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Review

Enthralling Prefigurative Urban and Regional Planning Forward

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Abstract: Improving, strengthening, and fine tuning, as well as developing, revitalizing, conserving, and preserving, are all words commonly used in an urban and regional planner's vocabulary. More nebulous are the concepts of it, thyself, which are the other in planning thinking and professional interventions. Who, what, how, when, and where will it be carried out? If conscious and aware of one's actions, oneself ought to be able to answer these questions without deference to its outcomes. However, it is commonly recognized that we are unable, and at times unwilling, to understand others' reaction to a proposal, even when put forward according to established common norms and traditions and socio-economic, environmental, cultural, and legal orders. The purpose of this paper is to review various planning challenges derived from earlier lived and or researched experiences that have already occurred, others taking place here and now, as well as others in need of further conceptualization and study. The review methods build not only upon the now classical sustainability framework, but also upon the more recent and alternative Soft City approach centered on place, movement, and sociability. It is believed that the planning topics and methods analyzed in this review can help reach carbon neutrality goals, promote climate urbanism, accomplish higher utilization of renewable energy, and reduce automobility levels, all goals conducive to graceful bliss and authentic happiness.

Keywords: planning challenges; desirable futures; common good; community design; professional praxis; scholarly potential

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1. Introduction

At the beginning of the third decade of the twenty-first century, multidimensional modeling has become a pervasive measure in rapid prototyping with the possibility of almost instantly accomplishing 3D modeling, 3D visualization, and 3D printing. Three-dimensional thinking variously stated (e.g., trinity, triad, and troika) has been fundamental to the development of scientific progress [1]. In religious terms, the holy trinity encapsulates ways of thinking and acting in the world [2]. In administrative terms, the three powers of the state known as the executive, the legislative, and the judicial are fundamental to the stability and co-existence of sovereign nations. In sustainability terms, the balance of the economy, environment, and community is utilized to identify fundamental conflicts and to propose corrective developmental measures [3]. Directly associated with the sustainable development conceptualization, the formulation of analytical frameworks, tools, and instruments, such as the triple-bottom line, is increasingly being used as the yardstick to control for the eventual domination of a single dimension [4]. In governance terms, the triple-helix conceptualization serves to articulate the need for government, industry, and community to coordinate joint programs and initiatives [5].

Nonetheless, innumerous dualities are frequently invoked to justify specific public policy decisions. Said dualities are usually presented as binary opposites or the two extremes of a continuous mensuration: white and black, inside and out, cold and hot, here and there, and loud and low. Scientifically, it is possible to clearly separate binary opposites (e.g., yin and yang) from discrete continuous ranges, such as various tones of color, being on the demarcation line or spot without either being inside or outside, a range

of temperatures from cold to hot and vice versa, and various noise levels depending on the source, the propagation of the sound wave, and the intensity of the electric impulse generated. Given these two different philosophical interpretations, it is legitimate to place or conceptualize the other as either the opposite of the characteristic one deems closer to scrutiny or somewhere in between, without any connection to the two extremes and likely opposite dimensions, or as the entity or action capable of bridging one or multiple pairs [6]. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to discuss various planning challenges derived from earlier lived and or researched experiences that have already occurred [7], others taking place here and now [8–11], as well as others in need of further conceptualization and study [12], but which, to a certain extent, are dependent on specific alignments or circumstances.

Contemporary urban and regional planning can be easily traced back to the industrial revolution and the reformist movement to help improve public health and quality of life, mostly in urban environments. However, planning as a set of articulated ideas, notions, and interventions was already utilized in ancient times. Greek cities had their agoras, and Roman cities had their forums. Specific functions could be found in very precise core locations, such as the colosseum for entertainment and the tribunals for judicial disputes. City states were formed based on military rules of conquest and domination, which replicated abroad the administrative functions and urbanization patterns tested previously, implemented, and improved at home [13]. The other was either a location outside of certain perimeters or individuals distinct from those already known and well conceptualized as possessing a set of specific characteristics, abiding by certain governance practices, and embracing a set of wills and ambitions.

Urban and regional planning, variously described and conceptualized, has been associated with the physical development of agglomerations and territories [14]. The locations of the built environment, its internal and external rules, and their connections to other aspects of the economy, the relationships to natural resources, power structures, and those with responsibilities over the administration of common affairs have always contributed towards planning activities' highly disputed nature. Politically, ideologically, and philosophically, a certain intervention is likely to be found in a tenuous or forceful interaction among various spatial, social, economic, and cultural variables, which constitute reality itself.

There is a relative consensus on the need for urban and regional planning, here understood as the management of public affairs [15], but there tends to exist a level of disagreement on how to implement it. Political ideologies are likely to "mud the waters" and, in certain cases, even prioritize competitive market forces over the distribution and equitable access to various means and vice versa. Perhaps the easiest way to conceptualize urban and regional Planning is along a continuum in which distinct situations require different levels of intervention, and at the two extremes of the continuum, we can idealize a situation with low market forces, where the most appropriate planning approach is to foster desirable corrective interventions. At the other end of the continuum, we find a situation with strong market forces, where the goal is not to intervene directly but to uphold standards and negotiate community gains to the benefit of the collective [16].

The theme of the Shanghai Expo'2010 in China was "Better City, Better Life" (see Figure 1a) [17]. Five basic challenges for cities at the beginning of the second decade of the third millennium were identified as being: "(i) Rebalancing our urban economies; (ii) Building new homes; (iii) Linking people and places; (iv) Living with finite resources; and (v) Fixing the broken machinery of planning" [18] (pp. 4–5). In 2015, and without having yet read Hall's book titled *Good Cities, Better Lives* [18], I conducted a comparative study of Phoenix, Porto, Venice, and Hong Kong (see Figure 1b) to determine how the built environment of these four cities had been impacted not only by each city's context, natural events, and man-made processes, but also by their cultural and professional praxes. I concluded that each city's set of ultimate goals appeared relatively similar, but that their

evolution, community design, identity, and professional praxes have had considerable local, regional, and national nuances [19] (p. 98).

(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 1. (**a**) Shanghai Expo'2010 (image courtesy of author, 2010); (**b**) Cities analyzed comparatively in [19].

Based on research conducted in the last decade, I argue that on a broader scale, Hall's five challenges can be tackled with a variety of planning strategies and on multiple scales [18]. Therefore, part one of this paper focuses on the need to resolve transportation planning, walkability and urban revitalization, and sustainable consumption. Part two discusses the need to pay attention to the role of university campuses, indoor and underground places, and urban livelihoods, especially of the most disenfranchised individuals in the global south. Finally, and given the rising Anthropocene's climate change phenomena, part three is centered on the urban livability and well-being of coastal cities, the preservation of the natural and built heritage at the waterfront interface, such as saltscapes, and on how food contributes to high levels of societal happiness.

