The Good City

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Summary. Can the contemporary city qualify as the *topos* of the good life, as it has in classical literature on human emancipation? As geographical entities, cities are hardly discernible places with distinct identities. They have become an endless inhabited sprawl without clear boundaries and they have become sites of extraordinary circulation and translocal connectivity. Similarly, sociologically, contemporary cities do not spring to mind as the sites of community and well-being. For the vast majority of people, cities are polluted, unhealthy, tiring, overwhelming, confusing, alienating. Politically, too, the contemporary city bears little resemblance to imaginings of the times when urbanism stood for citizenship, the ideal republic, good government, civic behaviour and the ideal public sphere. The politics of emancipation with a big 'P' is no longer a particularly urban affair in either genesis or practice, having given way to national and global institutions and movements. What remains of the urban as *demos* in these circumstances? At one level, clearly very little, as one instance in a wider *demos* or demon that pulls in many directions. This said, the urban remains an enormously significant formative arena, not only as the daily space of over half of the world's population, but also as the supremely visible manifestation of difference and heterogeneity placed together. Urbanism highlights the challenges of negotiating class, gender and ethnic or racial differences placed in close proximity. It also profiles the newness that arises from spatial juxtaposition and global flow and connectivity, forever forcing responses of varying type and intensity in the face of negotiating strangers, strangeness and continuous change. Possibilities thus remain for continuing to ask about the nature of the 'good city'. This paper outlines the elements of an urban ethic imagined as an ever-widening habit of solidarity built around different dimensions of the urban common weal. It offers a practical urban utopianism based around four registers of solidarity woven around the collective basics of everyday urban life. These are 'repair', 'relatedness', 'rights' and 're-enchantment'.

Introduction

Models of the good city—of the kind of urban order that might enhance the human experience—invariably tend to project from the circumstances of the times. At the origins of urban settlement, providing the means of defence against invasion, starvation and the elements would have featured high on the list, while the Greco-Roman city would have measured its worth through its capacity to embellish the built environment, project its power and develop the deliberative, political and creative energies of some if its citizens. In the context of the filthy and overcrowded Victorian industrial city, the battle against want, poverty, grime and disease would have been coupled to moral crusades of various

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sorts, ranging from temperance and manners to bourgeois charity and revolutionary zeal, in defining a civilised urban existence. In our times, the basics of urban infrastructure once again come to the fore in cities recovering from war and destitution, while in many cities of the global South access to the staples of life, clean water, energy, shelter and sanitation remain the targets of urban progress, awkwardly juxtaposed with definitions of human advancement in prosperous cities based on high-income consumer lifestyles and bourgeois escape from the ugly or dangerous aspects of urban life.

Such contextual influence makes it highly problematic to assume that models of the good city can travel unmodified across space and time. Indeed, the history of practical effort to improve human life in cities is one that has worked the fine grain of circumstance and place. Yet, paradoxically, this history has also been influenced by universalistic imaginaries of the good life, with cities placed at the very heart of the various projections on offer. For example, utopian thought in its various iterations through time, from the ideas of Plato, St Augustine and Thomas More to those of de Sade, Bellamy and le Corbusier, has imagined the logos of utopia to be an ideal city, a visible emblem of order and harmony. The city of concentric circles of function and purpose, the city of modernist planning, the city of contemplation or passion ordered through particular architectural rules, can all be seen as blueprints for urban organisation in different parts of the world, intended to deliver the good life, however, defined.

According to Zygmunt Bauman (2003), our times, for various reasons have begun to dispense with universalistic models of the good life often associated with the ideal territorial community. One reason is the systematic unhinging of territorial moorings and obligations by globalisation in its various guises. Another is the displacement of strong and lasting senses of community by multiple and ever-changing social and cultural attachments. A third reason is the impossibility of teleology and heaven in an age of fleeting

pleasures, instantaneous gratification, constantly changing desires and scepticism towards order and ordering, especially of mass collective nature. Finally, Bauman argues that organising élites in a global market society are largely responsible only to themselves and their like, no longer interested in societal projects. Utopia has lost its logos, meaning, appeal and organising force, as meanings of the good life shift to immediate, temporary, private and hedonistic projects.

Whether Bauman's analysis of contemporary modernity holds is not a question I wish to pursue here. Instead, I want to ask if the developments that concern Bauman might not be read as an invitation to rethink ideas of the good life, away from longings for faraway and deracinated citadels of achievement that need no further work, towards a pragmatism of the possible based on the continual effort to spin webs of social justice and human well-being and emancipation out of prevailing circumstances (see also Pinder, 2002 and 2005). Such an understanding, potentially, might even allow a more hopeful reading of the multiple and mobile attachments freed from the moorings of territory and nation that Bauman chooses to interpret as a post-utopian presentism without promise.

