

whether they actually are. Legally, the corporate open spaces remain private property. In San Francisco, the presumption of public domain is legislated: an official plaque that declares the publicness of plazas is required. In Los Angeles and many other downtowns, this presumption at best remains in the planners' visions, and is not an official requirement. But even in San Francisco, the formal requirement has not always succeeded in integrating plazas and other private open spaces into the public realm. These spaces are inward oriented, cut off from the street, detached, and isolated. They are created for the benefit of the office tenants and not for the general public.

We have seen that private interests have always played a role in downtown development, but the complete subjugation of urban design to market forces is a phenomenon of the last two decades. Downtown urban design, because it is determined by private interests, has become reactive and opportunistic rather than proactive. The public sector reacts to the initiatives of the private sector for downtown building. The developers' actions are opportunistic, predicated upon their expectations of market response. Their objectives are profit and good business—which are not always congruent with good city form and urban design. This philosophy is quite different from earlier urban design philosophies that relied on the strategic location and investment of public projects and improvements to stimulate civic pride, sense of community, and private investment in a desired pattern.

Finally, the lack of strategic planning and the dominance of the private over the public sector in the creation of downtown's public realm have resulted in some lost urban design opportunities for downtowns. For example, the inward orientation and fragmentation of most urban plazas and downtown open spaces are in conflict with urbanistic objectives for coherence, effective linking of districts, and pedestrian connections. Plazas effectively turn their backs on one another, closing the city outside. This tactic produces a noncohesive arrangement of open spaces and a fragmentation of the public realm.

The polarization of new and old in downtown

In their effort to create exclusive settings and spaces accessible to some but not all, contemporary patterns of urban design serve only a limited public. This

result has contributed to a polarization between the public, but old and derelict, downtown for the indigent, and the new, private, and glamorous downtown of the corporate America. Increasingly, the new downtown has come to be at odds with the traces of the old downtown, the Main Street of yesteryear. The public life of the Main Street downtown is vestigial at best and has been totally transformed by the culture of the poor, the homeless, and the new immigrants. What is left of the earlier downtown is ignored or forgotten as indeed are many of its denizens. This polarization is all too apparent in the segregated urbanism of contemporary downtown, and is a challenge yet to be addressed by most urban designs and downtown plans.

Reviewing the downtown plans of six cities (Cleveland, Denver, Philadelphia, Portland, San Francisco, and Seattle) in the 1980s, Dennis Keating and Norman Krumholz (1991) express skepticism that any of these plans can change the pattern of uneven development that insulates revitalized downtowns from all the socioeconomic problems that plague their ailing downtown frames. It can be argued that postmodern urban design contributes to the widening of the gap between the private downtown of corporate America and the public downtown of the poor. This gap is reflected in the distribution of downtown open space. Maps of the downtown areas of San Francisco and Los Angeles clearly show that the corporate plazas are not located in the high-intensity pedestrian and transit corridors. There are very few open spaces in and around the old downtown. Los Angeles is both an embarrassment of riches and an embarrassment of deprivation. Since the downtown rebuilding has systematically segregated the contemporary downtown from the historic core, corporate plazas normally do not have to worry about integrating different classes of users. But the contrast between the old and the new should haunt public policy. Should public priorities keep fostering investment into the new downtown while neglecting the poor and more ethnically diverse parts of the city?

Polarization of space in downtown happens also at the microlevel. In contrast to the modernist design scheme that placed buildings within a limitless and abstract public space, the postmodernist approach is to enclose public space, to drastically separate the fragment of new development from its context. In the examples that we studied we found that an array of architectonic elements is often utilized to produce the desired effect of seclusion. Developments are surrounded by blank walls and impenetrable street frontages. Frequently, plazas