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Translating Architecture and Planning from Berlin and Britain to New Zealand: the Work and Life of Gerhard Rosenberg

This anthropological approach to the history of Gerhard Rosenberg (1912-95) in the first extended study of his work suggests that his distinctive contributions are illuminated by exploring the ways that cultural, social, and personal contexts of his life were translated in his work from Europe and England to New Zealand. The paper explores his preoccupations with architectural attention to people subjected to discrimination in the light of his own background and of his experiences of injustice.

Just as an architect translates the forces of point, line, and plane from geometry into a building, so might the works of architects and planners be approached as translating their lives: as embodying their personal, cultural and social heritage, their education and experience. This is an attempt to discern the legacy of his life in the works of architect and planner Gerhard Rosenberg (1912-95), a life that spanned the twentieth century, made him witness to some of its most iconic events, living through some of its most significant and traumatic processes in Germany and the United Kingdom. The suggestion is that his origins, education and experience make the focus and character of his works more intelligible because they are translated into them.

Translation comes from the Latin “trans” meaning across, and “latus”, the past participle of the verb to carry. Its synonyms include: copy, change, imitation, and transference. A synonym of “translate” is to displace, of “translative” is interpretive.¹ Only in the simplest sense is a translation a direct parallel to an original meaning. Any person who speaks more than one language knows that it is almost impossible to convey the exact sense or the spirit of the foundational term into another language. What is lost in translation is a permanent lament. Translation is interpretation at every step, and the interpreting is not only of words but of action and thought, always affected by who is making the interpretation, not only because of expertise, but because of the interpreter’s positions and penetration, and especially because of their own unrecognized assumptions. What applies to the perils of translation in language is magnified for possible misunderstandings about peoples’ lives and works. We are indeed always ‘other’ to one another, even when we are very close, and especially when we are distant: comprehension is at best always partial.

A particular pitfall is words that seem identical in two languages, especially in languages that are related, but in fact have importantly different meanings about which the speakers are unaware. As an example, the distinctions between ‘regular’ and ‘ordinary’ in United States English may elude British English speakers in that these words are not more or less equivalent in the United States as they can be in British speech, because ‘ordinary’ in the United States means that the quality is below par. Because the Americans recognize what the outsider means by the inaccurate term, usually they do not correct it and it may take the foreigner many years to realize the mistake.

There is another pitfall when a term in one language is translated conventionally by a term in another that is not in fact an accurate translation and usually the inaccuracy goes unrecognized. There is an example in the term for the housing where Rosenberg lived as a child on Alt-Moabit in Berlin. It is the architectural definition of a tenement in English and German. In his typewritten memoir of his childhood, he translated the building where he grew up as a “tenement”.² That surprised me because his father was a distinguished lawyer and it seemed odd to me that a professional family would live in a tenement. It surprised me even more when I saw it: the building survived wartime bombing and it seemed to me substantial and neither overcrowded nor associated

1 *Rogel’s Thesaurus of English Words & Phrases*, ed. Robert A. Dutch (London: Longmans, Green 1962).

2 Gerhard Rosenberg, “His 21 Years in Berlin,” Typescript. Rosenberg Family Archives, Auckland, New Zealand (1987), 42 pp.

with poverty. It took me several months before I discovered that *Mietskaserne*, (or *Mietshaus*) refers to the housing that was built in Berlin between 1860 and 1914, around the city in what is known as the Wilhelmian Ring, and which had to have a courtyard in which a fire engine could turn around. In the German meaning of tenement there is none of the sense of slum that I associate with the English word. Both are indeed multi-storey rental properties, but my sense of tenement came from the notorious Gorbals in Glasgow that epitomized the term in British English. It still usually does as I discovered by questioning several speakers: overcrowded impoverished slum housing. The handful of German speakers, fluent in English, architects and not, had none of that association. In American English, the tenements in New York are now the sites of nostalgically affectionate tours of nineteenth century migrant housing in Brooklyn.