2. Methods and Material

The last five decades have seen Western cities change and evolve according to socio-political, market, environmental, and technological forces. Those transformations and their legacies can be analyzed and evaluated through these three distinct approaches: (i) chronologically in a linear fashion and according to the extent that plans, programs, and policies have had cascading effects on our societal behavior; (ii) thematically through the distillations of ingredients of success and reasons for systemic failures in the planning of territories; and (iii) prospectively through the use of research agendas aimed at charting more desirable futures.

For instance, these five books emblematic of distinct planning and urban design trends help us understand some of the major professional advances and shortcomings of the last five decades: 1970s—*The New Downtowns* [20]; 1980s—*History and Precedent in Environmental Design* [21]; 1990s—*Urban Conservation* [22]; 2000s—*Designing Cities* [23]; and 2010s—*Soft City* [24]. One of the common characteristics of these five books is that they all contain theoretical postulates, planning and urban design principles, and lists of specific site, neighborhood, and city building projects typical of specific city building theories and often prize-winning practices.

Regarding the distillation of ingredients of success and reasons for systemic failures in the planning of cities, Garvin's *American City: What works and what doesn't* is helpful at illustrating ingredients of success, such as market, location, design, financing, entrepreneurship, and time [25]. In the mid-2000s, two issues of *Progress in Planning* focused on emerging research agendas in planning with analyses of such territorial issues as hot, congested, crowded, diverse, shaken, shrinking, impoverished, and informal [26,27]. More

recently, emphasis has also been devoted to European urban agendas in processes of policy making [28]. Figure 2 shows the review's precedents, major transitions in the last five decades, and the knowledge gaps in need of further research.

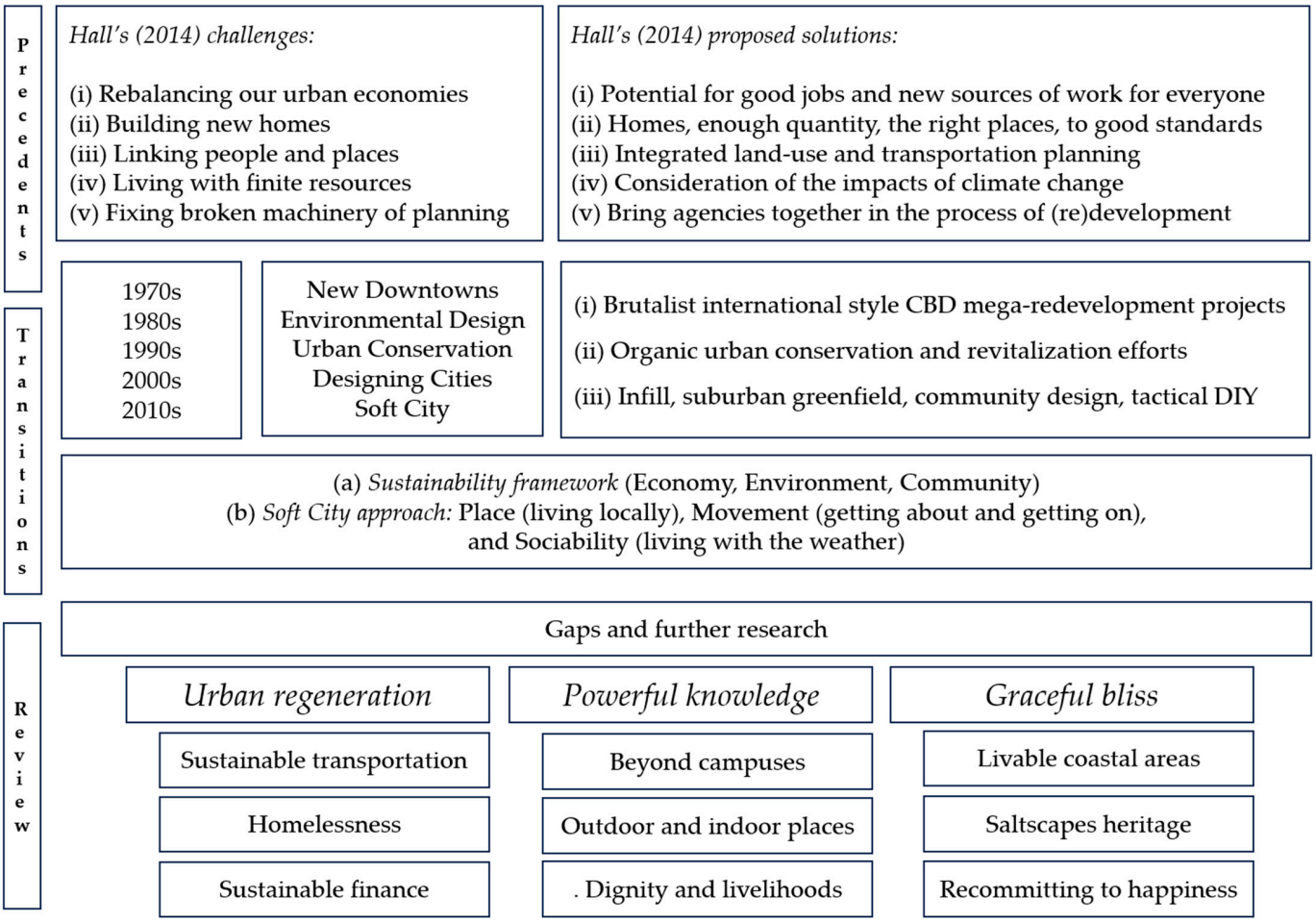

Figure 2. Synthesis of the review's precedents, transitions, knowledge gaps, and structure of main research themes and sub-themes.

This paper's methodology and methods build upon these three distinct approaches and attempts to identify and characterize, even if succinctly, unresolved gaps in an alternative, albeit personal, agenda for the future of urban and regional Planning [29]. Although it does not aim to be an exhaustive review or an all-encompassing agenda, the planning topics are all derived from the author's recent teaching and ongoing research activities. The significance of the paper is that most of the topics reviewed in the subsequent three parts appear nicely connected to broader bodies of work and the research agendas mentioned above. In the face of recent concerns about the future of the academic monograph in the Western world [30], this review not only analyzes an even percentage of research articles indexed in scientific databases, but also strives to scrutinize book-length works and chapters.