In prising open such a possibility, my intention is not to rewrite the ills of capitalist globalisation as the goods of a new utopia. Rather, it is to look at the contradictions and possibilities of our times as the material of a politics of well-being and emancipation that is neither totalising nor teleological. Such an approach accepts that utopia is not a dream of the attainable, but an 'impossible place' following Foucault, expressing a 'hope in the not-yet', based on many practices "of transformative intervention" that strive "to give and find hope through an anticipation of alternative possibilities or potentialities", as Ben Anderson (2005, p. 11) has recently argued. It retains the original idea of an emancipated society, but now harnessed to careful obligations in the arena of personal politics, insurgent design, collective responsibilities and human rights (Harvey, 2000). It accepts

that the constitutive multiplicity of our times is both capitalist entrapment and opportunity for a plural democracy drawing on possibilities that are more than capitalist trickery (Amin and Thrift, 2005a).

The Good City?

But can the contemporary city qualify as the topos of even this more pragmatic interpretation of the good life, given its increasingly indistinct geography as a place and its vast sociology of hopelessness and misery? As geographical entities, cities are hardly discernible places with distinct identities. They have become an endless inhabited sprawl without clear boundaries and they have become sites of extraordinary circulation and translocal connectivity, linked to processes of spatial stretching and interdependence associated with globalisation. In turn, however, complex processes of global urbanisation are rendering cities into all-embracing social spaces as the world and its ways pours into them, such that they are increasingly read as emblems of the modern (Amin and Thrift, 2005b).

Similarly, sociologically, contemporary cities do not spring to mind as the sites of community, happiness and well-being, except perhaps for those in the fast lane, the secure and well-connected, and those excited by the buzz of frenetic urban life. For the vast majority, cities are polluted, unhealthy, tiring, overwhelming, confusing, alienating. They are the places of low-wage work, insecurity, poor living conditions and dejected isolation for the many at the bottom of the social ladder daily sucked into them. They hum with the fear and anxiety linked to crime, helplessness and the close juxtaposition of strangers. They symbolise the isolation of people trapped in ghettos, segregated areas and distant dormitories, and they express the frustration and ill-temper of those locked into long hours of work or travel. Cities still abound with all manner of acts of mutuality, friendship, pleasure and sociality (Thrift, 2005), but to project the good life from so much urban fracture seems a step too far.

Politically, too, the contemporary city bears little resemblance to imaginings of the times when urbanism stood for citizenship, the ideal republic, good government, civic behaviour and the ideal public sphere. The politics of emancipation with a big 'P' is no longer a particularly urban affair in either genesis or practice, having given way to national and global institutions and movements. In turn, the public arena and public culture in general have not been reducible to the urban for a long time. The urban political has become part of a much larger political machinery, with the centre located elsewhere, spatially or institutionally. This is not to say that cities have ceased to be political spaces. Far from it, for they remain sites of considerable political agency. For example, global cities have become the political base of the global capitalist class and of many globally oriented social movements, along with sparking new political impulses stemming from the urban juxtaposition of the rich and the poor (Sassen, 2003). But this cannot be confused with a politics of the good life, which no longer projects outwards from the city.

Any habit of urban solidarity is assailed by the incursions of state power and surveillance, by social practices and affective cultures formed in a highly dispersed and multilayered public sphere, and by orderings that include many forms such as parliaments and assembled things and virtual objects where politics is practised (Latour, 2005). Indeed, in the contemporary geopolitics of shame and tame based on a US-led re-equilibration of the world in the name of the war on terror, the very idea of the city and what it means, is being redrawn through experiments with new spaces of exception, such as extra-territorial camps and military-run cities, where there are no legal rights and protections, where human rights are abused, and where new security systems are in place for intense and intrusive surveillance. A new template for the conduct and regulation of civic life is being drawn in these spaces.

What remains of the urban as *demos* in these circumstances? At one level, clearly very little, only as one instance in a wider

demos or demon that pulls in many directions. This said, the urban remains an enormously significant formative arena, not only as the daily space of over half of the world's population, but also as the supremely visible manifestation of difference and heterogeneity placed together. While I would not go so far as Rainer Bauböck's proposal that

> We should conceive of the city as a political space inside the territorial nation-state where multicultural and transnational identities can be more freely articulated (Bauböck, 2003, p. 142).

the 'being-togetherness' of life in urban space has to be recognised, demanding attendance to the politics of living together. The human condition has become the urban condition. In 1950, one-third of the world's population lived in cities but, by 2050, the figure is expected to rise to two-thirds, or 6 billion people. Then, by 2015, each of the world's 10 largest cities (Bombay, Tokyo, Lagos, Shanghai, Jakarta, São Paolo, Karachi, Beijing, Dhaka and Mexico City) will house between 20 and 30 million people. Arguably, even those people who are not included in these figures owe most of their existence to the demands that cities place on the world economy. Thus, no discussion of the good life can ignore the particularities of the urban way of life, ranging from the trials of supply, congestion, pollution and commuting, to the swells of change, scale, inequality, distribution and sensory experience in urban life. The daily negotiation of the urban environment has become central in defining the privations, provisions, prejudices and preferences of a very large section of humanity.