So it is especially true that there are extra pitfalls when terms that are close nevertheless can have differences that go unnoticed and so unknown by the foreigner because they are not corrected by the native speaker. These differences can be crucially important. They can epitomize more than linguistic misunderstanding: they can be a microcosm for larger personal, cultural, and social misunderstandings. This is how a foreigner from a more closely related tradition paradoxically can be more vulnerable to serious cultural, social and personal misunderstandings than someone from a background more obviously distinct. Native speakers and actors are more likely to alert the person from a very different country about how to adapt to the new situation than they are the more closely culturally related newcomer; they are more likely to tolerate or dismiss errors of interpretation and custom, attitudes and behaviour, because they dismiss them as understandable ignorance. The mistakes that the native speakers hardly realize they are correcting for and therefore do not mention, may reverberate with more serious consequences for the people arrived from a closely related culture, especially when they speak the local language relatively fluently. The differences that persist may be experienced as inappropriate, unskilled and offensive instead of forgiven as relatively intelligible and tolerable.

During an interview, Rosenberg was mentioned as 'not a departmental man'. He may indeed not have been knowledgeable or active in academic administration. But he came to New Zealand after having been outside academia for many years, he was appointed jointly to two departments, a notorious situation for being in the other department when one is needed. There is at least space for wondering if, besides not being temperamentally suited to administration, not robustly convivial in the male social climate of New Zealand in the 1950s, he simply did not realize what was expected of him in a collegial sense and that no one may have seen a need to explain this to him because the native academic actors took for granted Rosenberg would have known. The translation apparently so close may have been too far away.

This interpretation comes from the perspective of an anthropologist, an approach close but usually different from that of an historian when studying an individual in that anthropologists may place more priority on setting contexts of culture and society, of political and economic and power. One perspective is that the person is seen as an individual but also importantly as an embodiment

of cultural and social heritages, often engaged in navigating several at once. To set one or more general contexts, anthropologists are likely to use methods that include more interviewing of colleagues, family, and of social contemporaries who were, or are, neither specialists nor acquaintances. The differences may be slight and the techniques overlap. Anthropologists, along with doing archival work, may be more likely to be studying societies other than their own, spending extended time in them and attempting to learn their languages. Thereby arises the responsibility on which anthropologists place the intellectual and ethical priority of disclosing the circumstances of their fieldwork, their position in the society of the research, especially in relation to power, their education and expertise or otherwise in what they are studying, and their own values of which they are aware, so that readers may judge for themselves what credibility they give to the reports. Most important are those foundational ideas that the anthropologists may not realize that they hold, buried so deep and so taken for granted that they are not even recognized as beliefs but nevertheless underpin their approach to the research. Outsiders may recognize those immediately and adjust their interpretations of the anthropological approach in the light of them.

This project began in mid-2012 as a subject for an invited paper for a World Society of Ekistics meeting. Not a Jew, I was brought up as a Catholic in New Zealand. The fieldwork was interviewing former colleagues and friends of Rosenberg, and brief archival work in New Zealand. It extended to intermittent archival work in London in 2012-14, to short visits in 2013-14 to Berlin, and to places where Rosenberg worked in England, and to extensive interviews with the Rosenberg family in New Zealand and Nice in 2013. It continues with archival work and with further interviews planned in 2014. As a student, in anthropology at Auckland University, the author met Rosenberg in 1959 and saw his initial plans for Maori housing, but never studied with him. She knew him slightly as a friend of friends, but not professionally, when she returned as a medical anthropologist based in the United States to visit New Zealand intermittently and briefly from 1971 until - 93.

Choosing where to start a story of someone's life is arbitrary, and this account begins with the Edict of Nantes in 1598 when Henry IV of France gave religious freedom to the Protestants, which was removed in 1685 by Louis XIV with the Edict of Fontainebleau. Many fled, especially to Potsdam, where the same year, Frederick William, Elector of Brandenburg in Prussia, issued the Edict of Potsdam, encouraging oppressed Huguenots to come there. Potsdam, capital of Brandenburg bordering Berlin immediately to its southwest, and formerly residence of the kings and Kaiser, became a centre of immigration, its religious freedom attracting people, including Jews, such as the Rosenberg ancestors. By the nineteenth century the Rosenbergs were established in Berlin, owners of a carriage business. By the twentieth century, they had become part of the civic professional elite.

Gerhard Rosenberg was born in Berlin in 1912. His father, Curt Rosenberg, a Jew and socialist, served in the German army during the First World War as a translator for French prisoners of war. He took the young Gerhard to hear Rosa Luxemburg speak. So Gerhard knew early what it was like to be outside the mainstream politically, and that seems to me to permeate his life's social position and the focus of much of his work.

