

## **Philosophy Gone Urban: Reflections on Urban Restoration**

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### Introduction

Many readers of environmental philosophy have noticed that, at least among environmentalists, there resides an anti-urban ethos. They describe urban life as morally inferior to life in the country. Some even take it a step further and portray the city as the anti-thesis of liberty, and source of corruption, consumerism, greediness, pollution, waste, alienation from nature, in other words, most environmental evils and for good measure, many non-environmental evils too. Dale Jameison takes an historical look at these attitudes, and emphasizes the disgust with which leaders and thinkers like Jefferson, Thoreau, Frank Lloyd Wright and others viewed the urbanization process. Gunn writes about ‘influential thinkers in the American tradition (who) have detested cities’.<sup>i</sup> Kenneth Grahame’s The Wind in the Willows is but one of many novels depicting rural life as morally superior to urban life.

It is interesting however to note that the attitudes toward the city described in Jameison, Gunn, and Grahame are but a ‘modern’ (18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries) echo of a Judeo-Christian anti-urban attitude stretching back to the bible. In biblical times we find city people portrayed as particularly corrupt (think of Sodom and Nineveh). The city is often described, especially by the prophets, as a ‘city of blood’ or ‘city of murderers’ (Ezekiel 22:2; Ezekiel 24:6; Nahum 3:1), a city of fear (Jeremiah 15:8), and a city full of theft and violence (Ezekiel 7:23). Leaders who came from a rural background were thought to be more innocent and sinless. Moses left urban Egyptian sprawl to find God in the wilderness. When the people of Israel demanded a king like every other nation, Samuel went searching for one in the countryside. He found Saul, and after him, David, who before being appointed used to shepherd his father’s flock in the hills around Bethlehem.

Many – including myself – disagree with most of the above slurs regarding city life.<sup>ii</sup> Such portraits of urban life are exaggerated, and, even worse, often founded on myth. For example, urban life is considered decadent and barren. This seems an odd thought when you are walking along the streets of New York, on perhaps one of the most vivid places on earth. Nevertheless, I think it wise not to dismiss the urban

critique out of hand as “not serious”. We should instead rise to the challenge and investigate this attitude, examine it against our own experiences and decide whether this stance has anything serious about it.

This paper therefore will first explore the anti-urban position step by step, and illustrate it with my own personal experiences of recent visits to New York City, or more precisely, Manhattan (or even more precisely, Manhattan’s commercial district). This part of the paper is rather meditative.<sup>iii</sup> The consolation, perhaps, is that this musing will ultimately pave the way to analytical examination of the anti-urban claim.

I would like to suggest that the critique of urban life may imply two conclusions. The first is overly simplistic: it argues that urban life is indeed morally inferior and that environmentalists should aim at country life, using ‘ruralist’ theorists<sup>iv</sup>. The alternative conclusion seems more sound. It argues that although the shortcomings of urban life described in the first section are based on experiences some of us may have in several cities, they are not necessarily an inherent component of the definition of city. Rather, they relate to very specific manifestations of urban life. They may be bad manifestations, but even so, they do not imply that all forms of urban life are bad. In fact, I would argue further that the anti-urban theorists are committing a methodological error by inferring inevitability from the evil they see. They infer that this evil is built into the fabric of city life and symbolizes what cities are all about.<sup>v</sup> I would like to suggest instead that we should be looking at how we can eliminate or change these negative elements.

But I do not want to stop at this stage. One aspect of urban environmental activities, and therefore of urban environmental philosophy, is urban conservation. The second part of this paper looks at this issue. However, the two parts of this paper are not detached from one other. The first part throws light on what many believe has gone wrong with the city. Thus from this rather negative image we can derive its opposite, i.e. a concept of the good city. In other words, by examining the critique of the city we can understand what it is that people are looking for in the city: how they picture the good urban life.

Thus the second half of the paper opens with the question: What is missing in urban life?<sup>vi</sup> Following this I ask: What good can we expect from urban life? I want to argue that it should be this good that guides the practice of urban conservation. I suggest that sound urban conservation is an act – call it a policy or a community act – that sustains and conserves this good that we are looking for in urban life. By this

way, I place conservation in a much wider social context than it is sometimes seen. I claim that unlike the case of natural conservation, where we conserve aspects of nature, e.g. trees, forests, lakes, ecosystems and so forth, the aim of urban conservation is not to conserve objects as monuments, houses, streets, parks – nor to conserve ecosystems. Instead we want to conserve ideas of the good, intentions, and, human deeds in general, which I would like to call ‘urban stories’. And if this is the case, then urban conservation becomes similar to urban restoration because often its goal is to breathe life into an urban story that has fallen into decay and which we find meaningful, or valid, or good. I will develop this argument below, but for now, let me move on to the first part and examine the anti-urban claim.

### 1. Reflections in Manhattan’s Commercial District<sup>vii</sup>

Anti-urban arguments are varied. I do not pretend to present all of these claims. But I would like to concentrate on several indictments or generalizations, that, as I contend above, while may be characteristic of some examples of cities, are nevertheless not components of the city by definition. These are:

- Alienation: the city is a source of alienation;
- Commercialization: the city causes us to treat each other and the city itself instrumentally;
- Individualism and lack of a sense of community: there is no sense of a collective or common idea of the good to bind people together in the city, and this is reflected in its architecture;
- Injustice: the city is a source of injustice.

I shall now reflect on these claims and later on look at the question of what these criticisms can teach us – even if they are false – about the expectations that people have from the city.<sup>viii</sup>

#### Alienation

Architects who grumble about Manhattan’s commercial district say that cities should be designed for people, not for cars. I’d like to add that cities should be designed for

people to walk in, not for people to rush through. Yet we all rush when we (are supposed to) walk in Manhattan's commercial district. It is difficult to just stop all of a sudden to stand and stare at something that catches your eye because others might (probably will) bump into you. This constant rushing about prevents us from enjoying the present, the very act of walking, the feeling of a place: the "here and now" feeling. By taking the subway one can move from one neighborhood to another in three minutes. The move is not only between neighborhoods but also between different environments. However, the actual moving is only instrumental. One minute we are at point A, the next at point B. What happens between A and B is overlooked. It all takes place underground anyway. We are not expected to enjoy moving from one place to the other. We do not expect it to be gradual. After all, we are just moving from one place to another. The rush, the detachment from feeling the move, and, therefore, from a very important part of the sense of place, is the first step towards alienation in Manhattan.

