

New Urbanism as a New Modernist Movement: A Comparative Look at Modernism and New Urbanism

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This article situates New Urbanism, and neotraditionalism more generally, on the ideological continuum of Modernism — as a neo-Modernist movement. By comparing the social and environmental goals of Modernism and New Urbanism as laid out in their respective charters and questioning the ability of New Urbanism to achieve its goals where Modernism failed, it offers a contextual analysis of the motivations behind the movements and their implications in practice. It then presents the cities of Brasilia, in Brazil, and Celebration, in the United States, as examples of the difficulty of putting the altruistic rhetoric of Modernism and New Urbanism, respectively, into practice. Finally, it offers the lessons of history as a way to reflect on the challenges facing New Urbanism and its prospects for success.

New Urbanism has been the most important movement in the area of urban design and architecture to take hold in the United States in the last two decades, on par with the City Beautiful and Garden City movements of the early twentieth century.¹ In addition to more than five hundred New Urbanist developments planned or under construction in the country today, the convergence of New Urbanists on the hurricane-devastated Gulf Coast region since September 2006 has further raised the profile of the movement by giving its practitioners an opportunity to act on their planning and design principles on a scale previously unimaginable and leave an indisputable mark on twenty-first-century U.S. architecture and urban design. Of course, the question of what this mark will ultimately be remains unanswered.²

Interestingly, though considered progressive in most planning circles, New Urbanist principles and the values they engender also align with the apparent revival of U.S. neo-conservatism over the past several years.³ This is evident in the close tie between New Urbanism's brand of urban values and its explicitly stated desire to return to certain past

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development models — what Christopher Alexander has referred to as “the timeless way of building.” The result is a sort of “back-to-the-future” approach, complete with quasi-traditional design typologies inspired by pre-Modernist, largely colonial architecture.⁴

Some New Urbanists have even invoked religious rhetoric to market their ideas, as when Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk’s declared Seaside, Florida, to be “the second coming of the American small town.”⁵ And religious institutions, themselves, are even beginning to get on board.⁶ In 2005, for example, the Religion News Service published the following:

Across the country, influential Christians are thinking theologically about urban design and applying its principles to the church. They advocate for New Urbanist concepts because they force people to share with one another, dwell among their neighbors and allow for a healthy exchange of ideas.⁷

This attempt to link nostalgic, though not necessarily historical, formal properties to simultaneously progressive and conservative social outcomes has proven to be a successful means of appealing to a broad slice of the U.S. consumer public in a socio-political context in which diverse values such as community involvement and the proliferation of an “ownership society” coexist with environmental conservation and growth management.⁸ Thus, in what seems like an ideological paradox, by virtue of its conservative formal language and strong normative call for a return to “traditional,” “objective,” and “universal” urban values of the past, New Urbanism has become for many a beacon of progressive planning theory, and is increasingly perceived as a potential antidote to the anomie and alienation of today’s postmodern condition.⁹ Ironically, however, evidence abounds that the “traditional” urban values promoted by New Urbanists — community, socioeconomic integration, and environmental conservation — though often trumpeted at both ends of the political spectrum, are largely at odds with historical, as well as present-day, U.S. development traditions, including actual New Urbanist developments.¹⁰

This article explores the extent to which New Urbanism has adapted the rhetoric and essential ethos of Modernism, even while positioning itself as a neotraditional — and therefore anti-Modernist — movement. It further explores inherent discrepancies between the ideals and outcomes of New Urbanism as a normative design-based movement whose goals are ultimately social in nature. Finally, using the cities of Brasilia and Celebration as examples, it discusses the many challenges New Urbanists face in pushing a reform agenda grounded in environmental determinism and social control.

TRADITION AND TRADITIONS: TOWARD A NEO-MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE

The built environment of most of the United States is the result of the relatively sudden and formulaic imposition of various European, primarily Protestant, values and eclectic colonial building styles on what was perceived at the time to be a vast *carte blanche*.¹¹ For many years, the lack of long-range transportation technology combined with the industrial-based economy of most U.S. cities necessitated a certain degree of centralized, high-density development. This made downtowns the economic and cultural hearts of cities such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco for some time. But for the most part the close association of early settlers’ religious values with ideas about individual liberty, proximity to nature, and female domesticity made urban development and the values associated with it highly undesirable. Indeed, unlike every other historically affluent civilization, people in the U.S. have idealized the private home and yard rather than the public neighborhood or town.¹²

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, rather than being viewed as an ideal form of development, dense urban centers have literally been regarded by the majority of Americans as a necessary evil.¹³ The massive escalation of suburbanization that took place all around the country with the arrival of the automobile and its supporting infrastructure, which continues to this day, demonstrates that the core values that brought many early European settlers to North America not only persist, but remain a powerful force. This is largely as true of policy-makers as it is of the public at large. Given the option to expand and live in intensely private spaces, many Americans, if not most, still will.¹⁴

This is not to say that everyone living in the U.S. shares these values; this is clearly not the case. Yet, as Robert Bellah et al. contended in their treatise on U.S. society, *Habits of the Heart*, “Individualism lies at the very core of American culture.”¹⁵ For better or worse, such values must be recognized as a cultural heritage — that is, as one of many U.S. “traditions.” Similarly, despite its acknowledged negative impacts, suburban sprawl must by now be considered at least as much a U.S. development tradition as more compact, preautomobile development.¹⁶

Yet, while acknowledging sprawl as the predominant development paradigm in the U.S. during the second half of the twentieth century, the neotraditional rhetoric of New Urbanism fails to recognize this status quo as a tradition in its own right, preferring to define tradition narrowly as strictly pre-Modernist.¹⁷ Such a selective definition of tradition establishes a binary condition in which the traditional and the modern — in this case the Modernist — are mutually exclusive. Ironically, this very condition aligns New Urbanist goals much more closely with those of Modernism than with those of pre-Modernist development — what New Urbanists refer to as “traditional,” because New Urbanism’s conscious

effort to devalue the contemporary built environment in order to instigate sweeping changes to it works against a variety of existent traditions in the current U.S. context.¹⁸

The discrepancy between the communitarian values advocated by New Urbanism and the individualistic values that have served as the foundation of much American culture and development for nearly two hundred years belies the notion that New Urbanism is a return to a universal American tradition. Even the much revered sense of community that New Urbanists hope to “reintroduce” into the urban fabric is closely tied to individualistic ideas about relative insulation and exclusion. As Denise Hall has written, it is most often created by “homogeneous circles of individuals” who feel a certain affinity for one another because they “share similar beliefs, values, and styles of life.”¹⁹

While such calls for social harmony may be inspiring, they may also offer an inherently problematic model for contemporary urbanism, particularly within the U.S. Many American urban contexts cannot accurately be said to consist of a homogeneous, monocultural population. And the incongruence of such an interpretation of the past with the realities of the present and probable future calls into question the validity of the New Urbanist vision and the degree of social control needed to achieve its goals in a diverse, multicultural, and increasingly global society.²⁰ Thus, as Jill Grant has written, New Urbanist claims of equity and diversity “may offer little more than rhetoric that masks practices that increase disparity.”²¹

Certainly, criticizing the status quo built environment is neither new nor unique to Modernism or New Urbanism. In fact, such criticism could even be seen as a necessary component of all urban planning and design. However, using such criticism as an engine to transform not just the spaces of the built environment, but the values embodied within them in order to “restore the moral health” of the city to an idealized state must be interpreted as a decidedly, though not uniquely, Modernist ethos — one which New Urbanism has adopted to the core. Thus, New Urbanism can simultaneously be understood as both neotraditional, due to its explicit desire to undo the negative impacts of Modernist development, and neo-Modernist, due to its efforts to actively “traditionalize” areas in need of physical restructuring according to a specific set of idealized, often nostalgic urban values. It is precisely this selective and retrospective assigning of the identity of “traditional” to one preferred historical development model and accompanying set of values at the exclusion of all others that distinguishes neotraditionalism from tradition itself. And it is here that similarities between New Urbanism and Modernism become most clear.

NEW MODERNISM?

Though it is often viewed as the philosophical antithesis of Modernism, New Urbanism is better described as a con-

tinuation of Modernism, or even as a neo-Modernist movement. Grant has even suggested that New Urbanism be called “a ‘traditionalized Modernism’ rather than a return to traditional values.”²² This unlikely hereditary relationship is particularly apparent from an analysis of the charters of the two movements.