Then, as already hinted, the urban comes with specific possibilities as an arena of direct democracy or engagement, described by some as a formative politics of citizenship (Holston and Appadurai, 1999). Urbanism highlights the challenges of negotiating class, gender and ethnic or racial differences placed in close proximity, with the spatiality of the city playing a distinctive role in the negotiation of multiplicity and difference. It profiles the newness that arises from spatial juxtaposition and global flow and connectivity, forever forcing responses of varying type and intensity in the face of negotiating strangers, strangeness and continuous change. According to Saskia Sassen (2003), the plenitude of sites, spaces, institutions and associations of organisation and mobilisation in cities potentially returns the urban as a strategic space for oppositional politics as representative politics with a big 'P' becomes increasingly corporatised. More modestly, it could be argued that the myriad bolt-holes that are to be found in cities provide some possibility to the millions of dispossessed, dislocated and illegal people stripped of citizenship to acquire some political capital (Amin and Thrift, 2005a). Then, urban public space, even if increasingly privatised and controlled, remains the visual emblem of the public culture as well as the sites of gathering where some aspects of this culture are formed and performed.

The good city might be thought of as the challenge to fashion a progressive politics of well-being and emancipation out of multiplicity and difference and from the particularities of the urban experience. This is a politics of small gains and fragile truces that constantly need to be worked at, but which can add up, with resonances capable of binding difference as well as reining in the powerful and the abusive (Sandercock, 2003; Hollenbach, 2002).

In this paper, I wish to outline the elements of the good city imagined as an ever-widening habit of solidarity built around different dimensions of the urban common weal. My argument is that such a habit can play a vital role in nudging the urban public culture—expressed in the acts and attitudes of government, the media, opinion-makers, civic organisations, communities and citizens—towards outcomes that benefit the more rather than the few, without compromising the right to difference that contemporary urban life demands. The result is the city that learns to live with, perhaps even value, difference, publicise the commons, and crowd out the violence of an urbanism of exclusionary and privatised interest.

How is it possible to build a chain of solidarity out of multiplicity? How can a culture of care and regard become the decisive filter of intersubjective relations (Hage, 2003), corporate behaviour and public engagement when the historical momentum is so decisively in the direction of urban disregard, intolerance and self-interest? How can such a culture be sustained across the vast spaces that count as part of the same city in none but name? How can it be achieved when the composition of the urban population of the city is constantly changing due to the ebb and flow of migration and mobility?

These are central questions to which there is no easy answer, but what a practical urban utopianism offers is credibility in a shared commons and active public engagement as a counterweight to the disinterested individualism that has come so to dominate. In some sense, it draws on the same powers of capture and enthralment of distant others that market capitalism has perfected, but now harnessed to a different ethic of human engagement and fulfilment. Its effectiveness lies in a politics of alterity given practical expression and demonstrable effect rather than in any magical powers to wish away the seductions, distortions and divisions of market individualism. It remains experimental in its practices and outcomes, but no less significant as a model of the good city.

Registers of Urban Solidarity

Against the backcloth of corporatist urban planning in the US and an absent social state, John Friedmann (2000) has identified housing, affordable health care, reasonably remunerated work and adequate social provision, as the four pillars of the good city. The key actor, for Friedmann, is

> an autonomous, self-organising civil society, active in making claims, resisting and struggling on behalf of the good city within a framework of democratic institutions (Friedmann, 2000, p. 471).

In a similar vein, I wish to identify four registers of urban solidarity that engage with multiplicity through the collective basics of everyday urban life. These are repair, relatedness, rights and re-enchantment—which could be labelled as the four Rs of contemporary urban solidarity.

Repair

Cities possess a machinic order composed of a bewildering array of objects-in-relation whose silent rhythm instantiates and regulates all aspects of urban life—economic, political, social and cultural (Amin and Thrift, 2002). It includes many mundane objects, such as road signals, post-codes, pipes and overhead cables, satellites, office design and furniture, clocks, commuting patterns, computers and telephones, automobiles, software, schedules and databases. These are aligned in different ways to structure all manner of urban rhythms including goods delivery or traffic flow systems, Internet protocols, rituals and codes of civic and public conduct, family routines and cultures of workplace and neighbourhood.

Nigel Thrift (2005) has described this machinery as a 'technological unconscious' that provides the 'interactional intelligence' without which urban life would end. It makes things work, it facilitates circulation, it guides economic conduct, it channels distribution and reward, it sets the ground rules, it provides orientation, and it designates the spaces, activities and people that count (for example, by demarcating investment zones and slump zones, or the economically worthy and the undeserving). It is the life-support system of cities (Gandy, 2002), so evident when such things as sanitation, clean water, electricity, telecommunications and transport systems, medical technologies and many other survival technologies, are lacking or fail. But, it is also a transhuman material culture bristling with intentionality. Software code, timetables, traffic signals, zoning patterns, lists, databases, grids and the like, can be seen as the 'hidden hand' of urban social organisation and behaviour. They act as the everyday filter through which society reads and accepts social

boundaries and demarcations, measures the achievements of modernity, assesses what it is to be modern and naturalises forms of authority and control that made visible in their raw power would face considerable scrutiny and opposition. Thus, identities, material supply, functionality and social power are all tangled up in this urban machinery.

