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## **Close-knit cities**

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**Abstract:** Aristotle rightly holds that the constitution of a city is not entirely captured by its written documents or official political structures. More fundamentally, the constitution of a city is made up of its real and deep habits, customs, relations, expectations, aspirations, and ideals of the people who live there. The aim here is to articulate five values that together constitute what I will call close-knit cities: a) ecological resiliency; b) intimate proximity; c) social heterogeneity; d) fairness; e) social trust. I give a brief account of each of these values alone, along the way showing how each value needs the others to be fully realised, and ultimately argue that at least most cities should aspire to become close-knit cities because they simultaneously realise environmental stewardship and enable human flourishing.

**Keywords:** cities; urbanism; ecological urbanism; resiliency; intimate proximity; social heterogeneity; fair consideration of interests; trust; human flourishing; environmental stewardship.

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### **1 The precarious world of cities**

For our purposes here, cities are areas of at least roughly contiguous land, on which some relatively high density of people are sustained by shared sets of social, cultural, and economic processes that largely stand or fall together (Meagher, 2008). The conventional hallmarks of cities, such as buildings and roads, are the symptoms of cities, but do not capture what cities really are or suggest what cities can be. Most fundamentally, cities of any significant size and complexity are best understood as sets of interlocking material and social processes (Harvey, 1997; Meadows, 2008). Thus, cities are akin to the interlocking sets of biological processes in bodies. In the best cases, the processes of

cities harmonise and support one another in much the same ways as a healthy body resists damage from without and does not attack itself or otherwise undermine itself.

This means that cities can and should be understood primarily within the frameworks of ecology and social evolution. Accordingly, just as animals are subject to pressures – disease, the need for sustenance, predation, etc. – cities also undergo various forces of selection and either adapt or perish through time. Mumford (1961) and Warner (2011) trace some of the evolutionary paths that human settlements can take. Cities can begin as natural sanctuaries, villages, strongholds, or all manner of temporary, transitional, and specialised settlements, such as outlying ports and colonies. As Warner has shown, the movement towards permanent urbanism, and the various forms it takes along the way, are guided by many different reasons – sometimes even conflicting reasons. Initial urban complexity compounds on itself as newly emergent features – for example, cultural diversity, social specialisation, religious status, and political power – become the bases for even more complex features – such as long-distance trade, coordinated banking systems, and political machines. Some urban centres develop even further, growing into intensive mega-cities controlling local regions (Hayden, 2003), or take up roles as organising centres of worldwide power and trade networks (Soja et al., 1983). Collectively, all of these urbanised forms, small and large, and their relations to one another, form the most important elements of the recent rise of nation states and modern international relations.

This very brief reminder about the complex genesis and evolution of cities, and the pressures that continually shape them, is important for two reasons. First, it highlights the freedom of cities. Cities cannot be wholly explained entirely by one kind of cause – for instance, by their geography, their nearby natural resources, their economic drivers, or their official ideological commitments. Such forces (and others) are undoubtedly important, but they interact in extremely complicated ways, and no single kind of force can adequately explain the formation and evolutions of cities. This means that people in cities – at least those who hold real power – have always had at least some freedom in choosing the values by which their cities are organised, built, reorganised, transplanted, and abandoned. These values determine the resources cities tap into and the related processes a city designs for itself to do so. Some cities draw their existence from the exploitation of nearby material resources while others grow from agriculture. Others may keep their footholds in the world through political power, or cultural elitism, or trade, or human exploitation, or empire, or tourism, and so on. Not surprisingly, the deep constitutions of cities vary dramatically depending on which values have dominated their evolution. It may well be that “form should follow function”, or at least that form is often constrained or guided by function, but with cities there are many different constitutions that can realise the same function. Even more profoundly, though, cities often have a significant say in choosing what their own functions are (Meadows, 2008). Thus, even within some real constraints, cities have largely chosen what values they live and die by.

