

WHOSE CITY, WHOSE ENVIRONMENT?

Self-Determination, Ethics and the Urban Environment

Sven Arntzen

The main concern of much traditional environmental philosophy and ethics has been the natural environment and wilderness. Natural conditions such as biodiversity, ecological health and integrity, and pristine nature as such, have been regarded as intrinsic values, considered to be absolute values in that they should not be compromised under any circumstance. Since humans and their activities and lifestyles are often opposed to what this kind of philosophy holds dear, there has not been much interest in the urban environment, except perhaps in a negative fashion. It is true that some environmental ethics has had room in its concern for environments that are outcomes of human activities affecting and modifying landscapes. Here one seeks the integration of humans and nature, of land use and land preservation. Some cultural landscapes and the human activities that contribute to shaping them can be considered sustainable, even in the strong sense, proposed by Arne Næss, of being consistent with and enhancing the flourishing of all (natural) forms of life (Næss 1995: 447), and not just in the anthropocentric sense of leaving enough resources in order for all humans, including future generations, to be able to satisfy their needs. This widening of the concern of environmental ethics seems necessary in order for this kind of ethics to have relevance and application in a European context in the first place, for most, if not all, European landscapes have been affected by the activities of humans throughout thousands of years. But also for this kind of ethics, the urban environment is often considered antithetical to the sort of environment the development and preservation of which are sought by environmental philosophy and ethics. For one thing, cities, considered in terms of their administrative boundaries, seem notoriously unsustainable (Wackernagel, Rees 1996: 10). Indeed, cities and the human lifestyles they embody seem to be the very source of environmental evils.

However, the last few years have seen a shift among some environmental philosophers away from the lack of concern with, or the outright condemnation of, the urban environment. Issues pertaining to this kind of environment are in the process of becoming legitimate issues from the point of view of environmental philosophy and ethics (Light 2000). There is an increased concern that an ethic of environment ought to be an ethic of the total environment, the humanly created and designed environment, including the city, as well as the self-organising, so-called natural environment (Fox 2000a). It is held that for a complete environmental ethic, the distinction between the natural and the built or urban environment, with the exclusion of the latter from the domain of this sort of ethic, is arbitrary and unfounded.

What is the character of the expanded environmental philosophy and ethics? What is the basic orientation or approach of such philosophy and ethics? When dealing with the natural environment and wilderness, there is a tendency in environmental ethics to disregard or suppress the human factor altogether. In the city, however, the human factor is inescapable and in most cases more prominent than the non-human factor. The expanded environmental philosophy and ethics need to be able to shift or move the emphasis of its considerations according to the kind of environment with which it concerns itself. How should the human factor be understood? How does it contribute to determining the manner in which the expanded environmental philosophy and ethics take the urban environment into consideration? In this paper, I will propose that the central element in this connection is human life and existence (not narrow interests and desires) and so a dimension of meaning and identity that is not detached from the environment but intimately connected with it. What is central here is the idea of environment in a concrete sense, as the type of local environment that people can consider 'home'. This means that the urban environment – what happens to it, its quality and character – cannot be considered in isolation from human life and existence, from those beings whose environment it is.

I. Conceptions of environment

Environmental ethics has existed as a systematic theoretical discipline of philosophy and ethics since the early 1970s. One of the landmark essays in this connection is Richard Routley's 'Is There a Need for a New Environmental Ethic?' published in 1973. Since then, different positions have been formulated

and developed, often in competition with one another. Some of the standard divisions are those of anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism and, within non-anthropocentrism, individualism, concerned with the existence and well-being of human and non-human individuals, and holism or ecocentrism, concerned with the preservation of entire environments or ecosystems. However, it is only in the last decade or so that the idea of environment itself has come under increased scrutiny. Careful reading of much of the literature in environmental philosophy and ethics helps reveal that there is no one agreed upon idea of environment. In other words, philosophers and others who write about the environment and concerns for the environment are often not writing about the same thing. In an article titled 'The Idea of Environment', David Cooper has taken issue with the sort of environmental ethics that use terms of piety or related attitudes to characterise the ethical relationship to nature or to the environment in general. His point is that it does not make sense for someone to feel reverence or awe for, or to view as sacred, a part of nature, say a rainforest or a mountain, which he has not observed or with which he has not somehow been engaged (Cooper 1992: 166). On the other hand, it cannot be denied that persons who live in or near the rainforest can have such attitudes towards that rainforest. The rainforest is the environment or part of the environment for those people in a different sense from that in which it is part of the environment for us who have not observed the rainforest or otherwise directly felt or sensed it and somehow been engaged with it.

