

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Harald Jahn, and I am very pleased to be invited to this great conference. I am a journalist and photographer and its great to be here with so many knowledgeable people from all fields. Anyway I am here to show you some impressions of today's urban traffic and design.

Let us start with this wonderful and very typical photo of a busy street in Vienna at the beginning of the 20th century. This was a time shortly after Vienna had been converted from the pre-industrial and walled Biedermeier city into a modern town. Nearly all buildings and structures you see on this photo were new at the time!

...and here we have another typical image, but of similar situation today. Vienna's suburbs have expanded and again on this photo nearly all structures are new. But there is one big mistake in the image, can you guess it? - - - right – the people are missing. 100 years ago, cities were built for people. During the last decades, the city was rebuilt, but for cars.

So what was the result? 100 years ago, people felt comfortable in the streets. Now cars feel comfortable – but people don't. Now people take their cars to bring them to environments especially made for people: Environments where the cars have to wait outside, where people can peacefully walk, talk, shop, have a coffee. These environments are called shopping malls, and their design imitates the structures of historic cities with their market places, fountains, beer gardens. Here the circle closes.

The people use their cars to escape the towns which were ruined by cars.

I think I do not have to describe the problems of urban sprawl, the infrastucture costs ans all the following problems here.

What is the solution? More of the same?

... No. More of the same brings us areas like these - and everyone will prefer to use a car to escape!

Let's jump back to the city that people still love to live at. We see small structures, plants, places to stay...

...and finally we see people again. What's right with this image, this time?
The cars are missing!

They do not need them, because they have everything they need within 5 minutes walking distance. Give the streets back to the people, and there will be no need for speed!

It needed only 50 years to convert the city for people into a city for cars. Now it is time to start a new conversion - and this time it will change the city for good. It is time to give the streets back to the citizens, and the simple reason is: When the townspeople feel well around the place they live, they do not need to find somewhere else. If you are living in a surrounding where it is great to stay, you simply do not have to escape.

Of course every today's city offers a pedestrian area, closed a street here and there and tries to bring life back into the center.

One country in Europe is leading in this process, and they are using a surprising tool – a tool of transport.

It is France, and the main instrument for the operation is the Tramway.

This new generation of french trams has nothing to do with the old noisy and bumpy vintage vehicles. It comes with...

Absolute priority over the cars

It is used as a tool for remodeling the whole street or even the surrounding quarter.

And it has great individual design which people can identify with

Moreover the neighbours are incorporated into the planning process from the beginning – and they love to get nice new streets with lots of trees!

Remodelling the City

Some before/after images. Here we have Angers, please note the 4 car lanes and the two bus lanes with additional parking lanes – so up to 6 lanes for motorized traffic in the very center of a city! ... And here the same street after conversion. Believe it or not - this is the same street as before – with Bus/bike lanes, wide pedestrian areas and a green carpet in the middle.

Another, yet more impressive example from Paris. This is, or better was Porte d'Italie with its underbridge. ...And this is Porte d'Italie today. And the interesting thing is – car traffic did not collapse! It never does, if you reduce the room – it is a little bit like a gas, which fills every empty space, but can be compressed when you reduce it. This is how this street looked before - and today.

Let's visit Strasbourg for a moment to see how the cross sections of streets changed. There are not only new tracks – also the place for pedestrians is enlarged and the place for cars is reduced. Moreover the the urban design quality was improved.

Angers shows us, how ugly suburbs can be redesigned. This leads me to a key sentence which describes french tramway construction.

“The Tramway brought us a park”

What does that mean? I think, some of you know tramway routes like these. With such a design people will never be glad to have a tram in front of their windows.

In France, the first impression you receive when visiting one of the appx. 30 tramway cities: the lawn tracks and the urban design.

“The tramway brought us a park!” Hundreds, sometimes thousands of new trees are planted along the new tracks, as here in Tour. More than 2000 trees are planted this year along the new tramway line, some streets are really converted into kind-of parks. Lawn track is more or less the standard superstructure which is used as often as possible. So let us make a stroll through the park!

Here we are in Strasbourg...

...Lyon, an old former railway line – now, also the fast airport trains are running here!

...The suburbs of Nantes -

...And the center of Reims with the cathedral – some of you will notice a detail which I will mention later.

...Mulhouse

...Orleans

...Grenoble

...Mulhouse again -
and Paris.

Lot of attention is used in the styling and architecture of the new gardens, like here in Brest – and so I come to the general design of these conversions.

What is the difference between places like shopping malls and historic inner cities?

The centers of our cities are places of highest value

(the streets around malls are places of highest volume ☺)

What does that mean? Inner cities are not cheap fast erected boxes of concrete, like malls. Inner cities are rich of historic buildings, special shops, cafes, restaurants. Inner cities are full of histories – they are places of personal remembrance, of old symbols and stories.