Similar to the global dimension of the five books mentioned above, this paper provides research directions for locales in both the global north (e.g., US Southwest, Portugal, Finland) and the global south (e.g., Latin America and India), as well as considerations on the policy transfer and the importation of planning techniques promoted by major international aid organizations and for hire planning consultants highly sought after by governments and business interests mostly in developing countries [31–33]. The review methods employed and the three thematic parts of this paper build upon the now classical

sustainability framework of Economy, Environment, and Community [34], as well as the more recent, and somewhat alternative, Soft City approach centered on place (i.e., living locally), movement (i.e., getting about and getting on), and sociability (i.e., living with the weather) [24] (p. 5).

From an assessment perspective, this analysis is influenced by the transition from the brutalist international-style central business district (CBD) mega-redevelopment projects in the United States to more organic urban conservation and revitalization efforts in European historic districts, infill and suburban greenfield projects, community design, tactical and "do it yourself" (DIY) interventions in existing neighborhoods in Nordic countries—with or without the support of high technology, smart city philosophies, and ICTs.

This transition appears to be contributing to the need for (i) urban regeneration via land retrofit schemes, more sustainable transportation options, and responsible and humane investments; (ii) powerful knowledge aimed at empowering and liberating action beyond college campuses and dignifying livelihood-enhancing interventions; and (iii) the promotion of urban livability and well-being of coastal cities, the preservation of the natural and built heritage at the land–water interface, and higher levels of societal fulfillment and happiness. The planning issues identified in this review, as well as their resolution through the methods proposed in several of the paper's sections can help reach carbon neutrality goals, promote climate urbanism, accomplish higher utilization of renewable energy, and reduce automobility levels, all goals conducive to graceful bliss and authentic happiness.

3. First Part—Urban Regeneration

3.1. Sustainable Transportation Planning

Transportation is critical to the proper functioning of the economy [35]. Most cities in the global north have an extremely high dependence on automobiles for everyday transportation. Most city and state administrations coordinate actions with non-profit organizations to reduce said dependence by incentivizing the use of alternative modes of transportation, such as mass transit, light rail, walking, bicycling, and micro-mobility [36]. Walking and bicycling, in particular, have received increasing attention in recent years in connection with the need to stimulate healthier lifestyles and to reduce the threat of chronic diseases resulting from sedentary lifestyles in cities. At the core of this planning approach lies the fundamental dilemma in which better endowed communities and agglomerations can provide more infrastructure and support programs to improve transportation and accessibility conditions than those with fewer means [37]. The planning dilemma is that many of the induced societal outcomes often lead to less sustainable perhaps contradictory results, which tend to increase automobile dependence instead of reducing car usage, vehicle miles travelled, gasoline consumption, air and noise pollution, and accidents. Despite this contradiction, redesigned public places have the potential to provide demonstrative effects useful elsewhere.

Guarantying better mobility conditions in communities with fewer means is a social responsibility and an opportunity to strengthen living conditions and sustainable livelihoods. By learning from walkability improvements in successful public spaces, it is possible to devise appropriate public policies for implementation in other contexts [38]. Central to this planning approach is a combination of hard and soft responses to improving transportation infrastructure and the built environment and to influence the transportation habits of the general population. Examples of earlier research and policy programs by multiple stakeholders on how best practices can be understood and implemented within a framework of social justice, policy innovations, urban and metropolitan governance, and sustainable transportation planning [3,39–44].

The existence of safe, attractive, and comfortable walking environments is critical to the livability of midtowns in global cities [45–47]. This is a significant departure from the traditional transportation approach that catered mostly to the needs of drivers. The study of the extent, significance, and public policy implications of walking improvements in the

core public spaces of global midtowns in different regions of the world is likely to be of interest to all those concerned with the creation and promotion of livable, safe, attractive, and comfortable areas in cities and suburbs [48–50].

Additional attention is needed on the design of public spaces and on how those spaces can relate to and are influenced by the adjacent built environments, including buildings (i.e., residential, mixed use, commercial, and services), transport hubs (i.e., train, streetcar stations, bus stops, skyways, and underground passageways), transport infrastructure (i.e., bridges, tunnels, viaducts, and escalators), economic activities (i.e., retail, services, industrial, and residential), and regulatory governance systems (i.e., metropolitan, city, and neighborhood levels, and partnership arrangements) in order to incentivize sustainable consumption levels [51].

It is also well known that commerce involves exchanges and lots of consumption. Urban regeneration has been used by decision makers to improve the urban livability of city centers [52]. It is, however, less known that many urban regeneration and redevelopment programs in cities of the global north did not take into consideration the relationship between physical improvements to public spaces, urban gentrification, increased levels of consumption, generation of solid waste, and associated environmental climate change pressures away from where the improvements and consumption took place [53,54].

Important in this discussion is the extent to which urban regeneration interventions have increased the pressures on other more peripheral and fragile, but equally important, areas of cities, such as suburbs and peri-urban areas of the metropolises. It is worth restating that a healthy city does not produce more than it can sustainably consume. A healthy and livable city is a community free of all types of sickness (e.g., physical, mental, economic, moral, environmental, etc.), which knows where it comes from, where and how it is doing via regular and participated assessments, and which attempts to anticipate, plan, and design its tomorrow [55]. A healthy and well cared for city enables a multitude of livelihoods to flourish despite technological changes, distinct lifestyles, and societal advancements and downfalls [56,57]. In the case of ecosystem services, a healthy city requires social innovation, entrepreneurship, and the cultural celebration of common traits without canceling out different societal beliefs [58,59].

In the urban regeneration context, desirable sustainability progresses can be approached from the following three angles: (i) reductions in car dependence, the easing of vehicular congestion, better mobility, safety and comfort for pedestrians and impaired individuals [60]; (ii) better integration of various modes of transportation (e.g., walking, bicycling, rail, subway, and transit); and (iii) via attempts at incentivizing sustainable levels of consumption (e.g., zero-waste city paradigm) [61]. The ultimate goals of sustainable transportation are as follows: (i) the understanding of how market economics can produce safer transportation infrastructure (i.e., road redesigns, bicycle trails and lanes, and other infrastructure) in disenfranchised communities and elsewhere; (ii) the extent to which social programs can be aimed at de-marketing automobiles and instead popularizing walking and the general use of more sustainable modes for daily transportation among adults and children; and (iii) the creation of safer and more comfortable walking and bicycling transport conditions to increase the quality of life of existing and future urban citizens [62].

3.2. Homelessness

Homelessness issues in the large Sunbelt cities of the United States (and for that matter, large cities of the global north) appear unresolvable. San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Miami have some of the highest percentages of homeless populations in the United States [63]. Other cities in California, Arizona, and Texas, such as San Diego, Tucson, and Dallas, respectively, also have high percentages of homeless and urban poverty. To what extent does rapid urbanization and relatively mild weather for most of the year lead to the continuous presence of these large homeless populations, despite recent and continuous advances in ameliorating social issues?

