CITIES AFTER CRISIS

Reinventing Neighborhood Design from the Ground-Up

CARLOS GARCÍA VÁZQUEZ

"In the form of an urban replica of Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, this book deals with the silent battle between the effects of the high urbanism of modernism and the low urbanism of people's demands, describing to the last detail how the latter have gradually won the acceptance and acquired the prestige that in the past was enjoyed by grand planning schemes, allowing us to witness a spectacle the protagonists of which—the conflicts that permeate life and politics nowadays—find in the city a privileged setting".

—**Iñaki Ábalos**, *Director and Founder of AS+ Abalos+ Sentkiewiz, Former Chair Harvard Graduate School of Design*

"Carlos García Vázquez charts the forces of change and the range of urban policy and urban design responses that may be brought into play to facilitate new ways of living. This book makes an important contribution to the pressing questions of how we may adapt in a world that might be emerging from a pandemic but will still face fundamental environmental, social and economic challenges".

—**Peter Bishop**, *Professor at The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London. Founding Director of Design for London*

"Carlos García Vázquez offers us a brilliant synthesis of the challenges that urban planning and design must address to tackle the three-pronged environmental, economic, and health crisis we are facing. This mature essay crowns several decades dedicated to reviewing visions and proposals revolving around the city. The book constitutes a valuable tool for scholars and professionals thanks to an original dialectic that balances an elegant conceptual approach with the empirical contrast provided by the Dalston (London) case study".

—**José María Ezquiaga**, *Professor at the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid*

"*Cities After Crisis* reveals the key issues behind what is a real cultural revolution, the one of the modest, local, and community-led urban practices that the neobohemians have been displaying in cool neighborhoods as an expression of their lifestyle but which have proven their efficacy in the face of crises of all kinds (environmental, economic, health). Nowadays, these practices outline a new urban planning and design paradigm".

—**Estanislau Roca**, *Full Professor at the Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya*

"An artisan of theories on the built environment, Carlos García Vázquez has crafted an overarching conceptual framework to support a much-needed urban reset in times of uncertainty. García Vázquez convincingly displays his rigour and intuition in a delightfully written piece . . . the future of cities is culture, and books like *Cities After Crisis* effectively encourage us to explore the way".

—**Plácido González**, *Professor at College of Architecture and Urban Planning of Tongji University (Shanghai).*
Executive Editor, Built Heritage Journal

"The situation we are living during the pandemic is pushing for a different point of view on contemporary cities which is posing urgent questions to the architecture culture. *City After Crisis* is a brilliant research which connects the environmentalist debate with urban studies, pointing out the quality of life and a sustainable approach to micro-urbanism as a way to improve the quality of our built environment and its future planning. The case study of Dalston (London) enlightens the centrality of cool neighbourhoods where the relationship between community, design, and good living represents one of the best tool to improve quality of every-day life and the metamorphism of the contemporary urban environment".

—**Luca Molinari**, *Full Professor Department of Architecture and Design "Luigi Vanvitelli", Università della Campania (Naples)*

"Often it takes someone from elsewhere to investigate the changes taking place in one's city, which Carlos García Vázquez does in his fascinating analysis of gentrification in the Dalston neighbourhood in east London. Arguing instead for a bottom-up mode of urban transformation based upon shared 'commons', this book is of clear relevance to cities everywhere".

—**Murray Fraser**, *Professor at The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London*

CITIES AFTER CRISIS

Cities After Crisis shows how urbanism and urban design is redefining cities after the global health, economic, and environmental crises of the past decades. The book details how these crises have led to a new urban vision—from avantgarde modern design to an artisan aesthetic that calls for simplicity and the everyday, from the sustainable development paradigm to a resilient vision that defends de-growth and the re-wilding of cities, from a homogenizing globalism to a new localism that values what is distinctive and nearby, from the privatization of the public realm to the commoning and self-governance of urban resources, and from top–down to bottom–up processes based on the engagement and empowerment of communities.

Through examples from cities around the world and a detailed look at the London neighbourhood of Dalston, the book shows designers and planners how to incorporate residents into the decision-making process, design inclusive public spaces that can be permanently reconfigured, reimagine obsolete spaces to accommodate radically contemporary uses, and build gardens designed and maintained by the community, among other projects.

Carlos García Vázquez, an architect and urban planner, is a full professor at the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura of the Universidad de Sevilla (Spain), as well as a visiting professor at the Scuola di Architettura Urbanistica Ingegneria delle Costruzioni of the Politecnico di Milano (Italy).

His main field of research is the contemporary city, having written the following books: *Teorías e historia de la ciudad contemporánea* (Fostering Arts and Design–FAD Award 2017); *Antípolis. El desvanecimiento de lo urbano en el Cinturón del Sol* (2011); *Ciudad Hojaldre: Visiones urbanas del siglo XXI* (2004); and *Berlín-Potsdamer Platz: metrópoli y arquitectura en transición* (2000)

He has carried out research stays at the Bartlett School of Architecture of University College London, the College of Architecture of Tongji University in Shanghai, and Northwestern University in Chicago.

CITIES AFTER CRISIS

Reinventing Neighborhood Design from the Ground-Up

Carlos García Vázquez

CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSES

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Lastly, I would like to show my appreciation for the excellent and committed Spanish to English translation of this book carried out by Vincent Morales.