New structures should cope with this. Mostly, the street surface is younger than the surrounding buildings. The street surface is the third cladding of a street - but: often we have great historic buildings - along ugly streets.

100 years ago, the best architects of their time designed the transport systems.

In France it goes without saying that the best architects, designers and artists are planning new tram systems, as here in Tours. Just to give you an impression: The Tramway is seen as the 4th landscape, beside the river, the gardens and the buildings.

(Video) The Project Website mentions at least 7 artists who worked for the new system, covering all aspects like station design, light and sound. The tram is seen as moving architecture, so every aspect was carefully designed. Roger Tallon, who was responsible for the TGV trains, created the tramcars; Daniel Buren with his famous stripes the stations. Acoustic elements come from Lois Dandrel and his Studio Disonic, and Patrick Rimoux is responsible for the light effects along the trace. A detail, for instance: even the color of the light inside the tramcars changes slightly – brighter and cooler light in summer, more yellowish and warmer in winter!

This is Nice on the Cote d'Azur. Not only the center was improved - this is the tramway depot building with its contemporary architecture. Please note how careful this simple street in the suburbs was designed!

Also in small towns like Valenciennes the transport companies try to build new symbols for their trams.

The glass roof of Place Homme de Fer has become famous in Strasbourg

In Orleans, even the overhead wire disappeared to avoid any disturbance of the cityscape!

And not only in Orleans: more and more cities use this "Alimentation par le Sol", which means ground level power supply – while in Nice batteries bring the tram over two unique places.

Everywhere you can feel the immense carefullness in the design - And the transport companies are aware of their responsibility.

The chief designer of the RATP in Paris says:

1. We are a transport operator
2. We are a public spaces manager
3. We are an urban player – our design has influence on the city. People use it every day, they see it everyday, therefore it must generate positive feelings!

Only 20 % of the interaction with the customer is communication – 80% is personal experience, feelings!

So the RATPs slogan is: Aimer la ville – loving the city.

A new kind of identification

I already mentioned that people are incorporated at early stages of a project. With this regardful approach, they can identify themselves with their new tram.

Everybody will immediately recognize this city. (what makes Barcelona so special? 😊) Beside the buildings and landmarks, the vehicles of public transport are a main element of any city. As even the buildings look more and more similar – not to mention things like McDonalds and Starbucks – the people need elements they are familiar with, elements which make their city unique. Especially tramcars with their life cycle of 30 or more years qualify for this identification.

This is not a cosmetics ad! - The “Cosmetic Valley” near Orleans is a center of the cosmetics industry, so it was not illogical to ask a company like Guerlain for the design of the new trams. Eh voilà – here they are!

Or Montpellier: here it was Christian Lacroix. This line goes to the seaside, and you can feel it already inside the cars... and also the other lines bear extravagant colors and designs.

In Mulhouse, it was a piece of art which became a new landmark of the city: Daniel Burens Arches at the symbol of the tramstops there. BTW, if you wonder about the different tramway – it is a tram-train, which uses railway lines for longer distances and tramway tracks in the city.

In Toulouse, center of the aeronautics industries, it was Airbus, who designed these Jets.

and guess how the trams in Reims look like? Well, as it is the city of Champagne ...these are the trams! Cheers!

These are the new yachts which cruise through Marseille.

We see silkworms in Lyon...

...friendly yellow faces in Mulhouse...

...or futuristic Trains in Bordeaux.

The poetic city

You might have realized that I did not mention technical informations in my presentation. Well – for me it simply is not the point.

The places of our cities have ever been places to meet, to discuss, to trade. They are the antipode to the private rooms, and both – private rooms and public spaces – form the city. The quality of the city is the possibility to choose – being on your own, or beeing among others.

For the last 1000 years, our european cities have been the place of this possibility. In this interplay, in this changeover everything we are proud of did develop.

The public spaces are used in many ways: The city is the place to meet friends... and to learn tolerating contrasts. In our rapidly changing times, this strength, this flexibility is a main skill our society needs.

If somebody leaves his flat to enter his car in the basement garage and drives to his company's parking lot, he will never leave his bubble.

So in my eyes it is absolute necessary that people of total different ages and classes come together in public transport and thereof in public space.

Cities can never be a place for fast transit – they are a place of living, to stay on. The tramway which runs with a matching speed directly in the streets is the perfect complement for this need.

Beside of all this, cities must fascinate their inhabitants again. Cities simply have to be nice. It has a reason, that the word “flaneur” comes from the french language.

Cities must rediscover their sensuousness; and everywhere in France you can feel the will to charm, to fascinate, to delight.

In my eyes, this is the true challenge for tomorrows city: To allow possibilities, and giving people an environment to unfold creativity, fantasy, power and love.

Cities have to be poetic again, and for this, we need

new urban spaces with highest quality based on the needs of the citizen – not their cars.

The tramway of a new generation can be the key for the the Rebirth of Public Space - and the future of our european cities, that we love so much.

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