

result has been “much more suburbanism than urbanism.” The city has become a place where “the children get run over, the grown ups get drunk—a place you should leave as soon as you finish your day’s work.”⁶

In contrast to nearly all his planning predecessors since the 1920s, Sert viewed this condition as correctible. He foresaw that the challenge now for architects would be “the carrying out of large civic complexes: the integration of city-planning, architecture, and landscape architecture; the building of a *complete environment*” in existing urban centers. Although the political situation in the United States probably kept him from spelling out whom this new urban environment would be for, CIAM’s urbanism was based on the idea that cities had to be reorganized to better serve the needs of the working classes for better housing conditions, more efficient commercial infrastructure, and better opportunities for mass recreation near the city (which implied a nascent environmental awareness) along with the Corbusian advocacy of widely spaced buildings set in greenery instead of dense traditional urban building fabric. Rather than decrying the super-density of older centers, as GATCPAC had done in the 1930s, Sert now echoed Lewis Mumford: “This culture of ours is a culture of cities, a *civic culture*.” Urban central areas such as “the Acropolis, the Piazza San Marco, the Place de la Concorde” Sert hailed as “a miracle repeated through the ages.” He saw these places not as we might tend to see them today—primarily for tourists—but instead as spatial and functional models for spaces of face-to-face pedestrian interaction. He argued that these spaces were the only places where civic culture (what we might call “civil society” now) could continue and be able to resist the centralizing and undemocratic forces of mass media-based politics.⁷

Architectural Record reported the event under the heading “Whither Cities?”⁸ Sert’s talk was described as one pole of a debate, with the other represented by city and TVA planner Tracy Augur, who stated that “the defense factor, in my opinion, should come ahead of every other consideration in city planning.” It was fortunate, Augur thought, that “the same space standards that serve to reduce urban vulnerability to atomic attack also serve the civilian planner’s goal of greater livability.” Augur had been arguing this position for several years, elaborating his view that “Urban Centers Make Inviting Targets” for long-range bombers with atomic bombs. Instead of continuing to build in urban locations, Augur argued that we should “direct the new building into channels that will produce a dispersed pattern of