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Visioning the Sustainable City

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Abstract (Summary)

A major feature of post-war urban development in Britain has been suburbanization, and now almost half the population lives in suburbs, while the population of the inner cities is ebbing away. Past city leaders had the vision and energy to pioneer a wide range of reforms including public transport, clean water and sewage treatment, municipal services, public housing, comprehensive secondary education, and further and higher education institutions-sometimes in spite of opposition from central government. [...] given that the plight of urban dwellers in the global South is largely caused by the demands of the richer countries with their globalized city economies that commodify the land, exploit terms of trade, and destroy traditional economies, challenges to global capitalism in the older industrial cities can help to remove some of the pressures on newer and younger city populations.

Full Text (7556 words)

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One of the dominant features of the 20 century was the rapid rate of urbanization. The first half of the 20 century saw the urbanization of most countries in Europe, Australia, North and Latin America, and Japan, although until the 1960s, three-quarters of the world's population still lived in rural areas. The last 50 years have seen a dramatic growth in cities across the globe so that now the majority of the world's population live in cities or urbanized areas. Over the next 50 years, this proportion is expected to rise to 75 percent.

The recent burst of urbanization and city growth has accompanied the globalization of capitalism with its linked changes in agricultural productivity, land ownership and forms, and location of production. This massive growth in urbanization and its economic context raises critical environmental and social questions. The richer urban societies-or rather the richer urban dwellers within them-live in a resource-gobbling bubble, exploiting natural resources in a distorted space-time vacuum where food is available out-of-season and goods are sourced from across the globe. At the same time, people in poorer cities experience disorganized and chaotic growth, and approximately a billion people are living without adequate homes and services. Even the more affluent cities like London, which are able to provide a high quality of urban living, infrastructure and environment that can compete internationally to attract and hold elite companies and their senior, wellpaid employees, embrace huge social divides and increasing inequality. As these affluent cities become more polarized, they turn into "dual cities." Despite the large number and variety of cities, only a few cities have sufficient economic power to be "global" or "world" cities.⁷ Most of the world's urban population of around 3 billion people live in cities of 1 million or less. More than 1 billion people live in the 300-plus cities of over 1 million people (described as "metros" by Agnotti), of which about 350-400 million live in the larger so-called mega-cities with populations greater than 5 million people.

Given the seemingly unstoppable momentum of the urbanization process, cities, and urban areas in general, are the place where most people live. As such, they will be the main testing ground for both ecological sustainability and socio-economic progress. The social and environmental impact of cities spreads far beyond their geographic area. For example, London's ecological footprint has been calculated at 120 times its size, while Vancouver has a footprint 180 times its size. Global trade feeding urban centers exploits natural resources and labor around the world. Materials' extraction such as oil, minerals and timber often damages local environments, while pollution from fertilizers and pesticides affects agricultural workers in rural communities. Even the waste of the richer countries can find its way to dumps thousands of miles away.

It is hardly surprising, then, that ecologists have often responded with a largely anti-city outlook. The Wuppertal Institute talks of "parasitical cities." Some in the environmental movement, like Edward Goldsmith, founder of The Ecologist, argue that cities can never be sustainable. He favors a return to the age of "vernacular communities" when "people everywhere really knew how to live in harmony with the natural world." Echoing earlier responses to the emergence of industrial cities, these are the latest in a long history of anti-city views linked to Romanticism. In England,

this is expressed as an attachment to the "countryside" and in the U.S. as the myth of "wilderness."

Does the current increase in urbanization mean that the environmental battle is already lost? Does urbanized mean unsustainable? Greens have argued strongly for a more local basis to production and consumption that integrates human societies and the natural environment; is this possible where both the built environment and socioeconomic structures have little link to the rural or natural environment? There is particular concern that whether people leave the land by choice or through necessity, replacing small-scale farmers by industrialized high-input agribusinesses will result in loss of biodiversity, vital local species, and local farming knowledge. This has led some people to argue that industrialization, urbanization and the capitalist market system must be replaced by non-market subsistence farming and production.' These ideas often reflect an idealized view of life in the agricultural villages of the past, ignoring social narrowness and repression, the hard physical labor, and the lack of material well-being commonly exhibited in the villages.