The most obvious similarity between the 1933 Athens Charter (AC), produced by the fourth Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne, or CIAM, and the 1996 Charter of the New Urbanism (CNU) is that both resulted from the coming together of prominent groups of planning and design professionals to develop a formal manifesto to address the greatest urban challenges of their respective eras. But the similarity goes even further: the CNU clearly seeks to take up the Modernist gauntlet by emulating the organizational structure and rhetorical framework of the AC. The Afterword of the CNU even acknowledges the influence of CIAM as an ideological predecessor, stating that “Not since the City Beautiful and Arts-and-Crafts movements at the turn of the century, or the CIAM in the 1920s, has there been an attempt to create a design vision that unifies the differing scales and disciplines shaping the built environment.”²³

Thus, while the formal qualities each movement has chosen to advocate are starkly different, the CNU clearly borrows much of its rhetoric from the AC, including its linking of “good” city form to desirable urban values. Yet, while New Urbanists have been explicit in adopting some of CIAM’s representational signs, such as the style of its charter, they have adamantly asserted that they are anti-Modernists — or conversely, that the Modernists were anti-urban.²⁴ New Urbanists have thus placed themselves at the opposite end of the spectrum of urban ideologies vis-à-vis Modernists.

Among prominent advocates of these views, Emily Talen has described New Urbanism as a synthesis of historical forces in American urbanism, which she defines as “the vision and the quest to achieve the best human settlement possible in America, operating within the context of certain established principles.”²⁵ These “recurrent principles” include “diversity, equity, community, connectivity, and the importance of civic and public space.”²⁶

In her book *New Urbanism and American Planning*, Talen identifies four planning “cultures” from which New Urbanism draws: incrementalism, plan-making, planned communities, and regionalism. Surprisingly, she does not recognize Modernism in this historical lineage, claiming that it constitutes “an anti-urbanist ideology that represents more of an antithesis than a source.”²⁷ In a chapter on “Urbanism vs. Anti-Urbanism,” she then explains how she perceives this polarization between New Urbanism and Modernism — which she asserts is “the near embodiment of anti-urbanism” with its “tendency toward separation, segregation, planning by monolithic elements like express highways, and the neglect of equity, place, the public realm, historical structure and the human scale of urban form.”²⁸

At least three items merit criticism in Talen’s approach. First, it is worrisome that she claims that Modernism had an explicit ideology that fostered “conditions that impede the principles of diversity, connectivity, and equity.” It has actually been widely acknowledged that Modernism strongly advocated these very values, particularly that of social equity, albeit through different physical means than New Urbanism.²⁹ She further uses her distinction between urbanism and anti-urbanism to discriminate between what she considers the positive and negative aspects of her planning cultures. Thus she selectively reconstructs the historical lineage of New Urbanism, weeding out all the “anti-urbanist” traits of Modernism from her antecedent planning cultures.

Second, Talen discusses social equity as “largely a matter of spatial equity, meaning that goods, services, facilities and other amenities and physical qualities of life are within physical reach of everyone.”³⁰ By defining social equity as spatial equity, Talen seems to be undoing a painstaking attempt in her previous writings to deconstruct the accusation of New Urbanism as environmentally deterministic.³¹ She is also setting New

Urbanism up for the more trenchant criticism that it fails to accomplish spatial equity in practice, since many New Urbanist developments increase social segregation and effectively function as exclusive “club goods” for residents and guests.³²

This leads to the third criticism of Talen’s approach, namely, that she advances a disparate comparison between Modernist failures in practice and New Urbanist ideals in theory. This criticism will be elaborated on later in this article. But for now some exploration of the language of the respective charters of the two movements will provide a comparative context.

At numerous points in the AC and CNU, the language is sufficiently similar that a person unfamiliar with the histories of the two movements might think the two documents were written about the same urban context, perhaps by the same authors. This is especially true of the two movements’ common disdain for the ubiquitous suburb, a development paradigm which was quite commonplace well before the principles of the Modernist movement were conceived. The accompanying table offers an extensive, though not exhaustive, comparison of some of the common language found in the two charters (FIG. 1).

FIGURE 1. Common Language — 1933 Athens Charter/1996 Charter of the New Urbanism.

	Athens Charter (1933)	Charter of the New Urbanism (1996)
Issue	Article : Clause — Text	Chapter : Page — Text
Importance of region	1 : 1 — The City is only one element within an economic, social, and political complex that constitutes the region. No undertaking may be considered if it is not in accord with the harmonious destiny of the region.	1 : 15 — The metropolitan region is a fundamental economic unit of the contemporary world. Some of our most vexing problems need solutions that recognize the new economic and social unity of our regions. . . .
Comprehensive plan	3 : 83 — The city must be studied within the whole of its region of influence. A regional plan will replace the simple municipal plan. 3 : 86 — It [the program] must bring together in fruitful harmony the natural resources of the site, the overall topography, the economic facts, the sociological demands, and the spiritual values.	2 : 23 — Regionalism — the idea that metropolitan regions are stronger when they harmonize with their natural environments — is making more sense than ever. One way regions can begin fostering this link between economic and ecological health is by marshaling a comprehensive plan... 5 : 44 — It’s important to design with the features of the land to define urban boundaries and establish a sense of identity.
Interrrelationships between political, social, economic, and environmental factors and land and design ordinances	3 : 91 — The course of events will be profoundly influenced by political, social, and economic factors. It is not enough to admit the necessity of a “land ordinance” and of certain principles of construction. Yet, it is possible . . . that the necessity of building decent shelters will suddenly emerge as an overriding obligation, and that this obligation will provide politics, social life, and the economy with precisely the coherent goal and program that they were lacking.	Preamble : v — We recognize that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework. 17 : 109 — The economic health and harmonious evolution of neighborhoods, districts and corridors can be improved through graphic urban design codes that serve as predictable guides for change.
History, preservation, tradition	1 : 6 — Throughout history, specific circumstances have determined the characteristics of the city. . . . One can still recognize in city plans the original close-set nucleus of the early market town, the successive enclosing walls, and the directions of divergent routes. 1 : 7 — The spirit of the city has been formed over the years the simplest buildings have taken on an eternal value insofar as they symbolize the collective soul they are the armature of a tradition... 2 : 65 — Architectural assets must be protected, whether found in isolated buildings or in urban agglomerations. They form a part of the human heritage, and whoever owns them or is entrusted with their protection has the responsibility and the obligation to do whatever he legitimately can to hand this noble heritage down intact to the centuries to come.	6 : 51 — Throughout time, people have developed vernacular design and building practices in response to their needs, desires and environments. 6 : 49 — In some places, we can still recognize the piece that each town and surrounding farmsteads played in shaping the pattern of the region’s landscapes. We can see the precedents that give us bearings within patterns such as street grids and downtown cores. 27 : 173 — Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes affirm the continuity and evolution of urban society. For this urban evolution to occur successfully, there must be an implied “contract” about the nature of city building in which the contributions of previous generations are understood and creatively reinterpreted. . . .

FIGURE I. (CONTINUED)

