Kaliningrad Presentation

I'm very pleased to be back in Kaliningrad, and grateful for the opportunity to explain the background to my proposals, indicate how and why I came to the conclusions I did, and discuss them with you.

I'm sorry that I am unable to address you in Russian, but I hope that, with the aid of the Interpreter, we'll be able to discuss some of these matters later.

Also, before I begin, I want to say that I'm particularly delighted that the competition winners have proposed a faithful completion of the House of the Soviets, as well as the restoration of parts of the old city. The competition has been very well organised, and I'm proud to have been part of the process.

[1. Title - Trevor Skempton, Architect and Urban Designer, Liverpool]

Most of my career has been spent in public offices, including management and some teaching. While these public programmes have always been worthwhile, the competition system has allowed me to develop theoretical positions that extend beyond the scope of my immediate practice.

I have entered competitions once a year, sometimes in collaboration with others and sometimes on my own. For this competition, I entered on my own, although I have had the support of my wife, Helen, who is a sociologist and gave critical advice in the analysis of the brief and help in organising my response to it.

The first part of my presentation will be concerned with a few relevant - but general – issues, including other projects, with the second part focussing on Kaliningrad itself. I hope you'll find a useful thread running through all my observations.

[2-3. Early Sketches by Le Corbusier]

These sketches were made by Le Corbusier as a young man, a hundred years ago. He liked to sketch at night when, as he thought, "architectural sensibilities are most acute." The sketches on the left are of the Gothic Cathedral of Chartres. That on the right is of simple forms on a mantelpiece; he damaged his eyesight [separation of the retina] doing this sketch in the dark.

[4. National Congress in Brasilia by Oscar Niemeyer]

Le Corbusier's lead in the International Modern Movement was followed by Oscar Niemeyer, the architect of Brasilia. Niemeyer, who was a Communist, didn't design these forms because they were utilitarian, but because they had a purity of form that symbolized escape from the stylistic conventions of the past.

[5. Open Hand Sculpture in Chandigarh by Le Corbusier]

When Le Corbusier came to design a new capital, in Chandigarh, he made a large sculpture of an open hand, as a potential symbol of the city.

[6. Chandigarh, plan of the Capitol, 1952]

On this plan of the centre of Chandigarh, you can see a number of monumental buildings arranged in a wide formal landscape. The bar at the bottom right indicates 400 metres. The Open Hand is isolated at the top right of the plan.

[7. Proposed re-urbanisation of Chandigarh, 1978]

This influential theoretical project, dating from 1978, shows a potential "re-urbanisation" of Chandigarh, with the Open Hand contained within a tight urban space. Just as the setting of the House of the Soviets in Kaliningrad was conceived in the same spirit as the National Congress in Brasilia, so this type of sympathetic intelligent transformation would, I believe, be both progressive and respectful, if applied in Kaliningrad.

[8. Former Soviet Embassy, now the Russian Embassy, Havana]

The Soviet Embassy in Havana was completed in 1985 [designed by Aleksandr Rochegov]. There is a need for detailed critical appraisal of this late period of Soviet architecture. The motivation evidently includes an evocation of the early Soviet avant-garde, together with an influence of later Brutalist and Metabolist movements around the World, notably in Japan. I have no doubt that these buildings are of international significance, and should be treated as such.

[9. House of the Soviets, Kaliningrad, prelude to competition]

The House of the Soviets is in the same category, even though it incorporates a clear reference to the simpler form of Niemeyer's National Congress in Brasilia.

[10. House of the Soviets, from a city street and from an upper floor]

These images indicate the potential views of the building from surrounding city streets, and the views out from between the buildings two wings and the interconnecting bridges. Towers often function as restricted vertical cul-de-sacs, but these connections suggest a potential multi-level permeability. Permeability, along with mixed-uses and high densities are critical ingredients of the new urbanism, in which modern cities fulfill their potential for the exchange of ideas and cultures, just as they have always seen the exchange of goods and services.

[11. Displays of historic images, on competition site]

This is the site of the former Schloss and these images are symptomatic of an interest in the history of the former Königsberg. I don't think it's appropriate to recreate the grander expressions of the fallen empire, but responding to the

collective memory to create a feeling of social continuity is a different matter. I have proposed extensive [and historically accurate] restoration of the quayside and the Eastern part of the island, around the Cathedral. I also propose a reconstruction of the West Wing of the Schloss, but with the upper floors re-created in the form of light modern galleries. The Clock Tower would be echoed in a larger multi-functional Gothic Tower – more about that later.