Second, situating cities within an understanding of ecological and social evolution underlines the fact that any attempts to ignore the responsibility of choosing the values of our cities will not hold the forces bearing down on them at bay. As we have said, cities can be seen as kinds of emergent life forms that are continuously undergoing various existential threats and developing various strategies in response. Some of these strategies work out. Some do not. One problem, though, with any life form that evolves through brute luck is that dead ends are far more likely than successes. Moreover, in the big picture it is not yet even clear that cities are a stable, winning strategy. Remember that

since the emergence of *Homo sapiens* approximately 500,000 years ago, only a very few of us even attempted settlements beginning about 10,000 years ago with the dawn of permanent agriculture. We have only lived in cities of any noticeable size for about the last 6,000 years. As recently as about 200 years ago there were only a handful of cities that had ever passed one million inhabitants. As a point of comparison, social insects such as termites have lived in colonies of millions for the last 145,000,000 to 200,000,000 years (Wilson, 1987). Furthermore, cities in the last 200 years have come to depend upon very different kinds of energy sources. Human and animal power, fire, water, and wind have been heavily augmented with, or entirely replaced by, fossil fuels and nuclear energy. Modern cities are indeed something brand new under the sun, and their continued existence is no more guaranteed than it is for any other form of life. If we build and rebuild them blindly the odds of continued success are even worse.

In summary, it is imperative that we acknowledge and exercise the freedoms we now have to choose the values that guide and constitute our cities. We need to appreciate the fact that such freedom is not guaranteed forever. Even if cities are not fully explained by single factors like geography, nearby natural resources, economic motivations, ideological commitments, or political structures, and so on, it remains the case that such factors can, and often do, come to impose such harsh constraints that cities lose the freedom to determine their own fates. History is filled with examples of urban-based civilisations – the Romans, the Mayans, the Chacoans – that reached a point where they were unable to reconstitute themselves on the same values that had guided them into existence, and values that had guided them through many previous threats (Tainter, 1988; Diamond, 2005; Lekson, 2005). We must think very hard about which values ought to frame our aspirations and guide our decisions about cities.

## 2 Urban visions

We already possess many descriptive accounts of what values *have* historically guided cities, and many accounts of what normative values *ought* to guide cities. So before I describe the values that constitute close-knit cities I want to be explicit about the kind of proposal being put forward here and how it squares with past and present visions.

In the western experience, we have influential philosophical accounts of our cities that are typically both descriptive and normative. Prominent examples include Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*, St. Augustine's *City of God*, St. Thomas More's *Utopia*, and Thomas Hobbes' *De Cive* and *Leviathan*. Modern comprehensive urban visions include Ebenezer Howard's pastoral garden cities, Le Corbusier's collections of brutal modernist towers, and the near complete rejection of urbanism all together, for instance in Frank Lloyd Wright's sketch of a *broadacre*. We also have available for consideration the near countless demonstrations of various visions of cities actually constructed in the prehistoric, historic, and living experiments of places like Babylonia, Ancient Mexico City, Beijing, Alexandria, Rome, London, Paris, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Levittown, and Brasilia. This century has also seen rapid progress in several fields of science useful to understanding cities and their potential, especially archaeology, anthropology, geography, political science, economics, sociology, and ecology.

In recent years there have been explicit declarations of what cities ought to be like. Such visions have most often come from social critics, architects, city planners, participants in city governance, and professional and political associations. These of

course often draw on many of the authors and fields already listed above. Just a small sample of modern vision includes the modernist *Athens Charter* from the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (1933), Jane Jacob's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), Allen Jacobs and Appleyard's "Towards an Urban Design Manifesto" (1980), Whyte's many books and films, perhaps especially *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980), and the *Charter of the New Urbanism* (1993). In a similar spirit, many municipalities have attempted to formulate principles to guide their own urban evolution in the form of regional plans, which are meant to function as broader guides to cities than collections of their accumulated ordinances.

