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Plenum 3: Innovation and Tradition

The City of 2030—Network and Processes

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- 1 Fixed urban-design models and prognosis on the future of the city have often missed out the reality of urban developments, as any review of the past thirty years will show. Economic and planning cycles are becoming more short-lived; new players have entered the scene. Instead of the completed 'urban product', it is networks and processes that are becoming more and more important in urban development. Where do we find innovative urban clusters? Who are the promoters of processes, and who the 'mere partakers'? How are urban development processes structured, and what phases of such processes are critical?
2. In recent years Siemens has initiated large development projects in Berlin, Frankfurt/Main, Munich and in the United States while at the same time stimulating the debate on urban design with new ideas and methods. This is exemplified by the urban renewal project for the world's largest Siemens premises in Munich, the Siemens City 'Isar South'. Established in 1927 as a factory for telephones, at present the complex is being redeveloped into an open urban quarter and core location of Siemens's IT and communications technology. We know that we can only win innovative employees on a long-term basis if we provide them with an attractive working and living environment. Siemens Real Estate, as the proprietor and real estate administrator of the Siemens Group, aims to create modern work spaces and offer flexible working methods to the brains of the next IT generations and to reactivate unused property potential. The planners envisage

urbanising the area and creating ca. 775,000 sq.m of floor space of offices, residential space and related facilities, hotels, catering outlets and leisure amenities.

A large project of this nature will only be successful if the proprietor, the users and the city as the authority in charge of urban planning join to form a threesome of creative energy which will ensure its win-win potentials and define common goals. In Munich, to this end, we discovered and developed an informal, co-operative planning procedure, teaming up with the municipal planning authority. The first milestones were the positive benchmark decision by the city council and an urban-design and landscaping ideas competition. The functional structures and zoning of the area are currently being defined in weekly sessions by the project group of Siemens managers and representatives of the city's planning department, at times supported by sub-groups specialised in particular fields. A steering committee of high-profile municipal and corporate representatives decides on any basic questions remaining open or matters of conflict.

Planning is based on the winning design by the young Cologne architects of Jaspert & Steffens–JSWD who proposed a somewhat unspectacular, but 'elastic', urban street-block grid with a central green area. Unlike individual buildings and urban estates, the design of urban layouts requires less 'exalted', timeless basic structures. Apart from consultations with neighbours, citizens and the district committee, the project benefits from important innovations and best-practice-oriented ideas proposed by expert consultants with a background of science and/or practice who accompany the innovatory process of collecting and applying information. Time-management models are of particular interest in the world of work, as are new workplace concepts, alternative forms of living and working, space-saving and environmental traffic management. It goes without saying that a technology producer like Siemens also applies—in an experiment on itself—its own guiding IT, building and traffic technology.

In today's construction industry, the developers' economic performance goals are of increasing importance. By developers we mean both the real-estate owner (e.g. Siemens) and subsequent investors of capital. This speaks for including 'investors' as early as possible in a consultant function. After all, paying developers' bills is the duty of every client. This is not to say that profit is the only priority, but only that the larger a development project, the more balanced the assessment of its economic and social aspects must be. Do all the social groups concerned assume their part in this process?

3. What we need on the road to urban development up to the year 2030, is high professionalism in process design and an 'elastic' project management. The planning steps from the initial stage through to marketing, letting, moving in and aftercare may not be new, but are rarely assessed and determined for the entire life of a completed project, beyond a ten-year period. It is crucial that processes evolve less hierarchically, i.e. more 'from the bottom up' than 'from the top down' and are understood as a value-adding chain of private and public initiatives. Experience tells us that proprietors, users and enterprisingly minded city representatives are the motors behind them. They possess clear goals, planning tools, economic thinking and social competence, and this enables them to establish a confidence-based informal consensus long before council decisions and contractual agreements are made. Siemens has introduced key data programming to the initial phase of development and construction projects. We should expect preliminary planning measures, even with large-scale urban development projects—i.e. the careful conception of planning goals, of alternative architectural, technical and economic strategies as well as time, committee-work and process structures—to take up 40 per cent of the entire planning time and work.

The control of planning processes is, however, only one half of urban development. The other is a sensitive taking stock of the long-term economic and social change in structures and values. As far as we

know today, the city of 2030 should be read as a 'basic expectation' of its inhabitants, as 'urban life on demand', i.e. a combination of a great number of amenities. It resembles a car rental company: instead of having their own car, citizens discover the attractions of permanent availability of service and of various paradigms. Once the city of 2030 has become—in terms of society and buildings—the 'elastic' field of action for constantly changing designs of living, we will also have to reckon with the related revision of zoning and use structures. Who will be able to afford these then?