INTRODUCTION

A study carried out by YouGov in 2019 revealed that the environment was considered by Europeans as the second most important challenge that the European Union should face in the upcoming years (29 percent of those interviewed). Only immigration (35 percent) came ahead, although in some countries, such as France and Germany, the environment was the main concern (*El País*, 2019). Just five years earlier, in a similar poll, the matters that most worried European citizens had focused on economic issues like unemployment, financial stability, public debt, etc.

The rise of the environmental issue to the podium of citizen anxiety has boosted the role of environmentalism as a spiritual guide for contemporary society. Slavoj Žižek stated:

> Ecology has all the "probabilities" of turning into the form of dominant ideology of the new century, a new mass opium that will replace decadent religion: it carries out the traditional main function of religion, that of proposing an unquestionable authority that imposes some limits.
> *(Žižek, 2012, p. 83, translation and adaptation*
> *from Spanish by the author)*

In fact, environmentalism has all the ingredients of the great monotheistic religions: an original sin (the damage of nature), a threat (the destruction of it), a penance (a more modest living), a doctrine (the discourse of sustainability), and a final reward (the salvation of the planet).

Environmentalism also leads in the field of knowledge. An encompassing approach that spreads throughout philosophy, geography, economy, art, and so on, has taken shape around the discourse of sustainability, its doctrine. By

connecting such diverse areas of knowledge, that approach has succeeded in weaving a metanarrative which has challenged to the limit the discourse constructed by twentieth-century modernity around the idea of progress. Unlike the latter, which was articulated by the axis of science and technology, the former is driven by a moral principle, the "ethics of scarcity", an ascetic vision of the world that is based on the exhaustion of natural resources.

This book deals with the way in which the most recent version of such a metanarrative is colonizing the areas of urbanism and urban design. Its main argument is that, in the decade of the 1970s, the environmental crisis prompted a change in values which brought forth a way of life and an aesthetic option, which are referred to in the text as "eco-lifestyle" and "eco-aesthetic". Both are rooted in the counterculture movements of the 1960s, many of whose values were adopted by the *baby boom* generation. At present, such values define a vision of the world, the core principles of which are environmental matters, but that also entails ideological, cultural, philosophical, and economic positions.

The infiltration of these principals in urbanism and urban design took place in the 1990s, although its spreading occurred during the second decade of this century. The financial crisis of 2008 strongly influenced this process. Paradoxically, the policies of austerity that neoliberal governments implemented were in tune with the originally progressive set of ideas of environmentalism. Either out of interest or out of conviction, both coincided in key matters, such as the commitment to frugality or citizen self-management. As a result, the vision of the world that had come as a response to a crisis of an environmental character was confirmed as the response to a crisis of an economic nature. Will such a ratification be repeated in the coming years, in this case as a response to the 2020–2021 health crisis?

These facts and suppositions lend weight to the initial hypothesis of the book. The period that is known as "late-capitalism" has been marked by a sequence of crises: one environmental in the early years (1970s), one economic in the middle (2008), and a health crisis at present. The assumption is that the first of these crises triggered a process of reinvention of the city that was backed by the second crisis and again could be endorsed by the one caused by Covid-19. As mentioned above, what articulates this redefinition is the ethics of scarcity, which is becoming increasingly stronger, fueled by the perception that not only natural resources but also financial and healthcare ones are becoming exhausted.

Over the last few decades, the so-called "cool neighborhoods" have served as testing grounds for the spatial expressions of eco-lifestyle. This is because the first groups that adopted the ethics of scarcity and still champion it nowadays are their residents, those who David Brooks called "Bobos" (2000), Richard Lloyd "neobohemians" (2006), Mark Greif "eco-hipsters" (2010), and Douglas McWilliams "flat whiters" (2015). With its simple designs, natural materials, and artisan-like assembling, eco-aesthetic was born in the coffee shops,

restaurants, hairdressing salons, and bookstores that these groups frequented. At the beginning of the present century, architects and urban designers took the eco-aesthetic outdoors and spread it to the streets and squares of their neighborhoods, which witnessed the flowering of an alternative way of making the city, both modest and spontaneous, often ephemeral and always creative, one that was diametrically opposed to that of the megaprojects that multinational companies were building in the central areas of cities with the approval of public administrations. In 2008, when the real-estate bubble burst, the urban and architectural spaces of cool neighborhoods like Malasaña (Madrid), Friedrichshain (Berlin), or Grünerlokka (Oslo) proved themselves as a manifesto of common sense, environmental conscience, and participative democracy.

Until now, cool neighborhoods seldom have attracted the attention of scientific literature in the fields of urbanism and urban design (unlike in the areas of urban sociology and geography). The reason for such neglect lies in the stigma they bear after being accused of acting as agents of gentrification. Although the evident correlation between both phenomena must be acknowledged, to identify cool neighborhoods with gentrification is clearly simplistic. It obviates and condemns to academic ignorance some remarkably interesting phenomena that have sprung up in these particular physical, social, and cultural ecosystems: civic economy businesses, the collective use of resources, platforms of neighbor self-organization, and an extremely creative aesthetic.