	Athens Charter (1933)	Charter of the New Urbanism (1996)
Issue	Article : Clause — Text	Chapter : Page — Text
Human scale, walkability, job-housing proximity	<p>2 : 41 — In the past, the dwelling and the workshop, being linked together by close and permanent ties, were situated near one another. The unforeseen expansion of machinism has disrupted those harmonious conditions. . . .</p> <p>3 : 76 — The natural measurements of man himself must serve as a basis for all the scales that will be consonant with the life and diverse functions of the human being: a scale of measurements applying to areas and distances, a scale of distances that will be considered in relation to the natural walking pace of man. . . .</p> <p>2 : 46 — The distances between places of work and places of residence must be reduced to a minimum.</p>	<p>Postscript : 181 — For five millennia, our human settlements were built to human scale, to the five- or ten-minute walk that defined neighborhoods, within which all of life's necessities and many of its frivolities could be found. Now we have elevators and cars allowing our cities to expand upward and evermore outward.</p> <p>12 : 83 — Interconnected networks of streets should be designed to encourage walking, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy.</p>
Schools as important elements of neighborhoods	1 : 19 — . . . schools, as a general rule, are badly situated within the urban complex.	Foreword : 7 — The failure of school systems . . . is another massive problem, aggravated by the concentration of families with the most severe economic and behavioral difficulties in older urban areas.
Disdain for suburbs	<p>2 : 22 — Seen from the air, it (the suburb) reveals the disorder and incoherence of its distribution to the least experienced eye.</p> <p>2 : 20 — The suburbs are laid out without any plan and without a normal connection to the city. . . . It (the suburb) has seriously compromised the destiny of the city and its possibilities of growth according to rule.</p> <p>2 : 22 — The suburbs are often mere aggregations of shacks hardly worth the trouble of maintaining. Flimsily constructed little houses, boarded hovels, sheds thrown together out of the most incongruous materials. . . . Its bleak ugliness is a reproach to the city it surrounds.</p>	<p>6 : 49 — Viewed from above, America's landscape now shows the enormous changes that human habitation has wrought over hundreds of years. The suburban patterns of alternating strip malls and circuitous street systems may be visually seductive, but they suggest an underlying lack of order, an endlessly repetitive, piecemeal approach to development.</p> <p>Postscript : 182 — The strange objects we have flung about our landscape are built only for today. Most are cheap and shoddy. Grouped into strips, they constitute a hostile and aesthetically offensive environment. We have built a world of junk, a degraded environment. It may be profitable for a short term, but its long-term economic prognosis is bleak.</p>
Criticism of contemporary urban approaches	2 : 23 — By abruptly changing certain century-old conditions, the age of the machine has reduced the cities to chaos.	6 : 51 — After World War II . . . traditional neighborhood building was replaced by radically transformed patterns. . . .
Negative externalities of suburbs	2 : 21 — The population density is very low and the ground is barely exploited nevertheless, the city is obliged to furnish the suburban expanse with the necessary utilities and services. . . . The ruinous expense caused by so many obligations is shockingly disproportionate to the few taxes that such a scattered population can produce.	9 : 69 — Low-density sprawl also is encouraged by building communities at densities that can't be served by public transit and with infrastructure costs that the existing tax base can't sustain. The same local fiscal pressures that encourage low-density development to enrich the tax base contribute to unnecessary low-density sprawl.
Parks and open space	2 : 32 — The remoteness of the outlying open spaces does not lend itself to better living conditions in the congested inner zones of the city.	18 : 119 — Parks and open spaces should be distributed within neighborhoods, and should be created and maintained to help define and connect neighborhoods.
Communal life	2 : 35 — Contrary to what takes place in the "garden cities," the verdant areas will not be divided into small unit lots for private use but, instead, dedicated to the launching of the various communal activities that form the extensions of the dwelling.	18 : 113 — Neighborhoods appear as balanced living environments when parks are the linchpin of a community. . . . Parks and open areas are the places that support neighborhood life and its celebrations.
Regional, multi-modal transportation systems	2 : 56 — Traffic channels intended for multiple use must simultaneously permit automobiles to drive from door to door, pedestrians to walk from door to door, buses and tramcars to cover prescribed routes, trucks to go from supply chain centers to an infinite variety of distribution points, and certain vehicles to pass directly through the city.	8 : 59 — The physical organization of the region should be supported by a framework of transportation alternatives. Transit, pedestrian, and bicycle systems should maximize access and mobility throughout the region while reducing dependence on the automobile.

Rhetorical positioning common to the two charters such as that illustrated in the table could be cited at length.³³ This is precisely because it is the contexts of the two movements and the formal solutions each advocates, and not the ideology

behind their common approach, that differ so notably. Thus, the paradigm shift advocated by Modernists in response to the negative outcomes of "the machinist age" is clearly different than that advocated by New Urbanists in response to the neg-

ative outcomes of the Modernist age. But the faith that both movements express in a “superior” design paradigm as a prescription for the myriad social, economic and environmental problems of their respective eras speaks to their common ethos. Stated another way, New Urbanism has established itself as Modernism for a new generation — a New Modernism — by adopting an explicitly anti-Modernist (neo-traditional) formal language. Meanwhile, it has sought to accomplish Modernism’s same essential goals in response to many of the same problems that Modernism failed to resolve.

From its ideological beginnings as expressed in the AC, Modernism was, above all, a formal response to the chaos of European urban centers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This had resulted primarily from the economic change provoked by the mechanization of various agricultural and industrial production processes, which brought a sudden migration of millions of workers to these urban centers. Simultaneous advancements in transportation technology, including streetcars and the introduction of the automobile, compounded the conditions of densification and disorder by creating new traffic and safety concerns.³⁴ As noted earlier, Modernists also abhorred the already abundant suburban expansion — now commonly referred to as sprawl — occurring in various metropolitan areas around the world, particularly within the U.S. The AC even went so far as to characterize suburbs as “one of the greatest evils of the century.”³⁵

The product of European leftist intellectuals, CIAM was initially closely tied to a socialist agenda, including ideas of land redistribution, social solidarity, and labor reform. Modernists decried the “machinist age” and called for regional planning efforts that would focus on allocating spatial autonomy to each of the four principal functions of the city: habitation, leisure, work and traffic.³⁶

Among the most significant rationales used to justify the sweeping physical and social urban reforms advocated by CIAM was the idea that basic human values had gone awry in urban contexts due to environmental, economic and political imbalances resulting from the machinist era and its failure to respect the fact that “the city admits of a considerable moral value to which it is indissolubly attached.”³⁷ Thus, by articulating its will to “restore” to the city the morality it once had, Modernism effectively established itself as a normative movement dedicated to improving the then current state of the pre-Modernist (what New Urbanists now refer to as “traditional”) city.

In retrospect, it is essentially agreed today that Modernism’s goals were largely utopian in scope and overly dependent on architectural, urban design, and physical planning solutions to primarily socio-political problems.³⁸ Nonetheless, the rapid rise to ubiquity of Modernist projects during the mid-twentieth century, which earned the movement the status of an international style, is evidence that its values had great appeal among design professionals, policy-makers, and even the general public in some cases.

Yet, despite its laudable social goals, the selective application of Modernist principles in practice failed to realize the urban revolution the movement’s founders had hoped for. Instead, they contributed to the exacerbation of conditions of social inequality and polarization through the creation of corporate downtowns, ghettoized public housing projects, greater sprawl and traffic gridlock, and a general decline in the quality of urban environments. Thus, not only did Modernist reengineering of “traditional” urban spaces not accomplish the socio-political agenda articulated by CIAM in the AC, but such reengineering also created spaces that were generally unsuitable for pedestrians, and that contributed to a general sense of anomie, alienation and estrangement in both urban and suburban settings.³⁹

However, while Modernism has deeply affected the shape and, more importantly, the character of cities around the globe, most of the ills of contemporary urban life cannot be attributed to the physical urban transformation it caused. Nevertheless, the tendency to blame the disfunctionalities of cities on Modernism is deeply entrenched among architects, urban designers, and planners, perhaps most notably among New Urbanists. Such blame can be traced back to the writings of Jane Jacobs and Charles Jencks, among others.⁴⁰

Kate Bristol has attempted to reveal this connection by arguing that the association of the Pruitt-Igoe public housing project’s demolition with the failure of modern architecture has constituted a powerful myth: “By placing the responsibility for the failure of public housing on designers, the myth shifts attention from the institutional or structural sources of public housing problems.”⁴¹ Mary Comerio has expanded on this notion:

While it is natural for architectural critics to focus on the stuff design is made of: space, proportion, structure, form and other essential elements of building, it is unnatural to ignore the social, economic, and political structure of society that ultimately shapes what architects do, how they do it, and why.⁴²

Nevertheless, the legacy of Modernism has been widely disparaged in cities around the world — particularly in the U.S., where the separation of urban functions, focus on automobile spaces, and creation of nondescript architecture led to the deterioration of downtowns and other older urban areas. And it is in this context that New Urbanism’s mission to “restore” urban centers and reconfigure suburbia using architecture that celebrates “local history, climate, ecology, and building practice” has been presented as a direct contestation of Modernism, and synonymous with redressing the negative effects of Modernist design.⁴³

As defined in its charter, New Urbanism, is, therefore a formal response to the decline of downtowns in the U.S. Yet, the widespread abandonment of inner cities occurred as a result of the market- and policy-sustained preference for sub-

urban landscapes, and to the unsustainable, economically and racially segregated, low-density, automobile-oriented way of life that they allowed.⁴⁴ Yet, like Modernists, the reaction of New Urbanists to these societal ills has been to break conceptually with the design status quo and establish an entirely new paradigm that extols the urban values, though not necessarily the urban forms, of a previous era. For Modernists the supposed moral foundation of the preindustrial city was a key source of inspiration, whereas the pre-Modernist city's assumed "sense of community" has been the principal mantra driving the New Urbanist charge.