Continuum of care activities, human services campuses, shelters and affordable housing initiatives, non-profit advocacy, regular volunteering by individuals and organized groups in the form of town–gown activities and faith-based services, various social welfare programs, municipal homeless courts, anti-discrimination laws, and partnerships between Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and municipal police departments are some of the various homelessness mitigation measures being implemented in cities throughout the United States in recent years [64–66].

Most city centers and coastal areas undergo urban transformations according to real estate cycles of growth and decline, but not everybody benefits to the same extent [67–69]. My own analysis of the homelessness dynamics in Phoenix demonstrated that to end homelessness, urban poverty ought to be an integral part of the process of revitalizing urban areas. A specific example implemented to assist the efforts of the Native American community-based organization *Tonatierra* consisted of helping to establish a social entrepreneurship center in downtown Phoenix. The said center aims to support local–global and holistic Indigenous community development initiatives and the area's rich Indigenous cultural heritage. All-encompassing attempts at eradicating homelessness in large Sunbelt cities are still urgently needed [54].

Besides their obvious geographic, climatic, density, and size similarities, many of the Sunbelt cities have been impacted by the 2008–2010 global financial crisis. Nonetheless, cities like Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Dallas have managed to implement urban regeneration schemes (e.g., public space improvements, urban redevelopments), transportation (e.g., new light rail and streetcar lines), and social services programs (e.g., human services campuses, municipal homeless courts), all aimed at resolving their partial downtown decline, urban poverty, and homelessness problems.

On the one hand, San Diego and Tucson are usually perceived and even promoted in the media as very livable southwestern cities, relatively distant, physically and ideologically, from their much sprawlier counterparts to the north, namely Los Angeles and Phoenix [40,54], respectively. On the other hand, although most of the population appears to benefit from the land development and expansive urbanization processes in the two latter metropolises, the tide has not yet lifted all boats equally, given that homeless individuals, recently arrived immigrants, carless, and Native Americans tend to suffer disproportionately from the least positive consequences of these land-intensive urbanization trends. An informed analysis of the recent evolution of the homelessness paradox in the U.S. Sunbelt cities and the identification of solutions for the resolution of this social malaise ought to bring forth positive new programmatic and policy interventions, re-energized philanthropic initiatives, and recommitted volunteering social actions [70,71].

3.3. Sustainable Finance

Also in the United States, most non-profit organizations are legally exempted from paying property taxes. However, because in certain municipalities a substantial percentage of land is occupied by non-profit anchor institutions [72], the host jurisdictions are deprived of potentially sizable amounts of public revenue that could otherwise be utilized to pay for public services [73]. Those services typically range from paying for road maintenance, fire, police, public schools, parks, and open spaces, to affordable housing and solid waste management, etc.

To offset this financial constraint, various states have created a place management mechanism called PILOTs, also known as *Payments in Lieu of Taxes*, to enable anchor institutions, such as universities and hospitals, to still make financial contributions to their host cities [74,75]. However, legal questions seem to remain regarding the extent to which those PILOTs can be enforced to create an even "paying" field in relation to the amounts paid by other property owners in the municipalities where the tax-exempt anchor institutions are located. At first glance, this is a legal problem like the free rider conundrum of public goods that Business Improvement Districts have been created to resolve [76].

There is little research on the effectiveness of PILOTs as placemaking instruments, especially in deprived neighborhoods. How can PILOTs be made more effective to help city administrations find the proper amount of support to offset some of their anchor institutions' tax-exempt status? Are there any other alternative non-legally coercive place management instruments available to minimize (or even to eradicate) this apparent free rider dilemma? Quantitative and qualitative analyses of legal, financial, and administrative controversies ought to enable the identification of implications for jurisdictions attempting to craft regulatory and advisory procedures aimed at implementing some of these innovative placemaking mechanisms [77].

4. Second Part—Powerful Knowledge

4.1. Empowering and Liberating Knowledge beyond College Campuses

What has been the effectiveness, limitations, and progress to date of national, state and city public health interventions deployed in the context of sustainable non-motorized transportation (NMT) plans, programs, and policies on college campuses throughout the United States and abroad? College campuses are by their very own nature transitory places. Powerful knowledge is transmitted and put into action on campus grounds [78]. However, it is important to also go beyond the relatively safe spaces of college campus and utilize powerful knowledge to help empower and liberate oppressive realities elsewhere in cities and suburbs, as well as throughout the countryside [79,80].

College campus governance and service learning for traffic safety and public health are understudied areas; therefore, it is important to shed additional light on the accountability and transparency of college campus governance procedures and their articulations with the various activities of governmental and community agencies, associations, and service providers. The relevance of increased transparency and oversight can be reflected in the involvement of interested stakeholders' conceptualization and the framing of traffic fatalities and injuries and their eradication by creating a culture of traffic safety and public health tenacity [69].

The town–gown system of college campus and host community comprises three distinct arenas: the university, the host city, and the specific communities bordering the college campus. The former two arenas have relatively formal and institutionalized governance mechanism with semi-democratic bodies (i.e., student government, college councils, the university senate, board of trustees on college campuses, and mayor and city council or ward systems in municipalities) and specialty departments (various scientific and art and humanities departments organized into various colleges, and specialty area departments in cities and towns, such as streets, planning, housing, parks and open space, neighborhoods, health and well-being).

Communities bordering college campuses are at the interface between, in certain cases, residential and commercial areas and usually the well-defined college campus precincts [81–83]. Students and, in certain cases, faculty tend to live near college campuses. On the one hand, host communities tend to benefit from this proximity by renting homes and rooms to the various university constituents and by catering to their many needs, such as restaurants, coffee shops, laundromats, bookstores, grocery stores, bars, and other entertainment venues. On the other hand, universities enable community members to have privileged access to their various on-campus facilities and functions, such as libraries, performance arts centers, stadiums, practice fields, and gymnasiums, among others. Although these various stakeholders have their own governance systems [1], they are usually distinct and autonomous and have little coordination among themselves [84]. These may be a direct result of distinct goals and clienteles, as well as a history of incomprehension among neighbors with, for instance, the university looking to expand into adjacent neighborhoods, with the potential displacement of residential and commercial functions, as well as noise, vandalism, violence, crime, and binge drinking [85].