All of these sources of insight and inspiration are for the good, and when I describe the values of close-knit cities below, I do not mean to suggest that we should forget these visions. Some of the five values of close-knit cities described here have been emphasised before. More importantly, the proposal here about close-knit cities is not meant to foreclose understandings now emerging. However, I want to begin to formulate some comprehensive aspirational values that are both philosophically coherent and also useful in practical decision-making for cities of nearly all types and sizes. In parallel fashion to Aristotle's claim that we study virtue so that we may actually become good, I want to understand the guiding values of choice-worthy cities so that we can better bring them about.

One last preface, looking for philosophically robust urban values does not commit us to trying to discover values without the wisdom of history, or trying to discover 'simple' values that anyone can fully appreciate without significant practical experience, or values that have no exceptions, or values that have no competitors worth taking seriously. Just as Aristotle pursues ethics as the question of what is worthwhile in most cases for all that we know now, but does not presume more precision than can be had with complex normative issues, the project here is to identify and organise values that together distil a range of experiences and lessons from past and present human settlements, and which appear to be the best values available to us now.

### 3 The five values of close-knit cities

Sections 4–7 will describe each of the values of close-knit cities in more detail, but to begin they are:

- a ecological resilience
- b intimate proximity
- c social heterogeneity
- d fair consideration and treatment of interests
- e social trust.

Descriptively, cities succeed in being close-knit to the extent that they come closer to fully realising and sustaining these values. People aspire to the values of close-knit cities to the extent that they demonstrate tangible commitment in action towards more fully realising these values – perhaps especially as opposed to working towards other values, or towards values at odds with them. The main claims here are, first, that cities are good largely to the extent that their deep constitutions embody and publicly express close-knit

values, and second, that people have good reasons to aspire to make their own cities more close-knit.

The suggestive metaphor of being ‘close-knit’ is intended to have two primary senses. First, as will become clear, the values of close-knit cities describe settlements where humans live together closely, but not in ways that are arbitrary, or physically congested, or socially or politically oppressive. Close-knit cities are intentionally built and carefully tended by those in them. Such cities will be made up of citizen strangers to be sure, but there will be very few people who are mere denizens. They are places in which people look out for one another, though they do not encourage, as Jane Jacobs puts it, ‘unwelcome entanglements’. They are living fabrics that are capable of constant re-weavings and comprehensible subtractions and additions. Thus, ‘close-knit’ cities are orderly and flexible in terms of how people and their institutions are related.

Underlying these relations and second, ‘close-knit’ cities are underwritten by aspirational values that are themselves deeply interconnected. One kind of failure urban visions may exhibit is excessive monism or reductionism where ‘the’ good of cities is boiled down to one value – for example, say, economic growth, or freedom of movement, or physical security, or religious commitment. The opposite failure is to draw up wish lists that are unconnected, indefinitely long, and frequently internally inconsistent in theory and practice. The aims of modern cities often include, for example, economic growth *and* strong property rights *and* sustainability *and* social justice *and* livability *and*.... However, a city cannot champion unfettered individual property rights and at the same time solve collective action problems such as sprawl. Trade-offs must often be made, and indefinitely long wish lists – while they might remind us of what we want if we could have everything – are not helpful guides when we cannot have everything, which is exactly the Earthly condition we are in. The problems raised by incompatible goals is especially acute in cities where practical trade-offs in the context of scarcity – of land, of common funds, of human capital, of political will – are required constantly, and where the effects of these trade-offs are felt quickly, deeply, and by many. I hope to show here that the five values of close-knit cities are not at odds with one another in principle, and more strongly, that the values must be undertaken together in concert. The flexible integrity of close-knit cities depends upon the careful combination of its five values in much the same way that the integrity of a piece of cloth depends upon how individual threads are brought together.