Also like Modernists, by dismissing the value of the predominant development style to evolve in the U.S. — the single-family-home suburb — as a tradition in its own right, New Urbanists have taken a position antagonistic to "traditional" development. This position is Modernist in spirit in that it seeks to ascribe the identity of "other" to the contemporary built environments of the majority of U.S. metropolitan areas. Indeed, these areas are largely considered as unsuitable spaces in need of comprehensive, rationalistic reworking — much like Modernist developments in Africa, East Asia, India, and Latin America toward the end of the colonial period and beyond.⁴⁵ In this sense, the grand design of Le Corbusier's Chandigarh is no more divorced from the historically compact urban form of Northern India than is Moule Polyzoides' pedestrian-oriented urban village concept for Playa Vista, California, from the historically auto-oriented suburb composed of single-family homes so common throughout the U.S. Similarly, neither is Costa/Niemeyer's ultramodern Brazilian capital city more imposed upon its previously undeveloped natural surroundings than is Robert A.M. Stern's New Urbanist Celebration, Florida, on its own previously undeveloped wetlands.

To fully appreciate the philosophical similarities between the two movements, despite their apparent formal polarity, it is necessary to look beyond the rhetoric of their respective charters and proponents, and take a closer look at the built results of their values, and what these values reveal about their common ethos.

MOTIVATIONS BEHIND NEW URBANISM AND IMPLICATIONS IN PRACTICE (IT'S THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ECONOMY, STUPID!)

Just as there was a gap between the aims of the Modernist charter and the actual impacts of Modernist projects, so too New Urbanism has struggled to achieve its stated goals in built form. In her comparison of Modernist failures in practice and New Urbanist ideals in theory, Talen recognized that "[t]he initial rhetoric coming from CIAM might have sounded right, but the translation of principles into city building was recognized as highly problematic."⁴⁶ However, she failed to perceive the same phenomenon in the

case of New Urbanism. A fairer approach, and the one advanced in this article, is to compare the similarities between Modernist and New Urbanist *ideals*, and to a lesser extent, Modernist and New Urbanist *outcomes*, while acknowledging the stark contrasts in design approaches.

New Urbanist projects to date have had mixed results regarding the theoretical premises of the movement. Like Modernists, New Urbanists have expressed high hopes of serving the disadvantaged, yet after a quarter century of practice, they have done more to suppress cultural differences, reduce social diversity, serve the interests of developers, enable sprawl, and reduce housing affordability and public housing.⁴⁷ And without being able to deliver the socio-political changes identified in its charter, New Urbanism is beginning to show signs of suffering the same fate as Modernism, as developers retain the most marketable elements of the movement (its aesthetic elements) while dismissing those that are more controversial and difficult to attain (its socioeconomic and environmental elements). As can be seen in many New Urbanist developments, so-called traditional architecture in the form of front porches and well-manicured tree-lined streets has become ubiquitous, while other aspirations such as higher density, greater pedestrian and transit choice, greater affordability, social diversity, and income mix have largely failed to materialize.⁴⁸

This is not imputable to New Urbanists alone. The status quo of political and economic power, consumption patterns, and cultural norms is formidable and clearly difficult to change. But the fact is that the sprawling automobile-dependent, single-use, and placeless urban and suburban settlements decried by New Urbanists are less the result of willful Modernist designers than of development practices established and perpetuated by institutions such as the Federal Housing Administration, municipal zoning and subdivision regulations, and discriminatory bank red-lining and home-loan policies. Yesterday as today, without a paradigm shift in the cultural, political and economic institutions that support inequitable and unsustainable development practices, "good" design is at best an exercise in wishful thinking, and most likely little more than a superficial embellishment of the status quo. To date, many New Urbanist projects have proven relatively homogeneous in both design and socioeconomic composition. They have even at times exacerbated social segregation by not only neglecting to produce more affordable housing, but actually contributing to its destruction (e.g., some HOPE VI projects), or by contributing to increased property values. While it is not within the scope of this article to evaluate whether such impacts are good or bad, it is clear that they are not in line with stated New Urbanist objectives.

The search for "the public good" or "the good community" that characterizes New Urbanism has always been an integral part of urban design and planning, and probably always will be. However, these abstract notions also have been, and probably always will be, deeply contested by social theorists

who highlight the need to plan for diverse publics.⁴⁹ So far, however, instead of accepting and celebrating difference and diversity, New Urbanist developments have largely addressed such ideas with an assimilationist approach, using middle-class — primarily white protestant — taste as a model.⁵⁰ This prompts a questioning of the motivations behind the movement and its implications in practice.⁵¹ As Hall has argued:

*New Urbanism's use of the term community to imply social and economic plurality is largely symbolic, disguising continued advocacy of conventional real estate development practices. That the movement claims to remedy complex social and economic issues without serious consideration of non-mainstream populations amounts to a willful disengagement from issues of race, ethnicity and poverty.*⁵²

Peter Marcuse's claim that New Urbanism is neither new nor urban, legitimating as it does a suburbanization of the urban fringe, is well known.⁵³ But in *Planning the Good City*, Jill Grant further asserted that “[w]e have shifted from a modernist paradigm in which we concentrated on function over form to a practice that increasingly privileges form as a mechanism to attract investment.”⁵⁴ About the Modernist values of New Urbanism, she writes:

*It retains a commitment to the model of planner/designer as expert. It relies on an expanding economy. It continues to try to accommodate the car and rising consumer expectations. It employs codes and rules to order society. . . . It represents a reform of the modern settlement pattern rather than a replacement of it.*⁵⁵

Thus, despite the call for sustainability and equity embedded in its charter, the developments built to date under the New Urbanist crest “problematize the character of space rather than the social structure that generates it,” Grant writes.⁵⁶ “The key values driving urban form in the contemporary period include capital (property values and return on investment), security (fear of difference and crime), and identity (need for status and self-actualization).”⁵⁷ This makes developers favor New Urbanist projects because they usually carry a market premium and appreciate faster than other projects.⁵⁸ New Urbanism will therefore only thrive for as long as it continues to respond well to those values — assuming a radical change to those values does not occur. Thus, like Modernism before it, the altruistic goals of New Urbanism have largely fallen prey in practice to the more immediate need of self-preservation.

The avoidance in practice of a more focused contestation of the socio-political economy that creates social and spatial inequalities has rendered New Urbanists virtually powerless in resolving these inequalities. They may even be complicit in sustaining them, given their focus on what Mike Pyatok has called

*. . . the symptoms of these deeper problems as they manifest themselves in the physical environment, and on the immediate policies that shape it, like zoning, fire and building regulations. As a consequence, their charter's principles of environmental justice ring hollow when compared to their actions in practice.*⁵⁹

Focusing on how to plan the “good community” through design has consequently been not only myopic, but damaging, by virtue of having diverted attention from issues of social justice, and by appeasing those who have the power to confront them.

TWO CITIES ON THE EDGE OF UTOPIA

The city of Brasilia and the new town of Celebration are case studies that illustrate the social ethos common to both Modernism and New Urbanism, as well as the difficulty of putting the altruistic values shared by the two design-based movements into practice.

There is by now a sufficient body of literature on the design elements and spatial patterns of Brasilia and Celebration that neither a complete description of these elements and patterns, nor a review of this literature, will be included here.⁶⁰ However, Brasilia and Celebration can be interpreted as the pinnacles of the utopian visions of their respective movements and the ultimate physical embodiments of the values of their respective designers. As such, they provide an ideal dyad for examining the ethos common to Modernism and New Urbanism.

On the surface the two places seem unrelated and utterly different. Where Brasilia is grand, Celebration is quaint. Where Brasilia emphasizes the rational, Celebration emphasizes the emotional. Where Brasilia presses untiringly toward the values of a brave new world, Celebration defines itself by replicating the old values of small-town life and the “American Dream.” Yet, as different as these two environments are, it is all the more intriguing that they were planted from the same philosophical seed, namely, the belief that urban form can actively, and predictably, determine social behavior.

BRASILIA

Inviolable rules will guarantee the inhabitants good homes, comfortable working conditions, and the enjoyment of leisure. The soul of the city will be brought to life by the clarity of the plan.

— Athens Charter

Brasilia will forever loom large as the crowning achievement of Modernist city planning.⁶¹ Vast, wholly new, and rationally conceived, the Plano Piloto, or Brasilia proper, was

intended to leave nothing to chance. Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer's masterpiece is an iconic city, reflecting intense confidence in the future, and equally intense faith in the ability of spatial order (and the creators of this order, the master architect and planner) to effect social change (FIGS. 2–5).