A politics of the good city has to grasp the ambiguous centrality of this hidden republic and subject it to democratic scrutiny and use. At one level, this is a matter of making public, ridiculing and neutralising the urban uses of technology as a weapon of social control. For example, as Steve Graham (2005, p. 5) argues, contemporary urbanism is impregnated with "new software-sorted geographies" silently demarcating the worth of particular zones and sections of urban society, used to exercise pervasive scrutiny and state/market authority. Graham notes, for example, the proliferation of biometric technologies that rapidly sort desirables and undesirables; the increasing reliance of companies on sophisticated data-gathering and classification software, in order to differentiate between premium customers and 'scavengers and surfers'; the use of GIS and GDIS technologies that re-engineer the social map of the city by demarcating desirable areas and taboo areas; and the use of new facial recognition software in CCTV surveillance to match individuals on the street to photo-fits of threat, so that the guilty can be named before the event.

There is a limit to how far the technological can be decoupled from the social when it has become so constitutive, but there is plenty to be done in terms of revealing the power dynamics of "values, opinions and rhetoric ... frozen into code" (Bowker and Leigh-Star, 1999, p. 35; cited in Graham, 2005, p. 1) and placing them under binding public scrutiny and influence, so that the abuses of software can be revealed and then confronted with alternatives that work for citizens. This is no easy task given the hidden nature of the technological unconscious and the powerful interests behind it. However, a first step in a 'new politics of repair' is revelation and open public debate on alternative ways of weaving technology into the urban social. The greater the impetus, the greater the pressure on states and élites to reconsider what for so long has been taken for granted.

At another level, so pervasive is the interactive intelligence of the techno-space (for example, software systems nested in homes, cars, pockets, implants, hospitals, schools, offices, roads, shops, pipes and ducts, and often talking to each other), that cities would shut down or spiral in unanticipated directions when this techno-space is threatened. This is precisely why an elaborate infrastructure works day and night to prevent or fix failure. The technological unconscious, as Nigel Thrift (2005) notes, is what allows cities to avoid the collapse that any vast and complex system of bits that need alignment and co-ordination can so easily suffer, and also to bounce back rapidly to normality after disruptions or disasters of various sorts.

The good city, then, is the city of continual maintenance and repair, underpinned by a complex political economy of attention and co-ordination. London managed to bounce back after 7/7 with remarkable speed as a machine of movement, work, livelihood and daily life, as the technological unconscious—through an extraordinary effort of co-ordination between myriad institutions and the public—kicked in to repair the city and its global connections. New Orleans, in contrast, due to the tardy response from the federal authorities as well as the sheer scale of destruction, has been switched off as a city and, while speedier recovery can be expected as the political will to do something returns, it will take some time to rebuild the technological unconscious that has thus far ensured rapid repair and maintenance. The city is discovering the chaos, risk and degradation that so many cities in the global South have suffered for so long owing to the deficiencies of the urban infrastructure.

The well-functioning city, however, does not reward all. It comes with its own political economy of supply and provision, discriminating against the poor and the marginal. Thus, no discussion of the good city in terms

of the politics of repair can ignore the need to ensure universal and affordable access to the basics of shelter, sanitation, sustenance, water, communication, mobility and so on. And when such a commitment is explicitly demonstrated, as the city of Bologna did in 1978 by ending bus fares, and then again in 1998 by providing free Internet access, it adds to the urban unconscious a habit of solidarity as the city comes to be experienced as the city for all.

But there is more. There has to be an explicit politics of repair and maintenance, one that attends to the silent republic of things that makes cities work not only when there is a threat of shut-down, but at all times so that a preventative and curative infrastructure is in place. This requires a progressive politics focusing on central aspects of service privation in especially the global South that make life so miserable for so many within cities that suffer constant blackouts, by intervening in an increasingly intricate system of software-based auto-regulation in order to know the system, prevent new auto-corrections that are harmful, and reduce lock-out. As Stephen Graham and Nigel Thrift (2005, p. 27) note, "repair and maintenance are not incidental activities. In many ways they are the engine of modern economies and societies" and nowhere more so than in cities that have so come to rely on technology for their survival and well-being.

Relatedness

Closely linked to the register of repair is the register of relatedness. Cities are riddled with the misery, anxiety and desperation of the disconnected and excluded. They always have been. Now, however, there is a new scale and intensity of disconnection associated with the mass migration of the world's population to cities, the displacement of welfare commitments by market individualism, the expansion of the illegal and precarious economy in the context of jobless growth, the evacuation of capital from risky and non-lucrative areas, the growing disconnection of the rich from the poor in all walks

of urban life, and the disjuncture between income and spend in a credit/debt economy which thrives on insecurity.

In this context, the good city has to be imagined as the socially just city, with strong obligations towards those marginalised from the means of survival and human fulfilment (Wacquant, 1999). These are obligations that should draw on a solidarity of human rights and recognise the constitutive role of the distant other in whatever counts as the social 'ours', rather than, as has been the case in the history of modern welfare, drawn on a solidarity of charity or instrumentalist support for the fallen insider within a pre-defined community of belonging (national, ethnic or other). The result is an equal duty of care towards the insider and the outsider, the temporary and the permanent resident. In the good city, the duty of public service through adequate welfare measures relating to financial and personal security, education, health care, shelter and so on, should extend to those least able to pay for these basics but who are most in need, ranging from disenchanted youths and broken households, to the many migrants, minorities and itinerants that seek refuge in the city. An equivalence of right has to be assumed between those in the mainstream and those on the margins, prior to fiscally driven decisions on what scale of welfare provision is judged to be sustainable.