*Imagine yourself a five year old. Now, go, stand on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the rush hour. But don't stand as you are. A five years old child's height is about one meter. Bend and observe what you see from this height. You will probably see movements. You will see legs moving fast, you will see sunshine and shadows replacing each other. You will not know these legs: who they belong to. If you walk in a straight line you will know you are still on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, but you won't have a clue as to where on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue you are.*

Indeed, I looked around me and saw very few children walking in Manhattan's commercial district. It is difficult to move from one place to another while you are on the street. It is not safe, distances are long, and there is no place for privacy. One must join the wave of people who walk forward. Adults seem to know their destinations and directions. But if you are a child not absolutely sure about your direction, whether to keep on, turn left, or whatever, you would want to stop from time to time. You'd like to look around you and see whether you are going the right way, whether you should keep on going. But you can't stop. If you stop all of a sudden, if you turn backwards, if you hesitate, people might walk on you, through you, at you. Pedestrians in Manhattan's commercial district have no time for hesitation. They do not expect you to stop and wonder. So children do not walk in Manhattan. They

become dependent on their parents to take them where they need to go by car or in a taxi. This is hard on parents so families with young children tend to leave the city and move to the suburbs or elsewhere, I am told. This makes Manhattan a childless town. This is alienation. In fact the very notion of 'commercial district' is inevitably alienating. As if this part has only function: commercial life, instrumental relationships. I compare this American city with Mediterranean town, whose formation of urban identity preceded the industrial revolution: they lack 'commercial districts'. Instead various urban activities mix with each other in the same areas. Work and residence are not separated, as if they belonged to different persons. And so the city' rhythm changes and becomes a much more human scale tempo.<sup>ix</sup>

*But there are moments of humanism. This morning the sidewalks are still frozen here and there. People suddenly slow down and hesitate. For a moment, a very brief moment, the lady in front of me becomes conscious of her walking. Because the sidewalk is frozen she has to face her surroundings. She cannot hurry from one place to another, but must walk here: here and now, experiencing and sensing the present.*

Albeit alienation manifests itself between people, its catalyst and inspiration may be the architecture of a city. Cities and buildings should be designed so that people can see the whole building at a glance. Seeing the whole building is seeing its full picture and being able to understand it. But Manhattan's perspective alienates walkers from buildings and thus from their surroundings. This is so because the building tower above one so high that it is impossible to see the entire building at a glance unless one retreats about a hundred meters. This allows one to see the building's architectural essence only from far away. Thus, there is no intimacy with the building. One is forced to take an alienating perspective.

Huge buildings denote power. Big equals power; small gives the impression of being more egalitarian somehow. Big is threatening. Small may be more person-friendly. Big is different from you and me. Small is our size - we can relate to small. Hence big is alien. Small may be more familiar. Big is out of reach; small may be accessible. Big is tiring, small is somehow comforting.

*You are back on Fifth Avenue. Now please straighten up from the eye level of five year old. You see faces. Count how many of these faces talk to the faces that walk next to them. Probably none. Count how many look at other faces. Probably none. We are all children in Manhattan. We can only see movement, we can't see the person who moves. We cannot see the differences.*

*Let me now tell you about my visit to an enormous cafe on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. I walk in and start counting obsessively. Sixty five customers. Sixteen leave and fifteen enter every minute. If I sit there for four minutes I will see about 120 people. If I want to think about them, meditate about their lives, speculate about who they are, tell myself a story about them, imagine something about their lives, I have four seconds for each person. This is not a human scale cafe.*

*The person behind the coffee machine prepares espresso and cappuccino. He makes six cups a minute. He makes three hundreds and sixty cups an hour. He makes about one thousand and five hundreds cups a day. No one has a story as far as the coffee person is concerned. Is he concerned at all? He says "Thank you sir" without looking at me.*

The city is a media space that creates communication. But it will not create positive communication unless it is built to serve people, rather than the ego of its architects. Sometimes it feels like the planners of Manhattan's commercial district believed that beautiful is monumental. Alas, 'beautiful' in a city must go hand-in-hand with people-friendly. But cities fashion their 'cultural centers', and these cultural – so to speak – centers are full of monumental buildings often named after the building's donor who wanted them to be huge, massive, impressive in its size. Thus, instead of building buildings that impress us with their ability to outreach people, cities erect those huge monstrosities that in the end only alienate their citizens. At best such buildings attract tourists while the locals suffer quietly. At worst, the tourists also stay away from those buildings.<sup>x</sup>

At this point one might claim that Manhattan's skyscrapers are nothing but an economic necessity. Due to limited space and the high cost of real estate, planners had to invent the skyscraper. However, David Nye and others argue that this theory is

misleading. The expenses of building higher were not off-set by rents, and, what is more, much of Manhattan was relatively undeveloped when the first skyscrapers were built.<sup>xi</sup> London, and even Berlin, were much larger cities at the time, and they saw no reason to build skyscrapers. The explanation for building these skyscrapers, claims Nye, is cultural. The basis for their building was sensationalism. The skyscrapers had symbolic significance, as icons of progress, or as Nye calls them, ‘geometrical sublimes’. They reflected an enthusiasm with technology and man’s victory over natural and physical obstacles. But the planners did not think about the massive picture. Several skyscrapers may well be impressive. A whole slew of them can be downright depressive and dehumanizing.<sup>xii</sup>

*The poet and singer Leonard Cohen once wrote the following, apparently while he was visiting Manhattan:*

*I wonder how many people in this city live in furnished rooms.  
Late at night when I look out through my window  
I see a face in every window looking back at me  
And when I go back to my desk  
I wonder how many go back to their desks  
And write this down.*

*Cohen sees a face in every window looking back at him. Is he imagining? If you look through your window in Manhattan, the last thing you are likely to see is somebody else looking at you,. Cohen is imagining a community of lonely people longing for some comfort, since they all feel strangers in their own town. He wonders how many do as he does and write down such a poem. Perhaps they write a note to themselves, about others writing notes to themselves. These people, however, do not only feel lonely. They feel alienated. They feel as if they cannot communicate with the faces they see – or imagine they see – in other windows. If Cohen wonders how many go back to their desks, why not ask them? Perhaps he wonders whether his curiosity will be understood at all?*

The feeling that Cohen experiences may be more than simply alienation. It may be a sort of anxiety, which differs from fear in that fear means being afraid of an object one knows. I can be afraid of a lion if I see it in the open field. Anxiety, though, is abstract and not necessarily related to a frightening object. Indeed, when one walks in Manhattan one does not feel afraid of the people around us; and yet one is aware of the possibility of being attacked, robbed, or hurt<sup>xiii</sup>. In this atmosphere, approaching a stranger could well be interpreted as a potential threat. Hence people do not approach strangers; Cohen knows, then, that his curiosity, his human desire to know more about the people behind the windows, will not be satisfied.

### Commercialization

Commercialization describes a process in which human beings, the cities they inhabit, and other objects are seen as having an essentially instrumental value, even though their intrinsic value is recognized. When these objects are seen as a means to advancing the valuer's ends, they are thought to have an economic value. Many environmental philosophers, in relating to human evaluation of the natural world, have discussed this process. However, I am not interested here in the question of intrinsic value. I want rather to shed some light on what this kind of attitude towards cities does to us, the city's inhabitants and visitors. I want to claim that the commercialization of the city's buildings, streets and parks carries implications regarding the way we relate to others in the city, and in this way contributes to our failure to fulfil our idea of the good city.

