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The Good City: In Defense of Utopian Thinking

The Utopian Impulse

Utopian thinking, the capacity to imagine a future that is radically different from what we know to be the prevailing order of things, is a way of breaking through the barriers of convention into a sphere of the imagination where many things beyond our everyday experience become possible. All of us have this ability, which I believe to be inherent in human nature because human beings are insufficiently programmed for the future. We need a constructive imagination to help us create the fictive worlds of our dreams, of dreams worth struggling for.

There are, of course, other ways of deploying this capacity than the imagining of utopias. With its promise of redemption, *religion* is one of them and, for many people, religious faith satisfies their thirst for meaning. Faith in an *ideology* is the secular counterpart to religion. American ideology is based on the belief that human progress is appropriately measured by continuous betterment in the material conditions of living for individuals. The goal is a mass society of consumers. Along with cornucopia, it includes an affirmation of democratic institutions (so long as they support global markets) and unswerving trust in the powers of technology to solve whatever problems might come our way.[1] Finally, intense *nationalism* may also satisfy the need for a transcendent purpose in life.[2] The question of why are we here arises precisely because the human condition leaves the future open and requires a response on our part.

Beyond the alternative constructions of religion, ideology, and nationalism, there are many good reasons why we might wish to engage in utopian thinking. For some of us, it is no more than an amusing pastime.

For others it serves as a veiled critique of present evils. For still others it may be, in the phrase of Sir Philip Sidney's comment on Thomas More's *Utopia* in 1595, a persuasive means of "leading men to virtue" (quoted in Manuel and Manuel 1979, 2). On the other hand, in its negative form of *dystopia* it may alert us to certain tendencies in the present that, if allowed to continue unchecked, would lead to a thoroughly abhorrent world. The twentieth century produced many literary dystopias (not to mention the many actual ones), from Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* to the cyberpunk novels of William Gibson and others (Warren et al. 1998). But most important of all, utopian thinking can help us choose a path into the future that we believe is justified, because its concrete imagery is informed by those values we hold dear.

Utopian thinking has two moments that are inextricably joined: critique and constructive vision. The critique is of certain aspects of our present condition: injustice, oppression, ecological devastation to name just a few. It is precisely an enumeration of these evils that tells us that certain moral codes are being violated. The code may not be written out or it may only be symbolically suggested whenever we invoke such slogans as "freedom," "equality, or "solidarity." Moral outrage over an injustice suggests that we have a sense of justice, inarticulate though it may be.

Now it is true that negative and positive images are not necessarily symmetrical with respect to each other. Most of us would probably agree that great material inequalities are unjust, yet we would differ vehemently in our answer to what would constitute a "just" distribution of incomes and other material goods. These different ways of understanding social justice are ultimately political arguments. And as such they are unavoidable, because if injustice is to be corrected (or, for that matter, any other social evil), we will need the concrete imagery of utopian thinking to propose steps that would bring us a little closer to a more just world.

It is this concrete vision—the second moment of utopian thinking—which young Australian of the Year, Tan Le, was calling for to give her a sense of a meaningful deployment of her own powers in the public sphere (Le 1999).

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

Visionings of this kind are always debatable, both in their own terms and when measured against alternative proposals. That is why I call them political. Where the uncensored public expression of opinion is allowed, they should become the substance of political argument. Utopian thinking should not be fairy tales but concern genuine futures around which political coalitions can be built.

There are always limitations to purposive action—of leadership, relations of power, resources, knowledge. But if we start with these limitations rather than with images of a desired future, we may never arrive at the future we desire. Successful utopian constructs must have the power to generate the passion for a political practice that will bring us a little closer to the visions they embody.

The Utopian Tradition in Planning

With considerations of this sort, we find ourselves back on the familiar ground of planning. City and regional planning have an enduring tradition of utopian thought (Friedmann 1987; Friedmann and Weaver 1979;

Weaver 1984). The evocation of the classics—Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, Pierre Joseph Proudhon, William Morris, Peter Kropotkin, Ebenezer Howard, Lewis Mumford, Frank Lloyd Wright, Percival, and Paul Goodman—are all names in common currency among the tribe. For more recent decades, I would add the names of Jane Jacobs, Kevin Lynch, E. F. Schumacher, Ivan Illich, and Murray Bookchin. And still closer to our time and, indeed, contemporary with us, I am inclined to mention certain works of Dolores Hayden (1984) and Leonie Sandercock (1997). Given this chain of utopian writings stretching over two hundred years that have influenced the education of planners and, to a greater or lesser degree, have also shaped their practice, it would be hard to argue that even the mainstream of the planning profession has stayed aloof from utopian thinking.