#### 4 Ecological resilience

Terms like ‘urban resilience’ have several possible meanings (Pickett et al., 2013). Here *ecological resilience* requires that we compose and revise our cities so that they are not unduly vulnerable to surrounding ecological constraints and changes, whether natural or manmade. As a minimum, ecological resilience is a defensive value. For example, Wheeler (2011) has described several of the ways that cities must change in light of climate change projections. Many cities will need to be modified and repurposed for our own anthropological concerns regardless of whether we do anything further to avert climate change in itself and its effects on the rest of the Earth. For example, certain urban areas will need to be selectively abandoned as they become untenable.

Ecological resilience should not be confused with common notions of efficiency that currently dominate public discourse – especially those most commonly used and

exploited in commercial advertising and political rhetoric. Many have noted that, compared with rural areas, many human activities can be carried out more efficiently in cities, and in fact this discovery may explain recent movements towards urban settlements (Davis, 1965). Such comparative urban efficiencies plausibly hold with respect to travel, trade, food distribution, government, information processing, financing, employment, and the use of diverse human capital (Porter, 1995).

However, as archaeologist Joseph Tainter (1988) has shown through case studies of various civilisations, increases in efficiency with respect to all technologies, organisational schemes, and energy sources eventually run into diminishing marginal utilities. The intensification of trade, for example, at first produces far greater surplus than what is had with less trade, but the positive correlation between greater trade and greater surplus does not continue forever. The costs of trade also tend to increase with intensification, and at some point the costs of increasing trade begin to outstrip any new surpluses. The same pattern holds for any number of goods that cities commonly manage: agriculture, education, political coordination, security, and so on. Tainter argues that all human societies, including urban-based societies, become imperilled when they insist on following every opportunity well past the point of positive marginal gains. That is, civilisations sometimes invest in their own complexity well past the point where doing so is actually a benefit. A related issue is that increased complexity still typically requires increases in energy input, and Catton (1982) warns against imagining a future of endless technological advances and discoveries of new energy sources. He argues that the recently accelerating historical process of moving from one energy source to the next – from human power, to animal power, to water, to wind, to oil, to nuclear, and so on – is most likely an anomalous blip, even within the short time that humans have spent on Earth. Cities should not bet too heavily on the assumption that the future will be like the past with respect to an endless string of new discoveries of energy and technology.

The second aspect of ecological resilience, then, is to reject the presumption that there will be further substantial gains from technological innovations and other efficiencies. Quite frankly, a city of deep resilience prepares for the *loss* of present technologies and *loss* of current energy supplies. In this way the ecological resiliency argued for here is more ambitious than the kind of sustainability often championed, for example by the United Nation's World Commission on the Environment and Development. On that conception, 'sustainable development' is development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (1987, p.8). In contrast, a commitment to deep ecological urban resilience supposes that we should plan for a future in which people will need to meet their needs quite differently than with the now dominant western techniques. We need to think far bigger than whether we can continue doing what we are doing now for an indefinite future on the dubious assumption that conditions will stay essentially the same.

A crucial step towards ecological resilience would be to make our cities less energy demanding in their daily functions. On this score the main factors under our control are the buildings that we use and the daily travel that their geographical arrangement requires. Many newly built modern buildings demand enormous amounts of energy to simply be habitable at all. When the power goes out, so does the ability to use them and be in them. For instance, most modern skyscrapers cannot distribute natural light all the way into a building with a footprint of several acres. Here we need to look to principles of 'passive' architecture – architecture that needs minimal active fuels (like coal) or energy transfer networks (like electricity) to remain livable and functioning. Examples of

passive construction, which often incorporate principles from traditional, local dwellings, include Palo Solari's *Arcosanti* (near Phoenix, begun 1970) and Rich Michal's *Passive Solar House* (Tucson, completed 2004). Ambitious versions can be seen in the *BedZed* development (near London, completed 2002), and *Dockside Green* (Victoria, completed 2011). Such experiments, like their historic or even prehistoric inspirations, have their own serious drawbacks, and we should be careful not to overestimate what they can accomplish. Like all technologies they have real limits. Nevertheless, cities that are in a position to radically reduce their energy needs without great struggle are much more ecologically resilient than ones that cannot.