[12. Sketch Map of Flights: Liverpool – Berlin – Kaliningrad]

This is the route of our journey. It connects three cities with traumatic histories.

Liverpool grew rich – very rich – on the triangular trade that saw millions of slaves transported from Africa to America. It then developed as the 'Gateway of Empire' and the main port for European emigrants to the 'New World' before experiencing a shocking decline and loss of population over the last century.

[13. Publications - 1: Liverpool, Berlin and Kaliningrad]

The magazine on the left, from 1978, has the sub-title 'New Life or Lingering Death for our Inner Cities?' over a picture of Liverpool [with the modern Catholic Cathedral in the distance]. Within a few years, following civil disorder, the UK Government discussed partial abandonment of the city and the possibility of a 'Managed Decline'. The people of Liverpool didn't agree!

Berlin had been a laboratory of ideas long before the removal of the Berlin Wall. Urban culture can thrive in the face of adversity, as all three cities have shown.

[14. Publications - 2: Liverpool, Berlin and Kaliningrad]

By 2008, Liverpool could be described as 'Work in Progress' and a slow but steady recovery had begun with its nomination as 'European Capital of Culture', its historic centre designated a 'World Heritage Site' and one of the largest city-centre regeneration programmes in Europe underway.

A book published by Liverpool University Press on 'The Sociology of Architecture' had an image of Berlin's new Reichstag Dome on the cover.

The Kaliningrad Competition booklet included this photo of the Gothic cathedral, under the question 'Where is the Heart of the City?' The photo shows a glimpse of the Cathedral Front – an enclosed view up a narrow street.

[15. Publications - 3: With Kaliningrad Wedding Photo]

This photo, taken this year, show the Cathedral Front, together with a bit of the House of the Soviets. But these both now sit in empty space, some of it parkland. Of course, urban parks can be great – indeed, they are essential – but they work best as coherent spaces enclosed and defined by the city, not pale imitations of unenclosed open countryside.

[16. Title - Liverpool]

[17. World Heritage Nomination book, with a view of the Pier Head on the cover]

Between 2003 and 2009, I was retained as Consultant Urban Design Advisor to the City of Liverpool. Liverpool no longer had a City Architect and I was asked to play that negotiating role with respect to the major changes to the City Centre, where much of the work was being carried out by private companies, notably Grosvenor with the 'Liverpool One' development.

[18. Pier Head and Cathedral, with the 'Liverpool One' Site between them]

The site of the 'Liverpool One' development was between the famous Pier Head buildings and the Anglican Cathedral [the largest Cathedral in England]. Much of this area had been empty since wartime bombing sixty years earlier.

[19. Early Sketch Plan and Later Architectural Form]

The sketch on the left shows the early intention to restore former streets and connections, and that on the right shows the final architectural form, with an elliptical enclosure around the small park [and four levels of car parking below].

Liverpool people didn't want another enclosed 'Shopping Centre' – they insisted on proper mixed-use 24-hour streets, with no roofs; even though Liverpool is a wet and windy city!

[20. Aerial view: Computer Models]

Computer models showing the elliptical park, "bringing the Waterfront into the City" – across a main road, The Strand [a bit like Moscovskiy Prospekt].

We argued against making a bridge across this road – the long-term aim is to create a pedestrian-friendly boulevard. One bridge would have led to more, and we'd have ended up with an 'Urban Motorway' through the Heart of Liverpool.

[21. Block Plan of Multiple Sites]

The Masterplan described some buildings as requiring 'Landmark' status, whilst others were to be more anonymous, as 'Consistent Urban Fabric'. The different architects were selected with these definitions in mind.

[22. Sketch of Protected Views to Landmarks]

This sketch shows examples of protected views towards historic landmarks – the Liver Building and the Anglican Cathedral.

[23. Sketch for Horizontal Scale Discussion]

This sketch shows a concern for the existing horizontal scale of buildings, the top sketch being preferred to the lower alternative. It preserved an unremarkable building, but one of an appropriate scale, which was part of the communal memory of the street.

[24. Part of the Physical Model for Liverpool One]

The Masterplan included twenty-five buildings, each designed by a different architect. As each design was finalised and approved, the simple block model was replaced by a detailed model, on continuous public display near the site.

