The Good City: In Defense of Utopian Thinking*

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An open letter to Manuel Castells

I consider social action and political projects to be essential in the betterment of a society that clearly needs change and hope. And I do hope that this book, by raising some questions and providing empirical and theoretical elements to treat them, may contribute to informed social action in the pursuit of social change. In this sense, I am not, and do not want to be, a neutral, detached observer of the human drama.

However, I have seen so much misled sacrifice, so many dead ends induced by ideology, and such horrors provoked by artificial paradises of dogmatic politics that I want to convey a salutary reaction against trying to frame political practice in accordance with social theory, or, for that matter, with ideology. Theory and research, in general as well as in this book, should be considered as a means for understanding our world, and should be judged exclusively on their accuracy, rigor, and relevance. How these tools are used, and for what purpose, should be the exclusive prerogative of social actors themselves, in specific social contexts, and on behalf of their values and interests. No more meta-politics, no more '*maitres a penser*', and no more intellectuals pretending to be so (Castells, 1998: 359).

Dear Manuel,

Reading these closing paragraphs of volume three of your great trilogy took me back to my university days in Chicago. It was the early 1950s, and we eagerly debated the possibilities and merits of a 'value-free' social science. I won't bore you with arguments that, as a sociologist, you know far better than I. But I had thought that, in the end, the resolution of those arguments was that the social sciences are inevitably imprinted with the values and interests of the author, and that, having torn the 'veil of ignorance' from our scientific persona, we could get on with our work. Until I came to your sentence about how theory and research 'should be judged exclusively on their accuracy, rigor, and relevance'. Until I read: 'How these tools are used, and for what purpose, should be the exclusive prerogative of social actors themselves...'

I think I understand, and even have some sympathy for, your position at the end of this over-ideologized century. But we cannot escape ideology. In a recent essay, Janet Abu-Lughod defines ideology as 'deep sets of beliefs about how the world works' (Abu-Lughod, 1998: 77). And so I could as readily call the 'empirical and theoretical elements' we bring together in our books a form of ideology, that is, a set of elementary beliefs about the far-reaching changes that are perturbing our lives in what you call the 'information age'. That is the heart of their message. The question is, to whom is the message addressed?

* Editor's note: Manuel Castells declined to respond to this article. Readers are invited to provide their reactions.

You seem to want to draw a line between the authorial self and those whom you call social actors, who, embedded in their specific contexts, have their own 'values and interests'. But who are these actors? And aren't we all social actors, even as we sit in front of our computers, drafting chapters that, in one way or another, are likely to create a stir among our readers? Or are we simply 'speaking truth to power' as Aaron Wildavsky claimed? Is there really this determinate boundary you want to draw between the academy, with its austere values of 'accuracy, rigor, and relevance', and the world of political passions? Doesn't any narrative have its own rhetoric of persuasion that is so clearly pitched at intellectuals like yourself and at members of certain power elites, all of whom, you quite rightly assume, will have agendas of their own and make such use of our work as they see fit. Of one thing I am certain: the stories we tell are unlikely to be read by social activists in the trenches of the many struggles for the better world for which we both hope. They don't have the leisure to read 'The information age' with its more than 1400 pages of text, footnotes and scholarly references.

But there is one particular group of readers that, I think, you and I would both like to reach — for otherwise, why choose to be an academic? — a group that will be deeply disappointed by your act of self-renunciation. I refer to students and other intelligent young people everywhere. I want to quote from a speech given by Tan Le, age 21, and nominated as the 1998 Young Australian of the Year. Tan Le is a lawyer now, and this is what she said:

> *I have just completed a law degree. One of the reasons I chose law — and many other young people also include this reason for choosing it — was because I believed that a law degree would enable me to contribute in a special way, to do what I could to make a better world.*
>
> *Of course I can do this as a lawyer, but nothing in the entire law curriculum addressed this issue in a serious and engaging way. And other tertiary courses are the same...*
>
> *Young people are not being educated to take their place in society. They are being trained — trained in a narrow body of knowledge and skills that is taught in isolation from larger and vital questions about who we are and what we might become.*
>
> *There is, in other words, a complete absence of a larger vision, and many young people who enter university in the hope that what they learn will help them make a better world soon find out that this is not a consideration.*
>
> *And it is not just in tertiary education courses that this lack of vision prevails. We lack it as a society. We have replaced it with what might be called a rationale. To my mind, this is not the same thing as a vision. It is more pragmatic, smaller in scope, less daring, and it does not fire the heart or capture the imagination. It does not inspire.*
>
> *Vision carries the connotation of value, meaning and purpose — and of something beyond our reach that is nevertheless worth striving for and aspiring to. A rationale, on the other hand, is limited and attainable, and the tighter and more compact the rationale is, the more attainable it is.*
>
> *And we do have a tight and compact rationale for our lives and for what we do. It is an economic rationale, and economic in a very narrow sense. It is solely interested in a certain type of efficiency and profit — efficiency and profit to the exclusion of, and in isolation from, everything else, particularly the future (Le, 1999: 17).*

Tan Le's plea is for a utopian vision, and by renouncing an alternative to the present, you deprive her of what is most important to her life and give her a prepackaged 'rationale' instead.