Many cities built since the invention of the car have also been designed in such ways that they require massive daily inputs of technology and energy. Most daily traffic in the USA is essentially from suburb-to-suburb, and almost entirely by combustion engine automobiles. Given this arrangement, a lack of access to oil-built and oil-powered roadways means – for far too many people – being forced to endure a lack of access to a livelihood and the basic needs of survival. Thus, the urban mobility required by a deeper ecological resilience is an existential issue, an economic issue, and an issue of human well-being in the broadest sense.

It should be clear that the term 'ecological resilience' as used here should not be confused with the sort of efficiency that is most widely assumed and discussed in general public discourse – namely, the requirements of energy per some unit of work done, or per some unit of good produced. It is true that the most technologically committed societies today are more efficient in this narrow sense. Modern cities can produce one widget or service using less energy than a non-city producing the same widget or service. However, it appears that western cultures and their emulators are mostly eating up these efficiency gains with simply more consumption. If we consider ecologically-based measurements like the *global hectare*, which is a measure of our biological resource consumption and imposition, we find that cities like San Francisco are quite good in their efficiency measured in terms of their *per unit efficiency* – the energy and material used to produce and enjoy some amount of some consumable – for goods like water, food, or heat (Global Footprint Network, 2011). However, an average San Franciscan footprint, even given the efficiencies of world-class public transportation, is still higher than the national US average, and where the US average is itself one that would require about four Earths if everyone on the planet lived in a similar way.

Bringing all of this together, ecological resilience means aspiring to build, rebuild, and abandon cities so that they are less vulnerable to surrounding ecological forces, whether natural or manmade. At a minimum, it means being careful not to suppose that safety lies in hopes for endless technological innovations and discoveries of new sources of energy, or simple notions of increased per-unit efficiency. It means that we should guide our cities to be wise and prudent with respect to their ecological limits and settings.

A city is resilient to the extent that it can be pressed and stretched while retaining the capacity to restore itself within its material and ecological constraints (Platt et al., 1994). Such distorting forces may well include economic hardship, war, tension or competition with other cities or political entities, natural disasters, crime, demographic changes, immigration and emigration, and so on (Ungar, 2011). The sort of resilience that matters is well summarised by Meadows. The resilience of any system, including cities,

“arises from a rich structure of feedback loops that can work in different ways to restore a system even after a large perturbation. A single balancing loop brings a system stock back to its desired state. Resilience is provided by several

such loops, operating through different mechanisms, at different time scales, and with redundancy—one kicking in if another one fails. A set of feedback loops that can restore or rebuild feedback loops is resilient at a still higher level—meta-resilience if you will. Even higher meta-meta-resilience comes from feedback loops that can learn, create, design, and evolve ever more complex restorative structures.” (2008, p.76)

With respect to cities, the primary stocks that matter are their material resources and the people in them, and the primary feedback loops that matter involves political, cultural, and economic decision-making. Just as Meadows suggests, cities need redundant and self-organising decision-making practices that adaptively learn and re-learn, create and re-create, design and re-design. Fundamentally, this concerns people, and this naturally leads us to consider next the four other values that draw together, organise, and thereby constitute close-knit cities.

## 5 Intimate proximity and social heterogeneity

There are good reasons to think that, at least in human societies, *ecological resilience* cannot be fully achieved or sustained without simultaneously realising the other four values of close-knit cities. We now turn to *intimate proximity*, which concerns both the density of cities and also the kinds of social interaction that occur in close quarters, and to *social heterogeneity*, which concerns the diversity of people and experiences that a city can promote.