[25. Aerial View of Liverpool One]

In this aerial view, it is difficult to recognize the boundaries of the 42-hectare new development. That is, of course, deliberate.

[26. Title – Berlin]

[27. Site Plan for Berlin – Spreebogen – Competition]

This was an entry for a competition, back in 1993, for a new Parliament Quarter next to the Reichstag, across the line of the Berlin Wall. I proposed a mixed-use development of streets and squares. However, what has been built is a single-use campus [like many universities or hospitals], with a wide public route across it.

[28. Model of Berlin – Spreebogen - Competition Entry]

This model shows a three-way, two-level 'Meeting Bridge' across the junction of the River Spree and the Humboldt Canal.

[29. Title – Warsaw]

[30. Palace of Culture Elevation]

A Competition, in 1992, asked the question "What should we do with the Palace of Culture?" It had been a gift from the Soviet Union in 1956, and was seen by some as a symbol of the past – but it was full of good things, valuable facilities.

[31. Palace of Culture plus Proposed Development]

A third of the entries [including mine] proposed keeping the building as it was, but surrounding it with dense new urban development.

[32. Plan of Competition Entry]

Here's my plan. Another third of the entries proposed radical changes to the tower's appearance, and a final third proposed demolition and replacement.

[33. Catalogue Page showing Competition Entry 039]

And here's my entry, as placed in the Exhibition Catalogue. There was, however, one entry that was different from all others....

[34. Catalogue Page showing Competition Entry 151]

This proposed building new tall structures around a retained Palace of Culture, a bit like petals around a stamen. I discovered that the author, Joachim Zadow, was another architect from Liverpool. His thinking has had an influence on my proposal for Kaliningrad. His scheme was no doubt dismissed as too expensive or wildly impractical, but....

[35. View of Modern Warsaw]

Look at Warsaw today, with large buildings surrounding the Palace of Culture.

[36. Title – Moscow]

[37. Sketch of Competition Entry]

This was a competition for a new building for the Moscow City Government, in 2002, in front of the proposed development of the 'Moscow City' towers. It had a slight twist to give it a distinctive silhouette, different from each point of view.

[38. 'Moscow City' Towers in 2014]

A twist has been used by the architects of the tower as built, RMJM of Edinburgh, but it's now tight, like a screw. The tower has been moved into the main cluster and no longer has the varied silhouette. It is part of a group of jazzy corporate towers, similar to others around the World.

[39. Axonometric Drawing of Competition Entry]

This drawing shows the slight twist on my entry, together with the expression of public elements, such as a clock, the debating chamber and enclosed courtyard.

[40. Elevation Drawing of Competition Entry]

This is a public clock – but sometimes it's not a clock. And a decorated egg – sometimes like a Fabergé egg. Variable facades included shapes which echoed the suspended Platonic volumes within Tatlin's famous project for a spiral tower. Architecture has to deal with many issues, not only practical engineering....

[41. Caption - Style: Culture: Identity: Memory]

Style, Culture, Identity and Memory.

[42. Caption - Social Progress: Sustainability]

Also Social Progress and Sustainability.

[43. Tatlin Tower and Capital of Culture Poster]

This model of Tatlin's Tower [on the left] was made by British architectural students. The tower, proposed for Petrograd in 1919, is still an inspiration to many around the World. I used it on one of a series of posters [on the right], incorporating more than twenty languages, which celebrated Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture in 2008.

[44. Capital of Culture Posters]

Imperial architectural links between Liverpool and Shanghai, now 'twin' cities.

[45. Capital of Culture Posters]

Here's a conscious link between Liverpool [St George's Hall] and Imperial Rome.

[46. Capital of Culture Posters]

And here is graffiti depicting Liverpool's modern Catholic Cathedral.

[47. Capital of Culture Posters]

And another. The Catholic Church used Modernism in 1963 [and an International Design Competition] to reflect a radical change to their liturgy; the new building incorporated a central altar, and was built over the crypt of the huge part-completed Classical-style Cathedral, designed by Edwin Lutyens in 1933. That had been conceived as a rival, not just to Liverpool's Gothic-style Anglican Cathedral, but also to St Peter's in Rome.

[48. Capital of Culture Posters]

The 'brand' of the city and culture of Liverpool has spread around the World – it's not just The Beatles and Football! The red telephone box was designed by the architect of Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral, Giles Gilbert Scott.

