of individuation. Nevertheless, since 1956 and as alluded to earlier, a nexus of institutional interests and politics have not infrequently built up and congealed such that anything like an appropriate point of balance can no longer be easily achieved, often, sadly, with the result that what might have been built or achieved could not be. Reactions like “not in my backyard” point to a lack of breadth in communitarian interest. Other reactions like “one size fits all” point to a narrowness of scope in communitarian as well as entrepreneurial interests. Still other reactions like “no growth at any cost,” including possible disinvestment, can result in similar dislocations, and so the list could go on. What is striking about all this is that the role and intensity of various special interest groups have escalated considerably, filling the relatively straightforward public-private divide contemplated by conference participants in 1956. One upshot is that the politics of urban development, culturally and otherwise, can be radically different. Another is that the campaign for “good” urban design by a particular group, either within or without government, often faces many more uncertainties as to its outcome than in the past and certainly than in 1956.

A third issue that arose during the 1956 conference and figured prominently in Sert’s conclusion concerned the “conflict” or “lack of agreement” between planners and architects. This remains an issue today, with divisions along similar lines as those expressed in 1956 (i.e., “misgivings among architects that city planners do not know anything about the three-dimensional world,” and among “city planners thinking architects know nothing about city planning”).¹³ To be fair, positions today are rarely, if ever, quite so balkanized. Nevertheless, one is often struck by the extent to which discussions of aesthetic considerations of city building and, say, politico-economic