Writing in 1989, James Holston eloquently captured the fundamental *raison d'être* of the Brazilian capital, stating that “more than merely the symbol of a new age, its design and construction were intended as means to create a new age.”⁶² This overarching intention permeates the entire metropolis, and marks every aspect of its physical form with the values of its designers. Yet, while symbolism in Brasília, at least for its own sake, is clearly secondary to efforts to instigate real change in a nation whose political leaders at the time were fixated on modernization, it is equally clear that symbols — in this case spatial symbols — were always intended by Brasília's designers to play an important role in a planned process of ambient socialization.

As Holston has pointed out, “The CIAM architect is therefore not merely a designer of objects. In the context of total planning, he is primarily an organizer of a new kind of society; he is an organizer of social change.”⁶³ In the Plano Piloto, the result is an architecture and overall urban form whose elements become symbols reinforcing the process of socialization. Yet, this is accomplished while maintaining just enough familiarity and connection to certain past typologies to achieve the desired disorientation and social conformity without sacrificing existing mechanisms of control. First, a uniform but monumental scale told inhabitants that the powerful forces of change behind the city's creation could not be fought, and austere materials and standardized formal properties communicated that life would be better due to the arrival of a more efficient and egalitarian age. Second, functional separations told inhabitants that traditional ways of using space had lost their validity, and constant, mechanized movement communicated that rapid change would be the new status quo.



FIGURE 2. (TOP LEFT) Barren pedestrian realm along the avenue of ministries (the sign reads “electronic policing”). Photo by Josué Torres, 2005.

FIGURE 3. (TOP RIGHT) A semi-permanent informal market in the central area of Brasília. Photo by Josué Torres, 2005.

FIGURE 4. (BOTTOM LEFT) An itinerant informal market of street vendors in the central area of Brasília. Photo by Josué Torres, 2005.

FIGURE 5. (BOTTOM RIGHT) Poor people and people of color in public space in Brasília. Photo by Josué Torres, 2005.

Taken together, these spatial symbols of scale (both of individual buildings and whole blocks), material, adjacency (both separation and proximity of land uses, services, and structures), and movement were the principal didactic conduits through which the modernization of all of Brazil was eventually intended to take place — not only on the ground, but in the collective psyche of the people. In this sense, in Brasilia one finds a master plan of spatial relationships and building typologies developed with the sole purpose of imposing a new set of social values upon an existing, albeit dislocated, population.

These forms and spaces embodied the spirit of the Modernist agenda of “collective social organization,” and represented a complex system of semiotic codes that operated at the functional level of daily activity by altering the private and, even more so, public behaviors of both individuals and the collective. This happened through a sweeping resignification of traditional spaces — or, in the context of a Brasilia built entirely from scratch, of spaces traditionally found in other, older cities. As Holston put it: “In this embodiment of intention, they [the designers] propose an instrumental relation between architecture and society: the people who inhabit their buildings will be forced to adopt the new forms of social experience, collective association, and personal habit their architecture represents.”⁶⁴

In Brazil in 1960, this meant that streets were suddenly no longer for pedestrians, public spaces were no longer for chance encounters or impromptu activities, and private dwellings were no longer ostentatious markers of socioeconomic status. Rather, Holston wrote, “Modernist architecture redefines each of these elements and develops their classification as an instrument of social transformation.”⁶⁵ This transformation was intended to be implemented via physical forms and spatial relationships that were so completely different from those of status-quo development models — such as traditional (pre-Modernist) urban environments — that their newness would force users into a particular and predictable pattern of behavior. This is the essence of the philosophy of environmental determinism.

Yet, despite the intentions and comprehensive planning of both Costa and Niemeyer in designing, and the Brazilian government in building and populating, the new capital city, the failure of this philosophy in the Plano Piloto is by now clear. This is primarily because the design of Brasilia, and its strict codes of conduct, negated almost entirely the history of the people whose lives it intended to improve. Such negation inevitably provoked a rejection by many inhabitants of the very concept of the utopian city and its expectations of behavioral conformity.⁶⁶ This rejection has continued to manifest itself in multiple ways: unanticipated utilization and modification of space, unregulated peripheral development, the rise of peripheral squatter settlements, and general social stratification. All of these adaptations and subversions of the master plan, while they cannot necessarily be charac-

terized as negative per se, have certainly had the effect of deconstructing any illusion of utopia; and this fact in itself belies the notion that urban design can predict or shape social behavior. In the ultimate, most ironic disassociation between its physical design and its ideological legitimations, Brasilia has served to advance either a critique of bourgeois society or its establishment, depending on the political leaning of the Brazilian ruler in turn.

This is not to say that social behavior, or even societal values, are not affected by physical planning and design. On the contrary, there is plenty of evidence in Brasilia, as well as countless other contexts, that the design of physical spaces can and does have a significant impact on what users do and/or don't do and value. Just one example is the dramatic reduction in pedestrian activity in Brasilia compared to that of other Brazilian cities, due both to the significantly higher capacity of Brasilia's automobile infrastructure and the Plano Piloto's lack of pedestrian-supportive circulation elements. As a result of this increased focus on motorized travel, the value that the city's inhabitants place on owning an automobile is higher than for other Brazilians, since essentially everyone who has the option to drive does.

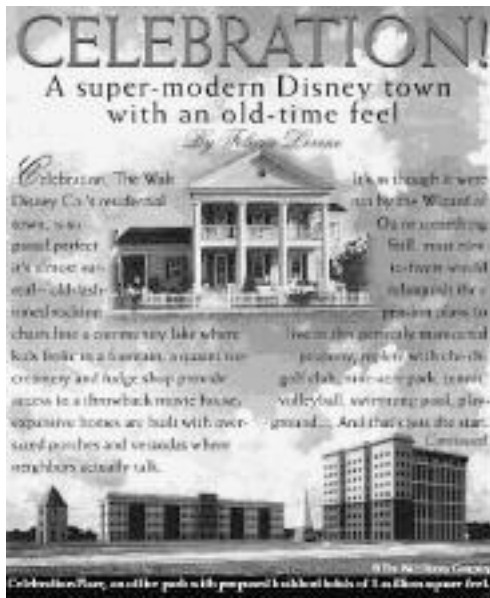
However, while there can be little doubt that physical design affects individual and group behavior to a certain extent, neither can there be much doubt that individual and group behaviors reciprocally affect physical design, perhaps even to an equal extent. In Brasilia this is demonstrated by what Holston has called the “familiarization” of the Modernist city, in which “traditional” values and long-held perceptions of how urban space is used (and, perhaps more importantly, how social relations are conducted) have battled the strictly prescribed uses and social interactions intended by the master plan to a stalemate. The result is an altogether new, largely hybridized urban form, and a unique urban culture that is neither traditional nor modern.⁶⁷

CELEBRATION

The economic health and harmonious evolution of neighborhoods, districts and corridors can be improved through graphic urban design codes that serve as predictable guides for change. It's therefore not a question of whether to control land development, but rather what to control, and to what end.

— Charter of the New Urbanism

Aside from Seaside, Florida, the “new town” of Celebration is perhaps the most significant New Urbanist project yet constructed.⁶⁸ And, like Brasilia, Celebration is a seminal work of socially didactic urbanism. Designed by Robert A.M. Stern and Cooper, Robertson and Partners, among other prominent New Urbanist firms, this “neotraditional stepchild” of Walt Disney's Experimental Prototype



Community of Tomorrow, or EPCOT, was envisioned to showcase how a high quality of life can be achieved in the future by returning to the pre-Modernist small town as a development paradigm (FIGS. 6–9).⁶⁹

As the original developer of the town, Disney made certain that Celebration “got the full new urbanist treatment.”⁷⁰ True to form, Celebration exhibits all its design staples — abundant green spaces, centralized “Main Street” shopping, narrow streets with a pedestrian focus, varied housing types packaged in nostalgic architectural styles, pre-Modernist lot configurations (narrow frontages, back-alley garage access, front porches, narrow street setbacks, etc.), and strict building codes, to name a few. The town’s spatial configurations, architectural details, and overall *esprit* were all deliberately planned to create a deep sense of history, identity and community in a place that was created out of whole cloth. They were also intended to serve as spatial symbols of a rejection of extant forms of development, particularly suburban sprawl.