There are no inevitabilities in this world, not even the apparent inevitability of globalization and the new power structures that are emerging alongside. There are always responses, resistances, attempts at shaping and reshaping the historical forces that impinge on our lives. Like yourself, I believe that the future is open-ended, even though not infinitely malleable, and that in order to bring about a world that is fit to live in, we need new and solid ideas for living, persuasive images of the good society. And I also believe that, by virtue of our intellectual understanding of what is happening around us, we — you and I — have a special responsibility to try and come up with some images of this sort. There is very little danger that our images of the good society, or the good city, will be abused by leaders mad

for power, by turning them into yet another tyranny, or that our words will send waves of good society warriors to their ignoble death, as they try to scale the impossible walls of utopia. If indeed I thought that was the case, I would stop writing now.

You do know that I have always admired your work, even when I did not agree with it, and your present trilogy is an impressive achievement. But you and I are also social actors by virtue of what we write, and this imposes certain obligations, if only to help fill the terrible void in the soul of young people like Tan Le.

As ever, your colleague and friend, etc. etc.

The utopian impulse

Utopian thinking: the capacity to imagine a future that departs significantly from what we know to be a general condition in the present. It is a way of breaking through the barriers of convention into a sphere of the imagination where many things beyond our everyday experience become feasible. All of us have this ability, which is inherent in human nature, because human beings are insufficiently programmed for the future. We need a constructive imagination that we can variously use for creating fictive worlds. Some of these worlds can be placed in the past, others in the future, and some, like Dante's *Divina comedia*, even in afterlife.

There are other ways of deploying this capacity than in the imagining of utopias. Religion is one of them, and for many people religious faith satisfies their thirst for meaning. Belief in hegemonic ideologies is a secular counterpart to religion. American ideology, repeated *ad nauseam* by our leaders and reinforced by the media, incorporates the idea of bliss in a consumer society, so that a better world is seen to be chiefly one of greater material affluence for individuals. This is the ideology we are selling around the world. Along with belief in a never-ending abundance of material goods, it includes the rhetoric of representative democracy, and blind trust in the powers of technology to overcome whatever problems that might be encountered along the way to a 'free society'.[1] Intensely nationalistic feelings may also satisfy the need for ordinary lives to have a transcendent meaning.[2] The question of 'why are we here' arises precisely because the human condition is to be open to the future, and it requires a response on our part.

Beyond the alternative constructions of religion, ideology and nationalism, there are many good reasons why we might wish to engage utopian thinking. For some of us, it is merely an amusing pastime. For others it serves as a veiled critique of present-day evils. For still others it may be, in the phrase of Sir Philip Sidney's comment on Thomas More's *Utopia* in 1595, a persuasive means of 'leading men to virtue' (Manuel and Manuel, 1979: 2). In the peculiar form of dystopias, it may alert us to certain tendencies in the present which, if allowed to continue unchecked and carried to a logical extreme, would result in a world we find abhorrent. The twentieth century has produced many literary dystopias (not to mention the many actual dystopias in the real world), from Aldous Huxley's Brave New World to the cyberpunk novels of William Gibson and others (Warren *et al.*, 1998). But most important of all, utopian thinking can help us choose a

1 According to the distinguished Israeli sociologist, S.N. Eisenstadt (1998: 123), America forged a civil religion out of disparate elements including 'a strongly egalitarian, achievement-oriented individualism, republican liberties, with the almost total denial of the symbolic validity of hierarchy; disestablishment of official religion beginning with the federal government; basically anti-statist premises; and a quasi-sanctification of the economic sphere.

2 Utopian thinking may also be denied altogether. In destitution and other situations *in extremis*, survival has priority and leaves no room for utopian thinking, despite wish-dreams of cornucopia. Finally, there are those who make a virtue of problem-solving via 'muddling through' in Charles Lindblom's (1959) provocative formulation, where our choices are guided by nothing more than a simple pleasure-pain calculus. Market fundamentalists are similarly averse to charting the long-term future.

path into the future that we believe is justified, because its concrete imagery is informed by values which are precious to us.

Utopian thinking has two moments that are inextricably connected: critique and constructive vision. The critique is of certain aspects of our present condition: injustices, oppression, ecological devastation. It is precisely an enumeration of these 'evils', however, that implies a code of moral values that is being violated. The code may not be written out, or it may merely be suggested symbolically by invoking slogans such as 'freedom', 'equality', 'solidarity'. But it is there nonetheless. The moral outrage over an injustice implies that we have a sense, however inarticulate, of justice. And so on, for each of our terms of condemnation.