Curt Rosenberg's senior officer ordered the men to unload their rifles when he realized that surrender was imminent. He noted that Rosenberg had not done so. When questioned, he admitted that his rifle had never been loaded. Gerhard inherited his pacifism. His mother did social work. He studied at the French gymnasium in Berlin, an elite school where standards were high and the language of instruction was French and a fellow student was Wernher von Braun. They would toboggan down the ramps of the Reichstag in winter. Early in his life Gerhard knew both multiple languages and histories of prejudice beyond the Jewish experience. But they were growing up in a Germany brought to its knees by defeat during the hyperinflation of the Weimar Republic.³ His younger brother, Wolfgang, who would emigrate to Christchurch in New Zealand in 1937 to become an economist at Canterbury University, kept a One-million Deutschmark note when it became the price of a loaf of bread.⁴

It could be posited that the experiences of the pressures of poverty in youth may translate into Rosenberg's lifelong concern for migrants and the poor in his urban planning, his architecture, and in his social and community activism. It is important to emphasize the risks of determinism in making such arguments. There are many routes to caring about people whose sufferings are similar to one's own - or completely different. The claim here is only that Rosenberg did encounter suffering kindred to those on whom he focused the work of his life. There is no stronger assertion about necessity or inevitability about that preoccupation.

Anti-Semitism was rising as the 1920s wore on, fuelled by perceiving the Jews as associated with money and as rootless without deep loyalty and connection to Germanic heritage. Rosenberg was brought up in a secular home without religious practice, yet almost without exception he mentions teachers, classmates, friends and acquaintances as Aryan if they are, but the term is simply descriptive; nevertheless it is there.⁵ Jews go undefined. Escalating rapidly along with Nazi politics, the anti-Semitism can be traced to earlier roots, for example in the philosophy of Herder and Fichte,⁶ in a tradition of authoritarianism and a focus on a putative purity in the superiority of Aryan blood, its mythic traditions and an association with an ideal of Nature. Many Jews at first thought that it did not apply to them but only to recent poor immigrants from Central Europe, because the professional families were the pillars of society on which Berlin and Germany in general depended. But gradually it became only too clear that it applied to every Jew, although of course it was not applied by every German, and Berlin itself never voted for Hitler; but Germany elected Hitler in 1933.

Rosenberg had known since he was a child that he wanted to become an architect. As a boy, Gerhard was engrossed in building structures; his sister said that he built a cardboard model of an entire

3 Rosenberg, "His 21 Years in Berlin," 6-8.

4 Murray Horton, "Wolfgang Rosenberg. Obituary," (2007), www.converge.org.nz, accessed 28 August 2012.

5 Rosenberg, "His 21 Years in Berlin," *passim*.

6 Louis Dumont, *German Ideology: From France to Germany and Back* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Arab city when he was twelve.⁷ In his memoir he includes an architectural drawing of every detail of the apartment at Alt-Moabit 119.⁸ By 1933, he was at the Technische Hochschule, now University, where he would receive further elite education in both the pioneering architectural movements of the time, contemporary with the Bauhaus, balanced with a broad and deep study of literature and philosophy. The architectural education included a year of practical work on buildings, and some of his learning prefigured ecology, including earth sod construction. He had in 1933 just completed his Architectural Intermedicate examination. As a Jew, he was required to leave that education and the Institute. He managed, perhaps with the help of Quakers, to get an invitation to England that was required for a visa. He was one of the first people in architecture to arrive as someone seeking refuge from Germany. He was alone, in his early twenties, and for the first time living apart from his family. He had very little money and almost no contacts. His loneliness and ignorance as a foreigner must have been arduous.

Rosenberg studied in London at what is now the Metropolitan University but was a night school then. Whether he knew it beforehand or not, what is remarkable is that he studied with Jacqueline Tyrwhitt and Gertrude Bell, thus being introduced to pioneering ideas in planning and on the humanizing of cities, based on the work of Patrick Bell and Sigfried Giedion. He completed his thesis on "Function in Gothic Architecture", awarded distinction in 1935 and thus published in summary in the RIBA journal in 1936.⁹ He found work, again with remarkable leaders, as an architectural assistant that today might be called a draughtsman with the distinguished firm, Tecton, led by the legendary Russian architect Lubetkin. He worked with Godfrey Samuel and Val Harding. Harding was someone whom he particularly admired and liked. Grieving for his heroic death in France during the Second World War, Rosenberg would give his oldest son the middle name Val.