How can these governance systems align their functions to better promote seamless integration and cohesive territorial development strategies to the benefit of everyone? As

mentioned above, it is believed that college campuses are privileged places to communicate a whole range of social, environmental, and cultural philosophies and practices, including greater awareness of social diversity and inclusion; environmental and sustainable development goals; sustainable transportation innovations, such as traffic calming, walking, bicycling and effective mass transit systems; and social responsibilities in the corporate world [86]. Moreover, we believe that once comprehended and experienced firsthand, such learned philosophies and behaviors will remain with students forever, which in the long run can serve to create more solid, socially cohesive, and environmentally responsible households and families in communities across the United States and the world [3,87].

The transitory nature of college student populations [88] and the mostly monetary goals of property and business owners, who mostly cater to these populations, have contributed to creating minimally cared for buffer places in cities; these zones of transition are sometimes referred to as "student ghettos" and have a high concentration of fraternities and sororities, as well as relatively few long-term families. These zones contrast with the campus precinct and with the more established surrounding residential neighborhoods. These issues are sometimes addressed punctually by community service projects in the surrounding areas where teams of students, faculty, and staff work together to clean-up the neighborhood and provide leadership skills to communities in need, while allowing students to gain real-world knowledge and experience.

We believe that campuses can establish productive collaborations with surrounding communities by building networks of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, installing traffic calming devices, incentivizing lower reliance on individual automobiles, integrating on-campus facilities with off-campus networks, while lowering and hopefully eradicating fatalities and injuries involving vulnerable street users and vehicular traffic [89], while simultaneously also reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. These improvements can represent substantial public health, quality of life, and climate change accomplishments, with impacts being felt both immediately as well as later in the lives of those who experienced those urban and transportation planning and sustainability innovations.

For instance, campuses in New York City have benefited greatly from investments in NMT planning in Manhattan and the four boroughs [38,90]. College campuses in Portland have also invested greatly in NMT technologies over the last two decades. In addition, Portland is well recognized for its pro-environmental and sustainability-oriented cultures. Cambridge, Massachusetts was one of the earliest US cities to fully embrace and pivot many NMT improvements at the municipal level. The city's Ivy League universities may have contributed in part to the positive environmental advocacy needed to test out some of those transportation innovations.

Nonetheless, vulnerable street users in the US are disproportionally injured and fatally killed in traffic crashes than motorists [91]. This constitutes a major unresolved public health crisis costing the country millions of dollars in lost lives, seriously injured and, in many cases, forever disabled individuals with loss of limbs and other basic autonomous mobility functions [92]. If the overall trend has been a decline in the total number of crashes, the main problem appears to be the fact that the US has experienced an increase in the number of highway and roadways crashes in the mid- and late-2010s. Moreover, the US still has crash levels higher than those of many high-income countries in the developed world [93,94], namely some Nordic and other European countries. According to the OECD, contrarily to Spain and Portugal for instance, which experienced safety gains well above 70 percent in the period 2001–2015, the United States experienced only very slim gains of approximately 10 percent [95].

This public health problem can be, at least, partially resolved with additional research on governance mechanisms, better collected and analyzed crash data via police reports and hospital visits, and geocoded and mapped bicycle- and pedestrian-motorized vehicle crashes, near hits, and near misses, and the implementation of specific countermeasures aimed at correcting eventual design flaws for the hotspot locations with the highest concentrations of crashes [96,97]. The relevance of this ought to be reflected in

the involvement of interested stakeholders' conceptualization and the framing of traffic fatalities and injuries and their eradication by creating a culture of traffic safety. More effective programmatic and policy alignments can be achieved by reviewing and revising on-campus governance mechanisms to foster productive town–gown collaborations with organizations and the various constituents in campus host cities [98]. Service learning and public engagement opportunities are sure to facilitate dialectic relationships across the campus–community interface [99].

4.2. Outdoor and Indoor Places

Land scarcity in cities tends to condition land use, the cost of land, property ownership, the types of urban spaces, and human relationships among individuals. Land prerogatives are responsible for a city's growth marked by either suburbanization or vertical development [100–102]. Above ground development is extensively more common than underground development. However, what we learned in the global north is that as cities become denser with skyscrapers, they also tend to increase their underground spaces. Constructing the foundations of buildings is an opportunity to bury certain facilities, and most importantly, connect new public spaces to the existing underground network where it already exists [103]. What are the main differences between above ground and underground shopping streets? Can a network of underground shopping spaces help increase the urban livability of already highly dense commercial cores? Can higher levels of accessibility, connectivity, and comfort be accomplished in outdoor as well as indoor places?

It is certain that climatic conditions also influence the construction and operation of open-air pedestrian shopping streets. However, there is a paucity of published research on underground shopping streets [104] compared to a flurry of recent literature on walkability, partial street closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, "do it yourself" (DIY) interventions, parklets, guerrilla planting, pop-up spaces, etc. [105]. It is assumed that highly dense cities tend to benefit greatly from the presence of outdoor privately owned public spaces (POPs) and underground path networks [106]. Exposure to a high number of potential consumers, climate control, high levels of cleanliness, human scale, proximity, and immediacy of access to transit hubs and retail stores and services are likely to enable safe, comfortable, and convenient semi-public, semi-private spaces in cities.

Underground shopping malls perform a complementary function to their open-air counterparts, and their privileged location in the immediacy of train and subway stations gives them high accessibility and centrality levels not easily found at other major shopping areas [107]. Going forward, one can distinguish two perspectives of analysis: (i) the users' perspective characterized by five extents, namely convenience, comfort, cleanliness, connectivity, and safety (i.e., the CCCCS approach); and (ii) management's perspective centered on four dimensions, namely urban redevelopment and regeneration, centrality in terms of accessibility and multimodality, business tenants, and governance orientations terms of connectivity bylaws, public service, and maintenance levels (i.e., the UrrCTG approach). Powerful knowledge (and governance action) is required to implement outdoor and indoor planning solutions in a myriad of city types and urban settings, ranging from extensive urbanization to densely built environments, respectively.

4.3. Dignity and Livelihood-Enhancing Approaches

Informal street trading is a common practice in many cities of the global south [108]. Many of the downtowns' public spaces (i.e., streets and squares) of large cities in the global south tend to be utilized not only for generalized human fruition, but also to sell and buy a whole array of goods. Those central locations tend to not only guarantee many passersby, but they also attract informal retailers willing to sell goods at more affordable prices than those practiced in formal retail establishments. Until recently, many cities of the global south had high concentrations of informal retailers [109].