In a recent essay, Susan Fainstein asks whether we can make the cities we want (Fainstein 1999). In her account, the important values that should inform our thinking about cities include material equality, cultural diversity, democratic participation, and ecological sustainability in a metropolitan milieu. Fainstein's background is in political economy, so it is not surprising that she should give pride of place to the question of material equality and follow, if not uncritically, David Harvey's lead in *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (1996). I will return to this prioritization later in this chapter.

But before I do, I would like to recall an argument I made fourteen years ago in *Planning in the Public Domain* (Friedmann 1987). In the second and third parts of that volume I attempted to sketch an intellectual history—a genealogy—of planning thought and, at the same time, to go beyond this history to advocate a transformative approach to planning that, because it was based on the mobilization of the disempowered groups in society, I called radical. I argued that the central focus of radical planning is political action by organized groups within civil society. Its radicalism derives from actions that, with or without and even against the state, are aimed at universal emancipation. "A key principle in radical, transformative practice," I wrote, "is that *no group can be completely free until freedom [from oppression] has been achieved for every group*. Thus, the struggle for emancipation leads to results that will always be partial and contradictory, until the final and possibly utopian goal of a free humanity is reached" (301).[3] I then examined what planners who opt for emancipatory struggles actually do. Among the many

things I considered are elaborating a hard-hitting critical analysis of existing conditions; assisting in the mobilization of communities to rectify these conditions; assisting in devising appropriate strategies of struggle; refining the technical aspects of transformative solutions; facilitating social learning from radical practice; mediating between the mobilized community and the state; helping to ensure the widest possible participation of community members in all phases of the struggle; helping to rethink the group's course of action in the light of new understandings; and becoming personally involved in transformative practice (303–7). I wanted it to be understood that utopian thinking, at least as far as planners are concerned, is historically grounded in specific emancipatory practices. Planning of this sort stands in the grand utopian tradition. Leonie Sandercock calls it an *insurgent* planning (Sandercock 1999).

In this chapter, my intention is somewhat different. Rather than talk about political struggles to resist specific forms of oppression, my aim is to identify some elements for a vision of the "good city." And I want to do so in the manner of an achievable utopia rather than paint a scenario set in an indeterminate future.[4]

A century during which the vast majority of the world's population will be living in urban environments cries out for images of the good city. I have purposely phrased this need in the plural. Taking the world as a whole, the diversity of starting conditions is so great that no single version of the city will suffice. Fifty years from now, the world's urban population will be roughly double the existing numbers of nearly three billion. We can thus look ahead to a historically unprecedented period of city-building. And city-builders need not only blue prints for their work but *guiding normative images*. The following remarks are addressed to planners and to anyone else who wishes to confront the multiple challenges of the age.[5]

Imagining the Good City 1: Theoretical Considerations

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

Whose City?

We have been bludgeoned into accepting as gospel that to speak of the common good is either propaganda or false consciousness. The attacks on the common good have come from all ideological quarters. Liberal pluralists see only a diversity of group interests striking temporary bargains in the political arena. Marxists argue on roughly similar grounds that the "common good" is merely a phrase invoked by the bourgeois ruling class, to hide purposes that are nothing other than an expression of their own class interest. Postmodern critics who see only a world of fleeting kaleidoscopic images, dissolve the "common good" into a thousand discursive fragments, dismissing attempts to raise any one of them above the rest as an unjustifiable attempt to establish a new "metanarrative" in an age from which metanarratives (other than postmodern narratives) have been banned.

Against all of these intellectually dismissive critics, I want to argue the necessity of continuing to search for the common good of a city, if only because, without such a conception, there can be no political community. In democratic polities, there has to be at least minimal agreement on the political structure of the community and on the possibility of discovering in given circumstances and through appropriate processes, a "common good." A merely administered city is not a political community and might as well be a hotel managed by some multinational concern. In that case, the answer to the question of whose city would be clear: whether cities or prisons, it is always the notorious bottom line that counts. In a putative democracy, however, the city is ultimately identified with "the people," and the cliché notwithstanding, it is the *demos* who must argue out among themselves, time after time, in what specific agendas of action the "common good" of the city may be found. It seems to me that there is a considerable difference in whether we seek to justify an action by grounding it in a conception of the "common good"—a conception that always remains open to political challenge, of course—or to assert it without any voices of dissent or, worst of all, to consider it an irrelevant diversion from hard-knuckle power politics.