According to Andrew Ross, a former Celebration resident-researcher, this should come as no surprise, since “like most blueprints for the pursuit of happiness, the reason for Celebration was rooted in repulsion for the existing order of things.”⁷¹ This repulsion is communicated through the neo-traditional urban design of Celebration at multiple levels, according to a network of semiotic codes that work together not only to tell people that life is better “in here,” but to sell them on the “traditional” values that made life in the past preferable to life today. For example, Celebration’s pedestrian scale and infrastructure are intended to tell inhabitants that walking, not driving, is the preferred mode of travel. And “traditional” architecture, rooted in American colonial styles, announces that the pioneer spirit and “American dream” have been reborn. Meanwhile, abundant public places communicate that social interaction and community ties are more an expectation than a choice. And the town’s very name tells inhabitants exactly how they should feel about living there.

As the previous discussion of Brasilia shows, this use of architectonic form and spatial order at the service of a larger social agenda is nothing new, and certainly not unique to the



FIGURE 6 (TOP). Disney advertisement of Celebration.

FIGURE 7 (CENTER). Children playing at a fountain in Celebration. Photo by Vicente Irazábal, 2006.

FIGURE 8 (BOTTOM). Mixed-use, retail street in Celebration. Photo by Vicente Irazábal, 2006.

FIGURE 9 (TOP RIGHT). Streets of cafes and restaurants in Celebration. Photo by Vicente Irazábal, 2006.

New Urbanist movement. But this pedagogy-by-design is especially clear in Celebration's old-town character. Like Brasilia, the master plan of Celebration is a "subversive search for origins," denying other aspects of U.S. history for strategic purposes.⁷² Specifically, Celebration characterizes the normative vision of neotraditionalism as the way urban life should be, as the natural continuation of age-old urban values. And it situates the predominant design paradigm of the past half-century — suburban sprawl — in direct opposition to this "natural" continuum. In this way, Celebration's New Urbanist designers successfully frame "nontraditional" (e.g., Modernist and suburban) development models as the anomalous "other," a mere mistake in the long history of urbanism — and a brief one at that. So framed, "nontraditional" (more accurately in this case "non-neotraditional") urban design is divorced from history, no longer a tradition in its own right, and therefore without legitimacy and/or merit. As Ross has pointed out: "Flush with utopian assurances handed down from centuries of American pioneer settlement, Celebration [is] yet another fresh start in a world gone wrong," albeit one that reverts to the past, rather than the future, for inspiration.⁷³

Indications of this rejection of existing Modernist and suburban development models are abundant in Celebration. Particularly obvious is the choice of available architectural styles, as listed in the original Celebration Pattern Book, and as now visible on the town's not-so-vintage streets: Classical, Victorian, Colonial Revival, Coastal, Mediterranean, and French. In the context of a former wetland near Orlando, these references invariably evoke an exoticism of distance, be it physical or temporal — and so too a mythos of long-held tradition. Yet, it is not just any tradition, but specific traditions; and it is not just any historic period, but a specific historic period that these styles point to, namely, the colonial United States and its predominantly white, Christian, pre-Modernist urban values.⁷⁴

As already discussed, the central values promoted by New Urbanism and showcased in Celebration, such as community interaction, socioeconomic integration, and resource conservation, are largely at odds with the values demonstrated in both historical and present-day U.S. development traditions. Ironically, however, they are largely consistent with those outlined in the Athens Charter. Thus, given that the socialist context within which Modernism originally developed and took hold has long since disappeared in the U.S., the New Urbanist rewriting of the progressive values of the Modernist movement as timeless (i.e., deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of Christian Europe as embodied in the architecture and spatial order of the colonial United States and resurrected in Celebration) has allowed the movement to have enormous and simultaneous appeal to both conservative and liberal consumers.

This reframing of Modernism's core values from a bold vision (almost to the extent of being revolutionary) to a nostal-

gic "return to tradition," but without the loss of modern conveniences, demonstrates how the social ethos that Modernism and New Urbanism share has been shaped into two diametrically opposed urban forms by two vastly different socio-political contexts. Clearly, Celebration is not Modernist in form. Yet, there can be no doubt that this quaint company town with high-tech amenities is a transfiguration of the Modernist aspirations of the EPCOT vision to suit the traditionally oriented values of the turn-of-the-century U.S. consumer. Thus, despite its emphasis on pre-Modernist urban form, and its attempts to engender pre-Modernist urban values, Celebration's philosophical origins are clearly rooted in Modernism.

While Disney no longer owns or operates the town, the controlled social environment dictated by the strict rules of its urban form is still the norm. This degree of formal control is not uncommon in other contemporary planned communities, and architecture in urban settings has indeed always subscribed to some sense of aesthetic order. Yet, the coordinated orderliness of Celebration is a decidedly Modernist invention, given that historically "authentic" places are undeniably messy.⁷⁵

The messiness of history, however, has caught up with Celebration with each passing year, and despite its strict controls, unexpected deviations in both form and the behavior of residents, have become commonplace. Again, this is primarily due to the fact that the city's design and strict codes of conduct largely negate the history of the predominantly suburban population that relocated to fill its homes, churches and schools. As was the case in Brasilia, such negation has provoked a rejection on the part of many of Celebration's residents of the unfamiliar social environment, and of its constant formal reinforcement of the simultaneously pre-Modernist and progressive urban values that they are expected to embrace.

As was also the case in Brasilia, this rejection has manifested itself in multiple ways: unanticipated utilization and modification of space, undesired polarization of political interests working in opposition to the planned order, and residents driving out of town to do their shopping at big-box stores due to the boutique-dominated shopping on its main commercial street. Interestingly enough, exactly as was the case in Brasilia, the result is an altogether new, largely hybridized urban form/culture that is neither traditional nor Modernist, neither small town nor suburb.

Residents of Celebration have paid a premium to participate in this experiment in the "good community."⁷⁶ However, despite its form as a small town, critics have dubbed Celebration "a conventional suburban subdivision," and they have decried its lack of social diversity, affordable housing, and neighborhood-related retail.⁷⁷ Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins have attested to the lack of racial diversity in the town, claiming that most of the African Americans appear to be the nannies of white babies.⁷⁸ Additionally, the damage to natural wetlands and creation of its artificial lakes

has raised questions about the real level of ecological commitment within the New Urbanism.

Finally, Celebration's design authenticity and diversity has also been questioned, as its buildings make use of faux windows and columns, and its codes dictate taste in areas like front porch furniture and window coverings.⁷⁹ In Marshall's impression, "The relative commercial success of Celebration shows a continuing American appetite for the fake, the ersatz, and the unreal."⁸⁰ Although the formal expression of this "design totalitarianism" in New Urbanist projects is very different than that of Modernism, there can be no doubt that it echoes a Modernist abhorrence of difference and disorder, and that standardization of the designers' taste is paramount.⁸¹

ONE CONTINUUM, ONE ETHOS

This article has challenged the common perception of the New Urbanist movement as a return to "traditional" urban development models and the values associated with them, as well as the self-identification of the movement's followers as strict anti-Modernists. It has done so by placing New Urbanism and Modernism on the same historical continuum, and by showing that the philosophical similarities between the two movements are as abundant as are the formal and contextual differences.

On the one hand, Modernism and New Urbanism can be interpreted as independently constructed reactions to two distinct urban phenomena — central city deterioration due to overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure in the case of the former, and central-city decline due to suburban outmigration and peripheral sprawl in the case of the latter. These occurred at different points in time and within notably different political contexts — one more forward-looking and socially progressive (pre-fascist Europe), and the other more backward-looking and socially conservative (present-day United States). Yet, on the other hand, due simply to the chronology of the two movements, New Urbanism (and neotraditional development more generally) must also be understood as a direct continuation of the legacy of Modernist city planning, since it relies on essentially Modernist principles as the backbone of its philosophy.⁸²

By virtue of its call to revisit "traditional" — explicitly defined in the Charter of the New Urbanism as pre-Modernist — forms of development, New Urbanism advocates a decidedly anti-Modernist urban form which has, simultaneously, decidedly Modernist ambitions — namely, a comprehensive restructuring of the status quo. Framed as such, the neotraditional values of New Urbanism become a normative mechanism for damage control vis-à-vis the failed social and environmental urban restructuring efforts of Modernism beginning in the late 1920s.⁸³ This reading of New Urbanism's relationship to Modernism is consistent

with the view of a number of contemporary thinkers who consider that, like sound and silence, the very concepts of the traditional (and so too the neotraditional) and the modern are simultaneously mutually exclusive and codependent. What this means is that any discussion of one requires implicit reference to the other; or, as Jane M. Jacobs put it, "tradition is (not) modern."⁸⁴ At the very least, a comparison of the original charters of the Modernist and New Urbanist movements reveals that New Urbanism belongs to the Modernist genealogy, born as it is out of a similar approach to the spatial analysis of, and physical response to, the perceived social, economic and environmental ills of its contemporary society.