Such considerations lead Cooper to distinguish between two senses of the concept of environment that are often confounded in the literature on environmental ethics. In one sense, environment is understood as the global environment, the biosphere, the order of things (Cooper 1992: 167). It is not toward the environment in this sense that it is reasonable or meaningful to call for an attitude of reverence or awe. In a different sense, environment is understood more along the lines of local environment, even if the 'local' part of it is not a matter of measurable distance (Cooper 1992: 168ff). Environment in this sense is the setting of individuals, groups or communities. It is places and landscapes with their distinctive characteristics. It is the environment in which one knows one's way about, which one affects and by which one is affected in a multitude of ways in everyday life. Environment in this sense is home: it is that with which one is familiar. It is the field of significance or meanings for

those perceiving and thinking beings whose environment it is. Whereas environment in the first sense is the environment of *all* beings, different beings or groups or communities have different environments in the second sense. It is only for the environment in this latter sense that it is meaningful to speak of reverence or awe.

Cooper's distinction leads to further considerations regarding the idea of environment (Attfield 1999: 9ff). In either sense, the environment is, of course, something on which people depend for continued life and existence. But the type of dependence differs relative to the sense in which environment is understood. The two senses of environment concern the character of humans' relationship to the physical world. They have to do with what the physical world, the environment, is for those who find themselves in it. In the first sense mentioned by Cooper, the environment, whether far away or near, whether actually experienced or not, is a necessity of life in general. It is the conditions of the existence of living things. Such an environment is the conditions of the continued existence of something somewhere, provided it is not severely deteriorated relative to that whose existence depends on it. An example might be an area of land whose soil is fertile and whose air and water are not excessively polluted as a condition of the existence of a community engaged in agriculture. Conceived in this manner, the environment is not thought of as having distinctive, individuating characteristics, and one environment can be considered exchangeable for another that provides the same or similar conditions of life and existence. Environment in this sense is conceived as homogeneous in much the same way as space according to the Newtonian conception of it as 'absolute space', central to the modern view of the world, is considered homogeneous. Just as it is a matter of indifference where in this kind of space, at what coordinates, a particular thing happens to be located or an event of action and equal reaction occurs, so is it a matter of indifference where in the abstract environment some life sustaining element happens to be. Whether the rainforest, so crucial to the present conditions of life on earth, is in Brazil or some other area, or whether a forest is old-growth or planted, is not important as long as it is part of the environment and does the life sustaining job it is supposed to do. This, then, is the environment in an abstract and detached sense, thought of as somehow external to the being for which it is the environment. This concept of environment has been characterised as an objective, scientific, causal concept (Dower 1994: 146–148; Attfield 1999: 10–11).

The environment is describable in terms of quantifiable, objectively ascertainable features and cause and effect relationships, that first gave rise to environmental awareness and concern world-wide.

Environment in the second sense is diverse and heterogeneous. Understood in this sense, environment is a place or landscape, the setting and context of the lives and existence of individuals and communities. Here, one environment is distinct from every other; it has its uniquely identifying characteristics, many of which may not be capable of being expressed in so many words. Because of this, an environment is perceived and felt and conceived by those who inhabit it differently from the way in which a visitor perceives it. It is the environment to which people relate at various levels, physically, intellectually and spiritually, through their senses, feelings, thoughts and activities; it is the concrete and present environment. The concrete environment is the condition of one's being-in-the-world; it is the life world of those whose environment it is. It is not only conditions of existence or life somewhere, i.e. generally, but the conditions of existence *here*. For those people who live in that environment, this means that the environment is not only life-sustaining, but meaningful. The concrete environment contributes to giving meaning to people's lives and activities. It is a source of meaning in that it involves an ordering or structuring of things that are diverse and may appear as fragmentary in relation to one another. The relationship between a subject and its environment is one of interaction and mutual influence at diverse levels. As home, the environment in this sense is part of who we are. Supposing that one environment is individually identifiable and so can be distinguished from another, it is a specific area, being as it is, having its particular unique character, because of the complexity of all its components: structure and topography, soil and rocks, plants and animals, smells and sounds. Environment in the concrete sense has to do with the manner in which the diverse phenomena are interconnected in relation to a given area or location. In the humanly built or otherwise modified environment, these phenomena include things and structures produced or placed in the environment by humans and humans themselves.