Process versus Outcomes

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

My own position is to deny this separation of ends and means, outcomes and process. Process, by which I specifically mean transparent democratic procedures, is no less important than desirable outcome. But democratic procedures are likely to be abandoned if they do not, in the longer term, lead to broadly acceptable outcomes. Moreover, a liberal democratic process also includes the nonviolent struggles for social justice and other ultimate concerns that take place outside the formal institutional framework. So, on one hand, we need an inclusive democratic framework that allows for the active pursuit of political objectives even when these are contrary to the dominant interests. On the other hand, we need to be clear about the objectives to be pursued. The imaginary of the good city has to embrace both of these terms.

Intention and Practice

The good city requires a committed form of political practice. It was Hannah Arendt who formed my concept of action or political praxis (she used the terms interchangeably) when she wrote, "To act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin . . . to set something into motion. . . . It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. The character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and in all origins" (Arendt 1958, 177–88). In other words, *to act is to set something new into the world.* And this requires an actor or rather a number of such, because political action always involves a collective entity or group. There are, of course, certain conditions of action. The group must first be brought together and mobilized. This means leadership. The group must also have the material,

symbolic, and moral power sufficient to overcome resistance to its project. In the longer term, both the group's actions and the counteractions to its initiatives lead to results that are boundless and therefore require continuous social learning. The group must be passionately committed to its practice, or it will be defeated in the early rounds of the struggle (Friedmann 1987, 44–47).

The Good City 2: Human Flourishing As a Fundamental Human Right

If they are not to be seen as arbitrary, principles of the good city must be drawn from somewhere, they must logically be connected to some foundational value. Such a founding principle must be clearly and explicitly formulated, so that it can be communicated even to those among us who are not philosophically inclined. I would formulate this principle as follows: *Every human being has the right, by nature, to the full development of their innate intellectual, physical, and spiritual capabilities in the context of wider communities.* This is the *right to human flourishing,* and I regard it as the most fundamental of human rights. But it has never been universally acknowledged as an inherently human right. Slave societies knew nothing of it; nor did caste societies, tribal societies, corporate village societies, or totalitarian states. And in no society have women ever enjoyed the same right to human flourishing as men. But as the fundamental, inalienable right of every person, human flourishing is inscribed in the liberal democratic ethos.

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

As this reference to political institutions makes evident, the potential of human flourishing can only be realized in the context of wider communities. So right from the start, we posit humans, not as Leibnizian monads, but as beings-in-relation, as essentially *social* beings. It is therefore mischievous, as Margaret Thatcher is reported to have done, to dismiss the concept of society as a fiction. Human beings cannot survive without the unmediated support of others, from intimate family on up to larger structures and strong emotional ties to individuals and groups. Nothing can be accomplished without them.

The social sphere imposes certain requirements of its own, and these may appear as constraints on willful action. Although as individuals, we are ultimately responsible for whatever we do, we are always constrained by (1) our social relations with family, friends, workmates, and neighbors, in short, by a culturally specific *ethics of mutual obligation* and (2) the wider sociopolitical settings of our lives that in various ways may inhibit human flourishing. The two are intertwined in many ways;[6] however, it would require a separate essay to even begin to disentangle them and to do justice to the powerful constraints we, and especially women, encounter in the sphere of relations I call civil. Instead, I will turn to the sociopolitical sphere, which is my primary focus.

Briefly, my argument is that we do not merely use the city to advance personal interests—some will do so more successfully than others—but to contribute as citizen-members of a political community to bringing about *those minimal conditions—political, economic, social, physical, and ecological—that are essential for human flourishing.* I refer to these conditions—and I regard them as only *minimal* conditions—as the common good of the polity, or the *good city,* because human flourishing is inconceivable without them. In this understanding, the "common good" of the city appears as something akin to *citizen rights,* that is, to the claims that local citizens can legitimately make on their political community as a basis for the flourishing of all its citizens. Making these claims, *and at the same time contributing to their realization in practice,* is one of the deep obligations of local citizenship (see chapter 4).