Perhaps the strongest evidence that the two seemingly opposed movements fall along the same ideological continuum, despite their vastly different contexts and formal language, is their mutual faith in physical planning as a mechanism for social reform.⁸⁵ Thus, the spirit of the AC, that "Architecture is the key to everything," is carried on in the CNU, which identifies "the reassertion of fundamental urban design principles at the neighborhood scale" as "the heart of New Urbanism."⁸⁶

The expert capacity and conscious duty of design professionals (architects, urban designers, planners, and developers) to bring about social change is also central to both Modernism and New Urbanism. Thus, each movement has envisioned how the design professional may offer a physical image at different scales (from the residential, or cellular, to the regional, or systemwide) of a socially healthy city which can be brought into being by formal means.⁸⁷ Yet, even New Urbanist supporter James Howard Kunstler has pointed out that New Urbanism is largely dependent on the same economic mechanisms as the "sprawl-meisters," and that there is little reason to believe that "just tweaking the municipal codes and building slightly better housing subdivisions and squeezing chain stores under the condominiums and hiding the parking lots behind the buildings" will make our "derelict towns" habitable again.⁸⁸

New Urbanists' concentrated efforts to undo the effects of Modernist or "nontraditional" development amount to a conscious process of social and ecological reverse engineering which, paradoxically, flows through the same basic philosophical conduit of environmental determinism that brought about such effects in the first place. Thus, New Urbanism's a priori diagnosis of lack of community as a fundamental cancer of both urban and suburban contemporary contexts, and its subsequent prescription of neotraditional design principles as a way to treat, or perhaps even cure, this ill, is reminiscent of Modernism's attempts to address centuries of structurally ingrained socioeconomic inequities and growing environmental degradation by returning to the preindustrial "raw materials of urbanism," and providing the urban working class with adequate "sun, vegetation, and space."⁸⁹

The fundamental lesson to be learned from comparing the ethos of "erasure and reinscription" common to both

Modernism and New Urbanism is that normative visions based on the philosophy of environmental determinism do, in fact, have the power to effect social change.⁹⁰ However, these visions cannot be implemented in a vacuum — that is to say, in completely neutral or homogeneous cultural contexts — because such contexts do not exist. This fact effectively precludes these visions from accomplishing their complete set of objectives, since the visions themselves are compromised as soon as the specific values embodied in their formal manifestations (e.g., the spaces they create) differ from the values or behaviors of the users of these spaces. Thus, normative movements such as Modernism and New Urbanism that define themselves largely by the extent to which they can control not only social behavior, but social values, are predisposed to fail because the ideal social conditions that they seek, by virtue of being ideal, fail to allow for the compromise of values between old and new, traditional and nontraditional, that must occur during the very process of change that they seek to instigate.

In this sense, the spirit of scripted revolution that can be said to characterize both Modernism and New Urbanism greatly negates the unscripted process of evolution that will inevitably lead to a reciprocity of influence between form and function, such that the multiplicity of values enacted upon, and embodied in, a given space by its users alters its intended use — and so too the urban values that it engenders. This negation results in an ongoing tension, and, as Talen has pointed out, this tension “between the idiosyncrasies of the everyday life of local residents, and the counter force of centralized, Haussmannesque authority, is not easily resolved.”⁹¹

Ultimately, both Modernists and New Urbanists have been right to assume that their respective design paradigms can and will change the social behaviors of the inhabitants of their developments. However, as Brasilia and Celebration demonstrate, they have been wrong to assume that they can control these processes of change, or predict the behavioral outcomes to which strict formal controls will eventually lead. It is therefore inherently problematic to suppose that a given set of values can be fossilized into a given urban form. As the legacy of Modernism has shown, the best-designed, most comprehensively planned cities are still replete with racial tension, crime, class segregation, and largely unequal distribution of resources. Today New Urbanists acknowledge the complexity and interconnectedness of issues that affect urban transformations, advocate for a multidisciplinary

approach to resolving socio-spatial problems, and market themselves in a way that appeals to a broad cross-section of the U.S. consumer public. Yet the goals of New Urbanism are ultimately still unduly influenced by faith in social control, and they are excessively reliant on environmental determinism as a strategy for social harmony, much as was the case with Modernism.

If New Urbanism hopes to reshape the U.S. urban fabric (and, more importantly, the urban values of people that call the U.S. home) in a comprehensive way, vastly different social, economic and cultural groups will eventually have to live together in their developments. While this may be the dream of progressive thinkers, it is evident that not all of these groups share the same idea of how space ought to be used. Nor are they all likely to have the same notion of what constitutes “traditional values.” Recent endorsements of New Urbanism by Christian organizations, for example, have expressed explicitly that such support is due to the perceived potential of neotraditional urban spaces to provide “opportunity for spontaneous ministry.”⁹² Such micro-motivated support for neotraditionalism at the grassroots level makes two things clear. One is the degree to which a self-selected population predisposed to the “traditional” values espoused by New Urbanism is likely to dominate its proliferation. Another is just how unlikely it will be that “new” forms of physical urbanism designed to encourage a strict interpretation of “good” social behavior can accommodate the diverse values of a diverse world, and thereby eliminate the fundamental social problems that the CNU identifies.⁹³

New Urbanism is by now widely acknowledged as both a sophisticated and mature, if idealistic, urban design movement, and it is increasingly apparent that its contribution to twenty-first-century urbanism, as well as its historical legacy, will be significant. The principal challenge facing New Urbanists as their movement continues to gain momentum and popular support is how to evolve as an ideology. This will require accepting compromises without yielding base values to the extent that the movement itself, and its laudable efforts to make needed improvements to the U.S., and increasingly global, urban landscape, lose all meaning. This said, the time has come for New Urbanists to accept their philosophical lineage in order to learn from the failures of Modernism, and so too be able to look in the mirror to acknowledge the limitations of their vision, in addition to its considerable power.

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16. M. Ebner, "Re-Reading Suburban America: Urban Population Deconcentration, 1810–1980," *American Quarterly*, Vol.37 No.3 (1985), pp.368–81; and R. Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).
17. Congress of New Urbanism, Charter of the New Urbanism, 1996, Ch.6. Accessed online June 21, 2006, at: <http://www.newurbanism.org/pages/532096/>.
18. J.M. Jacobs, "Tradition Is (Not) Modern: Deterritorializing Globalization," in N. AlSayyad, ed., *The End of Tradition?* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp.29–44.
19. D. Hall, "Community in the New Urbanism: Design Vision and Symbolic Crusade," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol.9 No.2 (1998), p.56; and Bellah et al. *Habits of the Heart*, 1996.
20. Falconer Al-Hindi, "The New Urbanism"; K. Falconer Al-Hindi and C. Staddon, "The Hidden Histories and Geographies of Neotraditional Town Planning: The Case of Seaside, Florida," *Environment and Planning D*, Vol.15 (1997), pp.349–72.
21. Grant, *Planning the Good Community*, p.193.
22. *Ibid.*, p.77.
23. Charter of the New Urbanism, pp.177–78.
24. Talen, *New Urbanism and American Planning*.
25. *Ibid.*, p.2.
26. *Ibid.*, p.3.
27. *Ibid.*, p.19.
28. *Ibid.*, pp.37–38.
29. *Ibid.*, p.38.
30. *Ibid.*, p.40.
31. E. Talen, "Sense of Community and Neighbourhood Form: An Assessment of the Social Doctrine of New Urbanism," *Urban Studies*, Vol.36 No.8 (1999), pp.1361–79.
32. C. Webster, "Property Rights and the Public Realm: Gates, Greenbelts and Gemeinschaft," *Environment and Planning B*, Vol.29 (2002), pp.397–412.
33. This is not an exhaustive list. We are interested in demonstrating that New Urbanism can be conceived as a neo-Modernist movement, in direct opposition to the presumption of their founders, because both in spirit and in practice it borrows significantly from the Modernists. For doing that, a selection of principles from the two charters that demonstrate that genealogy is one of the methods we use in this article.