There is also a gender aspect to these rural-urban changes, as men often precede women into the towns and cities, leaving female heads of household with small plots of land or no land at all.¹ On the positive side, urban environments may offer opportunities for both men and women to make wider lifestyle choices than they could in more traditional rural communities. Cities have been seen as places of hope and emancipation. Can they also be made more sustainable-or perhaps less unsustainable-both socially and ecologically?

Cities and Urbanization

It is urbanism, rather than cities, that is new. Cities have existed for thousands of years since the emergence of ancient empires in Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus valley, China and Central America. In 1860, Britain was the first country with a majority urban population. ° It also experienced the social and environmental degradations of the early industrial cities. However, in the same way that industry, trade, and proximity to natural resources called many cities into being, the core of older industrial cities in northern Britain, like Newcastle where our Research Institute is based, have experienced a decline in population as employment and people move to more prosperous areas, particularly the South East and the suburban fringe. This phenomenon is not unique to northern Britain and has occurred in many cities around the world.

As Stuart Hall has argued, cities are the material and spatial product of their times. A major feature of post-war urban development in Britain has been suburbanization, and now almost half the population lives in suburbs, while the population of the inner cities is ebbing away.²² The massive spread of suburbanization is also fed, ironically, by the demand of people to have their own personal link with nature in domestic gardens, a well-known British preoccupation.

Many city dwellers have moved well beyond the city into rural or semi-rural locations. This does not necessarily enhance traditional rural life, as the new occupants tend to create dormitory villages or occupy second homes, bringing with them the privileges of an urbanized lifestyle and all the services and commuting pressures that entails. As a result of suburbanization, many inner city areas have suffered a decline in resources as businesses and population move away. In some cases, that has led to the gentrification of inner city areas; for example, the Quayside area of Newcastle has experienced a remarkable change over the past 20 years. This, however, has meant that while the inner parts of the city have become renewed, they are mainly the preserve of the affluent, sometimes in gated communities. A decline in the provision and quality of affordable housing along with a car-dominated transport system has amplified this trend. And in cities such as San Francisco and Vancouver that have maintained an attractive center, even those on middle incomes have to move to the suburban fringe to find housing they can afford. Meanwhile, the poor are trapped in estates that represent the "power-filled geography" of urbanization, as public spaces are eroded by privatization, shopping areas turn into malls, and closed circuit TV-monitored city centers operate a virtual curfew. Open spaces generally deteriorate from a lack of maintenance, which leads to an increased sense of fear and insecurity, with the lack of safe and pleasant public places further exacerbating the negative dynamics of urban sprawl.²⁴

While individual cities are becoming socially and spatially polarized, cities around the world are becoming more structurally similar as global commercial patterns replace the local and the unique. Identical city financial and commercial centers and shopping malls filled with the same international chains-e.g., GAP, Starbucks, MacDonalds-are weakening the variety and vitality of city centers. Commercialized leisure undermines the cultural diversity of cities, with history and culture sanitized into tourist attractions. The tragedy for many cities is that they are losing their cultural traditions and identity without offering even any economic benefit to the bulk of their citizens. Cities in Britain are competing against each other to attract footloose industry, big name chains, supermarkets, and retail malls.

In envisioning the sustainable city, we make a distinction between urbanization and the edios of the city. As we have argued, cities have a long (and varied) history, whereas urbanization is a new phenomenon. While recognizing the problems that cities face, the history and conceptualization of the city can be seen as expressing positive elements in human development. Cities have historically had a spatial and political identity characterized by density and

heterogeneity, but as Loretta Lees argues, the concept of the city is an ideal and does not necessarily reflect any particular urban context. However, the concept of the city does have meaning in practice. In Britain cities have their status designated by charter. Some are very large, and some are small, but the status is meaningful and eagerly sought by the larger towns. We are concerned here with the ethos of the city rather than a debate about what qualifies as a formal spatial definition. The words civilization, civility, citizen {civitas} and politics {polis} are all derived from the city. According to a German medieval phrase, "City air makes you free." The poet Milton said of London that it was the "Mansion-house of liberty." As Bookchin argued, "cities sought to bring rationality, a measure of impartial justice, a cosmopolitan culture, and greater individuality to a world that was permeated by mysticism, arbitrary power, parochialism, and the subordination of the individual to the command of aristocratic and religious elites."

Cities have been the focus of corruption, decadence, and economic power and domination. But they have also been centers of human development, discovery, innovation, and interchange that have both enhanced the potential for human improvement and created a forum for struggles for democratic and social improvement and movements for social change.²⁸ It is the city's capacity to bring together a diversity of people with different outlooks, aspirations and needs that has created great (albeit often unequal) wealth and developments in culture, art, technique and science.