The Good City 3: Multipli/city as a Primary Good

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

By *multipli/city,* I mean an autonomous civil life substantially free

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

In its political aspect, then, civil society constitutes the political community of the city. But there are other aspects of a richly articulated civil life, including religious, social, cultural, and economic life, all of which can be subsumed under the concept of a self-organizing civil society.[7] Michael Waltzer calls civil society "a project of projects," foreshadowing my own characterization of multipli/city. The relevant passage is worth quoting in full.

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

Throughout history, city populations have grown primarily through migration, and migrants come from many parts. Some don't speak the dominant language of the city; others practice different religions; still others follow folkways that are alien to the city. They come to the city for its promise of a more liberated, fulfilling life, and also perhaps, for

safety, escaping from the danger of physical harm. They do not come to the city to be regimented, to be molded according to a single concept of correct living. Nor do they seek diversity as such. Rather, they want to live as undisturbed as possible by their own lights, so that diversity appears as simply a by-product of the "project of projects." But cities are not always hospitable, and mutual tolerance of difference must be safeguarded by the state so long as certain conditions are fulfilled: respect for human rights and the assumption of the rights and obligations of local citizenship. In a broadly tolerant society, one may perhaps hope for a step beyond tolerance, which is to say, for mutual acceptance and even the affirmation of difference (see chapter 3).

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

Each of these four pillars has given rise to a vast literature, both technical and philosophical, and it is not my intention here to review it. I do want to take up an important point of difference, however, that I have with the old socialist Left who have consistently argued that justice—social justice—demands "equalizing access to material well-being." The Left has always given priority to rectifying material inequalities. And though it is undoubtedly true that unrestrained capitalist accumulation leads to profound inequalities, gross differences in income and wealth

have, in fact, existed in all social formations since the beginnings of urban society. My disagreement is therefore with a vision that regards material inequalities as primary and thus the only appropriate focus of popular struggle. But all historical attempts to level inequalities, as in Maoist China, have had to employ barbaric methods to suppress what appears to me to be precisely the primary good, which is a flourishing civil life in association with others. It is certainly true that since 1980, major inequalities have resurfaced in urban China, but alongside these inequalities are also the first sproutings of a civil society (Brook and Frolic 1997). As much as I welcome the second, I have no wish to justify the first, which is accompanied by its own evils of exclusion, exploitation, and corruption (Solinger 1999). Still, the two phenomena are not independent of each other, as they point to a general relaxation of government control over social and economic life. And even though I argue here for "four pillars" to provide the material foundations of the good city, I regard them as chiefly a means to a more transcendent end, which is a vibrant civil life and the context for human flourishing. Genuine material equality, Maoist style, is neither achievable nor desirable. Whereas we will always have to live with material inequalities, what we must never tolerate is a contemptuous disregard for the qualities of social and political life, which is the sphere of freedom. A good city is a city that cares for its freedom, even as it makes adequate social provision for its weakest members.

The Good City 4: Good Governance

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

Three sets of potential actors can be identified. First are the politicians and bureaucrats who represent the institutions of the local state. It is because of them that decisions concerning city-building are made "binding." The state can be seen as standing at the apex of a pyramid whose base is defined, respectively, by corporate capital and civil society. The role of corporate capital in city-building has become more pronounced in recent years, encouraged by privatization and the growing emphasis on mega-projects, from high-rise apartment blocks, new towns, office developments, and technology parks to toll roads, bridges, harbor reclamation schemes, and airports. The role of civil society in urban governance has been a more contested issue. Beyond the rituals of "citizen participation" in planning, civil society's major role, in most cities, has taken the form of protest and resistance to precisely the mega-projects that are so dear to state and capital.[8] Civil society has also put pressure on the state for more sustainable cities, for environmental justice, and for more inclusive visions of the city.

In a utopian exercise, it is tempting to invert the order of things and, as in this case, to place local citizens at the top of the governance pyramid. This would be broadly in accord with democratic theory as well as with my earlier claim that the city exists for the sake of its citizens who are bound to one another, by mutual (if tacit) agreement, to form a political community. But I hesitate, because I am not convinced that city-regions on the scale of multiple millions can be organized like New England town meetings or the Athenian agora. Nor do I believe in the vaunted capacity of the Internet—even supposing universal access were realized—to overcome the problem of scale. Democratic governance requires something more than a "thumbs up"/"thumbs down" public intervention on any given issue, which is no more meaningful than telephone surveys at the end of a presidential debate in the United States, asking the question, "Who won?"