Considerations have been presented to the effect that the language of awe or reverence that Cooper thinks should be reserved for the concrete or local environment can and should be extended to the global environment, and that the global environment is, as much as the local environment, something with

which we can and should consider ourselves intimately integrated (Dower 1994: 148ff). Be that as it may. If there is a distinction between two senses of environment along the lines Cooper maintains, and he does seem to be right about that, then it makes sense to distinguish between orientations in one or two types of environmental ethics. One is concerned with the environment in general, as the conditions of life, with which we may not have the kind of first-hand acquaintance and familiarity to call it 'home' in the relevant sense. Given the terms used above, this can be called 'the ethics of the abstract environment'. The other type of environmental ethics deals with the local or concrete environment. It is concerned with the fields of significance for distinct groups of people (and other animals). This type of environmental ethics can, then, be called 'the ethics of the concrete environment'.

The two types of ethics can complement one another, but they can also be in conflict. The ethics of the abstract environment is typically concerned with clean air and water and with protecting and maintaining environments that have certain physical, biological and ecological characteristics. The concern of this type of ethics is largely uniform in character, and it typically abstracts from local and regional conditions of human life and culture. The concept of biodiversity, for example, means the same everywhere, and as a basic value, it requires that the same type of measure be taken for its preservation across the globe. The ethics of the concrete environment, by contrast, is concerned both with the physical characteristics of the environment in the sense in question and with the relationships of people, their traditions, lives and practices, to that environment. There is a conflict between the two types of ethics in cases where, in the name of environmental preservation, as discussed by Ramachandra Guha, indigenous communities are forced off their traditional lands and made to give up their established, usually sustainable, ways of life for the sake of protecting some endangered species or the perceived integrity of some wilderness area (Guha 1989). In such cases, the ethics of environmental protection or preservation (here: the ethics of the abstract environment) fails to do what the ethics of the concrete environment must do, namely, take those humans into consideration who are most directly affected by the measure with respect to their very lives and existence. I do not mean to claim that the ethics of the abstract environment is less important than that of the local environment, or that it is unimportant altogether. But care must be taken so as not to allow the one or the other type of ethics to rule absolutely.

In human ethics, there are times when it is appropriate that considerations of care, directed at specific individuals, supercede the universalistic considerations of justice. At other times, considerations of care ought to yield to or be tempered by considerations of justice.

In what category does the ethics that is concerned with the urban environment belong? It is a fact that the large city, with all its smells, sounds and constructions of concrete and steel can mean as much and be as valuable to its inhabitants as the peaceful rural village or calm agricultural landscape often is to those who live there. The Norwegian poet Rudolf Nilsen (1901–1929), considered the poetic voice of the urban working class in Norway in the 1920s, writes of the eastern industrial part of Oslo with praise and affection: ‘...I am happy walking here and feeling that in these depths I have my home and my roots – for everything is made by human hands, from the street light to the concrete by my foot.’ (Nilsen 1968.) The city can be considered an environment in the local and concrete sense and so has special meaning for those who live in it.

People confined to large cities are often the victims of environmental racism and discrimination. There are well-documented cases in the United States of subjecting groups of people, mostly in certain urban or highly developed areas, to environmental harms and hazards in a manner and according to a pattern that can be linked to those groups’ ethnicity or socio-economic status. Cases include the locating of landfills, hazardous waste incinerators, lead smelters, refineries and the like, in areas predominantly populated by the groups of people in question (Bullard 1995: 6–9). As a result, people in these areas experience a greater than average exposure to environmental harm and consequent problems. For example, children with unsafe amounts of lead in their blood tend to have lower scores on IQ tests, reduced hearing, reduced ability to concentrate and stunted physical growth. Generally speaking, people in these situations suffer harm that more or less impedes their abilities, compared to the population at large, to lead healthy and fulfilling human lives, and this because of ethnicity or socio-economic status. Since there is always an agent involved where injustice takes place or is done, this can be put in Kantian language, as some have proposed to do (Hartley 2003: 480–481). Environmental racism and discrimination involve a corporation’s or majority population’s treatment of a vulnerable group of people or a community as a mere means for its own purposes, because of that group’s or community’s ethnicity or socio-economic status.