Living close to one another contributes to urban ecological resilience so long as human density avoids damaging the natural systems that replenish cities. However, we have long known that density alone is often personally undesirable and socially unstable. Davis (1965) points out that early industrial cities required on-going immigration from the countryside because they would otherwise decline in population. That is, early industrial cities killed more people than they produced themselves. Engels (2009) gives an account of the inhumane and even deadly conditions of such close-quarter living in the industrial towns of England in the mid-19th century. Serious urban problems continue to reappear whenever density is not carefully addressed, for example in places like Cabrini–Green in Chicago (constructed 1942–1962, demolished 1995–2011), and modern expanses of squatters and slums in places like Mumbai. Moreover, even when conditions in cities are not dreadful or lethal, the anonymous compaction of city life can still be regrettable. For example, Wirth thought that the densities of urbanism implied the “relative absence of intimate personal acquaintanceship” and the “segmentalization of human relations which are largely anonymous, superficial, and transitory” (1938, p.1). Thus, cities should not aspire to mere population density alone, even if density can contribute to ecological resilience.

What makes density appealing is living within an attractive social, psychological, and physical intimacy. For most people, enjoyable intimacy with others does require regular physical proximity. Sidewalks that are even moderately useable are more enjoyably intimate than the fastest highways. This is probably true even if we imagine sidewalks filled with mostly indifferent strangers and highways filled with our closest friends. Many authors have explained why proximity to others matters and how we can do it well. In their own ways, Jacobs (1961), Gehl (1971), and Whyte (1980) always return to the fundamentals: public spaces are desirable when they are interesting and feel safe. Good



public spaces also share subtle relationships with private spaces. Whyte has observed that mere inches can matter here. When semi-private parks are separated from public paths by even a couple of stairs they are significantly less used. Comfortable cities are like comfortable houses. In both there is a natural and easily negotiated mixture of public, semi-public, and private spaces that are all safe and inviting in their own ways.

Nearly everyone who has carefully observed public spaces notice that what interests people the most are other people (Whyte, 1980), though personal technologies may be undermining this as people find more ways to be in public without being attentive or available to those around them (Hampton et al., 2010). More specifically, we have a special interest in people different from ourselves. Many scholars and social observers have developed themes regarding the productive contestation of diverse uses of city spaces (LeFebvre, 1996; Hall, 1998). As just one recent example, Hou (2010) has worked on understanding the social dynamics of creating attractive night markets. He has found that public spaces of interaction are the most enjoyable when they bring together people with socially significant ideas and cultural identities. Watered-down multiculturalism is not enough. Public spaces, even seemingly commercial places like markets, are enjoyably intimate when they encourage people to genuinely express themselves to others – to see and be seen as they really are.

Here the importance of *social heterogeneity* – the third value of close-knit cities – begins to emerge. People tend to be best off in cities – and likely quite generally – when they engage as a matter of daily routine with other people that are unlike themselves in meaningful ways. History broadly suggests that one of the unique and powerful features of cities is their capacity to generate new forms of social and political life as diverse populations come together and are forced to negotiate with one another (Hall, 1998). Cultural confluences do not, of course, always turn out well. But when they do, the cities that emerge are arguably healthier than cities that have not gone through them.

This also suggests a link between social heterogeneity and ecological resilience, and this is because having multiple perspectives on urban planning is likely to create more robust systems. For example, it has been found that parks are better planned when they involve the surrounding communities with their diverse perspectives. The reason seems to be that even the best trained and best intentioned professional designers are likely to miss opportunities to make parks that address the widely different needs of the community, and instead tend to build parks around only a few activities. Having more eyes on a project means that more interests are seen and taken seriously. It is likely that the same holds true of all city planning, for instance with respect to infrastructure and public education.

Taking the first three values so far together, ecological resilience often requires that we live close together, but for density to be something more than an arrangement we must merely endure, and for it to be something that does not itself undermine the attractiveness and stability of cities, cities must cherish and carefully cultivate intimate proximity and social heterogeneity.