During the 1930s, as an assistant, then as an architect, he worked as part of teams designing and altering domestic houses and aspects of commercial properties, including contributing to the innovative and influential Finchley Health Centre. This was the firm that designed Highpoint Tower I in Highgate and the zoo quarters in Regent's Park in London and Whipsnade. His own designs ranged from complex flues for a kosher sausage factory to modernist apartments for London, often entered in competitions. But London was experiencing the effects of the Depression and many architects came to expect that another war was coming. Large-scale projects diminished and firms worried about being able to continue to provide employment. The circumstances of Rosenberg changing employment and unemployment have not become clear yet, but he moved to Glasgow, where he worked for a Swedish timber firm. But he was not doing architecture and he missed it bitterly.¹⁰

7 Jill Whitfield, "Memoirs of Miriam Whitfield (née Rosenberg)," Typescript transcribed by her daughter. Rosenberg Family Archives, Auckland, New Zealand, (n.d.).

8 Rosenberg, "His 21 Years in Berlin," 2.

9 Gerhard Rosenberg, "The functional aspects of the Gothic Style," *RIBA Journal* (18 January 1936): 273-90; (8 February 1936): 364-72.

10 Godfrey Samuel and Valentine Harding, "Professional and personal papers of Samuel and his partner Harding, and other related papers, 1925-1961," Tecton SAG 1-100 London: RIBA Archives, Victoria & Albert Museum.

Curt Rosenberg, although a distinguished author of authoritative books on marriage and divorce law, had been disbarred by the Berlin judiciary in 1938: this was an order made more poignant by an added complaint about his wife's social work. Desolate, the Rosenberg parents arrived in Scotland on the last ship from Hamburg, having been forced to leave all their belongings on the wharf there. Although recognized for their civic service by the Association for Jewish Refugees in Britain, the parents never recovered their spirits: Curt Rosenberg withdrew to reading, his wife had to add to what she had been reduced to doing in latter years in Berlin: taking in sewing, to taking in laundry.¹¹

Anti-Semitism had long been present in Britain: the first Jews came in 1066 with William the Conqueror. Edward I issued the Edict of Expulsion in 1290; Cromwell permitted return in 1657 in exchange for money. Nearly three centuries later, the flood of architects who were Jews, desperate to migrate to Britain to escape Nazism in Europe by applying for work permits, was a tidal wave that the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) tried to address, but very late. In 1939 they formed a Committee for Jewish refugees, chaired by Godfrey Samuel, Gerhard's former employer, whose own father had been Governor of Palestine.¹² Samuel worked almost without stopping to try to help. But it was only rarely that he could find work which was needed for visas for the applicants. The Minutes of the Committee, held in the Royal Institute of British Architects Archives in the Victoria & Albert Museum, make the grimmest of reading: I was hardly able to breathe, crushed for hours, days, and still many months later. Desperate letter after letter, their tones rising in despair, pleading for work in Britain to flee from Nazism. Often these were senior architects who had been pillars of their communities, soundly established in their practice. Now they had nothing but the prospect of annihilation: real, not imaginary. Among the worst of it was seeing the humiliation of people being reduced to becoming supplicants, losing their dignity, their confidence, and their self-assurance. Yes, the suffering is not the same as being sent to the gas chambers, but words cannot capture the agony of the applicants as they lost their autonomy, any sense of control over their lives, let alone facing the prospect of having their safety and survival obliterated.

When the Swedish timber firm closed its office, Rosenberg himself joined the supplicants. He had tried to volunteer to work for the sake of working, but he wrote in one letter that no one wanted to accept even free work from a Jew.¹³ Part of the heartbreak is seeing the strain of the immense restriction Rosenberg put on himself to refrain from writing too often, restraint apparent in almost all the letters written by the others whose own lives and those of their families were indeed imminently endangered. Meanwhile, he had survived the investigation of the Tribunal to determine if he were a spy or not. But later he heard that there were people questioning neighbours about him,

11 Interview with Rosenberg's son, 2013.

12 Samuel, Godfrey "Correspondence on political refugees, 1935-40," SAG/83/3, SAG/84/1-3, London, RIBA Archives, Victoria & Albert Museum.