Now it is true that negative and positive images are not necessarily symmetrical with respect to each other. Most of us might agree that great material inequalities are unjust, yet differ vehemently about what might constitute a 'just' distribution of incomes or other material good. But differences about social justice are ultimately political, not philosophical arguments. In any event, they are unavoidable, because if injustice is to be corrected (or, for that matter, any other 'evil'), we will need the concrete imagination of utopian thinking to propose steps that would bring us closer to a world we would consider 'just'.

It is this concrete vision — the second moment of utopian thinking — which Tan Le was calling for to give her a sense of a meaningful deployment of her own powers in the public sphere.

Such visionings are always debatable, both in their own terms and when measured against alternative proposals. That is why I call them political. Where the uncensored public expression of opinions is allowed, they should become the substance of political argument. Utopian thinking is thus not at all about fairytales but about genuine futures around which political coalitions may be built.

There are always limitations on purposive action — of leadership, power, resources, knowledge. But if we begin with these limitations rather than with images of the desirable future, we may never arrive at utopian constructs with the power to generate the passion necessary for a social movement that might bring us a few steps closer to the vision they embody.

The utopian tradition in planning

With considerations of this sort, we find ourselves back on the familiar ground of planning. City and regional planning (or spatial planning) has an enduring tradition of utopian thought (Friedmann and Weaver, 1979; Weaver, 1984; Friedmann, 1987). The evocation of the classics requires no references: Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, Pierre Joseph Proudhon, William Morris, Peter Kropotkin, Ebenezer Howard, Lewis Mumford, Frank Lloyd Wright, Percival and Paul Goodman are all names in common currency among the tribe. In more recent decades, we can mention the illustrious names of Kevin Lynch and, for some of us also E.F. Schumacher and Ivan Illich. Still closer to our time and, indeed, contemporary with us, I could mention Jane Jacobs (1961), Dolores Hayden (1984) and Leonie Sandercock (1997). Given this chain of utopian writings stretching over 200 years that have influenced the education of planners and, to a greater or lesser degree, have also shaped their practice, it would be hard to argue that even the mainstream of the planning profession has kept itself aloof from utopian thinking.

In a recent essay, Susan Fainstein poses the question of whether we can make the cities we want (Fainstein, 1999). In her account, the important values that should inform our thinking about cities include material equality, cultural diversity, democratic participation and ecological sustainability in a metropolitan milieu. Fainstein's background is in political economy, and so it is not surprising that she should give pride of place to the question of material equality (or rather inequality) and follow, if not uncritically, David Harvey's lead in *Justice, nature and the geography of difference*

(1996). I will come back to this particular prioritization of social values when I present my own answer to Fainstein's challenging question.

But before I do this, I would like to recall an argument I made fourteen years ago in *Planning in the public domain* (Friedmann, 1987). The second and third parts of this volume attempt to sketch an intellectual history of planning, but, at the same time, to go beyond this history in advocating a transformative planning that, because it is based on the mobilization of the disempowered groups in society, I called radical. The central focus of radical planning in this sense is political action by organized groups within civil society (which is the more familiar 'community' of planning discourse but situated in a different theoretical setting). Its radicalism derives from actions that, with or without and even against the state, are aimed at universal emancipation. 'A key principle in radical, transformative practice', I wrote, 'is that *no group can be completely free until freedom* [from oppression] *has been achieved for every group*. Thus, the struggle for emancipation leads to results that will always be partial and contradictory, until the final and possibly utopian goal of a free humanity is reached' (*ibid*, 1987: 301).[3] I then went on to examine what planners, who opt for emancipatory struggles, do. Among the many things I considered are elaborating a hard-hitting critical analysis of existing conditions; assisting in the mobilization of communities to rectify these conditions; assisting in devising appropriate strategies of struggle; refining the technical aspects of transformative solutions; facilitating social learning from radical practice; mediating between the mobilized community and the state; helping to ensure the widest possible participation of community members in all phases of the struggle; helping to rethink the group's course of action in the light of new understandings; and becoming personally involved in transformative practice (*ibid*, 303–7). I wanted it to be understood that utopian thinking, at least so far as planners are concerned, is historically grounded in specific emancipatory struggles. Planning of this sort stands in the grand utopian tradition. In her most recent work, Leonie Sandercock calls it an insurgent planning (Sandercock, forthcoming).

In the present essay, my intention is somewhat different. Rather than talk about political struggles to resist specific forms of oppression, my aim is to delineate some elements for a positive vision of the 'good city'. And I want to do so in the manner of an achievable utopia rather than paint a scenario set in a distant, indeterminate future.