*Opposite Central Park. I am amazed. I see five dental clinics, with full size, shop front, windows. Joseph Lipinto, DDS is a real eccentric. His clients don't get to see Central Park because they are facing the other way - a white wall - when they lie down. But Central Park gets to see them, exposed in their most embarrassing moments. So what is the inside, and what is the outside for Dr. Joseph Lipinto and his clients?*

*I sit in a cafe on Broadway Avenue. I gaze at people. I am inside. But as a matter of fact I have the feeling of being outside since it is so noisy inside. The person next to me is on his mobile phone. He is talking to his broker. Buy this.*

*Sell that. He disconnects. Another phone call: Buy this. Sell that. His phone rings. "Hi sweetie", he shares his love talk with me. There is no inside and outside now. He says "I've got to go" and disconnects. But he remains sitting. "Hey" I want to complain, "you have just deceived your sweetheart". But can I bother him? Why should he be interested in my thoughts about his relations with this woman if I'm not offering something to buy or sell?*

Commerce is perhaps the reason for the rapid development of Manhattan's commercial district, and therefore an inevitable part of it. Perhaps this is the idea of what is the good for Manhattan; Perhaps then, one should not complain about it.

*And yet, I want to know why dining out becomes so commercial. An Italian restaurant on 52<sup>nd</sup> St. has a note on its window: Now selling Sushi. Does this place have an identity crisis? Does it treat its guests as nothing but customers? Is it a restaurant – a place that should combine atmosphere with taste, two possible components of identity – or is it a place for buying food?*

In Manhattan, though, this is not the way most people choose their places to dine outside, or so I hear. But I also read that this is indeed often the way people buy their homes, or apartments, as they call them here. People's first thought when buying a home is about the future property value. Indeed they treat it as an asset, rather than a home. While they buy it they already think of selling it. Home becomes a good to be used instrumentally to make more money to buy a better apartment. Even Jane Jacobs, who criticizes urban design and commercialization, does not pay attention to how she has uncritically internalized this model of thinking about apartments and houses, indeed about homes. She tells us about how she looks for a flat to live in and about the financial value of this or that flat, depending on the neighborhood.

“Automobiles are often conveniently tagged as the villains responsible for the ills of cities and the disappointments and futilities of city planning. But the destructive effects of automobiles are much less a cause than a symptom of our incompetence at city building. (...) The simple needs of automobiles are more easily understood and satisfied than the complex needs of cities.”<sup>xiv</sup> Isn't it so only because we relate to the

city as a place that has to sustain itself economically, rather than as a place that has to sustain its inhabitants' sense of home?

## Individualism

As I wander around Manhattan's commercial district, it strikes me that in the most multi-ethnic city on Earth people are considered to be first and foremost individuals. He is not a black person. She is not a white person. This is racism. He is not Jewish, she is not Irish. This is ethnicism. And so, all these people in Central Park are individuals, nothing else. On the face of it, this is the triumph of Universalism: no more irrelevant distinctions between human beings. The brotherhood of mankind.<sup>xv</sup> But how can we be brothers and sisters when all we can claim is our individual-ness? If I want us to be brothers and sisters, I want you to understand me, to know me intimately. You cannot be brothers and sisters by ignoring all that is "I" in me. How can you understand me, how can you empathize with me, if you do not know my story? And how will you know my story if you do not know that I come from Israel, that I am Jewish, and that at the moment I'm feeling so miserable because I miss my family. And how can I empathize with you if I do not know where you live, who your parents are, and what binds you together with all these people who are now skating with you? How can I be brother to an 'individual' or to somebody who insists on being merely a 'person'? Why should I be drawn to being brother to someone I'm not allowed to know intimately? Now, of course, I could get to know you personally and then learn whatever I want about you. But it seems that in the name of individualism people in Manhattan are denying their own (group) identity. It seems that the whole city is structured in a way that is meant to defend individuals from having to expose to and profoundly relate to their group identity.

A city should be alluring and inviting. This can be achieved if the facades of the city are partly transparent and partly masked or hidden. This will allow us to exercise our imagination, fantasize about interiors, about what's going on behind the facade. The object – be it a house, a flat, a restaurant -- comes to life. But Manhattan seems either to expose its interiors, leaving us nothing to the imagination, or hiding them, behind revolving doors, or dark window panes, giving no sign to passersby as to the interior. Concealment is uninviting. Over-exposure is no better. Exposing things, the "we've got nothing to hide" feeling effects not only the buildings. The

avenues and streets also echo this concept. Endlessly straight streets that keep the horizon in sight, seem to declare: you cannot see the end of these streets; but the reason is not that they are hidden; on the contrary: we have nothing to hide, there are no surprises here. In fact, you cannot see the end of this avenue or street because there is no such end. The open horizon symbolizes the endless options, the great promise of America.

These avenues bother me. They are nameless but numbered. Whereas in many cities streets carry the names of people or events that the city wants to recognize as constituents of its identity, the Manhattan streets and avenues are numbered, as if to declare: we place no greater value on this event or that person. What's more, these avenues never seem to end. They're just crossed by streets, and go on and on. They never take you to a dead end, to some place in particular, which strikes me as analogous to the palpable climate of neutrality which pervades the city. It is as if the mood of the city asks pedestrians and drivers not to bring up politics or discuss social goals. "We in Manhattan are open to everybody, all colors, nationalities, beliefs". "Immigrants arriving, fifteen or twenty thousands in a week"<sup>xvi</sup>. This phrase reflects the essence of openness, so prevalent in Manhattan. But in order to sustain this openness this city holds to its neutrality between different ideas of the good. "We as a city are neither socialists nor anti-socialists; we as a collective are neither Christian nor Jewish; we as a collective do not believe in this or that; we simply accept everything. And therefore we shall not have official ends; we shall not have common goals. 42<sup>nd</sup> St., or 6<sup>th</sup> avenue, or what have you, will not lead to an end. They will just go on and on, so that whenever you walk in those streets you will have the feeling that ends and public goals are not determined; the city is open to you, to your neighbor, to just everybody."

Alas, a city that lacks an idea of the good can produce a feeling of alienation or unease. While in some cities the idea of the good may be overwhelming, causing its visitors to feel unwanted and its inhabitants to leave<sup>xvii</sup>, it is also the case that a city that refuses to take a stand on anything seems to be hiding something, and may appear washed out, flat or insipid. Whichever way you look at it, architecture without social goals seems not genuine. There has to be more to architecture than just aesthetics. Architecture that its claim to fame is its neutrality seems to have lost its essence as a *human* activity. Dale Jameson writes that 'we want our cities to provide an environment that is conducive to the good life'. In other words, we value cities not

only for the material opportunities they offer, but also for the ‘possibilities they present for living a life of high quality’<sup>xviii</sup>, the latter being defined in terms of common or shared values. Thus, for example, in Israel, Jerusalem is conducive to a life of spirituality, while Tel-Aviv offers a hedonistic, more vital, in secular terms, style of living. In England, intellectuals who would rather a quiet, peaceful more reticent kind of life would choose Cambridge, whereas those seeking an academic atmosphere combined with a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, pluralistic lifestyle, would choose Oxford, and so on. However, if a city, in our case, Manhattan, was designed without a notion of the good life in mind then we cannot expect it to be ‘conductive’ of the good life.