[49. Cartoons - Liverpool Cathedrals]

Liverpool's two Cathedrals represent competing powers. Here the Catholic Cathedral is represented as a megaphone, with the Priest's head being the dome of St Peter's in Rome.

[50. Cartoon - Classical and Gothic Styles]

This cartoon shows the Gothic style on the left, stretching and bending, and the Classical style on the right, serene and static.

[51. Cartoon - Prince Charles with Classical Car]

The son of the Queen of England doesn't like modern architecture. He prefers the Classical style [stability and permanence].

[52. Newcastle Cathedral Spire Drawing]

Finally, before discussing Kaliningrad, here are pictures of a beautiful mediaeval Gothic Spire, on Newcastle Cathedral.

[53. Newcastle Cathedral Spire Conservation Work]

With some pictures of the sophisticated work necessary to maintain it.

[54. Gothic Town Hall with Houses, Kirkcudbright]

And here is a gothic town hall and houses in a small town in Scotland. These impressions lead us to....

[55. Title – Kaliningrad]

[56-57-58-59 Volumetric View with Sight-Lines]

The central part of the competition site in Kaliningrad. Here is the House of the Soviets, completed in accordance with the original plans and specification, flanked by a new gothic tower and a new classical tower.

Also a restored West Wing of the Schloss and a 2,000-seat Concert Hall.

And here is the new Central Square, and here at the top is new Immanuel Kant Square – both squares are tightly enclosed and defined by new buildings.

Two narrow streets converge on the Cathedral spire. A circular space, we've called the 'Oculus', incorporates access into the underground car parks and service areas from Moscovskiy Prospekt. People have asked what this circular space would look like. This is, of course, an urban design competition, and I'm aware that too much specific architectural detail can be unhelpful, but here are a few examples we could bear in mind...

[60. Circular Developments, in London, Edinburgh, Bath and Lucca]

[61. Underground Plan]

The car parking allows access to all the main buildings, but also across a new bridge to Kneiphof and the Cathedral.

[62. Phase One Plan]

The yellow area is the main square, made ready for the 'Fan Zone' for the World Cup in 2018. The dotted lines across Shevchenko Street and elsewhere depict

pedestrian crossings at grade level [not bridges or subways] – a 'shared surface'. The magenta-coloured areas are temporary buildings [some more temporary than others].

[63. Phase Two Plan]

At this stage, the first bridge over Moscovskiy Prospekt would be constructed, forming one side of the Oculus. As my Liverpool experience suggested, I have been reluctant to propose pedestrian separation in this form. However, I believe an early decisive link between the Central Square and the Cathedral must be made – it is urgent, and cannot wait until alternative arrangements are in place to take the heavy traffic off Moscovskiy Prospekt.

[64. Phase Three Plan]

By Phase Three, the Oculus would be complete, together with the Concert Hall. I have shown extensive restoration of the historic streets and quaysides on Kneiphof. I've also indicated eventual removal of the high level bridge, but have left the resolution of the junction between Moscovskiy and Leninskiy Prospekts to a further phase. One possibility would be to bring dense urban development to this area. This would leave half of the island, and the circular space of the Oculus as coherent – and all the more valuable – green spaces in the Heart of the City.

[65. Diagrammatic Plan, showing Transport Routes]

I find it difficult to imagine loss of the East-West route [Moscovskiy Prospekt], even if the Western by-pass is completed as shown. This is especially so because I wish to minimise further damage to the green space and lake on the Northern section of the ring [I have not included a new road at this point].

[66. Diagrammatic Plan, showing Green Ring]

The green ring around the fortifications is a potential major asset that could attract visitors and be part of an welcome green network for residents. I imagine this being linked to the new Heart of the City by two or more green corridors, with pedestrians and cyclists having priority.

[67. Mass Plan of Competition Area]

The red colour indicates new buildings, the magenta shows restored older buildings, and grey is retained existing buildings. Care has been taken to provide strong enclosure and street approaches to the University and Immanuel Kant Square, as well as a stronger urban frontage to Shevchenko Street.

[68. Annotated Section, showing Skyline]

This is the proposed skyline.

[69. Sketch of Relationship between Gothic, Classical and Modern]

Here is a sketch of the relationship between the Gothic, Classical and Modern styles. I've presented it as just a sketch, because it's speculative and open for discussion. I've suggested a 'trialectic' relationship, with buildings being able to be placed somewhere within the plane of the triangle [recognizing a mix of influences] rather than at the extreme points.