The aversion that scientific literature feels toward cool neighborhoods turns the press that specializes in leisure, travel, fashion, or lifestyle into a required source of information. A prominent role regarding this is played by the magazine *Time Out*, which has published a list of "The 50 Coolest Neighbourhoods in the World" for several years. The listing for 2019 revealed some interesting aspects regarding their location (Manning, 2019).[1] By country, the United States was the one with most cool neighborhoods, seven, followed by the United Kingdom with four, which can be explained by the Anglo-Saxon origin of the phenomenon. As far as the geographic area is concerned, most of the neighborhoods (38 percent) were in Europe. The ranking was led by Lisbon's Arroios, an urban area that became fashionable at the time when the Portuguese capital reached its peak as a cool destination. Equally emergent were the neighborhoods selected in London (Peckham), Barcelona (Poblenou), and Athens (Kypseli); whereas there were also neighborhoods that have flaunted the "cool" label for many years, as is the case of Saint-Denis in Paris or Wedding in Berlin. With nine cases each, North America and Eastern Asia followed Europe in the *Time Out* ranking. New York's Astoria and Chicago's Pilsen stood out in the United States, which demonstrates how, in those places where the phenomenon has consolidated, it is moving toward relatively peripheral areas (in New York's case, from southeast Manhattan to Queens and in Chicago from the north branch to the south branch of the river). By contrast, in the cities where the phenomenon is relatively new, it continues to appear in the historic centers, as in downtown Miami.

The fact that the Far East had the same number of cool neighborhoods to North America (nine) could respond to the fascination that they provoke in the thriving bourgeoisie of communist countries that have embraced capitalism. Vietnam had one, District 3 in the city of Ho Chi Minh; and China three, Old Shuhui in Shanghai, Sai Ying Pun in Hong Kong, and Overseas Chinese Town in Shenzhen. In these places, cool neighborhoods are the spearheads of a new colonizing vector that is spreading the most sophisticated forms of Western lifestyles around the planet. The last frontier of this conquest is in Africa, which on the *Time Out* list was represented by three cases: Jamestown (Accra), Melville (Johannesburg), and Onikan (Lagos), which was considered by the publication as the third most relevant cool neighborhood on the planet. Finally, two other data should be emphasized that probably will not surprise anyone. Most of these neighborhoods were in large cities, with a population between one and five million,[2] and in what the World Bank considers high income countries.[3]

Actually, cool neighborhoods usually share similar physical, evolutionary, and sociological patterns: they are located in the center of a city, were built at the end of the nineteenth century or beginning of the twentieth century, had a working class and industrial origin, and often became the epicenter of revolts and a refuge for radical movements. They fell into decay in the 1970s, when de-industrialization emptied their factories of activity and their buildings of residents, but shortly afterwards were brought back to life when they were colonized by artists and intellectuals, who were soon followed by members of the middle and upper-middle classes. Presently, the majority of these cool neighborhoods are among the most expensive areas in their respective cities as well as a mecca for tourists and stylish young people, and they are teeming with alternative cafés, vegan restaurants, vintage shops, farmer's markets, community gardens, and coworking spaces.

Dalston, the case study in this book, is one of them. It is at the west end of Hackney, one of the most iconic boroughs of the traditionally proletarian east of London. Its physical definition is complex since it has never been an administrative entity. In the book it is identified with the area determined by postcode E8, which coincides with the section that most Londoners recognize as Dalston. The approximate boundaries are: Regent's Canal to the south, the line that separates it from Shoreditch; the old Roman road and highway A10 (now Kingsland Road and Kingsland High Street) to the west, marking the limit with Islington borough; Mare Street to the east; and Amhurst Road to the north. Within these boundaries the so-called "Dalston Area", an electoral ward coinciding with the commercial center of the neighborhood, stands out. Its less than 20 hectares hold all the interventions that are studied in the book: the Arcola Theater, Gillet Square, the Dalston Eastern Curve Garden, Ridley Road Market, and the Bootstrap
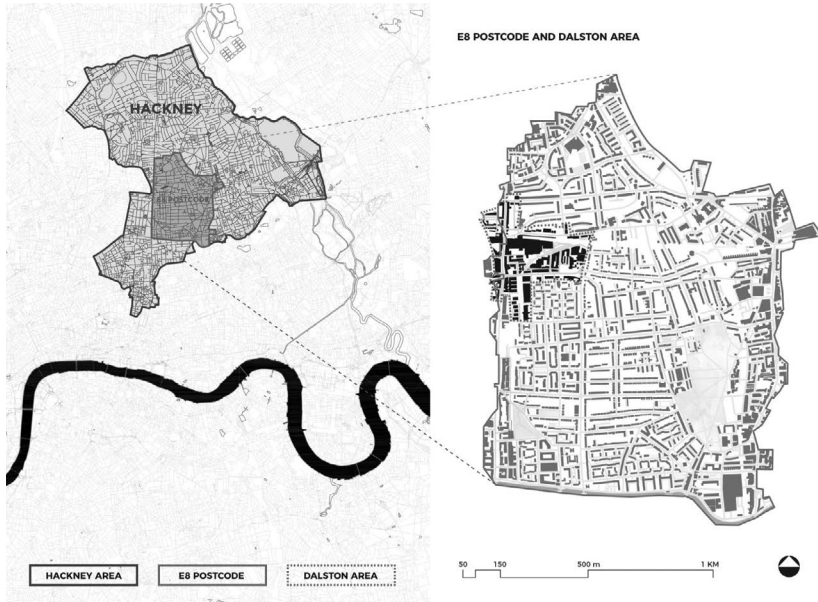
FIGURE 0.1   Boundaries of Dalston and location in London and Hackney.