Typically, these street vendors make their living by purchasing, hauling, storing, and selling goods, often without the incumbrances faced by their merchant counterparts with establishments located in the adjacent built environment. However, in recent years, these individuals' livelihoods have been harmed by cities' growing tendencies to regulate most, if not all, retail activities independently of where they take place [110]. Urban revitalization interventions have also contributed to the forced relocation of many of these individuals from the public space onto less central shopping alleys, malls, and gallerias. In a number of cases, these relocations have served to create city spaces for a different clientele, often the international neoliberal tourism crowd with the means to patronize—and pay the higher prices imposed by—formal establishments [111]. Although there is published literature on the effects of the forced relocation of informal businesses from the streets, one is hard pressed to find public scholarship (also known as powerful knowledge) on how well the informal retailers' livelihoods change once they start trading elsewhere. In certain cases, they have abandoned the new shopping spaces where they were forced to trade from and returned (often camouflaged) to the same or to other public locations, and in other situations, they lost their livelihoods altogether [112].

Are there suitable alternatives to the forced relocations that can symbiotically benefit both informal merchants' livelihoods and municipalities' needs for imposing order in public spaces, guaranteeing the collection of sales taxes and enforcing the cleanliness associated with trading in public spaces? Ethnographic and policy evaluation research methods [113], such as study visits to distinct cities over a certain period of time; photographic documentation and visual surveys of trading activities in public spaces; interviews with policy makers, scholars, residents, and merchant stakeholders; and reviews of urbanistic and strategic plans and of the specialized literature are all likely to provide up-to-date knowledge of the livelihoods of informal retailers in central locations and help conceive more consensual and authentic destinies for the downtown of cities in the global south [109].

5. Third Part—Graceful Bliss

5.1. Livable Coastal Areas

Seaside tourism and leisure-oriented developments have shaped the evolution, growth, and current territorial development paths of resort cities across the North Atlantic Ocean [114–116]. A preliminary study of the parallels, differences, challenges, and opportunities faced by coastal cities in central and southern Europe (e.g., Brighton, Biarritz, La Coruna, and Figueira da Foz) and in the northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions of the United States (e.g., Provincetown, Coney Island, Atlantic City, and Virginia Beach) uncovered some of the various transformations those resort-oriented cities are facing (e.g., [54,117–120]. Major coastal cities are usually located on the deltas of important rivers or strategically located on the coastline. Tourism activities in seaside cities and towns in the North Atlantic have evolved with a mostly seasonal character (i.e., summer and weekend activity peaks) [121].

In the early days, only wealthy populations would be able to spend summer vacations at seaside resorts [122]. The democratization of mass tourism occurred in central and southern European countries at various epochs during the twentieth century. Such a tourism-induced phenomenon led to mini-construction booms of second homes and summer vacation homes purchased by national and foreign vacationers at those touristic spots with a highly impactful presence on the waterfronts of cities and suburbs [123]. The emergence of "black markets" with private property owners renting rooms and apartments during the busy holiday season has developed in multiple places over the years [124]. The peak demands on infrastructure (e.g., water and sewer systems), traffic, and parking add up to the more permanent destruction of sensitive ecosystems due to land reclamation and artificialization of fragile natural ecosystems and nearby estuary and harbor areas. The over-urbanization of the littoral and ensuing beach erosion processes have required the making and implementation of coastal management plans and strategies. Climate change

and sea level rise phenomena constitute major threats to the urban livability and well-being of those residing year-round in littoral cities and towns.

Tourism alternatives, together with the improvement of port lands in the immediacies of working harbors and their endowment with functional, pleasant, and ample public spaces for locals and visitors arriving by land (i.e., automobile, bus, and train), air (i.e., plane, helicopter), and sea (i.e., cruise ships and yachts), are being proposed in multiple locations. Cultural tourism, environmental education opportunities related to saltscapes, salt-making practices, biodiversity, and radical sports have become extremely popular in many cities located on ocean front river estuaries. Other summer resort towns hold regular festivals (e.g., carnival and LGBT(Q) parades, art festivals, and summer sports). Even others have privileged culinary tourism centered on fish and shellfish, given their seaside locations and the relative abundance of those delicacies, often combined with regional wines and desserts [125–127]. Local and regional arts and crafts also benefit greatly from growing tourism markets. Various cities have taken advantage of new technologies used to augment knowledge about touristic destinations and entertainment opportunities (e.g., electronic kiosks, enhanced visualization and observation technology, and smart city offerings [128]. Furthermore, sea and marine economy R&D activities in collaboration with research institutes and universities are stimulating more even year-round utilization of coastal cities' assets and amenities.

Novel concepts in waterfront planning and marine spatial planning, such as the land–water interface, ecosystems services, and blue urbanism, provide opportunities for additional research to reduce the negative consequences of over-tourism in sensitive areas and enhance community well-being. Examples of novel methods to advance the study of livable coastal areas comprise the following: (i) analysis of digital positional endeavors (i.e., websites, twitter, and other social media; user-led rating and evaluation systems) [129]; (ii) the study of effective participation in supralocal arrangements (e.g., how new initiatives have been thought out, developed, and implemented); (iii) the application of a new activities index of effort–reward (i.e., effort spent in planning (people, visibility enhancement, and marketing) versus real reward (i.e., visitors, volume of sales, revenues, and investments); (iv) assessments of a new built environment index of rehab–construction (e.g., rehabilitation of built heritage versus construction of new structures and equipment); and (v) inventories of decision-making processes, (in)effective public policies, and governance mechanisms in need of revamping. International and regional interdisciplinary comparisons (i.e., across the Atlantic Ocean, central and southern European coast, and the northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions) involving a multitude of disciplines and professional practices ranging from tourism; urban and regional planning; destination management; sustainable urbanism; urban livability and well-being; techno-rational management; architecture; public administration and policy; and political science are surely to deliver comprehensive and timely research findings [12].

The originality of this analysis results from the comparative study of cities across the North Atlantic in the "Old World" and "New World", while the innovative aspect of the research is an outcome of the common analytical mechanism CPRABGOV (i.e., comparisons, positionings, regional influences, activities, built environments, and governance). In synthesis, this section has presented four contributions to existing knowledge: (i) it called attention to small- and medium-sized mature cities across the North Atlantic Ocean (and their exquisite niche market orientations and or lack of economies of scale); (ii) it emphasized the long tendencies and the relevance of critical sectors for littoral environment (i.e., seasonal tourism, arts and culture, well-being, and creative activities); and (iii) it uncovered the short-range prospects and compromises of littoral cities and how these cities are dealing with exogenous factors (e.g., rise of other destinations, changing lifestyles and preferences, growing competition) and endemic factors (i.e., climate change and sea level rise, conciliation between production and consumption, and the need for sustainable revenue financing). Further research on livable coastal areas ought to also shed light on

how these locations have been able to withstand the complexities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic health crisis and are currently planning for a post-pandemic future.