13 Rosenberg's letters to Godfrey Samuel, almost identical in tone to those of the others in pleading for help to find work, are held in the Samuel and Harding archives: Godfrey Samuel & Valentine Harding, "Professional and personal papers of Samuel and his partner Harding, and other related papers, 1925-1961," Tecton SAG 1-100 London: RIBA Archives, Victoria & Albert Museum.

and that someone had identified him as a pacifist, and pacifism was not appreciated by a pre World War II Britain where many were enthusiastic for military action to fight Hitler.¹⁴

Churchill was elected on 10 May 1940. The next day he said: "Collar the lot of them". It was a directive in the Cabinet Minutes to round up every male with German or Italian papers between the ages of seventeen and seventy. Gerhard was detained as an enemy alien, sent first to the Isle of Man and then deported to a camp in Canada along with 4000 others; another 2000 who were deported to Australia. A handwritten letter, perhaps never sent, to May, a woman whom he loved unrequited, is in his archives.¹⁵ It describes the voyage and it is apparent how many British and Canadians did not understand the difference between the Jews and Nazis. Nazi prisoners-of-war were herded together with the Jews, the very people whose situation and views were most opposed, twice as many in the hold as the ship was designed to transport, not enough food, not enough latrines. Most contracted diarrhoea. They had to lie on the filthy decks, too weak to climb into their hammocks. Rosenberg wrote that he lay there dreading that someone with a heavy hobnailed boot might step on his head. But he was a strong young man: he did recover, even his spirits, and he wrote about his excitement as he saw islands such as Newfoundland as the ship passed them.¹⁶

The ship arrived in Quebec City, where they were forced to stand all day in the sun on the top deck of the ship without food or water, and without latrines. At night they disembarked to be taken by train past people jeering at them as they passed the platforms of suburban railway stations.¹⁷ It was a time when people in Canada were utterly certain of the evils of the enemy, and the passengers were seen as all part of the enemy. Canada too had refused to give visas to Jews in the 1930s. What happened might be defined as brutality, but Rosenberg in his letter said it was not brutality.¹⁸ That could be because he was writing to a sweetheart. Some of it can be viewed as disastrous lack of organization because Churchill's hasty decision had left the Canadian authorities with very little time to prepare.¹⁹ The detainees and the Nazi soldiers, still combined, were put in a disused prison, Cove Fields, on the edge of the Plains of Abraham. The first night they were fed a small amount when they arrived, put in a building where there was no possibility of lying or sitting down, and again no latrine.

Later, because of the Geneva Convention, the Jews were separated from the Nazi prisoners, and Gerhard went to a prison in the country, Lennoxville; his son has a painting in oils that Rosenberg did

14 Rosenberg's letters to Godfrey Samuel, almost identical in tone to those of the others in pleading for help to find work, are held in the Samuel and Harding archives: Godfrey Samuel & Valentine Harding, "Professional and personal papers of Samuel and his partner Harding, and other related papers, 1925-1961," Tecton SAG 1-100 London: RIBA Archives, Victoria & Albert Museum.

15 Gerhard Rosenberg. "Internment 1940," handwritten letter, Rosenberg Family Archives, Auckland, New Zealand.

16 Gerhard Rosenberg. "Internment 1940," handwritten letter, Rosenberg family archive, Auckland, New Zealand.

17 Rosenberg, "Internment 1940."

18 Rosenberg, "Internment 1940."

19 Anthony Grenville, "Remembering Internment," *AJR Journal* (2007), <http://www.ajr.org.uk/index.cfm/section:journal/issue.Jul07/article=875> accessed 16 June 2014.

of its lovely landscape. As they had done on the Isle of Man while awaiting deportation, the internees set up a 'University' with courses of study.²⁰

It was the British public that managed to stop the deportation of detainees after news about the sinking of one of the ships, the *Arandora Star*, with the loss of 730 lives.²¹ It was the first one dispatched, sent without a convoy because the British had assumed that the German intelligence was better than it was - that the Germans would not torpedo it because everyone on board was German. But they had no way of knowing who was on board. They did torpedo it. The story is that there was outrage when word of it got out in Britain, and the deportations were stopped.²² So Rosenberg returned to Britain in 1941. Rosenberg himself had already departed on the next ship sailing from Liverpool, but when *Arandora Star* was sunk, his ship returned to port and was included in a convoy.