Image © Collaborators of OpenStreetMap, available under a CC BY-SA 2.0 license.

Open Database License (ODbL). Adapted by José M. Romero and Safiya Tabali.

coworking space. All of them are prominent examples of how the city has reinvented itself over the last few decades.

Objectives and Methodology

After introducing the subject and the main case study in the book, the objectives and methodology are described. Regarding the former, three should be highlighted:

- To tackle the study of contemporary urbanism and urban design from a cultural standpoint, with the assurance that the factors behind their redefinition are more closely related to the appearance of new values and lifestyles than to technical or productive matters.
- To study, from a theoretical point of view, how urbanism and urban design are assimilating the environmentalist metanarrative. To do so, the book dedicates one chapter to each of the five concepts that have been selected as the keys to understand it: anti-progress, resilience, localism, commons, and bottom-up processes.

- To analyze the practical implementation of this emerging urbanism and urban design in cool neighborhoods.

To reach these objectives the book combines a theoretical and an empirical approach:

- The first two or three points of each chapter define the theoretical framework. The abovementioned concepts are linked to five different knowledge sources: anti-progress to philosophy, resilience to ecology, localism to geography, commons to economy, and bottom-up processes to urbanism.
- The last point of each chapter is dedicated to Dalston. An analysis of the district is provided, which is based on fieldwork and a series of interviews with members of the local community, as well as professionals who work in the area. Each point focuses on specific case studies referring to the theoretical framework of the corresponding chapter: Arcola Theatre to Chapter 1, Gillett Square to Chapter 2, Dalston Eastern Curve Garden to Chapter 3, Ridley Road Market to Chapter 4, and the *Making Space in Dalston* proposal to Chapter 5.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 deals with the changes in values which have supported the reinvention of the city after the environmental crisis, from modernity to anti-progress. The thread of the argument starts in philosophy, more specifically in "ecosophy". First, the ideological and philosophical sources that have nurtured such a change in values are analyzed, as well as the way of life that has risen from it, the eco-lifestyle, and the social groups that follow it. Next, the chapter studies the anti-progress movement, which uses nostalgia as an instrument to elaborate its vision of the world. Following this, it introduces the concept of eco-aesthetic, the cultural expression of eco-lifestyle, which is inspired by artisan thought. Finally, it describes the implementation of eco-aesthetic in several of Dalton's "third places", paying special attention to the Arcola Theater.

Chapter 2 deals with the changes in the environmental debate that have supported the reinvention of the city after the environmental crisis, that is, the evolution from the idea of sustainability to the concept of resilience. The thread of argument starts in ecology, especially in the so-called "deep ecology". It begins by analyzing the environmental debate, which shifts between the sustainability postulates of the 1980s to the present concept of resilience. Next, it tackles the transfer of the debate to the city, where the sustainable urban model is being challenged by the resilient vision. Finally, it focuses on questioning urban growth and on valuing obsolescence—a change in paradigm that has resulted in processes of city rewilding and in the recovery of residential areas in decline, the cool neighborhoods. The interventions carried out in two squares

in Dalston, Gillett Square and Dalston Square, highlight differences between the resilient vision and the sustainable urban model.

Chapter 3 deals with the change in scale that has supported the reinvention of the city after the environmental crisis, from the global to the local scale. The thread of the argument begins with geography, more specifically from human geography with roots in phenomenology and post-structuralism. Initially, it goes over the political dimension of vindication of the local, focusing on the so-called New Localism, a movement that has given legal support to neighborhood planning. Next, it examines the economic dimension of localism and the impact that it has on the discipline of regional planning, which has placed urban agriculture in the agenda of the resilient vision. Finally, the chapter analyzes the cultural dimension of the lure of the local, which has stirred up a complex debate about identity in globalized societies. A community garden, the Dalston Eastern Curve Garden, is postulated as a paradigm of contemporary sense of place.

Chapter 4 deals with the change in resources that has supported the reinvention of the city after the environmental crisis, from the realm of the private to the commons. The thread of argument begins with economy, more specifically with political economy. Here, the book delves into the second great struggle that has shaped the abovementioned redefinition, the economic crisis of 2008. It begins with the boom in collaborative businesses, a response to the austerity measures implemented by governments. After defining the concept of the "urban common", the chapter analyzes its forms of governance and the main resources that are available to it in the contemporary city, paying special attention to co-housing and coworking spaces. It then focuses on the approach of critical theory and its proposal to transform public space into an urban common by means of "commoning" actions. The chapter ends with an analysis of the Ridley Road Market and the Bootstrap coworking space.

Chapter 5 deals with the change in the types of agents involved in the reinvention of the city after the environmental crisis, a result of the U-turn from top-down to bottom-up processes. The thread of the argument starts in the field of urbanism, more specifically in the so-called "bottom-up urbanisms". It first analyzes their theories and practices, which have brought the discovery of new places, new tactics, new times, new processes, and a new aesthetic into the debate. Later, it studies the possible transferring of these contributions to institutional urbanism. Finally, the chapter focuses on the convergence of the top-down and bottom-up approaches in the proposal *Making Space in Dalston*, an example of "tactical masterplanning".