Environment in the first, abstract sense is the environment on which living beings depend for their continued existence in the first place. This is the environment whose degradation endangers or compromises the lives, health and natural functions of these beings. Almost without exception, the philosophical literature discusses environmental racism and environmental justice in relation to environment in the first sense. Now suppose that proper action is taken to clean up the environment for those people in the cities who have been the victims of environmental racism or discrimination, to remove all toxicants and in general make the environment such that the abstract conditions for leading healthy and fulfilling human lives are there for them as for everyone else. But there is a catch. The inhabitants are bound to maintain their clean environment in exactly the same condition, with the same characteristics, in which it is 'given' to them. This seems consistent with the ethics of the abstract environment. Yet, there is a sense in which the people in question are made subject to another kind of injustice, a sense in which people's basic moral rights are violated. They have no say over their concrete and local environment and so cannot exercise complete power over their own lives and selves. For this reason, environmental ethics dealing with the city must also, at least, be the ethics of the concrete environment, since this is the type of environmental ethics that for the human environment is concerned with the relationship of people to their environment as well as the environment itself, including its physical characteristics.

II. Environment and self-determination

The concrete (human) environment is active and contributive in being a source of the identity of those humans whose environment it is. But this contribution to people's identity is not a one-way process. It is a dynamic relationship of reciprocal dependence and influence between the environment and its inhabitants. This relationship exists at the diverse levels of sensing, feeling and thinking, and it manifests itself in diverse ways of both interference and non-interference with the environment. If the concrete environment is a source of the identity of its inhabitants, who in turn contribute in shaping the environment, the relationship of reciprocal influence that humans have to their specific environments is a form of self-determination. This kind of self-determination should not be taken in the Kantian sense as rational ethical choice. Kantian autonomy assumes the existence and activity of the rational human being in separation from the specific

and concrete facts of human life and of the world. This point can be illustrated by the suicide example as Kant presents it in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant 1983: 30). The person is tired of life and feels it is better to end his life than to continue it. Kant imagines the person's being able to hold back for a moment and ask whether his maxim could be considered or willed as a universal law. Very likely, and contrary to what Kant appears to believe, hardly any candidate for suicide is in a mental or emotional position to detach himself in this manner from the process in which he is intensely involved. In contrast to Kant's abstract idea of self-determination, the kind of self-determination that involves the concrete environment is the person's making of himself and his world in a dynamic relationship of mutual dependence and influence. It does not occur at the merely rational level, but also sensually, emotionally and spiritually, and it is a process of which one is not conscious at all times. Since this is self-determination in relation to environment, I will call it 'environmental self-determination'. The making of one's home by decorating it is an example of this at the individual level. But environmental self-determination is not just an individual matter. It is anchored in culture and tradition and in communal practices. The practices not only link the individuals and communities to their environments, but they also connect the present with the past and with the future. The practices fit into a narrative in which humans and their environment are inextricably linked. These considerations suggest that for the ethics of the concrete environment, decision-making concerning the local environment should primarily be handed over to those who find themselves closely connected with that environment, who as persons have an important stake in the character of its further development. One must presuppose, of course, that the type of decision-making in question follows reflection and debate among those who participate in it. When applied to the city, this means that the power of decision-making concerning the urban environment should not be contingent upon legal property rights or central political authority. Legally, a city may well belong to a few people; environmentally the city belongs to the many people who live there and have their identities rooted in the city.

In his *Discourse on Method*, Descartes remarks that 'often there is less perfection in works made of several pieces and in works made by the hands of several masters than in those works on which one master has worked' (Descartes 1993: 7). He applies this idea in considering and evaluating two kinds of cities. One