It is hardly a stretch to suggest that Rosenberg's later concern with prison architecture in New Zealand, in particular his strong dissent about the maximum-security prison near Auckland, Paremoremo opened in 1969, might have been an outcome of his own detention. His protests about the inhumanity of its design were rejected with bitterly disrespectful attacks from the prison authorities.²³

One of the inmates who had been in the same bunkroom as Rosenberg in Canada was only sixteen. This young man, Harry Seidler, was to become an architect in Sydney. He always attributed his decision to be an architect to Rosenberg's influence in the camp. The author had wondered how it was that not long after the Second World War, still somewhat isolated in the Antipodes, an architect based in Sydney could have the international reputation that Seidler did. But in 1940, the Canadians became uneasy when they realized that they were holding detainees who were both very young and very old. So they decided to release those prisoners provided that they undertook to stay in Canada for the duration of the War.²⁴ Among them was the young inmate, who managed to get into university in Manitoba, and after the war to Harvard, where he studied with Gropius, and his classmates included I. M. Pei and Harry Cobb.²⁵ The former detainees made magnificent contributions in Australia, including architects for example in Canberra, and twenty two of the ones who stayed in Canada after they were released, were awarded the high honour of the Order of Canada.²⁶

20 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/timeline/factfiles/nonflash/a6651858.shtml> accessed June 16 2014; <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/the-friends-canada-insisted-were-foes/article4416458/?page=all>, accessed 16 June 2014.

21 Please add reference.<http://www.accademiapulia.org/en/members/-and-then-came-the-blitz.html> accessed 16 June 2014; www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/timeline/.../a6651858.shtml, accessed 16 June 2014.

22 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/timeline/factfiles/nonflash/a6651858.shtml> accessed June 16 2014.

23 Editorial, *NZIA Journal* (August 1969), 250-55; reply by JRP Blake-Kelly, 255.

24 <http://enemyalien.ca/pdf/guide-eng.pdf>, 79-81, accessed 16 June 2014.

25 One of the delights of the research was to discover this because Gerhard's son Julian Rosenberg has a retrospective catalogue of the work of Harry Seidler. See Kenneth Frampton and Philip Drew, *Harry Seidler - Four Decades of Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson 1992), 390. (In the footnotes at the back, Seidler had done a tiny drawing of the bunkroom and written about his studies.)

26 <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/the-friends-canada-insisted-were-foes/article4416458/?page=all>, accessed 16 June 2014.

When Rosenberg returned to England, he studied Planning in the Institute for Planning and Reconstruction in London which was constituted for what might be done post-war. It was led by Jacqueline Tyrwhitt. Once again he was exposed again to the most current European thinking and soon after the War, to the founding of Ekistics by Constantin Doxiades, Town Planner for Athens. Doxiades foresaw the headlong rush to urbanization that followed, predicting the chaotic growth of huge cities. His driving inspiration was to develop a discipline devoted to improving the quality of life in cities. Ekistics remains a field, followed now mostly by planners and architects although initially by creative intellectuals and professionals from a wide range of disciplines - an early President was the anthropologist Margaret Mead. Active initially most in Europe it is now led by Turkey, and China with some participation from India, Pakistan, and Australia. It was an outgrowth of CIAM, the International Congress of Architects, and the British MARS modernist architectural group, to which Rosenberg belonged in the 1930s, and an immediate result of Le Corbusier's frustration about not being able to hold a CIAM congress in the Soviet Union just before the Second World War. Greece had solved the problem by making possible a Congress held at sea. Rosenberg remained committed to Ekistics throughout his life, publishing in its journals, elucidating it in many articles published elsewhere, and focusing on it in his teaching. His work about it was initially based on research about improving the quality of urban life according to age groups: creating places for young children to play, small and near to housing - not distant in immense inaccessible parks for example, and on having street pavements safe for children to play, with nooks and crannies where they could hide, or hide their playthings. Such work extended to designing play centres for early education, including their interior spaces, to maximize creative as well as verbal learning. For adolescents his Ekistics planning addressed places for them to assemble with one another, and for the elderly the preoccupation would be with safety and accessibility for walking and shopping. The larger issues related to the quality of life in cities identified that people preferred their urban location when they experienced a large city as a string of linked villages, providing some sense of belonging to an area. Later, issues of urban transport became and remain dominant.