Many of the problems or failings laid at the door of cities are not really a city issue, per se, they also apply to suburban and rural areas. In much of the world, almost all the population apart from a small elite live in poverty. Across the planet in city, town, village or countryside, environmental damage is being done. The debate should not be about a choice between a romanticized rural past or the modern commercial city, but instead about how to create patterns of human dwelling on the earth that are socially just and ecologically sustainable. The city ethos, rather than being the main culprit in social and environmental decline, has the potential to be a driving force for change. Bookchin, and before him Marx, argued that the development of cities was a step forward for humans. However, the recent trend of sprawling urbanization, metropolises, and mega-cities is currently having widespread negative impacts. Environmental damage is increasing, and the dwellers in cities are not able to embrace their potential as citizens. They are not able to play an active and collective role in urban life, but often respond-and are viewed by policy-makers-as passive and individualistic consumers and constituents. In Britain this is illustrated by declining participation in municipal elections, particularly in the poorer electoral wards.

However, despite these problems, there is still optimism about the dynamics of the city. Recently Pinder, like David Harvey, has defended the importance of reclaiming urban utopianism as "the expression of desire for a better way of being and living through the imagining of a different city and a different urban life."³⁰ For Pinder what is needed is "oppositional-utopianism. If humanity has a future, it will be an urban one; as Athanasiou has argued, it is "too late for simple Utopias, too late for the dream of retreating to 'the land.'"³²

A key feature of the city is a link between diversity and a common identity or focus. Diversity is expressed in wide-ranging economic activities, cultures, lifestyles, and faiths. There is also a diversity of space with narrow lanes, wider streets, squares and courtyards, and a range of types and sizes of building. Historically the focus of the city has been in its power centers-public and monumental buildings for different purposes such as religion (the temple), governing (the castle, palace, or town hall), economic (the market), and social (the gymnasium or bath). Today in Britain, universities, arts and culture, and a vibrant nighttime and leisure economy are important. What is needed is to maintain the diversity of the city while developing a focus that represents the people as a whole rather than having cities serve primarily as centers of wealth and power for an elite minority. The challenge is to enhance difference as diversity while reducing difference as inequality.

The danger is that the worldwide phenomenon of urbanization will occur without civilization, that is, the building of a progressive urban culture. Far from civilization being a symbol of creative living together in a community structured for a purpose, civilization is currently being misused to describe a national culture (as the U.S. used it in the "war against terrorism") or individual etiquette (behaving in a civilized manner) rather than with its original association with the life of the city. The traditional city was not a disorganized agglomeration of people-it had a religious, military, political, cultural, or commercial focus. Little remains in modern cities but sterile malls, business parks, enterprise zones, or at best a tourist representation of tradition. We would not want to return to the traditional foci of cities but to find new patterns of civilization that are socially just and ecologically sustainable.

Greening the City

There has been considerable interest in the potential for urban sustainability and greening the city.³³ Far from being a source of environmental decline, Satterthwaite³⁴ sees concentrated urban areas as being better able to tackle environmental issues and provide services such as clean water than rural areas with a more widespread population. The energy efficiency of cities, both in transport and building heating, can be much greater than in dispersed populations. There is great potential for resource reuse and recycling. The provision of many services is easier and more efficient in an urban area. Good transport without cars, mixed-use compact communities to improve access and

the quality of life, buildings with very low energy needs, well-designed and safe public spaces, green urban landscapes, attractive buildings appropriate to people, provision of clean water, decent standards of housing and education, and a circular use of materials are all feasible.³⁵ The main barrier lies in politics and economics, not technology. It is estimated that the U.S. alone has spent between \$1 trillion and \$2 trillion on the war on Iraq. What could this level of expenditure have achieved to make the urban environment more sustainable?

Britain is slowly waking up to the need to address the sustainability of the urban environment. Our local city, Newcastle, has boldly announced that it intends to be the world's first Carbon Neutral, zero-CO₂ city.³⁷ The evidence is, however, that European cities are moving ahead much faster than cities in Britain. One notable exception is the Greater London Assembly, led by Mayor Ken Livingstone, which has significantly decreased car use in central London by introducing a congestion charge and enhancing bus transport. Durham in northern England has also introduced a congestion charge.