A century during which the vast majority of the world's population will have to live in urban environments cries out for images of the good city. I have purposely phrased this need in the plural. Taking the world as a whole, the diversity of starting conditions is so great that no single version of the city will suffice. Fifty years from now, the world's urban population will be roughly double the existing numbers of 2.9 billion. We can thus look ahead to a historically unprecedented age of city-building. And city-builders need not only blueprints for their work, but *guiding, normative images*. The following remarks are addressed to planners and to anyone else who wishes to confront the multiple challenges of the age.[4]

3   I would like here to quote from a recent essay by Gerda Lerner (1997: 197), which expresses a similar conviction:

> As long as we regard class, race, and gender dominance as separate though overlapping systems, we fail to understand their actual integration. We also fail to see that they cannot be abolished sequentially, for like the many-headed hydra, they continuously spawn new heads. Vertical theories of separate systems inevitably marginalize the subordination of women and fail to place it in the central relationship it has to the other aspects of the system. The system of hierarchies is interwoven, interpenetrating, interdependent. It is one system, with a variety of aspects. Race, class and gender oppression are inseparable; they construct, support and reinforce one another.

4   Some other notable attempts to imagine normative frameworks for city-building include Allan Jacobs and Donald Appleyard's *Toward an urban design manifesto* (1987), Richard Rogers' *Cities for a small planet* (1997), and an interesting utopian experiment in Germany, involving four cities (Stadt Münster, 1997). Called an '*Agreement concerning the quality [of life] for a league of cities of the future*', this program includes specific discussions under five headings: (1) economizing land management practices; (2) forward-looking environmental protection; (3) socially responsible housing programs; (4) transportation policy guidance for a sustainable urban future; (5) promoting an economy that will ensure a firm foundation for the city's future within a sustainable and resource-conserving framework.

Imagining the good city I: theoretical considerations

Before proceeding, however, some preliminaries must be considered. First, in setting out an account of the good city, whose city are we talking about? Can we legitimately assume the possibility of a 'common good' for the city? Second, are we concerned only with process or only with outcomes, or should outcome and process be considered jointly? And finally, how is a normative framework such as we are considering to be thought of in relation to professional practice?

Whose city?
We have been bludgeoned into accepting as gospel that to speak of a common good in a given polity is either propaganda or an act of self-deception. The attacks on the common weal have come from all ideological directions. Pluralists see only group interests that strike temporary bargains in the political arena. Marxists argue on roughly similar grounds that the 'common good' is a phrase used by the hegemonic class, i.e. the bourgeoisie, to hide purposes that are simply an expression of class interest. Postmodern critics who see only a world of fleeting kaleidoscopic images, dissolve the 'common good' into a thousand discursive fragments, dismissing any attempt to raise one of them above any of the others as an unjustifiable attempt to establish a new 'metanarrative' in an age from which metanarratives have been banned.

Against all of these intellectually dismissive critics, I would argue for the necessity of continuing to search for the 'common good' of a city if only because, without such a conception, there can be neither a sense of local identity nor a political community. In democratic polities, there has to be minimal agreement on the structure of the community and on the possibility of discovering a 'common good' through political discourse. An administered city is not a political community and might as well be a hotel managed by some multinational concern. In that case, the answer to the question of 'whose city' is very clear. But in a putative democracy, the city is ultimately 'the people', and the cliché notwithstanding, it is the people who must find a way among themselves to define, time after time, in what specific action agendas the 'common good' of the city may be found. It seems to me that it makes a world of difference whether we seek to justify an action by grounding it in a conception of the 'common good', a conception that always remains open to political challenge, or merely to assert it without voices of dissent, or omit any reference to it altogether.

Process vs. outcomes
This opposition of terms has a long pedigree. Democratic proceduralists believe in process, partly because they assume that the differences among the parties in contention are relatively minor, and because today's majority will become tomorrow's minority, and vice versa. Everybody, so to speak, gets their turn in the long run. Opposed to them are Kantian idealists for whom good intentions are sufficient to define the good. A third position is held by those who are so persuaded of the rightness of their own ethical position that they lack patience with democratic procedure, pursuing their ends by whatever means are at hand. Among them are many who believe in the theory of the 'big revolutionary bang'. Transformative change, according to this theory, requires a sharp break with the past, a break that is often connected with some violence, because the *ancien régime* must be 'smashed' before the revolutionary age can dawn.

My own position is to deny this separation of ends and means, outcomes and process. Process, by which I specifically mean democratic procedures, is no less important than desirable outcomes. But democratic procedures are likely to be abandoned if they do not lead, in the longer term, to broadly acceptable outcomes. Moreover, process in a liberal democracy, also includes the non-violent struggles for social justice and other concerns

that take place outside the formal institutional framework. So, on the one hand, we need an inclusive democratic framework that allows for the active pursuit of political objectives even when these are contrary to the dominant interests. On the other hand, we need to be clear about the objectives to be pursued. The imaginary of the good city has to embrace both these terms.