Is such an expanded urbanism at all realistic at a time when senses of the human collectivity have all but disappeared? The ethos of unconditional hospitality that Jacques Derrida (2001) has invoked from Europe's cities in the name of their old duty to provide sanctuary when life outside the city was barely protected has either been long forgotten by modern-day universal welfare systems or it has been gradually redirected by states towards targeted social groups under pressure from neo-liberalism. One consequence of the restructuring of the national welfare state has been increased pressure on politicians, élites and civic associations closest to the problems—in cities—to provide a solution. Yet, here too, the grain is

decidedly against the city of universal care, as business and professional élites become ever more tied to transnational communities, pressing on city leaders to serve their particular local needs (Sassen, 2002). The city for all, therefore, is by no means guaranteed, lacking as it does, considerable opposition from local élites as well as external support.

But a 'politics of relatedness' is becoming increasingly necessary not only because of the cost and wastage associated with widespread disconnection, but also because of the damage wrought by the fear, hate and anxiety that feeds on division and envy in urban life. It is becoming unavoidable to address the consequences of unequal provision, which include class segregation, endless surveillance, civic disruption, urban violence, fear of the stranger, suspicion of youths, immigrants and asylum-seekers, and generalised anxiety and caution. The inclusive city, although undeniably taxing on the public purse and requiring sustained public and civic effort, is also the city of untapped potential and expanded human and social capital. Most importantly, it is the city that extracts an opportunity for individual and collective advancement out of urban multiplicity and mobility.

Solidarity based on the universal provision of the basics of existence and human association is however no guarantor of social mutuality and respect for difference. Contemporary urban multiplicity is linked to a public culture of misanthropy, tribal affiliation and self-interest, an explicit denial of difference feeding on the comfort of welfare support in some instances. There is a 'nasty' politics of hate ingrained as an urban affect (Thrift, 2005). Against such obduracy, heightened by the suspicion faced by the most visible and vulnerable subjects of global displacement such as immigrants, asylum-seekers, Travellers and the homeless, an urban solidarity of relatedness can barely escape addressing the ethic of conduct among strangers. This is an issue that has long interested urban theorists, from Simmel and Benjamin who saw a combination of indifference, inquisitiveness and alienation in urban social mixture, to Mumford and Sennett who anticipate civic interaction under certain conditions of management of public space.

The present times are particularly uncompromising in this regard, due to growing urban segregation, the collapse of universals serving to bind difference, an eroding urban commons, and increased legitimacy for group isolationism in private and public life. Living with difference is becoming a test of endurance as the urban public comes to accept that multiplicity is best tackled though isolation or, depending on who is involved, ejection. A case in point is the rampant suspicion that has grown of Muslims as they go about their daily business after 9/11 and 7/7, grotesquely feeding on complacent neo-Conservative babble about incompatible civilisations. The actions of the very few—militant Jihadis—have been allowed to feed nationalist frenzy demanding the taming or ejection of an entire faith group on grounds of cultural incompatibility a nationalist security. Such extreme reaction, along with other examples such as the contempt heaped on asylum-seekers or Travellers, is borne out of a fractured commons in an increasingly tribal or self-centred public culture.

Is there a specific role for cities in rekindling a 'habit of solidarity' towards the stranger, based on recognition (rather than consensus or affect)? I have argued elsewhere that much of the required intervention transcends the urban (Amin, 2002). This includes stripping national cultures of belonging of racial and ethnic moorings in preference for collective standards thrown up by a living cosmopolitanism or by politically defined national virtues. It includes building and sustaining a certain ease with unassimilated difference and agonistic disagreement in the public domain, with the help of the media, politicians and opinion-formers. It also includes vigorous and steadfast implementation of legislation against incitement and prejudice, together with a rich opportunity structure for social mobility and individual enhancement.

But cities also have a place. The everyday negotiation of diversity is crucially influenced

by the public ethos of places, which draws on many inputs, from neighbourhood movements and city-centre dynamics to the habits of public office, the media and other local institutions, public events and shared spaces. The thin line between suspicion and tolerance is demarcated only too frequently around prosaic negotiations of diversity, so part of the politics of relatedness in the good city has to be about working on the prosaic as the space of strange (be)longings, the site of cultural transgression. This means returning the city's public spaces to mixed public use, without excessive surveillance, gating, privatisation or humiliation of minorities, but with adequate security against the violent or against corporatist homogeneity (Low, 2003). It means experimenting in everyday situations that bring people from different backgrounds to work together in projects of common interest, so that a habit of intercultural formation emerges (Amin, 2002; Body-Gendrot, 2000; Keith, 2005). Typical examples include experimenting with mixed sport teams in schools and colleges, cultural exchanges in crèches, growing food from around the world in communal gardens and multicultural events in housing estates. It means open publicity for cultural transgression based on multiplicity, through imaginative and bold experiments such as sporting events and public art that bring together warring youth factions, legislative theatre in workplaces and closed communities to confront prejudice, urban visuals that iconicise mixity and hybridity (Deutsche, 1996), and perhaps even bouts of civic duty for those particularly hateful of difference. The sum is the city of restless mobilisation of a public culture based on shared space and only ever partial claim by individual groups over the commons (Gandy, 2002).