of these is the ancient city. This kind of city has developed over generations, from its feeble beginnings as a village to becoming a large city. It has no readily recognisable structure and order of buildings and streets; in Descartes's words, it is 'quite poorly laid out'. The other is the kind of city that is the result of one planner's unitary design. It is well-ordered; its structure is easy to recognise; its streets are not crooked. Descartes finds the second city preferable to and more valuable than the first, for it is more evidently the result of rational design. If Descartes's remarks are put into the context of the present considerations, the ancient city is to a greater extent an environment whose character has evolved and has been determined by its residents. Those people and groups of people who have lived in the city have to a greater extent, through their lives, activities and practices, made the city what it is. In its present state, it is the result of people's needs, conceptions, emotions and values, as these have evolved over time. The ancient city, in turn, has had an impact on its inhabitants. It has had a role in determining who they are. This kind of city, as it has gradually come about and evolved, is the type of environment that is a central dimension to people's identity. It is the tangible manifestation of environmental self-determination. Descartes's second city, however well-ordered as it may be, is not the environment of those who are put to live in it. It is the result of external design and control and so lacks the character of the type of environment that people experience as home, at least when they are first placed there. It is not the type of environment that has been built and developed in interaction with those who live there. Even if Descartes's 'modern city' is structured in such a manner that one can quickly and easily find one's way in it, one's acquaintance and familiarity with it are not of the first hand sort that is part of belonging to or identifying with a place. The modern city seems designed to 'expel' people – they do not really belong there.

As the preceding remarks suggest, the contrast between these two cities is not just a conceptual or imaginary one, as might appear in Descartes's way of seeing things. The contrast is very real, and perhaps more so in our days than in Descartes's. The contrast is between the city that is allowed to follow the course that those who live in it stake out step by step, as the conditions warrant, and the city that is being transformed by planners whose main concern is to accommodate business interests and to move people efficiently into and out of the city. Where the city planners have their way, there is often no room for the local inhabitants. The city is appropriated by a distinct group of planners, architects,

investors, construction companies, not people who live their lives in the city and whose lives are most immediately affected by changes made to the city. The differences between the two kinds of cities may be illustrated by means of the Norwegian ecophilosopher Sigmund Kvaløy Sætereng's distinction between complexity and complication, between that which is complex and that which is complicated (Kvaløy 1993: 122–124). That which is complex is typically the organic, dynamic, irreversible, self-governing, diversified and multi-directional. An example is any particular organism, which as a whole is an intricate relationship of interdependent parts, and whose identity transcends the collection of its parts. That which is complicated is mechanical, static, reversible, externally controlled and unidirectional. That which is typically complicated is a machine, which is analysable in terms of the actions and reactions of its parts.

The ancient city is complex. It is an intricate and dynamic whole of a myriad of things: physical structures, sensible characteristics, people, experiences and relationships. In such a whole, each component is an integral part and is not, like the part of a machine, easily replaceable in relation to the whole and to the other components. Buildings reflect the dominant tastes of different periods, yet hang together without being too uniform and homogenous. Shifts in styles do not occur in a vacuum; they have historical antecedents and an inner historical relationship to the styles that are replaced, however different these may be from those that replace them. The complex city is traditionally divided along socio-economic lines. No one these days will argue for the virtue of maintaining such lines or divisions. Historically, however, such divisions have had a role in giving each part of the city its distinctive character. It is not unlikely that local residents would wish to maintain or continue that character. The modern city is the complicated city. From what has been said, it should be evident what this implies. One characteristic is worth mentioning, however. The complicated city is a whole but does not have dynamic unity. This means that the relationship of its parts is that of extrinsic elements, not of mutually integrated components. Accordingly, the complicated city is in a sense indifferent to its components and inhabitants.

III. Preservation and urban environment

One of the chief concerns of environmental ethics is preservation of the environment or of some aspect of the environment. There are often tensions between interests of preservation and the obvious needs of humans to make use of the

environment and of what it has to offer. But preservation and use need not be mutually exclusive. Forestry is a case in point. In many cases, preserving a forest does not preclude harvesting from it, but it does constrain the extent of harvesting. Here, human activity is part of the history, the dynamic course of life of the forest. For the humanly modified, built or urban environment, attempts might be made to somehow combine or reconcile preservation and use. In such cases, the extent of preservation and the extent of productive use depend on the type of thing or environment in question and types of use that can be considered compatible with preserving that thing or environment. Taking Tallinn's Old Town as an example, its preservation does not preclude, it seems, commercial activity in the form of small shops and restaurants and the modest modification to physical characteristics that these activities involve. By contrast, preserving an object of art, such as a painting, or a monument, requires that the use of it be confined to its being an object of observation, study and appreciation at a distance. Furthermore, the kind of value a thing is thought to have, by which it is considered worthy of preservation in the first place, is relevant to the manner in which it should be preserved, to the type of preservation appropriate for that thing.