The book ends with a conclusion chapter which revisits the initial hypothesis posed in this text, that is, that the city reinvention process which began with the environmental crisis of the 1970s, and that the financial crisis of 2008 consolidated, may well experience a new and perhaps final push due to the 2020–2021 health crisis.

Notes

1. *Time Out* polled 27,000 people on their opinion about their cities' most belittled neighborhoods that they liked the best. From those opinions, and taking into account the advice of local experts, the publishers chose the neighborhoods that were more present in the media. Unfortunately, the listing was not very helpful with respect to the presence of cool neighborhoods in the different towns, since it only admitted one per city.
2. Only five neighborhoods were found in cities with a population of less than a million. Hobart (Australia) was the least populated.
3. A per capita income above $12,000 (2018).

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1
ON VALUES
From Modernity to Anti-Progress

This chapter deals with the change in values which has supported the reinvention of the city after the environmental crisis, from modernity to anti-progress. The thread of the argument starts in philosophy, more specifically in "ecosophy".

The Synthesis of Ecosophy and Eco-capitalism in the "Eco-lifestyle": The Slow City Movement

This section traces how the change in values evolved from a nineteenth-century philosophical tradition, Romantic thinking, towards ecosophy, the main source of these values nowadays. It continues by focusing on the social groups that have assumed them as their own, the "neobohemians", and their way of life, the "eco-lifestyle". Lastly, it addresses one of the first spatial expression of the latter, the Slow City movement.

Richard Tarnas (1991) argued that, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Western thought was nourished by two different sources: the Enlightenment and Romanticism. The goal of the Enlightenment was the emancipation of the people from ignorance and servitude through science. To reach this objective, the world of knowledge had to leave symbolic thinking behind and reformulate it on the basis of the dictates of reason. The precursors of Romantic thought, on the other hand, distanced themselves from Descartes' ideals, and embraced Rousseau's as catalysts to the voices that accused the Enlightenment of placing humanity in a purely materialist context.

Those same decades saw the advent of the Second Technological Revolution, with its electric and gasoline powered motors, which propelled the economic period known as "monopoly capitalism". A new political and business elite that

belonged to the bourgeoisie set in motion the modernization project, an ambitious rationalization program that began in the realm of industry but that ended up engaging society and culture. It was led by Enlightenment thinking, which contributed notions that led to efficient production and management methods, such as Fordism and Taylorism. It also provided the modern project with an ideological vector, the idea of "progress", around which a metanarrative was constructed that ran through all areas of knowledge. This idea promised a more prosperous future for all, an aspiration which was very hard to question and that quickly became a universal discourse: those who opposed this were discredited and deemed reactionary, archaic, or obscurantist.

Among the latter were those who defended Romantic thinking, a minority of intellectuals and artists closely related to bohemian circles. Their mistrust in progress was based on a reality that became patent shortly after the modernization process began: the deterioration of living conditions in the large industrial metropolises. Overcrowding, poverty, disease, and pollution called into question the promise made by the Enlightenment of welfare for all, opening a rift in the consensus around the idea of progress.

This led to a cultural war between the bourgeoisie and the bohemians that would last a century. David Brooks summarized it as follows:

> The bourgeois realm was the realm of business and the market. The bohemian realm was art. The bourgeois preferred numerical and mechanistic modes of thought. The bohemians preferred intuitive and organic modes of thought. The bourgeois liked organizations. The bohemians valued autonomy and regarded the bourgeoisie as conformist herd animals. The bourgeois loved machines; the bohemians preferred the intimate humanism of the preindustrial craftsman.
>
> *(Brooks, 2000, p. 69)*

These two world views responded to clashing value systems, leading to opposing lifestyles: the bourgeois was an urbanite, individualist, materialist, pragmatic, and believed blindly in the future; the bohemian was a ruralite, communitarian, spiritualist, idealist, and yearned for the past. The latter's reference was David Henry Thoreau, the representative of American Transcendentalism, a group of intellectuals that strived for an existence in accordance with these values in nature. There, in a cabin next to Walden Ponds (Massachusetts), Thoreau retired to fish, gather wood, and write *Walden* (1854), a book in which he put forward the concept of "voluntary simplicity".

In short, at the end of the nineteenth century, a group of Romantic bohemians confronted the modernization process that the bourgeoisie of the Enlightenment had set into motion around the metanarrative of progress. As an alternative, they proposed a new value system inspired in the past, which

derived into a lifestyle driven by simplicity. This chain of events would repeat itself a century later. The onset of the ecological crisis, or to be more precise, the dawn of its awareness, is usually set in the 1960s, coinciding with the rise of what is known as the "counterculture". A series of natural disasters occurred at the time, such as the Cornwall oil spill (1967), which favored the study of pollution. Some scientific journals announced, in often apocalyptic terms, what was then called the "environmental crisis". In response, in academic circles, activists organized into groups calling for the implementation of environmental protection policies. Taking the same cues used by the Romantic thinkers at the end of the nineteenth century, they warned against the dangers of the prevailing economic model—industrial developmentalism—and the consumer habits that sustained it. The environmental movement began to utter its first words.