The achievements of such a public culture are in part to ensure the reconnection of those at a disadvantage, in part to convert urban misanthropy into an ethic of mutual regard towards those unlike us, and in part to foster a public culture of care around the principle of relatedness. This is not a public culture of forced mixture with the stranger and strangeness, but one that demands acceptance of relatedness as central to urban existence. This means extending the shared commons, facilitating the negotiation of difference and preventing harm, and minimising the right to disconnect (especially secession movements that have emerged in recent years seeking escape from urban governance structures that do not suit; see Boudreau and Keil, 2001).

Rights

The register of relatedness is closely linked to the register of rights to the city, famously defended by Henri Lefebvre (1996) as the right of all citizens to shape urban life and to benefit from it. The right to participate presumes having the means and the entitlement to do so. Many urban-dwellers have yet to acquire this right. In the global South, we see this in urban planning practices driven by the needs of the economically and politically most powerful and in the eviction or stripping down to bare life of the masses. In the global North, we see it in the form of growing vilification and intolerance of immigrants, itinerants, asylum-seekers and youths, and in the gradual alignment of urban élites and central urban spaces to the interests of global capital. The contemporary city remains the city of rights restricted, notwithstanding historical gains made by subjects in certain parts of the world as citizens formally endowed with social, economic and political rights.

In precisely these parts of the world, a new paradox of rights has arisen, involving constraints on the civil freedom of many urban-dwellers in the name of the individual rights of the so-called majority. For example, the rapid rise of surveillance technologies is both an encroachment upon civil liberties and a means of protecting the public against harm. Similarly, the injustices of racial segregation pursued through discriminatory planning and housing allocation policies are complicated by moves by ethnic minorities to live among their own communities in order to preserve cultural integrity and ensure personal safety. In turn, the rules of

order in the machinic city, silently re-engineering social hierarchies through new software-sorted technologies, are also the template through which the city functions as a whole, forcing a dependence without which the discriminated would be worse off. The question of urban rights, therefore, is not straightforward, as many liberal societies come to assume that rights should not bring enhanced freedom for all.

This paradox is being increasingly exploited by urban managers to restrict voice and dissent in urban public life, against a background of growing commoditisation, homogenisation and privatisation of urban public space. Urban marginals, protesters, drop-outs, itinerants, minorities and the like, are all quickly tracked, gathered and shunted on as threats to an urban public space valued increasingly for its worth as a consumer and corporate space (Smith, 1996; Mitchell, 2003; MacLeod, 2002; Graham, 2004; Coleman, 2004). The result is that the principle that urban public culture might be shaped through the free hand of a plural and equal citizenry has been compromised by an urbanism of differentiated rights and pre-ordained expectations from the shared commons. The Lefebvrian idea of urban life made through the creative impulses of all its dwellers has become redefined as a threat to urban order.

On the occasions, therefore, when the role of urban public space as the arena of dissent and protest is invoked, the acts are condemned as an aberration, a violation of urban stability. This is vividly illustrated by the official anxiety that surrounded the riots in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley in the summer of 2001 when young Asians in these north-England ex-textile towns clashed with White youths and the public authorities. These riots were widely described by opinion-formers and officials as race riots, and were condemned as emblems of minority ethnic disconnection from mainstream life, values rooted in Islam and diasporic tradition, social isolation and segregation, and an anti-British race politics. At the time, and especially more recently as public anxiety has grown over the realisation

that the London bombers on 7/7 came from similar backgrounds in nearby cities and towns, there has been no shortage of calls for mixed schools and mixed housing, better integration into mainstream culture, tests of loyalty to Britain and core British values, and moderation of ethnic difference. In short, Asians have been asked to prove their Britishness as a condition of entry into the city.

The irony, though, is that the rioters were young Britons who were bi-lingual, perfectly at home with British modernity and Islamic tradition, politicised and unequivocal about their identities as British Muslims. It is increasingly clear that their anger was aimed at the lack of economic opportunity, negligence by the public authorities and community elders, racism and racialised institutional practices, an enduring history of taunt and intimidation, and material deprivation and marginalisation (Kundnani, 2001). These were civic riots by a group wanting to claim the public turf as full British citizens and not the riots of cultural aliens (Amin, 2002). They were a test of the terms of public visibility and claim in a multicultural and multi-ethnic society. Yet, because they were disturbances that involved a visible minority that could be branded culturally and ethnically, they were debated as matters of national integration, core British values, minority obligations to the nation, and other familiar tropes of the language of assimilation, integration and multiculturalism, that forever plagues ethnic minorities in Britain.