To further allay a fear of determinism in exploring translation from experience as a source for later work in architecture, in comparison with my suggesting that early trauma in his life may have foretold Rosenberg's later concerns with oppressed urban migrants, no hypothesis is advanced here about childhood history as the precursor for his interest in urban planning. Rather, it could be an outcome of the education he happened to receive in Britain with Tyrwhitt and his exposure to other urban pioneers in Planning.

After the Second World War, Rosenberg was employed for a time in London with the eminent architect Frederick Gibberd. Then he worked for the Ministry of Agriculture, based in Wolverhampton. He produced in 1947 for example, a report analyzing systematically the planning of land settlement in ten countries in Europe, and including the United States and the Soviet Union, with recommendations for the British to consider in their future planning. He did many designs for farm buildings, with recommendations emphasizing the central importance of flexibility in the structures for adapting to changes in machinery, such as the introduction of milking machines, which required for example,

wider spaces. Otherwise the buildings themselves could be disastrous impediments in modernizing agriculture and stock raising. Again, it is hardly a surprise that when he moved to New Zealand, Rosenberg continued to show an interest in rural planning and to do reports such as for Northland.

At the urging of his brother Wolfgang at Canterbury, who said that it was time for him to return to University life, Rosenberg migrated to New Zealand in 1955, where he had already been awarded a prize in a competition for an architectural design.²⁷ He was the first person appointed to Town Planning, as a Lecturer jointly in Architecture, at Auckland University. Robert Kennedy, appointed Professor, arrived in 1957. Rosenberg introduced contemporary planning theories from the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States in his Civics course that became famous or notorious, depending on whether the audience were exhilarated by the history and the theory in it, or whether it came across as obscure and superfluous to good keen men focused primarily on the practical.

In two interviews, suggestions were raised that Rosenberg was not appointed Professor because of anti-Semitism. There is no way of proving or disproving such a claim. It is true that the Professor who was appointed came directly from the practical field of Planning, and did not have the Town Planning qualifications that Gerhard had acquired in London. But there could be aspects of administrative temperament and experience that were also at stake.

The nation in which Gerhard Rosenberg arrived was still remote from Britain; European thought seemed even further away. Academic journals could take six weeks or two months to arrive by sea. Distance separated the Universities from the immediacy of their intense theoretical debates--although it could be said that the ideas often were absorbed more carefully in the calm of reflection. In architecture, those theories focused on modernism. The home-grown theories and controversies were vitally passionate, led by such pioneers as Vernon Brown and Bill Wilson about developing a settler architecture that was independent from copying the former Centre of Empire in Britain, that distinctive to New Zealand in embodying local culture, society, resources, and environment.

Rosenberg in 1955 was perhaps the latest, just as Wolfgang in 1938 was one of the first of a generation of scholars, professionals and artists, many of them Jews, men and women, or the Gentile husbands and fathers of Jews, who migrated in flight from Nazism and anti-Semitism in Europe. Some, such as the philosopher Karl Popper, or the founder of Political Science at Victoria University, Leslie Lipson, stayed for the duration of the Second World War. Most of the architects immigrated permanently. Rosenberg had been preceded by a number from Central Europe and Germany who already had made very significant contributions to New Zealand architecture, often by working in Government Departments and designing major Public Work structures such as hydroelectric power stations and State Houses in domestic architecture. There is an eminent ancestral lineage that includes Max Rosenfeld, Friedrich Newman, Helmut Einhorn, Henry Kulka, and Ernst Plischke (married to a Jew), who designed the towns of Mangakino and Kaingaroa as well as the first high-rise office building in Wellington. He returned to Austria in 1963.

27 "New Zealand Permanent House," *Home and Building* 40 (1955) Sheppard Collection Architecture Library, Auckland University, R813b.

Issues of anti-Semitism were reported in several interviews and conversations about Rosenberg. Again they cannot be proven or disproven. There was one account of his being spat upon. There is also the fact that the intense patriotism about the Second World War and the roles of returned servicemen in New Zealand meant that fervent feelings against anyone German lingered long in many aspects of the New Zealand psyche. Many New Zealanders were, and still are in 2014, ignorant about Jews and Jewish achievements - unaware for example, that six Mayors of Auckland have been Jews, or that the current Prime Minister is a Jew.