## Injustice

*The hotel room window is wide. It gives me the illusion that I am watching a film on a wide screen TV. If I want, I can slightly open the window and let the noise in. If I want I can shut it and turn the noise off. From my hotel room, I watch as a limousine stops and a movie star gets out, almost stepping on a homeless person.*

Ruralists often point to cities as the *source* of injustice. This is far-fetched. Manhattan is not and cannot be the *cause* of injustice. Injustice is caused by political arrangements and institutions -- or the lack of them -- not by cities. However, if we modify this anti-urban claim, it does make sense. In Manhattan you accept injustice as “inevitable” or “natural”. What happens in fact is that this city blinds us to the fact that injustice is neither natural nor inevitable.

Let me clarify. Most people are shocked at their first glimpse of extreme poverty or misery, or the sight of homeless people. Not a single person will remain unmoved to see terrible poverty face to face. However, when we are exposed repeatedly to some evil or wrong we become accustomed to it in the sense that we no longer become very emotional, agitated, or enraged by what we see. When we see homeless people in such masses as found in Manhattan, we may well feel desperate about it all. If we feel terribly bothered but cannot find a solution, we may complain and sigh about it, but in the end, we will inevitably become increasingly callous by the sights. When the number of homeless people is small, there is always a hope that a

cure can be found and there will be enough people willing to try at least to make things better. However, in Manhattan, there are masses of homeless and poor and one simply learns to live with the phenomena. The point is that we become so used to such scenes that we regard them as ‘natural’, as ‘part of urban life’, as though by definition cities must engender thousands of homeless people.

The same may be claimed about social and economic gaps. Social gaps are easily noticed. Someone, who is sensitive to such gaps and to the possibility that they may be the work of Fortuna or Tyche, may resent them in small doses. But when the gaps are as wide as they are between the street cleaners and the limousine riders, and when they unremittingly stare you in the face, you can either become extremely despairing or else switch off as best you can. In other words, Manhattan does not cause injustice, it just causes people to become indifferent to it.

*A worker comes to clean the public garbage cans. He lifts one in order to empty its contents into a large plastic bag. Maybe because of the cold he drops the can and the garbage spills onto him. It is very wet, and his trousers and shoes get really muddy and filthy. He bends to pick up the garbage. People pass by. No one stops to help him.*

*“Oh, Please, don’t pass me by” sings Leonard Cohen,  
“Please, don’t pass me by;  
Cause you,  
You can see,  
and I,  
I am blind”.*

*But it is not the worker, begging these people not to pass him by, who is “blind”. People have become blind; blind with indifference to other people’s agony and misery.*

A city should not abandon its people. But can the passers-by behave any differently? Manhattan is very much about numbers and time. You are accustomed to seeing those scenes. Presumably most of the people who stride past the worker don’t actually see what was happening. They are not bad; if someone asked them to stop and help they

might. But they don't notice. They are rushing to some meeting, to work or to their coffee break and everyone else is just a blur. Manhattan makes them blind.

*I go out of the cafe. There is a giant limousine parked by the sidewalk. . I pace out its length - nine steps. Nine long steps to walk the length of a car. My guess is that every inch of this car costs more than feeding all the homeless people in this street. But wait! The chauffeur is going out of the limousine. He is entering a pizza place. He is out with a pizza. Is it for him? No, he is giving it to the person whom he drives. Yes! We are all humans, after all!*

The limousine is not only a car. It is a metaphor. It is beyond access; it is rich but not reachable. It is closed to the public.

*The rich person sitting inside is invisible. Dark glasses prevent me from seeing him. Does it also prevent him from seeing me? Can he see the drummer who plays the drums opposite Rockefeller Center? It is 20 degrees Fahrenheit. The guy must be freezing. I stop to put a dollar in his basket. He is not the greatest musician I have ever heard, but he wants to be an artist, no doubt. He will never be able to be one playing like this because people do not have the time to stop and listen. Thus he does not have an audience. I wait for a minute to see: hundreds of people pass by but nobody stops to listen. Don't they feel anything for this drummer? Aren't they ashamed to be seen passing him by without paying him for his music? Don't they feel any guilt at not listening to him, or at least for the fact that he has no other way to perform his music but by playing in the freezing nights of December? Or do they hide behind their anonymity?*

## 2. From Critique to Idea of the Good

Earlier I argued that the anti-urban claims mentioned above might derive from a methodological mistake, which I called the “*is-IS fallacy*”. This fallacy occurs when one inspects an example of an entity and concludes that this example is characteristic of all other examples or even of the entity itself. However, not every characteristic of a sample of a being is fundamentally constitutive of that being. Let G be an entity and

$g^{(1-n)}$  be the many objects that fall under the category of  $G$ . Then if  $g^{(1)}$  is  $p$  it does not imply that all (or any) of the  $g^{(2-n)}$  are  $p$  and that  $G$  is  $p$ . Moreover, even if all  $g^{(1-n)}$  are  $p$  it does not imply that  $G$  must be  $p$  (although this may often be the case).

For example, a person, say Mr. Jones, can be nasty without nastiness being a constitutive characteristic of 'being a person', although it may be a constitutive element of that particular Mr. Jones. A certain government can be corrupt without corruption being a constitutive element of government or of what governing is. Indeed, even the fact that most governments in the world are, unfortunately, corrupt in some sense does not suggest that governing is corrupt by definition. Hence a street can be dirty without dirt being an inseparable part of streets. A city can be polluted without pollution being a constitutive part of what a city is. A town can be alienating without alienation being an inherent part of a town. Thus the burden of proof that all cities are like Manhattan, and, moreover, that Manhattan is a paradigm for cities in general rests on the shoulders of the anti-urban advocates.

But if so, why have I bothered to go into details of the urban environment critique? The reason is that from this critique, from what people feel is lacking in Manhattan for that matter, we can derive the idea of a good city. Consider a government and citizens' complains about it: it is not citizen friendly they claim; it does not listen to the people; it does not work efficiently, and so on. Such comments allow us to extrapolate a sense of what good government is. It is citizen-friendly, it listens to the people, it is efficient, etc. The same can be said about the city.

But why do we need a sense of a good city? Why do we need an idea of a good city? Because, I want to suggest, we cannot engage in 'urban conservation' or 'urban restoration' (and I'll soon argue that these concepts are interchangeable) if we do not understand, or be guided by, the idea of the good city in general, and the specific idea of the good of that particular city in which we are working to advance urban conservation.