The green perspective on cities is, as we have pointed out, an ambivalent one. Cities are greedy and parasitic certainly, and their current ecological footprint is huge. However, cities are arguably less destructive than the same number of people living the same lifestyle spread across the countryside. As one of the pioneers of the urban ecology movement has pointed out, the city maximizes interaction while minimizing the distance travelled to achieve it. This chimes with a long-term aim of radical city planners to achieve a compact city—the walking city—as opposed to the zoned city with its sterile streets devoid of noise and bustle in the residential areas by day, and the office districts devoid of noise and bustle in the evenings. ° While there is a case for removing people from polluting factories and creating peace and quiet, a green city would aim to have industries that did not pollute or engage in mass exploitative production. A compact city would also reduce suburban sprawl. The architect Richard Rogers, who has led the U.K. Government's Urban Task Force, sees urban sprawl as a major problem for a small and crowded country such as Britain. Instead, he wants to recapture the quality of the great classical cities, which, he argues, combined the beauty of urban space with a strong civic society in an approach he describes as urban renaissance. This view is supported by Power and Houghton, who argue that housing demand can be satisfied within current city areas and brownfield sites without any further incursions on greenfield land. They call for "smart growth" through intensively regenerating existing neighborhoods.⁴²

The idea of a compact city is not without its critics. The case is made that city dwellers need air and green space, and from prominent British urban planner Ebenezer Howard in the late 1800s onwards, there has been a move against the neo-Medieval city environment of gross overcrowding and industrial pollution in favor of newly designed garden cities. However, the compact city need not be all concrete and industrial sites. It could have green spaces and good housing, especially if the large areas of land—usually 30 percent in a British city and 50 percent in the U.S.—used by cars were reclaimed. Existing cities in Britain are fortunate to have both Victorian parks and a green belt, although these green spaces are now under threat. Cities also had land set aside as community gardens, or "allotments," to enable people to grow their own produce. After a period of decline, allotments are becoming increasingly popular. One of the authors of this paper is an inner city allotment holder and has seen over the past ten years a move from abandoned allotment plots to full occupation and a waiting list. Certainly it would be unfortunate in the name of sustainability to remove assets such as parks and allotments, and a compact city would need to maintain a balance between high-density land use and green space. In Newcastle we have an award-winning example of low-rise, high-density housing with small, but very effective, green spaces. The Byker Wall development is a public housing estate shielded from a motorway by a long undulating block of flats that forms a wall enclosing a variety of low-rise housing. The development is well-planted with trees, and includes public spaces and small garden areas. Much of the estate is car-free. The area is not without its social problems, however, which illustrates the fact that good design alone is not sufficient; socio-economic injustice also has to be tackled.

For greens a crucial aspect of the city is its resource use and the creation of waste. A sustainable city would need to obtain maximum use from minimum resources. A profit-driven, export-led, commercially oriented city would not be possible within these constraints. There are many good ideas for greening the city, including restoring the landscape underlying urban areas, growing food in the city, providing safe public spaces, and shifting land use from cars to people and vegetation. Where pollution is no longer an issue, it should be possible to open up culverts and recover natural drainage patterns. If this is not possible, the aim must be to make the ground more porous, particularly on impervious surfaces such as roads and the remaining car parks.

Bringing provisioning as close to use as possible would mean implementing urban agriculture and linking the city with the surrounding countryside. An example is the Seikatsu Cooperative movement in Japan, which links city co-operators directly with the farmers supplying their food. Many communities in Britain are experimenting with box schemes and farmers markets, which also link city dwellers with those producing the food. Urban agriculture is another possibility and would include planting fruit trees and making more productive use of gardens. Cuba, where 60 percent of vegetables are grown in city farms, provides an excellent example of what can be accomplished with urban agriculture. Havana allows only organic food to be grown. The Cuban government gave unused city land to anyone who wanted to cultivate

it, and now there are 62,000 small urban plots of less than 800 square meters (patios or huertos) and many "organoponicos," or urban market gardens.⁴³ Initiatives in urban gardening and self-provisioning have been established, even in neoliberal Northern cities, often led by women from more self-provisioning cultures.⁴⁴

There is, however, a long way to go for urban dwellers who, having no connection with the production of food, have lost both skills and knowledge. People can become alienated from-and therefore ignorant and dismissive of-the ecosystems that sustain life. For example, one of the authors was picking cherries from a street tree when children surrounded her and asked what they were. When told, the children stripped the tree. Because urban children are so unfamiliar with berries and fruits, she had to urge them not to assume all berries and fruits were edible. Urban farms would help familiarize city dwellers with rural life, but real productive farms would be much better. However, most of the working farms that surrounded Newcastle until 20 or 30 years ago have been concreted over for so-called "executive housing" and business and retail parks.