Intention and practice

The good city requires a committed form of political practice which I call transformative. It was Hannah Arendt who formed my concept of action or political praxis (she used the terms interchangeably). She writes: 'To act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin ... to set something into motion... It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. The character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and in all origins' (Arendt, 1958: 177–8). To act, in other words, is to set something new into the world. And this requires an actor, or rather a number of such, because political action of the transformative kind always involves a collective entity or group. There are certain conditions of action. The group must first be brought together and mobilized. This means leadership. It must also have the material, symbolic and moral power sufficient to overcome resistance to its projects. In the longer term, the group's actions, and the counter-actions to its initiatives, lead to results that are boundless and therefore require continuous social learning. The group must be passionately committed to its practice or it will be defeated in the first rounds of struggle (Friedmann, 1987: 44–7).

The good city II: human flourishing as a fundamental human right

If they are not to be seen as arbitrary, principles of the good city must be drawn from somewhere, they must be logically connected to some foundational value. Such a founding principle should be clearly and explicitly formulated, so that it can be communicated even to those among us who are not philosophically inclined but make their living as carpenters, domestic workers or on construction jobs. I would formulate this principle as follows:

- *Every human being has the right, by nature, to the full development of their innate intellectual, physical and spiritual potentials in the context of wider communities.*

I call this the right to human flourishing, and regard it as the most fundamental of human rights. Despite this, it has never been universally acknowledged as a right inherent to being human. Slave societies knew nothing of it; nor did caste societies, tribal societies, corporate village societies or totalitarian states. And in no society have women ever enjoyed the same right to human flourishing as men. But as the fundamental, inalienable right of every person, human flourishing is ingrained in the liberal democratic ethos.

Human flourishing underlies the strongly held belief in contemporary western societies, and particularly in America, that privilege should be earned rather than inherited. Accordingly, human beings should have an equal start in life. Over a lifetime, individual and group outcomes will, of course, vary a good deal because of differences in inborn abilities, family upbringing, entrenched class privilege and social oppression. Still, the idea of a basic equality among all citizens underlies the mild socialism of western countries with their systems of public education, public health, the graduated income tax, anti-discriminatory legislation and so forth, all of which seek some sort of leveling of life chances among individuals and groups.

As this reference to political institutions makes evident, the potential of human flourishing can only be realized in the context of wider communities, so that right from the start, we posit humans, not as Leibnizian monads but as social beings. It is

unconscionable, therefore, as Margaret Thatcher is reported to have done, to dismiss the concept of society as a mere fiction. Alone, we cannot survive without the unmediated support of others, from intimate family on up to larger structures and emotional bonds to individuals and groups. Without them, nothing can be accomplished.

The social sphere imposes certain requirements of its own, and these may appear as constraints on willful action. Although as individuals we are ultimately responsible for what we do, we are always constrained (1) by our social relations with family, friends, workmates, and neighbors, in short, by a culturally specific ethics of mutual obligation within civil society and (2) by the wider sociopolitical settings of our lives that inhibit human flourishing. The two are intertwined in many ways;[5] it would require a separate essay, however, to even begin to disentangle them and to do justice to the powerful constraints we, and especially women, encounter in the sphere of relations I call civil. Instead, I will turn to the sociopolitical sphere which is my primary focus.

Briefly, my argument is that local citizens do not merely use the city to advance their personal interests — some will do so more successfully than others — but, as citizens of a political community, which is the city in its political aspect, also contribute to establishing those minimal conditions — political, economic, social, physical and ecological — which are necessary for human flourishing. I refer to these conditions — and please remember that I call them minimal conditions — as the common good of the polity, or the good city, because human flourishing is inconceivable without them. In this understanding, the 'common good' of the city appears as something akin to citizen rights, that is, to the claims that local citizens can legitimately make on their political community as a basis for the flourishing of all its citizens. Making these claims, and at the same time to contribute to their realization in practice, is one of the deep obligations of local citizenship.

The good city III: multipli/city as a primary good

Human flourishing serves us as a template for judging the performance of cities. But to assist us in this detailed, critical work of assessing the extent to which a city provides an adequate setting for human flourishing, further guidelines are needed. I propose to do this by suggesting a primary good — multipli/city — together with certain conditions that would allow multipli/city to be realized in practice.

By multipli/city, I mean an autonomous civil life relatively free from direct supervision and control by the state. So considered, a vibrant civil life is the necessary social context for human flourishing. Multipli/city acknowledges the priority of civil society, which is the sphere of freedom and social reproduction — and it is for its sake that the city can be said to exist. Political economists might disagree with this ordering. They tend to describe the city in terms of capital accumulation, external economies, market exchange, administrative control, and the like, and urban populations in terms of their incorporation into labor markets and social classes. From an analytical perspective, I don't object to these characterizations. But if our project is the good city, a different, explicitly normative approach is needed.