## **6 Fairness and social trust**

Not much has been said so far about how cities, in real-world terms, can best realise the values of ecological resilience, intimate proximity, and social heterogeneity. Here the last

two values come into play: *fair consideration and treatment of interests* – ‘fairness’ for short – and *social trust*.

Cities feel the best when they feel like we belong to them, and this is often grounded in the feeling that they belong to us. This feeling is different from the way that it feels to own our living rooms. In fact, the privatisation of urban spaces is one of the worst trends of recent modern cities. Too many cities, especially those in the USA, have forgotten the importance of genuine civic spaces for social inclusion and fair governance (Mitchell, 1995). Often the only ‘public’ spaces left are anonymous and dangerous roadways and parking lots. The shallowness of such ‘public’ space is indicated visually by the simultaneous invasion of vivid commercialism and the vacuous ‘civic’ art displayed there. Moreover, serious doubts have been raised about whether electronic versions of civic spaces – for example social networks the internet makes possible – can fully recapture all of the political power of mass demonstrations in symbolic spaces, such as historic squares (Tufekci, 2014).

What belonging means, first, is that when our interests are at stake in the city, they play significant roles in determining the social and political processes, architecture, and general layout of the settlements we live in. An obvious example of this is the movement towards universal design (Carr et al., 2013). Even if it is largely professional architects and city planners that determine the shape of spaces like sidewalks, streets, and buildings, a concern for designing these spaces for *all* who might use them is essentially a respect for all those people who have a real and legitimate interest in them. Design that treats the interests of its citizens with fairness, then, does not have to mean that any time someone has a stake in the city they must be the one to decide. Given the rise of mega-cities such a proposal would be unworkable in many cases. However, fair planning does, at minimum, mean that legitimate interests are not arbitrarily ignored or overrun by simplistic concepts of ownership or overrun by the power of wealth and influence (Bentham, 2007; Hare, 1963; Rawls, 1971; Ornfield, 1997).

Second, a feeling of belonging means that we reasonably believe that our legitimate concerns will continue to hold sway into the indefinite future, even if respecting those concerns may mean that others may have to forgo some of what they want, but do not need, and vice versa. That is, there must be a firm basis for *social trust* – the final, but not least, aspiration of close-knit cities. The issue of trust is especially poignant and pressing in cities since most fellow urban citizens are strangers to one another in two senses. In the first sense, others are strangers insofar as one does not hold a personal relationship to most of them. In the second sense, other people in cities may be strangers insofar as they may hold conflicting ideas about what is good and worthwhile, including what interests of others deserve respect and consideration. Thus, the diversity and large population sizes of cities have often undermined the stability of social trust in cities. How can social trust in cities get off the ground? How can it be sustained?

The era of top-down, expert, master planning is still with us, and this is for the good when done well. Calthorpe and Fulton (2001) argue persuasively that the aims of sustainability – ‘ecological resiliency’ for us here – require broad-scale, regional coordination. Architect Douglas Farr (2007, 2009) has added to this argument, showing that even the most energy efficient buildings, if isolated from the rest of a city, often accomplish little in the way of worthwhile ecological sustainability, and have too often destroyed intimate proximity. A new ‘green’ elementary school built on the edge of town requires new roadways and more car travel, and so simultaneously undermines resiliency and meaningful social interactions. Moreover, Ornfield (1997) has argued at length that

there are certain kinds of structural problems – for example, inter-city disparities in the tax bases for schools due to differences in affluence – that can only be addressed by regional coordination. It should also be remembered that, at least in the USA, municipal authority is often constrained by state authority, for example in determining environmental statutes and setting minimum wages. Thus, thoughtful and inclusive regional planning and political coordination is indispensable for all of the values of close-knit cities described so far.