The main connections that current city dwellers in Britain have with the natural environment are the city parks and smaller green spaces. Using such spaces is often problematic for the elderly, women, young children, ethnic minorities, and the poor. Green cities would need to make their public spaces, such as parks, squares and pavements, attractive and inclusive, and thus well used. One good way of encouraging the use of green spaces is to create walkways and cycle-paths through them that interconnect with each other and to have gardener/wardens constantly in view, actively working and available to help. It is also vital to plan wildlife corridors through urban areas and the habitats they need, such as wetlands. This is particularly important as rural areas are regimented by industrial agriculture. In fact, urban gardens and wild urban spaces, such as railway sidings and old graveyards, are increasingly a haven for wildlife. Thus, it is important to resist the urge to "tidy up" the environment in such places. It is often in the abandoned corner or the old industrial works that wildlife can hide out.

Greening the city will also offer social benefits. Reducing the car's domination of urban space by land-use planning, good public transport, and pro-walking policies would have many benefits, including freeing up more safe and attractive public spaces, reducing pollution and accidents, improving community well-being and health, allowing opportunities for children to play, and reducing social inequality. The development of industries based on renewable and local energy generation and the re-use and recycling of materials would provide jobs that meet local needs and are rooted in an area, rather than being vulnerable to global changes. Greening of urban space would improve the environment; reduce stress, noise, and pollution; improve health; and encourage people to visit public places.

Alongside technical changes, fundamental shifts in economic, social, and political policy are needed. Cities offer opportunities for the formation of many types of communities, not only those of geographical proximity, but communities of interest. Sustainable cities would provide opportunities and resources to enhance communities and social networks. This would allow many needs that are presently-and often only partially-met in the world of commodities and commercialism to be met in other ways. This is an illustration of what Daly⁴⁶ described as qualitative, rather than quantitative, improvements. Cities are not only about form and shape; they are about social processes and interaction. Issues of space cannot be privileged "in the assumption that if these are sorted out then social matters will follow."⁴⁷

The Politics of the City

Sustainable cities could never be built on the present patterns of neoliberal capitalism, which has undermined public expenditure, encouraged privatization, and imposed limits on the activities and tax-raising power of city governments (and local government generally). The ending of the post-war consensus and the resulting weakening of progressive taxation, the provision of social services, public facilities and infrastructure, the negative changes in employment conditions (lowering of wages for the poor while increasing payment to the rich), and the loss of manufacturing employment in the developed world have greatly exacerbated social and economic inequality. All of this has magnified the social and spatial division of cities and increased the public squalor suffered by the majority, while the private wealth enjoyed by the minority has grown. These changes also undermine the public domain and increase social divisions and alienation. To seek some compensatory solace, people consume ever more goods to find satisfaction and identity, and this consumerist consumption undermines sustainability, while much of the need that underlies this compensatory consumption remains unsatisfied. As the needs are rooted in society, they can only be resolved socially; consumerism is part of the problem, not a solution.

At present, political strategies for many British cities focus heavily on selling the city as a commodity, an image, a feeling, trying to lure tourists and inward investment. Glossy brochures extol the benefits of business developments and property tax exemptions. Newcastle Council, faced with declining population and therefore tax revenue, launched Going for Growth in the late 1990s. The policy was based largely on gentrification rather than sustainability. It was socially divisive, and after mass opposition was scrapped. A sustainable city would not see a political problem in managing population decline. Instead it would focus on the well-being of the citizens themselves, on building the positive ethos of the city.