In its political aspect, civil society comprises the political community of the city. But there are other aspects of a richly articulated civil life, including religious, social, cultural and economic life, all of which can be subsumed under the concept of a self-organizing civil society.[6] Michael Walzer calls civil society 'a project of projects', foreshadowing my characterization of multipli/city. The relevant passage is worth quoting in full:

5 For a devastating look at the entanglement of political and civil spheres in twentieth century China, see Chang (1991).
6 For a discussion of civil society, see Keane (1988), Seligman (1992) and Walzer (1992). Friedmann (1998) has attempted to introduce the concept into the discourse on planning.

> Civil society is sustained by groups much smaller than the *demos* or the working class or the mass consumers or the nation. All these are necessarily pluralized as they are incorporated. They become part of the world of family, friends, comrades and colleagues, where people are connected to one another and made responsible for one another. Connected and responsible: without that, 'free and equal' is less attractive than we once thought it would be. I have no magic formula for making connections or strengthening the sense of responsibility. These are not aims that can be underwritten with historical guarantees or achieved through a single unified struggle. Civil society is a project of projects; it requires many organizing strategies and new forms of state action. It requires a new sensitivity for what is local, specific, contingent — and, above all, a new recognition (to paraphrase a famous sentence) that the good life is in the details (Walzer, 1992: 107).

Throughout history, city populations have grown primarily through migration, and migrants come from many parts. Some don't speak the dominant language of the city; others practice different religions; still others follow folkways that are strange to the city. They come to the city for its promise of a more liberated, fulfilling life, and also perhaps, as refugees, escaping from the danger of physical harm. They do not come to the city to be regimented, to be molded according to a single concept of correct living. Nor do they seek diversity as such. Rather, they want to live by their own lights as undisturbed as possible, so that diversity appears as simply a by-product of the 'project of projects'. But cities are not always hospitable, and mutual tolerance of difference must be safeguarded by the state so long as certain conditions are fulfilled: respect for human rights and the assumption of the rights and obligations of local citizenship. In a broadly tolerant society, one may perhaps hope for a step beyond tolerance, which is to say, for mutual acceptance and even the affirmation of difference.

Reflected in a thickly quilted mosaic of voluntary associations, multipli/city requires a solid material base. A destitute people can only think about survival, which absorbs nearly all the time and energies at their disposal. A substantial material base, therefore, must provide for the time, energy and space needed for active citizenship. Four pillars support the material foundations for the good city. First in importance is socially *adequate housing* together with complementary public services and community facilities. As innumerable struggles in cities throughout the world have shown, housing needs, along with water and affordable urban transit, are viewed as a first priority of individual households. By common consent, the greatest social disaster (in peacetime) is to be homeless. *Affordable healthcare* comes second, particularly for women, infants, the physically and mentally challenged, the chronically ill and the elderly, as a prime condition for human flourishing. *Adequately remunerated work* for all who seek it is the third pillar. In urban market societies, a well-paying job is a nearly universal aspiration not only for the income it brings but for the social regard that attaches to regular work in capitalist society. Finally, *adequate social provision* in housing, medical care, human services and income must be made for the weakest citizens, if their own efforts are insufficient to provide for what is regarded as the social minimum.

Each of these four pillars has given rise to a vast literature, both technical and philosophical, and it is not my intention here to review it. I do want to take up a point of difference, however, that I have with the old socialist Left which has consistently argued that justice — social justice — demands 'equal access to material well-being'. The Left has always given priority to material inequalities as their rallying cry. And though it is undoubtedly true that unconstrained capitalist accumulation leads to greater material inequalities, gross differences in income and wealth are, in fact, found in all social formations since the beginnings of urban society seven millennia ago. My disagreement is, therefore, with a vision that regards material questions as primary and thus as the appropriate focus of popular struggle. All large-scale attempts to level inequalities, as in Maoist China, have had to employ barbaric methods to suppress what appears to me to be precisely a primary good, which is a flourishing civil life. It is certainly true that since the neutralization of the so-called Gang of Four, major inequalities have again surfaced in

urban China, but alongside this are also the beginnings of a civil society reborn (Brook and Frolic, 1997). As much as I welcome the second, I have no wish to justify the first, which brings about its own evils of exploitation and corruption. Still, the two phenomena are not independent of each other, as they point to a general relaxation of government control over social and economic life. And even though I argue here for 'four pillars' to provide the material foundations of the good city, I regard them as chiefly a means to a more transcendent end, which is a vibrant civil life. Genuine material equality, Maoist-style, is neither achievable nor desirable. Whereas we will always have to live with material inequalities, what we must never tolerate is a contemptuous disregard for the qualities of social and political life, which is the sphere of freedom. A good city is a city that cares for its freedom, even as it makes adequate social provision for its weakest members.