I will approach the issue of preserving the urban environment through a consideration of cultural (and rural) landscape preservation. For this purpose, I understand cultural landscape as the landscape that has been physically, and more or less visibly, modified by intentional human activities.¹ Not all such landscapes are considered valuable and worthy of being preserved, but those that are so considered are regarded as having specific characteristics that make them valuable. Such characteristics might relate to the landscape's ecological features, its aesthetic or scenic qualities, or its being an area of recreation (Bull 1987: 14–16). Perhaps the most significant value a cultural landscape has that makes it worthy of preservation is its identity value. The landscape, with its history and its present characteristics, provides a setting or context for those who relate to it on a frequent or daily basis, through their lives and activities. Identity value may encompass other values. A cultural landscape has identity value in that it is regarded as a necessary factor for people to maintain their identities as individu-

¹ I am aware that I am leaving out of the present discussion cultural landscape in the symbolic or immaterial sense as articulated by Audhild Schancke (1995). Her point is that what is cultural in a landscape need not be what is placed there by humans. It can also be the meaning that a landscape has for a group of people. Also so-called natural landscapes can be cultural in this sense.

als and as part of a community that is anchored in the landscape. Those who relate to the landscape in the relevant manner might find special significance in its ecological or aesthetic characteristics. The underlying assumption is, of course, that people's environment really matters to those people whose environment it is. That is, the cultural landscape is *their* environment. In other words, this thinking does not acknowledge the modern, atomistic conception of the human self as simply rational, independent and self-sufficient. In the context of the two senses of environment, a cultural landscape whose identity value makes it worth preserving is an environment in the local and concrete sense. In being concerned with the cultural landscape on account of its identity value, one is concerned with the environment, but not in isolation or separation from the beings whose environment it is, including the human beings involved and engaged in that environment. And being concerned with those human beings who have much at stake in relation to the landscape that is their local environment, one is concerned with human life and existence and activity, but not in isolation or separation from the environment, which provides the indispensable context of such life, existence and activity.

In Norway, some rural landscapes are considered to have aesthetic or scenic value, but their continued existence as valuable in this respect is threatened by small farms' being abandoned and by the absence of traditional methods of farming. So a program is in place, supported by public funding, to have goats and other livestock graze in these areas during the summer, thereby maintaining the landscape's ecological characteristics and its scenic qualities, even if this practice has no productive value. This kind of preservation resembles the preservation of a work of art, combined with periodic maintenance. Such preservation is not preservation of the land and people's intricate and dynamic, historically founded, relationship to it, but of the land as an object. The other extreme would consist of failure to preserve the landscape altogether, of the drastic transformation of the land through intense factory farming, construction of housing developments, etc. Here too, the historical relationship that people have had to the land is discontinued.

A city has enough significant resemblances with other types of cultural landscape that some general considerations concerning the latter, including considerations regarding their preservation, can be applied to the urban environment. A cultural landscape is artefactual in that stages or phases of its modification and

development are the outcomes of human intentions. For the most part, there is no one unified plan behind a cultural landscape. A city is similar in this respect. A city may originally have been conceived and constructed in accordance with one plan or design, but cities develop over time. Their originators have had no idea of the outcome of development and change some hundred years later. Many individual plans and designs have contributed to making a city what it is today. Insofar as cities are often the contexts of people's lives and existence, identity value as a criterion of preservation holds for cities and parts of cities as for other cultural landscapes. And cities are also susceptible to the two extremes, museum piece preservation, on the one hand, and drastic transformation, on the other.

For an environment in the concrete or local sense, then, a distinction can be made between two types of or two basic approaches to preservation. One is focused on the object as such. It seeks to maintain the environment in its present condition, to arrest its past and present physical characteristics. This is not easily done in landscapes that have a significant natural, i.e. not artefactual, aspect, for such a landscape is likely to run its own course, subject to the processes of evolution. Human interference to maintain the status quo would be rather manipulative. For the urban or built environment, this type of preservation would require occasional maintenance work to maintain things in a fixed condition. One might call this type of preservation 'static preservation'. The other approach to preservation is focused on the relationship people have to their environment. It allows for continued development and change, subject to certain constraints, certain conditions for maintaining meaning and identity. The aim is not to fix or arrest the environment's physical characteristics, unless this would be part of maintaining the sense of meaning or identity among those whose environment is preserved. Certain monuments and buildings have important symbolic value to some people and so are an important part of the local environment. This type of preservation, concerned with maintaining meaning in relation to the physical environment and with physical characteristics of the environment as being bearers of meaning, can be called 'dynamic preservation'.