I suggest the 'Gothic' represents experiment and change, aspiration and [perhaps] spirituality. The 'Classical' [as in the cartoon I showed earlier] represents symmetry and permanence, and perhaps enlightenment [as in the Renaissance]. The 'Modern' represents Iconoclasm [casting off the old styles], Constructivism and Futurism, and [maybe problematically] Utilitarianism.

[70. Section Showing Skyline, with Additions and Adjustments]

This Skyline is pluralistic and an invitation to thought and debate, rather than a definitive statement of belief. I thought of giving the Gothic Tower the name 'Konigsberg Tower' and the Classical Tower 'Kaliningrad Tower' but decided against that – the definition and interpretation should remain open-ended.

In this latest version of the composite skyline drawing, I've reduced the towers by ten per cent in height and width [thus maintaining their proportions], and making the internal spaces more efficient.

[71. Sketch across the River Pregolya, from Oktyabrsky Island]

I considered it important to give an indication of the architectural possibilities, but thought this should be restricted to quick sketches.

I'm not too critical of the buildings in the 'Fishing Village' because they respond to the historic texture and scale. Nevertheless, I would argue for the restored buildings on Kneiphof to be as historically accurate as possible.

Bringing historic buildings right to the water's edge would be a revelation, as shown in this photograph of Bruges...

[72. Waterfront Buildings in Bruges]

[73. House of Soviets – Left - and Variations on a Theme - Right]

These are the drawings I prepared to test the architectural possibilities within the urban design concept. The way to ensure genuine variety in new buildings [other than restored original buildings] is to employ a different design team for each plot. The size and disposition of the plots is a task for the Masterplan.

[74. Schloss West Wing – Left - and Concert Hall - Right]

The lower floors of the Schloss would be carefully restored [along with the great buttresses] and they would provide museum space. The upper floors would be of

a contrasting light form of construction and expression, providing modern galleries and exhibition space.

[75. Gothic Tower, Section and Elevation, with Triangular Plans]

The top of the triangular tower would house a public Winter Garden. Below this there would be a hotel and private apartments. Both towers have 'entasis' – that is, a slightly curved convex profile, to make them appear more solid, and distinguish them from other commercial and residential blocks

[76. Classical Tower, Section and Elevation, with Circular Plans]

The top of the circular tower would house public restaurants and a roof garden. This would be the highest publicly-accessible viewpoint in the city [although the top of the Gothic Tower would be the highest structure]. Below this would be a carefully-controlled mixture of offices, work-spaces, small shops, small guest houses and apartments, with access off a unique helical ramp – a single route from top to bottom. All units would be two-storey, with the upper storey having an external balcony above the helical ramp [forming, in effect, a 'double-helix'].

[77-78-79-80. Bullet Points - Implementation of Proposals]

The only thing that has disappointed me is that some have apparently thought my proposals to be unrealistic or requiring too much investment. My answer to such concerns is to recommend making long-term incremental plans. Progress can then be made in simple phases, as and when resources become available or outside investment can be secured.

- Develop local expertise and capacity for the restoration works, including research, design and construction, finance and maintenance.

- Invite international developers [from other parts of Russia and elsewhere] to build and manage the three towers, on long leases, in accordance with a prescriptive Masterplan.

- Retain local control over the Schloss, Concert Hall and Oculus, with associated infrastructure, as part of a long-term Development Plan.

[81. Sketch from River Pregolya]

Here is a sketch of the proposal, from near to the World Ocean Museum.

[82. Sketch from Leninskiy Prospekt]

And this sketch suggests the transparent nature of the Winter Garden at the top of the Gothic Tower. It also shows the potential for new narrow plots [as shown on the left side of the street]. The Gothic Tower would also be designed for variable displays, such as the following....

[83. Gothic Tower Illumination, after Malevich]

After Kazimir Malevich.

[84. Gothic Tower Illumination, with Soviet Symbols]

With Soviet Symbols.

[85. Gothic Tower Illumination, with Clock]

With a Clock.

[86. Gothic Tower Illumination, for Immanuel Kant Anniversary]

And celebrating the 300th anniversary of Immanuel Kant.

[87. Caption - Thank you – Bolshoye Spasibo]

Thank you very much.

[88. Blank]

Trevor Skempton, 16th November 2014, revised 26th November 2014