This is not to claim that all cities share exactly the same 'idea of the good city'. It seems that all cities share a *thin* idea of the good (e.g. the city should be citizen friendly; it should help form a community; it should be safe for children, and so on).<sup>xix</sup> Cities differ, though, in their *thick* ideas of the good: every city has its own idea of the good, which I will call 'its story'. For example, the city of Bnei-Brak in Israel is a city of ultra orthodox Jews. They prefer living with a higher building

density because of their specific culture and way of life. Their city should therefore be built to support such behavior as attending synagogue three times a day (thus the working place should not be far from the synagogue, which should also be close to one's home). This city should also have a lot of public spaces for the many children these families have. Most of the families are rather poor and cannot afford much space at home. So this city should facilitate the idea of children playing together in large groups and mixed ages.

The city of Ra'anana, on the other hand, serves a population of hi-tech specialists, business people, lawyers and the like. Their idea of the good for children's leisure activities emphasizes small group classes in music, sports and the arts. Thus this city should encompass many public places with such facilities (e.g. libraries). On the other hand, most Ra'anana families live in large houses with private gardens, so the need for public open spaces is less urgent.

However, I do not want to elaborate on instructions for designers. I want instead to argue that cities share a thin and universal concept of the good and that each city has its own story, which is a thick concept of the good. I call it a story because this thick concept of the good is indeed often presented in a form of a narrative, telling the history of this town. Conservation, then, should relate not just to the general idea of the good city, but also to these stories<sup>xx</sup>.

Therefore, when we reflect upon urban conservation we must realize that it is not about conserving just the actual buildings. Instead, our efforts at 'conservation' should aim to keep faith with the intentions of the architects of the buildings. Take for example, the Amsterdam School – a group of early twentieth century architects influenced by the works of utopian socialists who designed and built public housing for working class people in Amsterdam, which was not only meant to be functional and efficient, but also aesthetic and attractive. Today political pressure is moving to destroy some of these buildings, to combine two or more small apartments into units of single and larger apartments and to build car parks near these buildings. However, it is not enough for this to be done aesthetically and in line with the exterior designs of the buildings. Knocking small apartments into larger ones will also clash with the intention of the Amsterdam School and change the function of these buildings drastically. Their occupancy would be handed over to upper middle class tenants rather than the working class, students, and young couples they were originally built to serve. It will thus contradict the Amsterdam School 'concept' and its idea of the

good, namely that Amsterdam is a city where 90% of the apartments are rented rather than owned. So, I claim, while these buildings may need some repairs and renovations, their conservation must imply bearing the original intentions of the architects and builders in mind, in other words, not betraying these buildings' story.

This is very different from nature (wilderness) conservation<sup>xxi</sup>. In nature conservation, we cannot follow intentions because nature has no intentions or aspirations. As Gunn writes, 'the most important characteristic that a human community has, and a biotic community lacks, is intentionality'.<sup>xxii</sup> Gunn mentions this to differentiate between human and biotic communities; the former having and the latter lacking the intention to form a community. I want to apply this observation here, to further distinguish urban from nature conservation. Thus, when we conserve urban environments, we must take human intentions into consideration. We may decide eventually to disregard them, or we may conclude that change is in need in spite of the human intentions that can be tracked, but we have first to relate to those intentions. When we finally decide to conserve we *interpret* and respect the intentions of those who created a building. When we say things like "this line is beautiful", or "that line is harmonious with the other line" we not only make an aesthetic assertion, but we evaluate and interpret what the builders and architectures of whatever buildings had in mind when they designed and created them. In other words, in urban conservation we conserve human deeds, not monuments. The buildings themselves are not the issue, but the intentions of their builders.

Accordingly, a building is not only a form. It is what goes on, in it and around it. It is how people relate to it, what they do there and so on. A building is therefore also a 'story'. If a building is a story so must be a group of buildings or a city. Part of the story is how people who visit or live in this building relate to the intentions that the architect and the builders had when they created the building. It is this story that informs us whether, and how we should conserve a building. However, since, as I argued above, conserving a building is conserving human deeds and intentions, we now realize that when a community asks itself whether or not to conserve a building, it actually asks itself whether (and if so, how) visitors and tenants of that building should continue to relate to the intentions of the architect and the builders. So when we conserve a building we must not only be aware of the building's 'story' and how people have been related to it (e.g. their use of the building, or reasons why they did not use it, and so on), but we should also have some idea as to future relations

between the building and its tenants and visitors. Urban conservation then means adapting existing buildings and streets to their new functions and taking their stories into account in the process.

Another difference between conservation in natural and urban environments is that when we conserve in nature we often think of the ecosystem as the unit, or object of conservation, and we often see it as a self-contained whole. However, there never have been self-contained cities<sup>xxiii</sup> and no city is expected to be self-contained. Water is brought in from the outside, food often reaches the markets from nearby rural areas, and so on. Urban conservation is therefore not about independent (eco)systems. Instead, it is about the relationships between the city and its surroundings and the role that a particular city has played historically in serving its surrounding.

Because of this, a further difference between conserving nature and urban conservation is that in nature it's all about limiting human's intervention with the ecosystem. In the city, limiting our action or preventing human interference have the opposite effect from interference in nature, and simply lead to decay. A building that is not treated may deteriorate rapidly. Hence in the city, conservation easily becomes restoration. Conservation in the city it is about curing and managing rather than merely maintaining.

I believe this is an important observation. It should be of interest to our discussion, because in places like Manhattan and other cities' commercial districts, where people can raise a lot of anti-urban criticism there really seems to be a need for restoration, rather than just conservation. Restoration is necessary in cases when there is decay not only of the building itself but also of the human relationships around it. In other words it is in cases when the building and the community need to be healed. It therefore relates to cases that go beyond conservation in the narrower sense. We can apply Jordan's principles regarding conservation in nature to conservation in the cities:

“[cases that go] beyond Aldo Leopold's “first precaution” – that is, saving all pieces – to a second precaution, which is learning to put the pieces back together again. Significantly, of course, this second precaution is more than a precaution. It is a commitment to positive action. It is – finally – an act of faith in the possibility of a mutually beneficial relationship between ourselves and the rest of nature.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

Often, ecological restoration is defined as ‘returning a site to some previous state, with the species richness and diversity and physical, biological and aesthetic characteristics of that site before human settlement and the accompanying disturbances’<sup>xxv</sup>. Following this argument, restoration in nature is perhaps not ‘authentic’. Robert Elliot claims so and names it ‘faking nature’. This argument is controversial, but I do not wish to relate to it here. My point is that in the city it should be the opposite. It is restoration rather than preservation that may be more authentic, because it is about revealing the original intentions of the builders and designers. Urban preservation on the other hand, is “faking it” in the sense that its claim that by preserving one respects the city and its story is pretentious. The reason is that the story as we superficially read it, without an investigation into and study of the building’s, or street’s past, is likely to be wrong.

Finally, restoration is an act of cooperation with the city.<sup>xxvi</sup> The restorative approach rejects the idea that the person living in the city can be distinguished from the city itself<sup>xxvii</sup>. This is an important point. While the debate regarding whether or not humans are part of nature makes sense<sup>xxviii</sup>, in the city it does not make sense. One cannot separate humans from the city, because everything urban (apart from lakes, rivers, some parks and, animals) is by definition man made.