In the 1970s, two oil crises occurred, in 1973 and 1979. Books written by scientists, such as *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson (1962) or Barry Commoner's iconic *The Closing Circle* (1971), became best sellers. Environmentalism expanded beyond the borders of university campuses and spread a troubling feeling of scarcity throughout society. The two mentioned crises were closely linked to the depletion of a natural resource, oil, and had sowed economic insecurity throughout a world with less work, fewer opportunities, and less welfare support. The brilliance of environmentalism lay in the way it made a virtue of necessity by presenting frugality as a moral value. This is how the "ethics of scarcity", that is, the ideological exaltation of austerity, burst onto the scene. Pier V. Aureli detected its original source in the medieval tradition of asceticism, the practice of abstinence from mundane pleasures through self-discipline (Aureli, 2013, location 46). Thoreau had recovered this tradition by choosing an austere but happy and fulfilling lifestyle on the shores of Walden Ponds. Thus, Romantic thinking converged with environmentalism around the ethics of scarcity.

This synthesis was intellectually articulated by "ecosophy", a term coined by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in 1973 but provided with epistemological content by Felix Guattari, the author of *Les trois écologies* (1989). Ecosophy was presented as a non-anthropocentric line of thought that proposed overcoming 500 years of humanist thinking. It considered people as part of the environment, but not hierarchically above it. In accordance with this vision, its goal was to achieve a harmonious relationship between humanity and the environment, in which the former simply co-inhabited with the latter. This understanding was incompatible with the unhinged consumerism that marked the decades of industrial developmentalism (1950–1970), which became responsible for a global commerce that used a vast amount of energy resources and produced tons of polluting waste. In order to change these habits, Western society needed to supersede the Enlightenment values that had governed it up until then. In opposition to materialism, ecosophy claimed the precedence of ethics,

or rather, bioethics, encouraging the citizenry to overcome the desire to own goods and become a "post-materialist" being.

Guattari did not postulate ecosophy as a philosophical theory in itself, but as a form of wisdom addressing how to inhabit the planet in the context of an environmental crisis. All wisdom is descriptive and prescriptive, expressing a system of values that derives from an ontological conception and laying out a set of norms accordingly. That is, ecosophic values had to be translated into a way of life. In this sense, it proposed redefining the notion of "quality of life". Humanity's well-being could not be mistaken with "standard of living", a merely quantitative parameter that only tallies consumption and the accumulation of goods. In contrast, true well-being emanates from a simple, austere, and empathic existence with nature.

The ecosophic way of life had begun to be sketched out in the 1970s. The New Age movement triggered an interest in spirituality. Meditation techniques with their origins in Buddhism and Hinduism became a fad, along with secular methods such as transcendental meditation, Gestalt, and hypnotism. Alternative therapies, both physical and psychological, also sprang up everywhere. Some came from tradition, such as Chinese acupuncture, Indian Ayurveda, or Perso–Arabic Yunani. But others did not, like homeopathy, herbal medicine, scent therapy, reflexology, chiropractics, bioenergy, or Reiki.

Once again, ways of life and social groups were closely linked. The cultural war between the bourgeoisie and the bohemians continued with the baby boomers. In the decade of the 1980s, the globalization process began, neoconservatives reached power, and the Third Technological Revolution took place. The former became known as "yuppies", a term applied to the young professionals that worked in the financial sector. The latter were left-wing activists that watched over the legacy of the counterculture movements. They advocated peace, social justice, minority rights . . . causes to which they added the protection of the environment. Therefore, it could be said that towards the end of the twentieth century, the bourgeoisie-Enlightenment, bohemian-Romanticism binomials were still standing. However, during the 1990s, and once the devastating economic crises of the 1970s had been left far behind, this framework crumbled. A new generation of young people, which Richard Lloyd calls "neobohemians" (2006) and David Brooks "Bobos" ("Bohemian-Bourgeois") (2000), began the process of merging bourgeois and bohemian values. The hipster movement is a good example of the transition from a purist bohemia to a hybrid neobohemia. Mark Greif divides their history into two periods: that of the "white hipsters", from 1999 to 2003, and that of the "primitive hipsters" or "ecohipsters", from 2004 onwards (Greif, Ross, and Tortorici, 2010, p. 4). The first were young, white, and educated members of the middle class that maintained a connection with counterculture groups (anarchists, punks, anti–establishment, etc.). After 2004, the bourgeois soul of the hipster came to light. Physical appearances turned into something meaningful. The bushy beard

became a masculine emblem while clothes and accessories were codified: plaid shirts, hunter blazers, proletarian scarves, skinny jeans … all of which had been the mark of the working classes up until then. This is how the ecohipsters came to be, softer and friendlier creatures than the white hipsters who reconciled the post-materialist values of ecosophy with a brand of consumerism that hoped to demonstrate their adhesion to said values.

The hipster phenomenon shows something unprecedented: the neobohemians managed to harmonize two forms of thought that, for over a century, had been immersed in a cultural war. As we have seen, the key lay in the reconciliation with consumerism, albeit with a special type of consumerism. On the one hand, it incorporated an ethical dimension: fair trade stores managed by NGOs or businesses committed to supporting vulnerable social groups (local farmers, Amazonian tribes, or political refugees, for example) conveyed this. On the other, it respected the environment and health. In this sense, organic food (whole wheat bread, basmati rice, radish sprouts, Fo-Ti roots) led the way. Ultimately, it was a conscientious and engaged type of consumption. It was never compulsive, it fled from luxury and ostentation and chose simplicity, turning economic well-being into something spiritual and intellectual. Thus, "eco-consumption", the cultural substrate of "eco-capitalism", was born. Both actually betrayed the principles of the ethics of scarcity. During this post-crisis period, with numerous societies riding a new wave of prosperity, asceticism and austerity lost their religious meaning. However, a taste persisted for simplicity and naturalness, two qualities with a strong aesthetic component which eco-capitalism exploited well. The ethics of scarcity led to the "aesthetic of scarcity", an ideological metamorphosis that ensured its future survival.