An alternative would be simply to scale down city-regional governance until governance becomes itself coextensive with what I have called "the city of everyday life" (see chapter 5). Thomas Jefferson had a name for it: "The republic of the wards" (for a summary, see Friedmann 1973a, 220–22). More recently, there have been calls (in the United States) for "neighborhood governments" (Kotler 1969; Morris and Hess 1975; King and Stivers 1998). And there is even a Chinese-Taiwanese version of this idea, citing the writings of Lao-Zi (Cheng and Hsia 1999), as well as a striking example from southern Brazil (Abers 2000). Evidently, there is something very attractive about this devolution of powers to the most local of local levels—the neighborhood, the street. But a city-region is more than the sum of its neighborhoods, and each level of spatial integration must be slotted into a larger whole, which is

the city-region. The question then is how to articulate this whole so as to further the idea of multipli/city and the four pillars of a good city.

I do not claim great originality for my criteria of good governance for city-regions.[9] But I would like to think that they have some cross-cultural validity, because they address what are ultimately very practical issues that must be dealt with in large cities east and west, north and south. Still, in any attempt to apply them, differences in political culture must be borne in mind. I would propose then the following six criteria for assessing the performance of a system of city-regional governance:

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

The "utopian" character of these criteria becomes immediately apparent when we invert the terms and visualize a form of governance that displays a bungling leadership without vision; deems it unnecessary to render public accounts of its actions; transacts the state's business in secrecy; directs resources to groups favored by the state without consulting with affected citizens; responds to the expression of grievances, if at all, with derision; and resolves conflicts with the arrest of opposition leaders and the brutal suppression of citizen protest.

This litany of misgovernance may no longer apply to many North American, West European, and Australasian cities. But in much of the rest of the world, and especially in Asia where urbanization is now in full swing, the dystopia of governance still prevails, and the application of criteria of good governance, especially at local levels, would be considered a novelty. In any event, good governance always hangs on slender threads, even in a democracy such as Australia. Not long ago, a State of Victoria Minister of Planning responsible for planning and development in metropolitan Melbourne suspended public consultation and declared that the ministry would no longer be required to supply information to the public on major city projects, claiming commercial confidentiality. This is the same minister who, a few years earlier, had suspended elected local councils, replacing them with city managers appointed by the state. He then proceeded to redraw council boundaries and issue administrative instructions on the privatization of local council responsibilities. In the State of Victoria, at least, good governance is still very much in the balance and so it may not be irrelevant, after all, even in a much admired democracy, to be reminded of what some criteria of good city-regional governance might be.

A Summing Up

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

In this chapter, I have set down my own utopian thinking about the good city. It is a revisiting of a problem terrain on which I worked, on and off, during the 1970s (Friedmann 1979). At the time, I was thinking through what I called a transactive model of planning to which the practice of dialogue would be central. These concerns subsequently expanded into my interest in social learning and the traditions of a radical/insurgent planning. My investigations then led me further to examine the microstructures of civil action, including the household economy, culminating in a theory of empowerment and disempowerment (Friedmann 1992). Today's communicative turn in planning (Innes 1995; Forester 1999) is a more mainstream reworking of some of these ideas.

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

I have not touched on the physical, three-dimensional city, the perennial touchstone of utopian designs: Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun,* Charles Fourier's *phalansteries,* Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities,* Le Corbusier's modernist *ville radieuse,* or Frank Lloyd Wright's *Broadacre City.* Each of these dream cities is conceived as the setting for an exemplary life. My interest, however, is in living cities each of which moves along very different historical/cultural trajectories, building and rebuilding itself according to its self-understanding of what it is and would like to become. We come to any of them as outside critics. But though we may not be part of its life, we have the right to ask, Does your city make possible and support human flourishing for all its citizens? Does it enable an autonomous civil life or multipli/city? Answers to these and related questions may reveal critical shortfalls. Here, then, would be a starting point for a genuine dialogue with local citizens and planners about the future of their city.