34. Hayden, *Building Suburbia*.
35. The Athens Charter, Art. 2–20.
36. *Ibid.*, Art. 1–8; and Art. 3, 77–83.
37. *Ibid.*, Art. 1–7.
38. Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City: Elements of a Doctrine of Urbanism To Be Used as the Basis of Our Machine-Age Civilization* (New York: Orion Press, 1967); Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*; and L. Peattie, *Planning, Rethinking Cuidad Guayana* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987).
39. E. Mumford, “The ‘Tower in a Park’ in America: Theory and Practice, 1920–1960,” *Planning Perspectives*, Vol.10 (1995), pp.17–41; E. Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); D. Dowall, *The Suburban Squeeze: Land Conversion and Regulation in the San Francisco Bay Area* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); P. Booth, “How Effective Is Zoning in the Control of Development?” *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, Vol.16 No.4 (1989), pp.401–15; D. McMillan and J. McDonald, “A Two-Limit Tobit Model of Suburban Land-Use Zoning,” *Land Economics*, Vol.66 No.3 (Aug. 1990), pp.272–82; R. Babcock, “The Spatial Impact of Land Use and Environmental Controls,” in A. Solomon, ed., *The Prospective City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1980), pp.264–87; R. Pendall, “Do Land-Use Controls Cause Sprawl?” *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, Vol.26 No.4 (1999), pp.555–71; and E. Birch, “Radburn and the American Planning Movement: The Persistence of an Idea,” *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol.46 No.4 (1980), pp.424–39.
40. J. Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961); and C. Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987).
41. K. Bristol, “The Pruitt-Igoe Myth,” *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol.44 No.3 (1991), p.163.
42. M. Comerio, “Pruitt-Igoe and Other Stories,” *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol.34 No.1 (1981), p.23.
43. See the Preamble to the Charter of the New Urbanism.
44. J. Levine, *Zoned out: Regulations, Markets, and Choices in Transportation and Metropolitan Land Use* (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future Press, 2005).
45. McCann, “Neotraditional Developments”; and Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*.
46. Talen, *New Urbanism and American Planning*, p.59.
47. See, for example, the following critiques: Falconer Al-Hindi and C. Staddon, “The Hidden Histories and Geographies of Neotraditional Town Planning”; Grant, *Planning the Good Community*; Pyatok, “Comment on Charles C. Bohl’s ‘New Urbanism and the City’”; K. Till, “Neotraditional Towns and Urban Villages: The Cultural Production of a Geography of ‘Otherness,’” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol.11, (1993), pp.709–32; and J. Zimmerman, “The ‘Nature’ of Urbanism on the New Urbanist Frontier: Sustainable Development, or Defense of the Suburban Dream?” *Urban Geography*, Vol.22 No.3 (2001), pp.249–67.
48. J.E. Gyourko and W. Rybczynski, “Financing New Urbanism,” *Urban Land*, Vol.63 No.5 (2004), pp.18–25.
49. L. Sandercock, ed., *Making the Invisible Visible: A Multicultural Planning History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); and L. Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities of the 21st Century* (London; New York: Continuum, 2003).
50. Grant, *Planning the Good Community*.
51. Although far from exhaustive, there already exists literature that scrutinizes and analyzes the discursive and professional practices of New Urbanists and the policy implication of New Urbanist projects in the U.S., e.g., A. Garde, “New Urbanism as Sustainable Growth? A Supply Side Story and Its Implications for Public Policy,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, Vol.24 No.2 (2004), pp.154–70; and A. Garde, “Designing and Developing New Urbanist Projects in the United States: Insights and Implications,” *Journal of Urban Design*, Vol.11 No.1 (2006), pp.33–54. In the context of Europe, Asia, and North America, see Grant, *Planning the Good Community*. In the context of Latin America, see C. Irazábal, “Da Carta de Atenas à Carta do Novo Urbanismo. Qual seu significado para a América Latina?” *Portal Vitruvius* http://www.vitruvius.com.br/arquitextos/arg019/arg019_03.asp Accessed June 27, 2007.
52. Hall, “Community in the New Urbanism,” p.56.
53. Marcuse, “The New Urbanism: The Dangers so Far”; and Zimmerman, “The ‘Nature’ of Urbanism on the New Urbanist Frontier.”
54. Grant, *Planning the Good Community*, p.11.
55. *Ibid.*, p.77.
56. *Ibid.*, p.22.
57. *Ibid.*, p.229.
58. C.C. Tu and M.J. Eppli, “Valuing New Urbanism: The Case of Kentlands,” *Real Estate Economics*, Vol.27 No.3 (1999), pp.425–51; and Y. Song and G.-J. Knaap, “New Urbanism and Housing Values: A Disaggregate Assessment,” *Journal of Urban Economics*, Vol.54 (2003), pp.218–38.
59. M. Pyatok, “The Narrow Base of the New Urbanists,” *Progressive Planning Reader*, [2002]2004, p.18.
60. For Brasília, see, for example, E. Silva, *História de Brasília* (Brasília: Editora de Brasília, 1970); J. Pastore, *Brasília: a cidade e o homem; uma investigação sociológica sobre os processos de migração, adaptação e planejamento urbano* (São Paulo: Cia Ed. Nacional, Ed. da Universidade, 1969); D. Epstein, *Brasília, Plan and Reality: A Study of Planned and Spontaneous Urban Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Holston, *The Modernist City*; P. Wong, *Planning and the Unplanned Reality: Brasília*, mimeo (Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California at Berkeley, 1989); and J. Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). For Celebration, see, for example, D. Frantz and C. Collins, *Celebration, U.S.A.: Living in Disney’s Brave New Town* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2000); M. Greif, “Potemkin Villages,” *The American Prospect*, November 2002, http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=potemkin_villages; A. Schmitz and L.W. Bookout, *Trends and innovations in Master-Planned communities* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1998); A. Ross, *The Celebration Chronicles: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Property Value in Disney’s New Town* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999); and C. Bohl, *Place Making: Developing Town Centers, Main Streets, and Urban Villages* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 2002).
61. P. Bica and B. Brasilia, “The ‘Capital of Hope,’” *UNESCO Courier*, July 1984, pp.21–22.

62. Holston, *The Modernist City*, p.3.
63. Ibid., p.91.
64. Ibid., p.15.
65. Ibid., p.187.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.; and Wong, *Planning and the Unplanned Reality*.
68. Grant, *Planning the Good Community*, p.82.
69. R. Kroloff, "Disney Builds a New Town," *Architecture*, August 1997, p.114.
70. Grant, *Planning the Good Community*, p.88.
71. Ross, *The Celebration Chronicles*, p.4.
72. Holston, *The Modernist City*, p.68, makes this exact same argument regarding Costa's master plan for Brasilia.
73. Ross, *The Celebration Chronicles*, p.5.
74. Kroloff, "Disney Builds a New Town," p.116.
75. Ross, *The Celebration Chronicles*; and Falconer Al-Hindi, "The New Urbanism."
76. Frantz and Collins, *Celebration, U.S.A.*
77. A. Marshall, *How Cities Work: Suburbs, Sprawl, and the Roads Not Taken* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), p.xviii; and Frantz and Collins, *Celebration, U.S.A.*
78. Frantz and Collins, *Celebration, U.S.A.*
79. Grant, *Planning the Good Community*.
80. A. Marshall, "A Tale of Two Towns Tells a Lot about this Thing Called New Urbanism," *Built Environment*, Vol.29 No.3 (2003), p.227.
81. Hall, "Community in the New Urbanism," p.34.
82. See Peter Calthorpe's Afterword to the Charter of the New Urbanism, pp.177-180. In it, he even goes so far as to say that New Urbanism is the first unifying design vision of urbanism to take shape since CIAM.
83. For a complete chronology of CIAM, see Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*.
84. Jacobs, "Tradition Is (Not) Modern," p.29.
85. Sorkin, "Will New Plans for the Gulf Drown it Again?"
86. Athens Charter, Art. 3-92; Charter of the New Urbanism, p.71.
87. Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*, p.272.
88. J.H. Kunstler, "The Clusterfuck Nation Chronicle," Online at http://www.kunstler.com/mags_diary13.html. June 12, 2005, np.
89. See the Preamble and Afterword to the Charter of the New Urbanism, as well as the Athens Charter, Clause 12. While the Charter of the New Urbanism places heavy emphasis on the need for regional planning, such planning is not the primary outcome desired by New Urbanists. Rather, New Urbanists recognize that only a regional approach to growth and development will allow the design principles that they advocate to be implemented at a scale great enough for their desired social and environmental outcomes, such as significantly reduced vehicle miles traveled, to be realized.
90. Holston, *The Modernist City*, p.271.
91. E. Talen, "Help for Urban Planning: The Transect Strategy," *Journal of Urban Design*, Vol.7 No.3 (2002), p.304.
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93. Falconer Al-Hindi, "The New Urbanism"; and Sorkin, "Will New Plans for the Gulf Drown It Again?"