Furthermore, even if a local environment, including a city or part of a city, is considered worthy of preservation, it does not, of course, follow that it will be preserved in one way or another. There is a third way of relating to the environment: eradication or drastic transformation, often brought on by powerful political or economic interests. It is not unrealistic to imagine a case in which commercial

interests dictate that a building that has had significance as a kind of landmark to local residents be made to yield to a parking lot attached to a shopping centre. Thus, there are three possible general scenarios: the environment is preserved in the static sense, it is preserved in the dynamic sense, or it is not preserved at all. In cases where the issue arises concerning urban change and development, it is often non-residents, entrepreneurs, politicians, planners, plain visitors, etc., who favour the first or the third scenario, while residents seem more favourable to the second scenario.² Paradoxical as it may seem, given technological development and human interference with the natural environment, it is part of being human to seek to maintain continuity and coherence and so resist drastic change. At the same time, changing needs and priorities are reasons why maintaining the status quo is not a viable option for local residents. To the extent there is truth in these remarks, it makes sense to distinguish between two perspectives in relating to the local environment, including the city, and its preservation: that of the dweller and that of the visitor.

What I have called dynamic preservation can be considered the 'mean between two extremes' in much the same sense in which this idea is expressed by Aristotle in his characterisation of ethical or practical virtue (Aristotle 1985, Bk. II). There are two other points in Aristotle's account of virtue that seem relevant here. First, there is no one set of specific or precise prescriptions of what counts as virtuous action as part of a general moral practice. Diverse factors, which vary between cases and between the persons involved, must be taken into consideration (Aristotle 1985, Bk. I, Ch.'s 3, 6). Second, Aristotle holds that a decision or conclusion of what is the virtuous or the proper course of action in a given case is arrived at from the point of the persons involved. For example, the trainer takes the individual circumstances to each of his athletes into account when determining their diets (Aristotle 1985, Bk. II, Ch. 6). The central question is: what is right for the person(s) involved, what is it to be, for example, generous, courageous or temperate in a given case, taking the relevant factors into consideration? When applied to the present considerations, these two points mean, first, that for issues or questions of preservation, there is no one course of action or measure or prescription that applies uniformly to all environments. Second, the power of environmental decision-making belongs to those who would most immediately

² I do not know whether an empirical inquiry into this question has been carried out, but it would be an interesting one and would seem worth while.

be affected in various ways by the decisions made. Decisions concerning the local (and urban) environment should be made from the perspective of the dweller, subject, of course, to information, debate, reflection and reasoning. Ethics for Aristotle is largely a matter of persons' reasoned self-determination. As the considerations presented here suggest, the same ought to be said for the type of ethics concerned with the urban environment and its preservation.

If there is no one specific prescription or fixed set of prescriptions, how does one determine the course of approaching the environment that falls between arresting the thing in its present condition, on the one hand, and, on the other, drastically transforming it? A local environment is a complex whole. It has a certain history, a series of developmental stages making it the thing it is today, whether humans have been involved or not. Preserving the environment involves somehow maintaining the complex whole in a manner which is continuous with its historical past. This may, though, allow for alternative courses of continued development, alternative trajectories. In recent writings, Warwick Fox has presented a principle of 'coherence', of 'contextual fit', of 'responsive cohesion' as a guide to approaching the environment (e.g. Fox 2000b). The idea is that a change or the introduction of some element always occurs in relation to an already established context. The element may or may not fit in or cohere with the complex, its history and with the things already contained in it.

One might get an idea of what Fox's principle entails by approaching the matter in a roundabout way, by describing kinds of cases that are in violation of the principle. I will do this for a conceived natural environment, then for a cultural landscape in the sense discussed, and finally for the urban environment. For a natural environment, an example would be the introduction by humans of some alien species or type of organism that would upset the existence and living conditions of native species. Many such cases have occurred, and the literature on environmental ethics is rich with discussions between ecocentric environmentalists and animal ethicists on how one should deal with this kind of case. The other extreme would be to halt the *natural* migration of alien species, i.e. to put a stop to a natural development or process. For a cultural landscape, one case might be the complete clear-cutting of a forested hill, especially if the hill has a place name that says or implies something about its being forested or having trees on it. Relevant here are the human eye that sees and the human ear that hears. Clear-cutting would probably have an ecological impact that would