### 3. Urban restoration

This is where I return to my picture of Manhattan’s commercial district. When skyscrapers were built in Manhattan they were intended to form a new ‘skyline’, which would still leave the horizon open. The mayor of NY, addressing to foreign guests in 1909, explained the rationale for the high buildings:

“Take the city altogether, the general effect of the city as a whole, the contrast of its blotches and vivid color, with the bright blue of the sky in the background, and the waters of the harbor in the foreground, the huge masses of its office buildings, towering peak on peak and pinnacle above pinnacle to the sky, making of lower Manhattan, to the eye at least, a city that is set on a hill, and New York does have a beauty of her own, a beauty that is indescribable, that seizes one’s sense of imagination, and holds one in its grip”<sup>xxix</sup>.

The vision behind this description is long been lost behind. At that time, skyscrapers were not as high as they are today; the sky could easily been seen. Today, though, it is a difficult task for pedestrians walking near those building. In 1909, presumably the harbor could be felt: now it is blocked by masses of buildings; one rarely smells the sea, even when an east wind blows.

Let's go back to the streets. As Jane Jacobs writes, “[s]treets in cities serve many purposes besides carrying vehicles, and city sidewalks – the pedestrian parts of the streets – serve many purposes besides carrying pedestrians. (...) Streets and their sidewalks, the main public places of a city, are its most vital organs. Think of a city and what comes to mind? Its streets.”<sup>xxx</sup>

Indeed, the streets and sidewalks are the public space of the city; they represent the city, its culture, its self-image and its thick idea of the good more than everything else. But in Manhattan one often feels that the streets are there to transfer cars and the sidewalks to carry pedestrians and nothing else. If the streets could talk they would probably complain that they have no time for anything else besides carrying cars from one place to another, and that the same applies to the sidewalks and carrying pedestrians<sup>xxxi</sup> “Sidewalks are active participants in the drama of civilization versus barbarism in cities” writes Jacobs<sup>xxxii</sup>. But if nobody helps the worker who empties the garbage and spills it all over himself, then barbarism has won in Manhattan. The fact that only a block away stands the most wonderful museum hosting the most interesting exhibition; or that around the corner the most exciting contemporary artist sits sipping his coffee does not matter. If compassion is missing - - if people are alienated from one another -- than barbarism has triumphed over civilization.

And yet, barbarism is not what the founders of Manhattan had in mind. What they had in mind was a city that would accommodate its inhabitants; a city that could embrace its newcomers, that could offer the excitement of immigration, an intensive commercial life, and beauty. As the poet Walt Whitman wrote:

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how curious you are to me!

On the ferry-boat the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning home, are more curious to me than you suppose,

And you, that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose. (...)

I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence,

Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,

Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd,

Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright flow, I was refresh'd (...)<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Therefore, if we want to restore buildings in Manhattan we have to restore such consciousness. We want to do it in a way that will allow people to “stand and stare”. We want them to communicate with each other, to express this attitude of human fellowship. Manhattan claims to be the only truly open city that embraces and accepts everyone, that accepts all beliefs and styles of life. And so, if this is Manhattan’s idea of the good, then let it be spoken, let it manifest itself. The avenues were fine when horses and carriages, and later, trams, were used. But with this incessant flow of traffic, with this inescapable rhythm of yet another car and yet another person – or a dozen persons, the avenues cannot allow pedestrians to pause, to relax, to calm down; they are designed in a way that forces people to keep on moving to their destination. The restoration of Manhattan would mean breaking it into parts; remolding it on a friendlier, more human scale to restore the original intention for Manhattan as expressed in Whitman’s poem.

At this point we must be careful not to become nostalgic about the city. Admittedly, restoration relates to the past: it is about restoring some of the intentions that lie hidden perhaps beneath layers of cement, underneath a paved street, or behind the aging facades of houses, and yet restoration should not be driven by nostalgia for two reasons. First, if our moral duty is indeed (only) to appreciate what our predecessors valued and to value those things that have played an important role in their history<sup>xxxiv</sup>, then one might argue that a contemporary German has obligations to restore values or monuments of the Nazis past. Prima facie, the argument that the present has obligations toward previous generations and their cultural heritage could easily be argued to support restoration. However, on second thoughts, it might also lead us to such absurdities as the restoration of parts of the Nazi past by modern day Germans.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Second, in cities nostalgia may be related to decay and death. Cities grow and develop almost like human beings, and therefore the inhabitants of the city who tenant its houses cannot be asked to preserve them because for some of us conservation meets our need to nurture the past. There is no problem today with city residents having plastic blinds, for example, because the metal ones are being attacked by the salty winds, or because there is not enough wood for wooden ones. Tenants of older buildings cannot be asked to pay for nostalgia-driven restoration that requires old or original materials since this would make living in these buildings prohibitively expensive. In this scenario, only rich people would be able to afford to live in such buildings and consequently, the original intention of the architects as well as the building's original function may be lost. Moreover, if we do ask the tenants to foot the restoration bill, many will find it too expensive and leave these houses. Thus, we will create nothing but ghost cities, driving the poor and middle class people out when they cannot afford to preserve their houses according to dictates of the nostalgic restoration lobby. Then we will find the rich people buying these houses, but not necessarily using them. Some will purchase the houses for investment, some to use as summer or winter homes. The bottom line is that many of these buildings will stand empty during most of the year. This, needless to say, will not contribute towards restoring the city's social life.

. But if instead we chose a relevant approach to restoration, one that is not nostalgic, but which looks to preserve and renew the function of the house, taking its present and future use into account, then the tenants will be able to afford to stay where they are. In other words, since restoration should consider the past and the 'story' of the house, street, or city, but at the same time should consider the future and the present use, we must not impose the cost of restoration on the inhabitants of the restored houses. Restoration should either be flexible (e.g. by using contemporary materials rather than the original ones) or be paid by the state. This way, the tenants will feel that we respect them, and therefore they will be more likely to respect our desire to restore the house. To wit, we need restoration regulations that the public can live with. We do not lose a lot by this. Remember that urban restoration is about human deeds and intentions, and not just about preserving monuments and worrying about their aesthetic value.

Thus, planners and architects do not live and work in an ideological vacuum. They must relate to the city's thick idea of the good . Recall that we related to the city

as a place offering possibilities of a high quality of life, defined by the values of its community. If this is so, then the question of whether to restore a house, a street, a church, a pub, and so on, has to do with the question of how the latter relate to the city's idea of the good life. Even if such buildings must be renovated because, for instance, their structure is no longer reliable, this must remain in line with their inherent story, metaphor and idea, with the way they have been used and their future, intended use.