5.2. Saltscapes Heritage

Solar salinas are special places. Quite often, their origins date back to immemorial times. After reaching their zenith in the late XIX century due to the establishment of profitable sea salt domestic and international mercantile routes, salt extraction started to decline in the mid-1900s when electric refrigeration replaced salt in the conservation of food [130]. The evolution of various saltscapes in southern Europe, as well as India, Taiwan, and South Korea, has been relatively similar, with only a slight time lag between the global north and global south locations.

Major estuaries' and tidal flats' saltscapes comprise three main dimensions: (i) technology; (ii) ecosystem services and cultural heritage; and (iii) the rehabilitation and potential transitions to new complementary uses. Land abandonment and degradation of solar salinas have been mostly caused by socio-economic preferences, which have had direct spatial, ecological, and cultural consequences on the land–water interface. As recognized above, a healthy city enables livelihoods to flourish despite changes in technology, lifestyles, and societal advancements. In the case of cultural ecosystem services, a healthy city ought to also recognize and value social innovations, entrepreneurship, and cultural rehabilitation [131,132].

The comprehensive study of solar salinas ought to be able to fully answer these three research questions: (i) which elements of the original technology of salt making by solar evaporation are still known and worth preserving?; (ii) what are the main dimensions of the ecosystem services approach? And how can they be utilized to inventory, analyze, plan, and implement the successful entrepreneurial rehabilitation of solar salinas?; and (iii) besides eco-museums, eco-tourism, and environmental education, which other activities can be used to facilitate a transition to more sustainable and entrepreneurial livelihoods and uses?

The rehabilitation of saltscapes requires not only adequate patrimonial recognition, but also maintenance and conservation of indigenous ancient knowledge through a combination of traditional and new uses. This argument is put forward based on preliminary analysis of saltscapes in the Portuguese Mondego River estuary and its delta city of Figueira da Foz, the Guadiana River centered on the city of Castro Marim [133,134]; the Khazan Ecosystems of Goa in India [135,136]; the Jingzaijiao region in Taiwan [137]; and the Shinan-gun region in South Korea [138]. Published research, mostly about southern European saltscapes [134,139,140], has contextualized the evolution of Portuguese solar salinas in the Mediterranean region and, based mostly on the cases of Figueira da Foz, Castro Marim, and Aveiro, has argued that saltscapes' socio-economic, cultural, and ecological value requires additional attention on multiple fronts, including the regulatory, business, and cooperative fronts. More recently, it has also been documented how saltscapes in Figueira da Foz and Aveiro have benefited from institutional support from municipal and educational entities to promote the rehabilitation of their respective solar salinas [141]. Said rehabilitation appears to be happening mostly through eco-tourism programs, the construction and operation of eco-museums, and the development of environmental education opportunities for students and scholars in high schools and institutions of higher education [142,143].

The state-of-the-art on saltscapes is encapsulated in three fundamental notions: (i) ancient technology is in danger of disappearing due to modern industrializing practices and urbanization pressures, if adequate attention is not properly dedicated to ensuring its maintenance and future dissemination [144]; (ii) ecosystem services and cultural heritage approaches represent important strategies to reverse the advanced state of degradation of many of these fragile ecosystems and their associated livelihoods [145,146]; and (iii) it is believed that improvements to existing ecosystems and transitions to complementary uses ought to be based on participatory, democratic, sustainable, and solidary interventions. Also, active socio-economic and cultural conservation ought to remain self-sufficient and

can potentially be centered on resilient capacity building by those who have been impacted the most by industrialization innovations [44,147].

The application of a sustainable development framework centered on three of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Agenda 2030) to the rehabilitation of pilot saltscapes in four different countries (i.e., Portugal, India, Taiwan, and South Korea) differs substantially from earlier attempts that contemplated mostly individual sectorial strategies to the study of salt making and their locations in estuaries of rivers [148]. In this context, the physical rehabilitation of the salinas complexes, training and workforce development, their cooperative mercantile practices, the agrobusiness opportunities of derivative products, eco-museums, eco-tourism, environmental education, and climate change mitigation and adaptation demonstrate a stronger integrative component to the preservation of natural and built environments on the water–land interface (e.g., [149,150]).

In compliance with the UN SDGs of the 2030 Sustainability Agenda, this part of the paper draws mostly upon goals 8, 9, and 15. SDG8 places emphasis on a sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economy with fair and just work for all, especially for those who have been negatively impacted by processes of societal mechanization and tertiarization ("humanware"). SDG9 is about the building of resilient infrastructure, while emphasizing inclusive and sustainable ancient technological development capable of coping with change and innovation ("hardware"). And SDG15 aims to enhance terrestrial ecosystems by halting and reversing land degradation and biodiversity loss ("software") [151].

Furthermore, the deployment of three UN Sustainable Development Goals in a developed country (Portugal), two recently graduated developed economies (classified as developing countries until the mid-1990s, namely South Korea and Taiwan), and a developing country (India), as opposed to only exporting "semi-efficient", but in certain cases "livelihood-destroying" industrial-based technologies to less developed countries, constitutes a novel approach seldomly attempted before [152]. Finally, it is argued that these three-pronged assumptions are critical to generalizing from the case studies reviewed in this section of the paper: (i) The location, area, and number of individual salinas in an estuary impact the probability of successful rehabilitation; (ii) high levels of land degradation and high abandonment levels of individual salinas and of their associated storage endowments in close proximity are correlated to their rehabilitation potential; and (iii) private ownership and past operation of individual solar salinas tend to influence the level of new transitory alternative uses already implemented or currently anticipated and designed for the immediate future.

5.3. Recommitting to Happiness

Finland has been ranked twice in a row as the happiest country on earth [153]. To what extent do food, food safety, and food sustainability play a role in contributing to this top classification? To attempt to answer this question, we can operationalize food into three domains: growing, catching, and consuming [130,154]. By the same token, happiness can be articulated into these three pairwise binaries: individual–collective, rural–urban, and spontaneous–enhanced [155]. The main assumption here is that the market, informed by deep socio-economic and cultural roots, is responsible for the sustainability and resilience of the food system [156]. Preliminary research has comprised literature reviews; informal surveys of growers, hunters and fishers, and consumers in Finland; a brief ethnographic study of food production and consumption in urban and rural settings; a policy analysis of the most important normative diplomas on food safety; and the writing and dissemination of research findings [157,158].

There is a perceived cognitive assertion that residents of southern European countries tend to be livelier than their Nordic counterparts. Hypotheses of explanation for the latter include gloomier weather, higher percentage of protestant faith believers, a jagged character, higher consumption levels of beer/vodka versus wine/brandy in southern European countries, and a higher consumption of fish (marinated) versus fresh (dry and salted) and mollusks [159,160]. It is believed that life-cycle, food chain, and urban metabolic

theories are central to understanding the path and circulation of food from production through consumption and disposal.