The good city IV: good governance

If process is as important as outcome, as I argued at the beginning of this essay, we will have to consider the processes of governance in the good city. Governance refers to the ways by which binding decisions for cities and city-regions are made and carried out. It is thus a concept considerably more inclusive than traditional government and administration and reflects the fact that increasingly there is a much wider range of participants in these processes than was traditionally the case.

Three sets of potential actors can be identified. First, there are the politicians and bureaucrats, representing the institutions of the local state. It is because of them that decisions concerning city-building are made 'binding'. The state stands at the apex of a pyramid whose base is defined, respectively, by corporate capital and civil society. The role of corporate capital in city-building has become more pronounced in recent years, encouraged by privatization and the growing emphasis on mega-projects in city-building, from apartment blocks, new towns, office developments and technology parks to toll roads, bridges, harbor reclamation schemes and airports. The role of civil society has been a more contested issue. Beyond rituals of 'citizen participation' in planning, civil society's major role, in most cities, has taken the form of protest and resistance to precisely the mega-projects dear to state and capital.[7] Civil society has also put pressure on the state for more sustainable cities, for environmental justice and for more inclusive visions of the city.

It is tempting, in a utopian exercise, to invert the order of things and, as in this case, to place local citizens at the top of the governance pyramid. This would be broadly in accord with democracy theory as well as with my earlier claim that the city exists for the sake of its citizens, who are bound to each other by mutual agreement, thus forming a political community. But I hesitate, because I am not convinced that city-regions on the scale of multiple millions can be organized like town meetings or the Athenian *agora*. Nor do I believe in the vaunted capacity of the Internet — even supposing universal access — to overcome the problem of scale. Democratic governance requires something more than a 'thumbs up' and 'thumbs down' to public intervention on any given issue, which would be no more meaningful than a telephone survey at the end of a public debate which asks the question: 'Who won?'

An alternative would be simply to scale down city-regional governance until governance becomes coextensive with what I have elsewhere called 'the city of everyday life'. Thomas Jefferson had a name for it: 'the republic of the wards' (for a summary, see Friedmann, 1973: 220–2). More recently, there have been calls (in the United States) for 'neighborhood governments' (Kotler, 1969: Morris and Hess, 1975; King and Stivers, 1998). And there is even a Chinese-Taiwanese version of this idea, citing the writings of Lao Zi (Lao Tzu) (Cheng and Hsia, 1999), as well as a striking example from southern

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7 But see the case studies of 'deliberative democracy' which are cited in Fung and Wright (1998).

Brazil (Abers, 1998). Evidently, there is something very attractive about this devolution of powers to the most local of local levels — the neighborhood, the street. But a city-region is more than the sum of its neighborhoods, and each level of spatial integration must be slotted into a larger whole, which is the prevailing system of governance. The question, then, is how to articulate this whole so as to further the idea of multipli/city and the four pillars of a good city.

I do not claim great originality for my criteria of good governance. But I would like to think that they have some cross-cultural validity, because they address what are ultimately very practical issues that must be dealt with in cities East and West, North and South. Still, in any attempt to apply them, differences in political culture must be borne in mind. I would propose, then, the following six criteria for assessing the performance of a system of city-regional governance:

- *Inspired political leadership*: leaders capable of articulating a common vision for the polity, building a strong consensus around this vision and mobilizing resources towards its realization.
- *Public accountability*: (1) the uncoerced, periodic election of political representatives and (2) the right of citizens to be adequately informed about those who stand for elections, the standing government's performance record and the overall outcomes for the city.
- *Transparency and the right to information*: governance should be transparent in its manner of operation and, as much as possible, be carried out in full view of citizen observers. Citizens should have the right to information, particularly about contracts between the city and private corporations.
- *Inclusiveness*: the right of all citizens to be directly involved in the formulation of policies, programs and projects whenever their consequences can be expected to significantly affect their life and livelihood.
- *Responsiveness*: the primordial right of citizens is to claim rights and express grievances; to have access to appropriate channels for this purpose; to have a government that is accessible to them in the districts of their 'everyday life'; and to timely, attentive and appropriate responses to their claims and grievances.
- *Non-violent conflict management*: institutionalized ways of resolving conflicts between state and citizens without resort to physical violence.

The 'utopian' character of these criteria becomes immediately apparent as soon as we invert the terms and picture a form of governance that displays a bungling leadership without vision, deems it unnecessary to render public accounts of its actions, transacts the state's business in secrecy, directs resources to groups favored by the state without consulting with affected local citizens, responds to expression of grievance with a mailed fist, and resolves conflicts with the arrest of opposition leaders and the brutal suppression of citizen protest.