drastically change the place from the point of view of persons' visual and audible experiences. Another case would be that of constructing buildings that stand out significantly in relation to the topography of the landscape or that have an architectural style that differs much from that of the already existing buildings, i.e. the typical 'eye sore'. The extreme to the contrary would be to stop any development dead in its tracks and turn the landscape into a museum piece, treating the landscape in much the same manner in which one would treat a valuable work of art or a monument of great symbolic significance. For the urban environment, the typical case would be that of drastically altering infrastructure or constructing buildings in a manner that does not pay heed to existing building styles. Again, the other extreme would be to stop all future development and maintain all parts of the city in their present (or maybe past) condition, thereby ignoring any change in people's needs and lifestyles.

These considerations indicate that coherence has a physical aspect. Additions or changes to a given environment are deemed coherent or incoherent through consideration of the relationship of new physical elements to already existing physical characteristics. For natural environments and some cultural landscapes, one kind of consideration pertaining to the physical aspect of coherence deals with ecological characteristics and local biodiversity. For some cultural landscapes and for urban environments, the physical aspect is largely a matter of human constructions. In addition, coherence has a non-physical aspect, whose significance from one case to another, it seems to me, is a matter of degree, depending on the extent of the human presence in the environment. As a general rule, where there is a considerable human presence or impact, the non-physical aspect seems to have a high degree of significance for those who live in that environment or relate to it on a regular basis. The non-physical aspect has to do with tradition, meaning, symbolic significance, as these kinds of things are embodied in a given environment. Coherence is, then, a matter of somehow maintaining or continuing or extending tradition, meaning, or symbolic significance. As previously indicated, this does not in many cases rule out making modifications to the physical environment, but it does imply certain constraints on the character and extent of such modifications. Of relevance here, to help account for the non-physical aspect of coherence, is Christian Norberg-Schulz's notion of *genius loci*, the spirit of place, which has found resonance among environmental philosophers (Norberg-Schulz 1992: 27–34; Brook 2000). Spirit of place can

be characterised as the emergent quality of meaning or significance that a local environment, such as a landscape, a city or a village, has. The local environment's spirit of place helps account for its identity value. Along with the idea of coherence, the notion of the spirit of place may have a role in environmental decision-making; it is relevant for determining what sort of development or activity in the environment is consistent with its dynamic preservation.

Discussions of coherence and of spirit of place must presuppose human subjects for whom things cohere and who are in a position to acknowledge an environment's spirit of place. However, it seems that these discussions generally do not concern themselves with who these human subjects are. They probably should, for it may well be the case that a visiting architect or planner has one idea of what constitutes the spirit of a place and so of what is consistent with considerations of coherence, whereas the people who live in or interact with the local environment on a daily basis, or those among them who are prepared to reflect on the matter, will arrive at a conclusion on this that differs from that of the architect and planner. Considerations of justice to persons of the latter group dictate that they have a significant say in the matter.

IV. Concluding remarks

In this paper, I have not wanted to make an attempt to address and answer specific questions concerning urban matters and urban development. Rather, I have tried to formulate at the theoretical level, in a very general manner, the course I think is appropriate for extending the concern of environmental ethics to the urban environment. If environmental ethics is concerned with environment in the concrete sense, as a field of significance, then the human factor is a legitimate concern for such ethics. Since the human factor is not that of narrow human interests or of human domination, this kind of environmental ethics is not a form of anthropocentrism in the commonly accepted meaning of this word. Indeed, since the ethics of the local environment is concerned with both non-human and human, including urban, environments and does not treat these environments as essentially different kinds of environment, it seems that the traditional division within environmental ethics of anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism should be abandoned altogether.

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Kelle linn, kelle keskkond? Enesemääratlemine, eetika ja linnakeskkond

Kokkuvõte

Käesolev artikkel on katse visandada lähenemisviisi, mille abil saab laiendada keskkonnaeetika huvivälja linnakeskkonnale. Leian, et keskkonnaeetika käsitleb keskkonda reeglina kui konkreetset kohalikku keskkonda, tähenduste väljanende jaoks, kes selles elavad. Inimeste enesemääratlemisvõimega seonduva õigluse või põhiliste moraalsete õiguste kaalutlustel peaks inimestel olema õigus teha omaenese keskkonda puudutavaid otsuseid. Nende ideede valguses käsitletlõpuks linnaga seotud keskkonnakaitse küsimusi.