Happiness science has gained increased recognition in the last decade or so [161,162]. Happiness involves cognitive feelings of well-being and quality of life [43]. Although there is research on both happiness and food system sustainability, there is an opportunity to strengthen research on the relationship between these two domains. A basic assumption to keep in mind is the fact that food tends to be produced, grown, and commercialized mostly through private supply chains. However, cooperative movements also have an important role in helping producers reach economies of scale and achieve a more favorable position in the marketplace. But the public sector plays an important role in regulating certain aspects of the food system, including setting standards and regulating fish catches and hygiene requirements for the display, sale, and preparation of food in supermarkets and restaurants [163]. Governmental agencies are also responsible for delimiting non-hunting reserve areas, as well as for restocking certain waterbodies with fish on a regular basis.

To conclude this section on food and happiness, it is important to also recognize that innovation in food production has evolved over many centuries [164]. Farmers have consciously selected, grown, and planted the most productive, tasteful, and fruitful seeds to accomplish the most resistant and productive goods. Biotechnology and food science have taken this natural selection to higher levels of productivity. However, the increasing utilization of pesticides, herbicides and other weed-controlling products have altered the natural characteristics of food products. A more in-depth study should examine the following food-related research topics: public markets; family businesses versus large store formats; food consumption for everyday purposes versus delicatessens; food security and food deserts; nutritious foods versus snacks and sugary foods; the relationship between the hinterland and food consumption in cities; the role of restaurants and cafeterias in schools, hospitals, jails, and large employment businesses; and culinary tourism opportunities [165].

6. Conclusions

Life is (too) real. Without the proper distancing or knowing the full extent of the truth, some appear to have it easier than others. 'Appear' because despite all the empathy and artificial intelligence in the world [166], one is physically unable to walk in someone else's genes. Urban and regional planning is but one attempt at creating more efficient, effective, just and fair world for our common existence on planet earth. A main premise of this paper is that an exhortation to imagine a place of co-existence [167] where songs, realizable utopias, and imaginaries alleviate one's burden in doing their jobs is extremely valuable [168]. Music has been utilized throughout history to raise awareness of complex socio-economic, cultural, environmental, gender, and racial phenomena [169–171]. Why has music, social tradition, and different art forms been so important in maintaining peace and advancing progress? Because the alternative is likely to be chaos and deadlock. In two of the most famous George Santayana's admonitions, we are forewarned that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" and "fanaticism consists in redoubling your effort when you have forgotten your aim" [172].

This paper started with the identification of some of urban and regional planning's most common aims. Hall proposed these five solutions to some of the most crucial challenges facing cities in the twenty-first century: (i) potential for good jobs and new sources of work for everyone; (ii) homes in enough quantity, to meet demand, in the right places, and to good standards; (iii) integrated land-use and transportation planning; (iv) the utter consideration of the impacts of climate change; and (v) the need to bring public and private agencies together in the process of (re)development [18] (pp. 4–5). In my own early writings, I have hypothesized that the city is, like Aesop's elephant metaphor, much more complex than professional practice can grasp (see also [173]). Therefore, the ultimate question of "what else can add meaning, direction and value to city building processes?" has been answered with four tentative recommendations: (i) specializations; (ii) collaborative practices; (iii) short and long-term perspectives into the past and stabil-

ity toward the future; and (iv) the creation of new technologies in the form of theories, practices, and processes [19] (pp. 108–109), [174].

At the national level, it is wise to remember that the first U.S. President, George Washington (1732–1799), led the then newly formed nation from 1787 to 1797 under the spirit of the "Oath of the Athenian City-State", mirrored in the enlightened exhortation that "We will ever strive for the ideals and sacred things of the city both alone and with many; we will unceasingly seek to quicken the sense of public duty. We will revere and obey the city's laws. We will transmit this city not only not less, but greater, better, and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us" (see Figure 3 and [175]).

Figure 3. George Washington's statue at Syracuse University (image courtesy of author, 2016).

Fast forward to post-Brexit UK, a "rising failure of consensus seeking politics in governing dissents, but also the rising authoritarian responses to fix it" [176] (p. 347) was lucidly recognized and "[c]urrent crises of climate breakdown, growing inequalities, democratic deficits, and declining public services have created an absence of hope for the future and a creeping pessimism about the ability of planning to be a force for good and to imagine places that do not yet exist" [177]. The latter author goes on to make the case for "prefigurative planning", which in her own words is "not about how to 'build that city on the hill', but how not to give up the pursuit of 'better' cities by combining criticality with planning imagination" [177].

The research subjects put forward in this three-part paper pertain to real but under-researched problems in need of very concrete utopias marked by livelihood-enhancing technologies, instead of the overfunded military production armament aimed at fueling ongoing wars, the perfect hallmark of "techno-managerial solutions" of the "ecological mod-

ernisation paradigm that has been proven not to work" [178] (p. 89) and for "[a]utomating inequality", which use high-tech tools to profile, police, and punish the poor [179], but not to resolve our incessant automobile addiction, the social tragedy of homelessness in the global north [180], and the deployment of "livelihood destroying" measures from the global north to the global south, in complete opposition to most United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). I subscribe to the school that recognizes value in liberating and empowering knowledge in order "to achieve radical change", not more technological oppression or determinism [181,182].

It is also appropriate to recognize that as long as there are people making weapons for a living, we will have wars. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to invest in education for peaceful purposes [85] and without the need for weapons. The strong and deadly earthquakes in Turkey and Syria in early February 2023 have shown us that nature alone is uncontrollable. However, images of war-torn cities reveal the irresponsible and selfish actions of nature-born individuals, who in the twenty-first century have likely learned nothing of the devastating consequences of armed conflicts in previous decades [168]. In the author's opinion, the ultimate goal of urban and regional planning (aka: territorial management and urbanism) is "to ensure the improvement of the most fragile individuals in society, those who have suffered disproportionately from the relentless advance of uncontrollable market forces;" that we have all helped to build, not only the rich [168]. Urban planners and professionals in the fields of community well-being and urban and regional livability ought to strive incessantly for the integrity of all living beings and things in the natural and built environments. Poverty, social unrest, human suffering, and hopelessness are unacceptable under ceasefire conditions [183]. The destruction of urban neighborhoods and the murder of people is the wrong approach to the inalienable right of human flourishing [184]. Peaceful co-existence and mutual trust in our ability to inhabit planet Earth must take center stage in the lives of all law-abiding citizens [185,186].

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