From this adjustment rose the "eco-lifestyle", a form of living that merged ecosophy and eco-capitalism, the ethical and post-materialist values of the former with a compatible form of consumption. This way of life took on decidedly bohemian traits which, nevertheless, neither questioned nor stood up to bourgeois values and institutions. The revolutionary commitment of the baby boomers had been lost along the way, but the undoubtedly progressive ideological overtone remained, as well as a caring, tolerant, inclusive, and socially sensitive mentality.

Millennials seem to have embraced the eco-lifestyle *en masse*, a fact that has to do with the complicated social-economic circumstances that they have had to face. The Great Recession has harshly affected this generation. Its members no longer work in the financial sector, but in that of the new economy (especially in creative industries), doing so as freelancers; their salaries and purchasing power are modest, and the instability of their job situation is permanent, making them part of a precarious class that lives following certain ascetic precepts. This explains the results of the *Deloitte Global Millennial Survey 2019* (Deloitte, 2019). It highlights five findings: millennials are pessimistic about social progress; they are suspicious of the world that surrounds them, where they search

for a place of refuge; they are more interested in helping their communities than in starting a family; they are skeptical towards the world of business; and they support companies that align with their values.[1] Of the 20 challenges that contemporary society faces, the majority points to climate change, the protection of the environment, and natural disasters as the most pressing issues. This reveals their commitment to the eco-lifestyle, which Richard Lloyd explained in the following terms:

> Compared to a previous era, flexible capitalism demands greater adaptability from its workers, and even educated professionals must learn to live with contingency and vulnerability. In other words, the reality of their work lives pushes them closer to the lived experience of the urban bohemia in key aspects.
>
> *(Lloyd, 2006, p. 240)*

Millennials, who are expert trendsetters, have transformed the eco-lifestyle into something cool, seductive, and civic. This generation, the first that can be considered truly global, has spread that form of living all over the planet and throughout society. Nowadays, a plethora of social groups of all ages and interests practice and promote the eco-lifestyle. The FIRE (Financial Independence Retire Early) movement preaches a way of life based on frugality, savings, and investment in order to retire at an early age; the Voluntary Simplicity movement proposes downshifting in order to end the work-consumption-work cycle and focus existence towards self-realization;[2] the Tiny House movement suggests shrinking residential space (the average size of their homes is 46 square meters) to save both when buying and maintaining a house, as well as to reduce their ecological footprint. For the first time in history, it is the bohemian, and not the bourgeoisie, who sets the pace of things.

One of these initiatives is the Slow movement, which will be underlined due to its relevance to the theme of this book. Its brilliant originality resides in the affront it poses to one of the most recognizable symbolic and cultural icons of modernity: velocity. It refutes this notion by defending slowness as a pillar of quality of life. Carl Honoré, the author of *In Praise of Slow* (2004), explains it in the following terms: "All the things that bind us together and make life worth living—community, family, friendship—thrive on the one thing we never have enough of: time" (Honoré, 2019, p. 9). The germ and main reference of the Slow movement can be found in Slow Food, which burst onto the scene in 1986, after the protests led by Carlo Petrini against the opening of a McDonald's in Piazza di Spagna in Rome. Nowadays, the Slow movement as a whole flourishes thanks to the intertwining between groups that focus on specific issues: Slow Food on gastronomy, Slow Sex on sexuality, Slow Schooling on teaching, Slow Medicine on health, Slow Capitalism or "Manbonism" on

economy, along with Slow Travel, Slow Reading, and so forth. Of these, the one that interests this book the most is the Slow City movement.

It was founded in 1999 by Paolo Saturnini, the mayor of the small Tuscan town of Greve in Chianti. Nowadays, it has more than 200 members (all of which are cities of fewer than 50,000 inhabitants) from around 30 countries, a third of which are in Italy[3] (*Cittaslow*, online). The requirements to join the Slow City movement are gathered in a manifesto, the *Cittaslow International Charter*, that consists of around 50 guidelines grouped into six chapters: "energy environmental policy", "infrastructure policies", "quality of urban life policies", "agricultural, touristic and artisan policies", "policies for hospitality, awareness and training", and "social cohesion". Its goal is to produce slow objects, slow practices, and slow spaces that apply the Slow Food philosophy to, among others, urban planning and design. This explains why certain issues linked to food production stand out, such as the promotion of organic agriculture or teaching eating habits. The existence in these cities of a "*convivium*" (local Slow Food unit) and a "*presidium*" (a body set up for the protection and enhancement of traditional products and agricultural techniques) is also required.