That said, within broad, citywide or regional outlines, cities work best when local initiative and input flourishes. There has been work recently on concepts like participatory democracy in cities, and that is for the good (Burgess et al., 1997; Young, 2000; Miller and Roo, 2004). For our purposes here, though, the ‘ladder model’ of citizen participation developed by Arnstein (1969) is the most straightforward and useful. The ladder model assesses citizen participation by determining the extent to which a city’s people genuinely guide its decisions. At the lowest levels of ‘manipulation’ and ‘therapy’ citizens are essentially governed without representation, often to their own detriment. The moderate levels of ‘informing’, ‘consultation’, and ‘placation’, are versions of tokenism, where some consideration is given, if somewhat begrudgingly. At the highest levels of genuine participation – ‘partnership’, ‘delegated power’, and ‘citizen control’ – citizens effectively make decisions by and for themselves. It is reasonable to suppose that citizens are most likely to have trust in their cities and enjoy a feeling of belonging to the extent that they are able to exercise tangible control over it. In practice, in most cases this really means ready access to high quality information and holding genuine budgetary power.

## **7 Human well-being and environmental stewardship**

It is hopefully obvious that close-knit cities embody and nurture attractive ideals of human flourishing and environmental stewardship. I believe many people will see what is good in them for people, and what is good in them with respect to how we relate to the ecological systems in which cities are embedded. Admittedly, the values of close-knit cities, as described here, are not the only values that might guide choice-worthy cities. But from what has been said here there is good reason for us to aspire to such cities in at least most parts of the world, in most circumstances, and that there is sufficient reason to prefer them most of the time.

It is also hopefully clear that these five broader values, which incorporate both ecological and anthropocentric concerns, are not simply mashed together, or merely put together on an unconnected wish list. Rather, the five values of close-knit cities are a mutually supporting set of aspirational values that can be used to evaluate where cities are, and to help plan where they can and should go. As suggested at various points here, realising one value well also requires simultaneously realising the other values well. Social heterogeneity supports ecological resiliency by lending more perspectives that encourage a more comprehensive picture of what matters. Trust supports intimate proximity, and a desirable intimate proximity supports trust. And so on.

It is also hopefully clear that all five values can each be enjoyed both by individuals and by ‘the city’. At least as far back as the ancient Greeks, there have been difficult questions about the relationship between the flourishing of individuals, and the flourishing of the city taken as a whole. Some have posited that the good of the city is greater and more fundamental. Others have said the opposite. The most interesting

proposals, though, try to show that there is reciprocity of some kind, where the goods of individuals and cities may not be exactly the same, but where they are inseparable from one another. The proposal here suggests that the five values of close-knit cities have complimentary personal and collective aspects. For example, living in an ecologically resilient city is something that should provide some sense of psychological comfort to individuals. At the same time, ecological resilience is a property realised by cities taken as a whole. In this way, ecological resilience is a value that is both a collective urban good and also a good for its individual citizens. Likewise, the other values of close-knit cities – intimate proximity, social heterogeneity, fairness, and trust – harmonise the goods of the city with the goods of its members without simply making one kind of good subordinate to the other kind.

## 8 Summary

Modern cities are something new under the sun. But it is an open question whether they will continue to exist. Whether our various urban experiments will survive does not ultimately rest on our expanding technical prowess or on endless discoveries of new sources of energy. Technology and energy are means, not ends. If cities are going to survive with all of the benefits that they have given so far, then they need to be guided by ends found in carefully chosen values. Five such values have been proposed here:

- a ecological resilience
- b intimate proximity
- c social heterogeneity
- d fair consideration and treatment of interests
- e social trust.

Cities that realise these values are ‘close-knit’ in two main, complimentary senses. First, in close-knit cities *people* intentionally weave themselves together into deeply interconnected and flexible patterns of living. Second, the five underlying aspirational *values* of close-knit cities are themselves interwoven with one another in the sense that their fullest realisation requires mutual support between one another.

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