I find Whiston-Spirin's notion of 'Deep Structure' very helpful here. It relates to the physical, spatial and evolutionary, and temporal dimensions of a place. Thus, Whiston-Spirin writes: "In the history of a city, deep structure is a constant that successive human generations must address again and again, each in accordance with its own values and technology. Tradition, values and policies may change, but the deep structure of each city remains an enduring framework within which the human community builds".<sup>xxxvi</sup> The problem is, of course, that a city's 'deep structure' is often hidden by layers of constructions, many of which oppose the deep structure. It is therefore the task of restorers, architects and planners, to study the 'deep structure', not only relating to the superficial physical appearance of buildings and streets, but also to the layers of now often buried intentions, or, as Whiston-Spirin puts it, the temporal dimension of the city. If a building conforms to the city's idea of the good, and if it is part of what constitutes people's reasons for living in that city, then the building's restoration should be guided by this idea and by the intentions of the original architectures, as well as by the way that the public has been relating to the building in the public's attempt to lead a meaningful life.

This implies that before planners and architectures start the task of restoration, they must first study, understand, and be sensitive to the sociology and philosophy of what a city is in general, and then relate to and learn to appreciate whichever particular building or city they are working with. In doing so they must remember that a city has to serve its inhabitants. Inhabitants are "persons who inhabit a place". To inhabit means to live or dwell somewhere, but also to exist and be situated. It derives from 'habitat', which means 'the native environment of an animal or plant; the kind of place that is natural for the life and growth of an animal or plant'. Thus habitation is a place of *natural* residence. 'Natural' in this context should mean authentic. Hence planners and architects should also study the history of a city or location, they should do their best to be informed about the vision that guided its original designers. They

should examine the public's attitudes to the building they are addressing and understand how it was used.

Last but not least, they should explore the present day expectations of the public from the place. This is an important comment. It may answer a possible challenge, to wit, what if the original plan for this building was wrong, or if the architects' achievements were very poor. The answer – beyond the even more basic answer that in that case it is not likely that the house will be restored – is that by studying the public's attitude to the building it is easy to learn about mistakes that have been done in this building. The public will not follow the builders' original intentions if they do not make sense. It will vote with its legs, go elsewhere and use another building. As a metaphor we can think of a park or a meadow in which the authorities pave a path for walkers, but this path turns out to be not functional. People gradually find their own way by trial and error, until eventually one can see the mark of a 'spontaneous' path which makes more sense, e.g. it is shorter.

So planners should explore the present day expectations of the public from the place. Then they should use their art to translate the ideas and conceptions they have found into drawings and maps. They should illustrate using stone and cement, soil and steel, the delicate balance that they have retrieved, between the 'story' of the place and present day expectations of it. A good urban planner who works on restoration is thus one who can interpret and exhibit contemporary expectations as following, or even deriving from, the story of the building. This is because when we live in a city we expect it to be a meaningful environment. We do not want it to be random, chaotic, or at worse, alienating. We do not want cities to become the Manhattan I have described.

Notice that I mention the balance between the past and the future because I want to avoid a rather Burkeian theory, according to which the story predominates the current expectations. For example, some people have argued that we preserve landmarks because they embody the common wisdom of those who have built them, lived in them, worked in them, and so on. So anything we contemporaries invent is likely to permit a lower quality of life than anything they have done. This argument, though, seems to me to be self-contradictory. If contemporary generation  $G_c$  accepts that a previous generation  $G_p$  is likely to make a higher quality of life than anything  $G_c$  can, then by the same rationale  $G_p$  should accept that an even earlier generation,  $G_{pp}$  is likely to make a higher quality of life than anything  $G_p$  can.  $G_{pp}$  then should

accept that Gppp was more able as well, until eventually we are to believe that the first generation made a higher quality of life than anything we (Gc) can. This is both counter intuitive and self contradictory, because what this argument aims at is that we contemporaries should respect, for instance, an 18<sup>th</sup> century building as manifesting something good. This is fine, but if the rationale is that the earlier the generation is the more likely it is to produce high quality, then I see no reason why we should stop at this 18<sup>th</sup> century building. (See also my discussion of nostalgic attitudes of restoration above.) It seems that contemporary Central Berlin is an excellent counter-example. Some of the old buildings and monuments that reflected the ‘wisdom’ of the Nazis and the imperial Germany were knocked down. Huge towers of ultra-modern design that express nothing but universal values, internationalism, and peace replaced them. I think that many would agree that this Berlin is better according to any parameter: political, social, moral, and aesthetic.

Instead of a summary

Instead of summarizing my argument, I would like to show that it has far reaching implications for urban restoration and urban environmental ethics, which go beyond the question of restoration. For example, it should imply that the idea of urban parks should change. In our days, parks are pockets of designed and controlled nature within urban surroundings. There is, so to speak, a dichotomy between nature and city, and the park is a compensation for this dichotomy, although it is built on the assumption that since nature and city are mutually contradictory, a park is not a section of ‘natural’ nature, but rather a designed and controlled, environment. However, the original intention of urbanites was not to detach the city from nature or rural areas. The idea was that one would serve and benefit from the other. According to Cosgrove the city has played a critical role in the changing discourse of nature and the natural. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the ‘picturesque’ was intimately linked to landscape and gardening as representations of the natural world in the city. Later on, the garden represented the place where nature and culture met. This led to the idea put forward towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Ebenezer Howard, a British town planner, that ‘the ancient dualism of city and country should collapse into a *middle* nature’. Both town and the country represented, to Howard, the ‘full plan and purpose of nature’. Indeed, claims Cosgrove, the suburbs with their little gardens ‘progressively

destroyed recognizable distinctions between city and country' until they seemed like 'middle nature'.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

This meant, however, that wilderness was outside the city and that the city contained a highly regulated form of nature. Nature was remolded to serve humans. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries this may have seemed right. But now, it seems to me that precisely because in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century rural nature itself is becoming less and less natural, because more and more land is cultivated and used for other human purposes, it is precisely the city that can conserve not only buildings and streets, but nature as well. The concept is simple. Since cities are home to many affluent people who pay large amounts municipal in taxation, the municipalities can use large sums to conserve pockets of wilderness in the city. These areas would be marked and city residents would agree to leave them untouched. Beside the advantage of having green lungs as they are called, to absorb the CO<sub>2</sub> gases and enrich the city's oxygen, these pockets of wilderness within the city would indeed help to eliminate the walls between real – not 'middle' – nature and the city. This is just an example of the further implications of my suggestion. I leave it in a very preliminary stage because there is no room to develop it here.

## Endnotes

*This paper was written before September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. I wish to dedicate it to the victims of this brutal attack and their families and friends. I would like to thank Andrew Light and Kit Wellman for their helpful comments. I have also benefited from comments by the various participants in the conference on urban environmental ethics hosted by the University of Georgia, Atlanta. Thanks also to Arthur Goldreich, Meira Hanson, Joseph Keulartz and Eilon Schwartz.*

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<sup>i</sup> Dale Jamieson, "The City Around Us", in Earthbound, ed. Tom Regan (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1984) 39-43; and Alastair Gunn, "Rethinking Communities; Environmental Ethics in an Urbanized World", Environmental Ethics, 20 (1998): 344-345

<sup>ii</sup> Notice that I put aside much of the environmental ethics critique of the city. This critique is aimed at showing that the city is not natural enough. I find this critique, though, quite boring and therefore not challenging: of course the city is not natural. It is so by definition.