This litany may no longer apply to North American or West European forms of city-regional governance, except perhaps in times of extreme tension — I am thinking of Paris and Chicago in 1968. But in much of the rest of the world, and especially in Asia where urbanization is now in full swing, the dystopia of governance still prevails, and criteria of good governance, especially at local levels, are a considerable novelty. And in any event, good governance always hangs on slender threads. The last State of Victoria's Minister of Planning in Australia, responsible for planning and development in the City of Melbourne, suspended public consultation and declared public information on major city projects as no longer a requirement. This was the same Minister who, a few years earlier, suspended elected local councils and replaced them with city managers appointed by the state. He then proceeded to redraw council boundaries and issue administrative instructions on the privatization of council responsibilities. In the Australian State of Victoria, at least, good governance was, until recently, in jeopardy, and so perhaps it is

not irrelevant, after all, even in a putative democracy, to be reminded of what some criteria of good governance might be.

A summing up

As human beings, we are cursed with a consciousness of our own death. This same consciousness places us in a stream of irreversible time. Minute by minute, lifetime by lifetime, we move through a continuing present — like the Roman god, Janus, forever facing in two directions — reading and re-reading the past and imagining possible futures even as we deal with the practicalities of the day. Shrouded in both darkness and light, as Gerda Lerner reminds us, history as memory helps us to locate ourselves in the continuing present while imagining alternative futures that are meant to serve us as beacons of warning and inspiration (Lerner, 1997: Chapter 4). In our two-faced gaze, we are a time-binding species whose inescapable task in a fundamentally urbanized world is to forge pathways towards a future that is worth struggling for.

In this essay, I have set down my own utopian thinking about the good city. It is a revisiting of a problem terrain on which I worked, on and off, during the 1970s (Friedmann, 1979). At the time, I was thinking through what I called a transactive model of social planning to which the practice of dialogue would be central. These concerns subsequently expanded into my interest in social learning and the traditions of radical/insurgent planning. My investigations then led me further to examine the micro-structures of civil action, such as the household economy, culminating in a theory of empowerment and disempowerment (Friedmann, 1992). Today's communicative turn in planning (Innes, 1995) is a more mainstream version of some of these ideas.

The good city, as I imagine it, has its foundations in human flourishing and multipli/city. Four pillars provide for its material foundations: housing, affordable health care, adequately remunerated work and adequate social provision. And because process cannot be separated from outcome, I also delved into the question of what a system of good governance might look like, attempting a thumbnail description of such a system. The protagonist of my visioning is an autonomous, self-organizing civil society, active in making claims, resisting and struggling on behalf of the good city within a framework of democratic institutions.

Physical planners and urban designers will miss a discussion of the three-dimensional city, but this is not my domain, and I refer them to the well-known 'urban design manifesto' by Allan Jacobs and Donald Appleyard (1987), where these matters are taken up in a context not very different from the value premises that underlie the present essay. Also missing from my account is any reference to the 'sustainable' city, which I am prepared to leave to the experts who will want to talk, more knowledgeably than I, about resource-conserving cities, blue skies and clear water.

So my image of the city remains incomplete, and I think that is proper, because no one should have a final say about the good city. Utopian thinking is an ongoing, time-binding discourse intended to inform our striving. It is no more than that, but also nothing less.

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Cities are always changing, but rarely as fast as this huge experiment changing how we all live, for better or worse.Ä The utopians, however, look at the same apocalypse and see a lot fewer zombies. Cities, they say, badly needed a change of course. Now that we've discovered with our own lungs the benefits of less air pollution – Los Angeles has enjoyed its longest streak of "good" air quality days since 1995 – we'll demand better emissions standards, congestion pricing and more car-free streets. Everyone who can will buy a bike – in fact they already are – as cities from Paris to Bogotá free up car lanes for cycleways . Best Article 2020 Prizewinner. Jan 18th, 2021. New IJURR Editors. Jan 4th, 2021. New IJURR Editors. Jan 4th, 2021. IJURR Foundation Awards: Applications for 2021 Now Open. "The Good City: In Defense of Utopian Thinking" 2000. The City Beautiful Movement. The City Beautiful Movement was a reform philosophy of North American architecture and urban planning that flourished during the 1890s and 1900s with the intent of introducing beautification and monumental grandeur in cities. Jane Jacobs. , "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," 1961, Modernism. Robert Moses. Modernism Known as the "master builder" of mid-20th century New York City, Long Island, Rockland County, and Westchester County, His decisions favoring highways over public transit helped create the modern suburbs of Long Island and influenced a generation of engineers, architects, and urban planners who spread his philosophies across the nation. 2 Utopian thinking may also be denied altogether. In destitution and other situations in extremis, survival has priority and leaves no room for utopian thinking, despite wish-dreams of cornucopia. Finally, there are those who make a virtue of problem-solving via 'muddling through' in Charles Lindblom's (1959) provocative formulation, where our choices are guided by nothing more than a simple pleasure-pain calculus.Â First, in setting out an account of the good city, whose city are we talking about? Can we legitimately assume the possibility of a 'common good' for the city? Second, are we concerned only with process or only with outcomes, or should outcome and process be considered jointly?