The neoliberal approach also ignores the fact that many cities such as Newcastle have economies that are underpinned by the public sector or have publicly supported institutions such as universities as major employers. The British National Health Service, a major employer in many cities, has a million employees and is the largest employer in the world. While the concept of the local economy is gaining ground, a recognition and defense of the public economy is more muted. Local and social economies already exist if we take account of public expenditure, social exchange, and unpaid domestic and communal activities. Cities also already have substantial informal cash economies. A vibrant local economy could be based on green manufacture, arts, crafts, and personal and public services emphasizing fair trade in "exotics" with other communities. Such an economy would minimize the need to transport goods. The necessary transport would use energy-efficient modes and avoid the freight miles of goods shipped back and forth, and the mad rush of Just-in-Time trucks.⁵³ What matters is that these economies should be democratically controlled and provide for the people of the city instead of being orientated to the global market and economic elites.⁵ Such an economy has yet to be developed and must be a priority for both the Left and Greens.

While there has been considerable attention to the greening of the city, socialists have paid less attention to the "red-ing" of the city. In fact, for socialists the focus of their politics has become uncertain. The traditional aims of socialism—the "common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange" (from the old Clause 4 of the British Labour Party) to enable economic activity to meet human needs without waste—faces new challenges because of the globalization of capitalism. Capitalism has globalized production, for a time weakening the power of worker solidarity in industrialized countries. The international socialist movement has been weakened with the shift to neoliberalism of many social democratic parties and the weakening or disappearance of communist parties, so that in recent years the Left has mainly been on the defensive, with campaigns around "Save" this, "Defend" that, and "Stop" the other. The anti-capitalist and anti-corporate globalization struggle, the anti-war movement, and the wave of radicalism in Latin America are all signs of revival. However, while it is obvious and important to state that "A Better World is Possible," this needs to be developed into a vision of what that world and its cities would look like. Evidence of how resistance can be organized within an urban context is shown by the people's social forums that have followed the global World Economic Forum junkets around the world.

Combining ideas of sustainability and justice with the traditional aims of decent standards for living and working would avoid the shortcomings of the social democratic reforms of the post-war era which, while providing reasonable living standards for the majority, were dominated by bureaucratic and often soulless systems and planning processes (which were hypocritically used as part of the neoliberal critique of social democracy). There would be many mutual links and benefits in a combined green and red city. The aim of sustainable, socially just, green, convivial cities would provide the basis for a positive vision of socialism to rebuild and inspire a new revived movement. It would resonate with many of the concerns of the young.

Realizing sustainable cities will require major political struggles given the attitude of national governments and the resistance of corporations. However, the aim would be popular with many millions of people whose needs would then be met, and they would be citizens with a role in decision-making rather than numbers exploited simply as consumers. Already there are examples of moves to sustainability around the world, such as the steps to reclaim democratic control through participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre. It would be a worthwhile research project to catalogue and analyze these examples. Municipal socialism laid the foundation for wider action as it allowed the building of a base of support and demonstrated the real benefits of socialist policies. For Harvey, the active involvement of the people is vital if there is to be a "right to the city," that is, a right to change it. However, he points out that this right will not be given; it must be seized through political struggles.⁵⁶ Cities, after all, are the basis of civilization.

The Convivial City

While it is important to identify ways of greening the city and to mount challenges to global capitalism, privatization, and social injustice, the ethos of the city also potentially expresses a social vision. For Herbert Girardet, that vision means putting "the pulsing heart of conviviality back into our cities."⁵⁷ Barbara Ehrenreich has recently pointed to the loss of festival in modern societies. ⁸ Most traditional societies, rural and urban, have historically had periods of festival and carnival. Carnival has been used to overcome communal strife, as in the case of the Notting Hill carnival in London that was instituted following major racial conflict. However, carnival can also be used to mask major social inequalities. To see conviviality as a major ethos of city life is more than just festival. The main element of the city ethos is the link between density and diversity. Cities are heterogeneous, bringing many peoples, cultures, occupations, and faiths into close proximity. In their cosmopolitanism, cities make the global local. The city has an identity, while its population is diverse. This identity and diversity is in tension, and that is part of the creative dynamic of the city. We would argue that a central role for city governance should be the enhancement of this creative tension to encourage human creativity and potential through the development of a convivial city.⁵⁹ Convivial comes from the Latin *convivium*—a living together, not only with other peoples, but also with the environment and other species.

If a convivial city is to be vital and viable, it must create social space and time. Social space must be free and friendly.