<sup>iii</sup> The parts that are meditative are in italics.

<sup>iv</sup> For 'ruralist' theories see Avner de-Shalit, "Ruralism or Environmentalism?", Environmental Values, 5 (1996): 47-59

<sup>v</sup> Thus I will call it the is-IS fallacy (I explain this below).

<sup>vi</sup> Notice that I am not claiming that objectively these claims are universal and applied to all urban cases. Quite the opposite.

<sup>vii</sup> Perhaps at this point it is necessary to comment that the very term of 'commercial district' is very American. In most Mediterranean cities, for example, there are no commercial districts as such. The events which led to the formation of urban identities in those cities preceded the industrial revolution. This has a clear impact on the shaping of public space in those cities: cohabitation of work, commerce, and residence is very common. I mention this because much of the critique discussed below is not relevant to such cities.

<sup>viii</sup> Notice, again, that I am not discussing the question whether this critique is true or not. As long as this critique is put forward it may teach us about people's ideas of the good city.

<sup>ix</sup> Interestingly, though, two Greek authors picture a rather inevitable future for all cities, See C. Dioxiadis and J. Pappoannou, Ecumenopolis: The Inevitable City of the Future (Athens, Greece: Athens Publishing Center, 1974).

<sup>x</sup> A friend of mine who worked at the Empire State Building confessed that it took him less than a week to lose his temper and shout at the tourists who blocked his way out of the building during lunch break, 'Hey, there are people working here, just go away'.

<sup>xi</sup> David Nye, "The Geometrical Sublime: the skyscraper", in City and Nature, eds. Thomas Moller Kristensen et al. (Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press, 1994), 33.

<sup>xii</sup> I shall return to this below when I discuss the "story" of these buildings, i.e. the intention of building them and how to restore this original intention.

<sup>xiii</sup> Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (Random House, 1961), Chapter 1.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

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<sup>xv</sup> Robert Redfield and Milton Singer thought that indeed cities allowed people to “enlarge their cultural horizons sufficient to become aware of other cultures and of the possibility that one’s own society may in some ways require their presence.” See Robert Redfield and Milton Singer, “The Cultural Role of Cities” in Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities, ed. Richard Sennet (New York: Meredith Corporation, 1969), 228.

<sup>xvi</sup> Walt Whitman, “Manhatta”, Leaves of Grass and Selected Poems, (N.Y.: The modern Library, 1950 (1924)), 369.

<sup>xvii</sup> It is often said that Jerusalem is such a city. People could either accept its religious, sometimes holy, atmosphere, or leave.

<sup>xviii</sup> Jameison, “The City Around Us”, 63.

<sup>xix</sup> For various such thin ideas of the good for the cities throughout history see Peter Hall, Cities of Tomorrow (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

<sup>xx</sup> At this point I was inspired by reading Alan Holland and John O’Neill, “Yew Trees, Butterflies, Rotting Boots and Washing Lines” in Moral and Political Reasoning in Environmental Practice, eds. Andrew Light and Avner de-Shalit (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, forthcoming). After describing their walks in various places of nature conservation, they relate to a development project in one of these areas, in north Wales: “To carry through this project would be to bury the past: it would involve burying the history of the local community and the story of their engagement with the mountain, revealed in the slate stairways, the hewn caverns and the exposed slate face. Higher up, and most poignant of all, the workmen’s huts were still in place, and inside the huts could be seen rows of decaying coats hanging above pairs of rotting boots, where the last men to work the quarry had left them.” Later on they write: “The same mound of earth belongs both to the story of an ancient meeting place, a drying area, and a farmer attempting to make a living in a world of unpredictable markets and state subsidies. There are different histories to which we have to be true - and there are histories that, when they are unearthed, change our perceptions of the nature of a place and what it embodies.” Let me just add that it may be the case that a city would have more than one thick notion of the good. In that case restoration would involve a democratic negotiation between the different groups and their ideas of the good, as they are reflected in that particular city.

<sup>xxi</sup> I relate here to nature as wilderness because as can be seen in the Holland and O’Neill’s example, when nature is combined with human settlements there is a story involved.

<sup>xxii</sup> Gunn, “Rethinking Communities”, 353.

<sup>xxiii</sup> See also Gunn, “Rethinking Communities”, 348.

<sup>xxiv</sup> William Jordan, “A new Society: A Second Precaution and Restoration as a Strategy for Selling Ecology”, Restoration and Management Notes, 6 (1988), quoted in Mark Cowell, “Ecological Restoration and Environmental Ethics”, Environmental Ethics, 15 (1993): 21.

<sup>xxv</sup> Cowell, “Ecological Restoration and Environmental Ethics”, 19.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Which is why Light and others claim that restoration has the value of participatory relationship with the environment and of participatory democracy. See Andrew Light, “The Urban Blind Spot in Environmental Ethics”, Environmental Politics, 10 (2001): 7-36.

<sup>xxvii</sup> See my rationale for urban conservation in Avner de-Shalit, “Urban Preservation and the Judgement of Solomon”, Journal of Applied Philosophy, 11 (1994): 3-15

<sup>xxviii</sup> Eugene Hargrove, Foundations of Environmental Ethics (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989), for example, thinks that humans disrupt nature.

<sup>xxix</sup> Edgar Hall, The Hudson Fulton Celebration (Albany: SUNY, 1910). Cited in Nye, “The Geometric Sublime” (1994).

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<sup>xxx</sup> Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities, 29.

<sup>xxx</sup><sub>i</sub> In December 2000 I stopped for sixty seconds on Broadway Avenue and counted the number of people who walked by me on both directions. I counted 140 persons in one minute.

<sup>xxx</sup><sub>ii</sub> Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities, 30.

<sup>xxx</sup><sub>iii</sub> Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" in his Leaves of Grass and Selected Poems (NY: The Modern Library, (1924) 1950). I thank Andrew Light for informing me about this poem.

<sup>xxx</sup><sub>iv</sub> As claims Janna Thompson, "Environment as Cultural Heritage", Environmental Ethics, 22 (2000): 241-258.

<sup>xxx</sup><sub>v</sub> A different case is when we restore a building because we still believe in those values. Still, in that case the idea of cultural heritage is only a strengthening element to the claim that we restore because we believe in those ideas.

<sup>xxx</sup><sub>vi</sub> Anne Whiston-Sprin, "Deep Structure: On Process, Form and Design in the Urban Landscape", in City and Nature, eds. Thomas Moller Kristensen et al (Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press, 1994): 11-12

<sup>xxx</sup><sub>vii</sub> Denis Cosgrove, "The Picturesque City" in City and Nature, eds. Thomas Moller Kristensen et al, (Odense: Odense University Press, 1994): 47, 53, 53.