The ultimate test of the good city is whether the urban public culture can withstand pluralism and dissent (Pred, 2000). This is not to provide licence for gratuitous protest or the violence of those bent on harm. Instead, it stands for "participative parity" (Fraser, 2005, p. 87) in a public sphere, such that new voices can emerge, the disempowered can stake a claim, the powerful can cease to hold free rein, and the future can be made through a politics of engagement rather than a politics of plan (Mouffe, 2000). On the part of civic leaders, this requires a certain confidence in the creative powers of

disagreement and dissent, in the legitimacy that flows from popular involvement, and in the vitality thrown up by making the city available to all. Far too much of contemporary urbanism is driven by the need to crush social vitality and to raise the alarm against non-conformity. The result is the city of fear and circumspection, not the city confident with difference and multiplicity. As Engin Isin (2002, p. 282) avers "we may owe the existence of politics not to citizens, but to strangers, outsiders, and aliens".

The city of open rights can become a place of violence against those least able to defend themselves or a place of self-centred advancement. My argument, however, is that, placed in the context of a vigorous and confident urban public culture, the open city is better equipped to channel antagonism towards deliberative and agonistic disputes in the public arena capable of some degree of reconciliation or mutual recognition (Young, 2002; Connolly, 2005). Such a 'heterotopic' urban public culture (Keith, 2005) is one that works with the multiplicity and transience that has come to define urban life, confident that it can build and extend solidarity, but also deal with dissent and disagreement in creative ways that minimise damage. On its own it cannot stop instituted or open violence, but it can expose its wrongs as well as reveal alternatives rooted in a habit of solidarity.

Re-enchantment

The final 'R' is re-enchantment. The good city celebrates the aspects of urban life from which spring the hopes and rewards of association and sociality. Re-enchantment in the history of urban utopian thought has tended to focus on a paradise to come, usually around grand projects designed to engineer human life materially, morally and ethically. In times when the engineering has yielded immediate gains through ambitious urban design and planning exercises to provide mass housing, sanitation, security, clean air and water, and other basic services, it has alleviated the misery of masses trapped in appalling urban conditions. The significance of such

intervention as a form of re-enchantment should not be lost in a present trapped between neo-liberal onslaught on the provisions secured under socialist and social democratic planning and the general scepticism that has grown of modernist urban planning (Gandy, 2005). The aesthetic complaint and sensory deprivation, however, real, were the children of mass provision of the basics of life. Many a form of urban enchantment—from jazz and Tupperware parties to mass political meetings and open air cinema—grew out of the bland and uniform regularities of the modernist ethic of care.

My interest in drawing this example stems from thinking about sociality as a form of urban solidarity, rather than any particular interest in defending the aesthetics of modernist urban planning. It is the prospect for a certain kind of sociality that comes from particular forms of gathering in public spaces upon which I wish to focus. The sites I have in mind are the associations, clubs, car-boot sales, restaurants, open spaces, bolt-holes, libraries, formal and informal gathering-places, and multitude of friendship circles that so fill cities (Thrift, 2005). These sites form an essential component of the urban public culture and are an important filter through which urban life is judged as a collective social good. At their best they are the civic spaces imagined by urban visionaries such as Richard Sennett (1998) and Richard Rogers (Rogers and Powers, 2000) to arise from free engagement and visibility among strangers in the city's public spaces. Along with the sociability associated with participation in family, consumption and institutional networks, the vitality of these public spaces as sites that combine pleasure with the skill of negotiating difference, acts as the gauge of civic ownership and civic behaviour in a city (Sheldrake, 2001; *Demos*, 2005).

There can be no denial that contemporary urbanism has put the link between free association and civic inculcation to the test. The neo-liberal erosion of publicly owned or publicly maintained spaces, together with the increasing surveillance and ejection of undesirable social groups within them, has

redefined the principle of free association as an intragroup activity rather than as a gathering of strangers around shared pleasures. In turn, urban association is increasingly defined by spectacle and consumption, gathered around urban tourism, heritage experience, unending consumerism, ostentatious display, sensory seductions and many other commoditised forms of socialisation (Miles and Miles, 2004). This form of urban enchantment certainly brings strangers together, but whether the result is enhanced civic regard remains a moot point. Thirdly, urban association has become a highly dispersed activity, involving ties with distant others enabled by the virtual media, travel, *diaspora* links, the circulations of public culture and so on. Urban association now co-exists with so many stretched geographies of association that to privilege urban sources of civic inculcation is indefensible.

So, why bother with the urban sources of civic sociality? Precisely because of the scope it offers for making the urban visible as a site of civic promise. Glaring at the 'new urbanism' that has fallen in love with the romance of compact cities, mixed neighbourhoods, pedestrian thoroughfares, classical architecture and cohesive communities, is the daily metropolis whose frenzy and pace conceals a multitude of spaces of association, from workplace and educational sites to angling clubs and public gatherings. These are the lungs of social respite in the fast city, but also the prosaic spaces of civic inculcation. To value, publicise and maintain these spaces is to recognise what is already there as a rich source of civic virtue in most cities, but is increasingly displaced by new engineerings of sociality that have yet to prove their worth.