Children, women, young people, and the elderly must feel safe and free to roam. All these groups are now marginalized in the modern city. Traffic and commercial priorities make it difficult to move about. Traffic is heavy by day, but public transport tends to be less frequent and feel less safe at night. Most people are expected to socialize in their homes or on commercial premises, and there is little free communal space. Young people are particularly affected by the privatization of city life. There are very few public spaces in which they can congregate, and often when young people do claim unused space, they are demonized for it and kept under surveillance by the authorities. A major requirement is for public space for young people to interact safely with each other. Without communal space that can absorb young energies, there will be more pressure for curfews and similar repressive and counterproductive actions.

Social space must also encourage and respect cultural diversity while providing a basis for linking communities. Without the convivial city with its public forums, there is no space for different cultures and groups to intermingle. There is no reason why modern cities should not continue to have high levels of cosmopolitan interaction while preserving distinctive cultural forms. Social time is important for this. With longer working hours and long, congested commuting times, the U.K. has the least social time of any European country. Similarly, most working families in the U.S. suffer from long hours, often holding several jobs and have little time off for vacation. As a result, for many people, their social life is focussed on work. The sentiment expressed in *Through the Looking Glass*, and *What Alice Found There* aptly describes what it's like for large numbers of working people: "it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place." Technology, aided by attacks on working conditions rather than increasing leisure, has added to time pressures. It is ironic that millions of people in the U.K. watch the soap opera, *Eastenders*, which shows a relatively mixed community focussed on the classic city form of the square and the market. People seem to eat regularly at the cafe and, of course, spend the rest of their life in the pub. There is even still a launderette. Yet it would be hard for such an interactive community to exist in real life, since there is neither the time nor the space. If communities are to retain or regain social interaction, much more work-free time and many more festive days based on different cultural celebrations are needed.

Political and cultural citizenship in the city is associated with the forum, square, park, library, theater and festivals. It embraces participation, performance and celebration. This can be in the city center or in "urban villages" that may emerge organically or be created through urban planning.⁶⁰ However, as Amin, et al.,⁶¹ have argued, design alone is not the solution; city communities are mobile and diverse. Conviviality is not just about form and structure. It is also about how mobile and diverse communities relate to each other and interact as well as how they are treated by political authorities and social leaders. Realizing the vision of creating convivial and sustainable cities in Britain will require a significant political change, particularly since the present leaders of most of the country's cities have largely adopted neoliberal policies and abandoned service delivery. Past city leaders had the vision and energy to pioneer a wide range of reforms including public transport, clean water and sewage treatment, municipal services, public housing, comprehensive secondary education, and further and higher education institutions-sometimes in spite of opposition from central government. However, there are some current encouraging examples. In Newcastle we have seen a city regenerate on the back of the development of public art and culture. For this, credit must go to Newcastle's neighboring town, Gateshead, which began by commissioning public art.

Without concerted effort to make cities more socially aware and responsive, there is a very real danger that urbanization will develop without the ethos of the city within which to build a vision for social justice, citizenship, and ecological sustainability. A convivial city could form a basis for associational, collective embodiment of the human spirit. It could encourage creativity in both celebration and local provisioning based on sufficiency. A focus on the city would not mean a retreat to local politics, but rather build the base for international action; a red-green society cannot be built in one city. However, just as municipal socialism gathered strength from each gain in the past, so each partial victory or achievement today inspires and strengthens the movement in other cities. We can imagine a growing network of cities in solidarity.

The main challenge in developing the idea of a sustainable city is to address the needs of the burgeoning cities of the South, which are caught between the commercialization and privatization of land, on the one hand, and the failure of global capital to deliver on its promise of meeting the needs of the world through industrialization, on the other. Hundreds of millions of people are living in conditions similar to the early industrial cities of Europe, but it is doubtful if there will be an industrial solution-certainly not one along the lines of the 19th - and 20th century industrialization model. In terms of fossil fuel usage and climate change alone, this model is impossible. However, given that the plight of urban dwellers in the global South is largely caused by the demands of the richer countries with their globalized city economies that commodify the land, exploit terms of trade, and destroy traditional economies, challenges to global capitalism in the older industrial cities can help to remove some of the pressures on newer and younger city populations.

The problem of urbanization without civilization, as represented by meaningful citizenship and city-building, is arguably one of the central social and public policy issues of the 21st century. People in extremis may be able to become city-builders, but it is more likely that they will be prey to millennial and fundamentalist movements, or the 21st-century

equivalent of the 19th-century gin shop. In the past, far-sighted campaigners-often socialists-carried out many reforms to create the great cities. Can green socialists rise again to that challenge now?

[Footnote]

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