What is not in doubt in the architectural and subsequent urban planning fields, is that the contributions of Jews have been immense, especially since the 1930s when their migration intensified dramatically to New Zealand from Europe as they fled Nazism.

When Rosenberg arrived, he produced distinctive architectural designs intended to be culturally appropriate for housing for Maori urban migrants, along with Donald McRae who did the drawings.²⁸ With his former student Michael Austin, he considered architectural matters in Pacific islands.²⁹ He designed a few houses: in suburban Auckland and Christchurch, as well as in a rural community (commune) in Coromandel. In Planning, his focus and passion were on creating liveable cities, and he was engaged with Ekisitics. He tended to turn his activism towards what he foresaw as the iniquities of planning catastrophes, such as the gales that whistled around the first high rise buildings in downtown Auckland in the early 1970s, or the plans for developing a container port.

Even more central were the protests related to injustice to the Maori people about apartheid and South African rugby tours as embodiments of prejudice, of disregard and disrespect. At a personal cost of being criticized, he was involved in the campaign trying to preserve the Maori land for the Maori people at Bastion Point in Auckland city. Later he was closely engaged with the Waitangi Tribunal that was formed in 1975 to attempt to remedy the injustices of the Treaty of Waitangi, which in 1840 had confiscated Maori land under the false pretence of writing different versions in Maori from the English: the deepest of all betrayals in a translation.

Rosenberg published steadily in the journals on planning matters, and wrote frequently as a public intellectual in local monthlies and weeklies with an educated general readership, from the *Monthly Review* to the *Listener*, as well as in daily newspapers about planning, its necessities and shortcomings. He participated in architectural and planning activism, such as making recommendations to the Government about or against their past or pending legislation, particularly on behalf of Maori and mining causes. Rosenberg's activism tended to be low-key, always courteous, quiet but solid, persistent, and reliable. His writing was polite, but he could dissect a bill and make the critique devastating in its inexorable deeply calm logic, showing up the contradictions down to clauses and subclauses.

28 Gerhard Rosenberg, "Maori Housing," *Te Ao Hou* (March) 18 (1960); "Some Aspects of Maori Housing," *NZIA Journal* (September 1964): 243-45.

29 Michael Austin and Gerhard Rosenberg, "Housing Polynesians in New Zealand Cities," *Second South Pacific Seminar, Suva: Living in Town: The New Pioneers*. 10pp. (1971). Sheppard Collection Archive 813b, Architecture Library Auckland University.

He would attend local planning meetings, especially after his retirement, quietly gaining the trust of the communities, eventually becoming their intercessor with planning authorities whom he knew how to approach effectively. He was active in environmental and ecological issues ranging from advocating the development of compost toilets to managing to stop the reopening of the Sylvia mine near Thames that would have polluted the Hauraki Gulf with arsenic, ruining its fishing and shellfish production.

It runs the risk of determinism to categorize peoples' works as outcomes of their past if there is an impression of inevitability about it: it is crucial to make clear that human creativity is in principle free to soar beyond biology and background. Nevertheless, that background may be material for making a case that makes more sense of why people designed what they did. There is no way that such an exploration is open to any form of proof. The criterion for the worth of the enterprise rests on valuing what extra light might be thrown on the work that is credible even when acknowledging its limits.³⁰ In terms of translation, my sense is that Rosenberg's background, ethnicity, education, and experiences, especially of prejudice, poverty and imprisonment can illuminate aspects of his works. The structures that he designed in New Zealand have a spirit of frugality about them. There is no extravagance. Function tends to dominate aesthetic priorities. He used sturdy and durable materials. His architectural and planning attention were directed mainly towards the less privileged people in cities as well as in rural areas. He became an activist on behalf of people imprisoned. He worked with issues of injustice about Maori land and designing housing that would be affordable and appropriate for their needs. It seems reasonable to claim that his works translate his life and times. That could be correct and it could be mistaken. Suggestions remain speculations, open to correction. There is no proof. There remains plausibility, strengthened by making sense of Rosenberg's trajectory in that aspects of his life appear to translate into the focus of much of his work.

30 Charles Taylor, "Interpretation & the Sciences of Man," in *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 25, no. 1 (Sep., 1971): 3-51.