The register of re-enchantment, however, can strive for more, by experimenting with everyday public spaces for transformative purposes. In part, this is a matter of new uses explicitly designed to disrupt existing convention. One example is provided by the rich legacy of popular radical urbanism in forms as diverse as liberation theology, legislative theatre and community art and mass events of the political Left—today most emblematically expressed in the cultural activities of the anti-globalisation movement at World Social Forum meetings in different cities. In all these examples, urban gathering is used as a means of mixing protest, education, pleasure and enchantment in the name of solidarity, new awareness, and a shared commons in and beyond the city; gathering credibility for many militant particularisms (Featherstone, 2005). Another example is the use of public art to signal cultural heterogeneity, in the way that cities such as Birmingham have experimented with in recent years to celebrate publicly multiculturalism. The initiatives have included comic strips placed in the back seats of taxis recounting the recollections of Asian cab drivers to the artist as they drive along, blindfolded walks around the city centre to encourage sensory experience of the city without the faculty of vision, public sculptures that deliberately play on the mixed racial narratives of the city, murals that record problematic events and histories in order not to forget, and photographic projections of faces on the street on public buildings to publicise multiethnicity (Kennedy, 2004). How successful these public expressions of ethnic and racial solidarity are in combating race hate is a matter of conjecture, but they provide a powerful official signal for what the public culture of a city should be.

Embedded in both examples of urban re-enchantment is an important principle of rupture without finality in the democratically negotiated city (Parker, 2004). Temporary coalitions arise to disrupt preceding ones in the name of an expanding urban solidarity, but are themselves surpassed by new experiments, so that new actors and new impulses can be grasped as the city itself evolves.

Conclusion

In making my case for the good city, I have chosen to redefine the good city as an expanding habit of solidarity and as a practical but unsettled achievement, constantly building on experiments through which difference and multiplicity can be mobilised for common

gain and against harm and want. In articulating the good city as an ethic of care incorporating the principles of social justice, equality and mutuality, I have deliberately chosen to avoid certain shibboleths of urban possibility that have become fashionable, centred around proclamations of new urban centrality.

One of these is the rediscovery of urban community, in the form of empowered neighbourhoods, abundances of social capital, face-to-face contact, and generally the goodness of urban social cohesion. I see little of all of this in contemporary cities, marked as they are by enforcements of introspective community, social attachments that do not cohere, belongings that traverse the city into the ether or globally, irreconcilable differences, and distance and separation within a given urban space. The city does not come together as a community or as a community of communities, for there is far too much difference, disagreement, and escape to assimilate. On the rare occasions that it does come together, such as during a catastrophe or a major event, a certain sense of place shared by the many is undoubtedly released, but soon the everyday steps in to demand multiplicity.

Another shibboleth that has arisen again is the idea of the city managed by an enlightened urban élite that attends to the interests of all. The current language invokes powerful mayors, partnerships involving multiple stakeholders, joined-up urban governance, decentralisation and devolution, and an entrepreneurial openness. All are seemingly reasonable, but in practice cast a veil over the impossibility of central reach over a constantly morphing and transjurisdictional city, a usually supplicant relationship with government and power based elsewhere, and the mischief of an itinerant business community forever threatening exit if its demands are not met. The idea of good urban governance is an illusion not only for all that it cannot capture, but also for its panoptic authoritarianism veiled as stakeholder democracy. My preference, instead, has been to emphasise the role of an active and distributed democracy based around different registers of solidarity; imperfect and constantly renegotiated.

This is the filter through which I would wish to interpret the questions of urban civility and incivility tackled in this Review Issue. I consider the four registers of solidarity discussed above—repair, relatedness, rights and re-enchantment—as defining influences on the balance between urban civility and its opposites. Together, they shape state and civic orientations to multiplicity in urban life, by defining access to the basics of existence, attitudes to strangers, rights of presence and expression, and the scale and purpose of the shared commons. They act as a kind of democratic audit, through inculcating a particular kind of social ethos. As such, they are often contradictory and surprising in their effect; tackling obviously anti-social behaviour, but also state panopticism and easy condemnation of the rights of minorities; providing the means for individuals and collectivities to develop civic capabilities, but also making ample space for civic disagreement and dissent; and constantly working on the perfectibility of democratic process, but not of forecasting perfect outcomes. What or who counts as civil or uncivil, thus, is a matter of the fine grain daily thrown up for public debate and scrutiny, rather than the product of pure and pre-defined categories of civility and incivility.

A civic politics of getting the urban habit of living with diversity right is one way of thickening the ways in which an increasingly fragmented, disoriented and anxious society can regain some mechanism for the distribution of hopefulness, as Hage (2003) has recently argued. This is not a Bush-like hopefulness borne out of a tragedy committed by those who shower hope, nor a hopefulness that works as an opiate for sustained misery, but one that works through an ethic of care that delivers on the ground. This is not a 'love-thy-neighbour' ethic of care, but one based on the rights of recognition. Once the city is returned as a vibrant democracy, those in power might be nudged to respond without recourse to a politics of containment and repression (see Boudreau, 2003, on differences between Los Angeles and Montreal based on differences in the balance between

state and civic power). Once the good city thus defined begins to deliver, the politics of representation—now so thoroughly aligned to corporate power—might be forced to give ground to another kind of politics based on participation on the ground, and by those discounted as political subjects.

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