The conceptual core of the movement, the promotion of slowness, is entrusted to "regulations of urban time" that harmonize the schedules of schools, libraries, hospitals, businesses, and work centers. The City Council of Bra opens on Saturday mornings; the outpatient clinics of Hamburg until the late afternoon; the schools of Bolzano do so gradually to avoid morning congestion. In addition to this, in many slow cities, stores have to close on Sunday and Thursday afternoons as a measure to protect local business. Transportation policy also plays a crucial role in the promotion of slowness. Bra, a small city in the Italian Piedmont and a founding member of the movement along with Positano, Orvieto, and Greve in Chanti, encourages walking. Pedestrian areas abound and pedestrian transport systems have been enforced, such as the walking school bus ("Pedibus"). Bra also champions repose: streets are filled with benches in an invitation to sit and contemplate the relaxing urban scene. Wherever vehicle traffic is allowed, at a maximum speed of 30 km/h, pedestrians have priority, a fact that is emphasized by setting the streets and sidewalks at the same level (to psychologically coerce drivers) and the absence of traffic lights (drivers always know who has the priority). Lastly, cafes and bars have the right to occupy the parking spaces in front of their premises with outdoor seating.

With regards to spatial policies, the Slow City movement advocates the preservation of local character and aesthetic. Everything that is related to architectural conservation and restoration is considered a priority, both for listed buildings and obsolete productive spaces that, in their day, accommodated traditional activities. However, the main role is played by public space, which is occupied and themed following Slow canons. Examples of the former are Orvieto's Events of Taste: the Cittá Slow Dinner Music, Cellars & Chefs, Orvieto with Taste, the Umbria Jazz Winter, etc. This city has declared five "Slow

FIGURE 1.1 Bra (Italy): outdoor seating occupying a parking space.

Sundays" between March and May during which the center of town is closed to all traffic, the crafts shops open, and the Piazza Duomo is transformed into a farmers' market. Orvieto has also themed its public space with such events as the Route of Wines and Savours [sic], which guides visitors to local wine, cheese, and olive oil production venues.

The geographer Paul L. Knox values that the Slow City movement has encouraged the disciplines of urbanism and urban design to focus on issues that have a major impact in the quality of life of citizens. He also appreciates that a sense of place is cultivated among the inhabitants in their everyday surroundings (Knox, 2005). However, questionable issues do exist. To begin with, it is disconcerting that the movement limits membership to cities with a population below 50,000, leaving out the real urban problematic of contemporaneity, which occurs in much more complex contexts. Carl Honoré recognizes this: "Cittá Slow, after all, is not for everyone. ... For many in Cittá Slow, the urban ideal is the late-medieval city, a rabbit warren of cobbled streets where people come together to shop, socialize and eat in charming piazzas" (Honoré, 2019, p. 91). Nor is the quality of life that Knox refers to within everyone's reach. It is revealing that most of the movement's members come from rich, highly educated European regions, such as the Piedmont and Tuscany, paradises on earth where the global elites take refuge when they retire.[4]

Furthermore, the cultivation of a sense of place has sometimes led to a mere aestheticization articulated by conservative urban regulations. Some city codes, for example, contemplate subsidizing new buildings that use colors and materials that are characteristic of the region (such as honey-colored stucco facades and red tile roofs). Regarding this, the lack of innovation in urbanism is also worrisome. The few guidelines of the Cittaslow charter directly related to this discipline abound with politically correct generalities that were pointed out and implemented decades ago: preservation plans for historic centers, the pedestrianization of streets and squares, the promotion of alternative means of public transportation, the defense of local commerce, etc.

Elitism, conservatism, lack of innovation ... Knox himself alerted that the Slow City movement was at risk of generating: "enervated, backward-looking, isolationist communities: living mausoleums where the puritanical zealotry of Slowness has displaced the fervent materialism of the fast world" (Knox, 2005, p. 7). For now, what it has produced are quaint little cities, inhabited by a sector of the population with a high purchasing power, and regulated by conservative urban policies. This is hard to digest for the practitioners of the eco-lifestyle, whose values, although hybrid and in peace with bourgeois thinking, are still decidedly progressive.

The Past as a Value to Redesign the Present: The "Eco-aesthetic"

The values of ecosophy were transferred to urban and architectural spaces by the eco-aesthetic, one of the most important cultural expressions of the eco-lifestyle. This section focuses on this concept, beginning by addressing its main source: the past. Then, it continues by contextualizing this phenomenon within the general anti-progress trend, intellectually interpreting it as "reflective nostalgia". Finally, it focuses on eco-aesthetic design, inspired by artisan thinking.

As mentioned, Romantic thought looked to the preindustrial age to construct an alternative value system to that of the modern project. Its defense of nostalgia as a legitimate feeling that is neither reactionary nor obscurantist collided with the Enlightenment insistence on the idea of progress. This reference to the past still has a robust hold in the eco-lifestyle. One of the first responses to the ecosophic call to reduce consumption was the rise of "retro-chic", a term coined at the beginning of the 1970s to identify the interest shown by certain groups for vintage clothing and accessories: 1950s pants, 1940s blazers, the brooches of mothers, the hats of grandfathers ... It was their way of claiming the ethics of scarcity while also rejecting the endless succession of styles and trends that energized bourgeois consumerism.

Retro-chic quickly spread through the London street markets of Portobello Road and Camden Lock, expanding into the realms of furniture and decorative objects. In order to stand out as socially different, eco-hipsters transformed the

past as a form of protest into an aesthetic movement. David Brooks, referring to a business specialized in domestic products, commented:

> [Restoration Hardware] caters to its graduate-degreed clientele with old-fashioned ribbed steel flashlights (just like we used to carry in summer camp), hand-forged scissors, old-fashioned kazoos, Moon Pies, classic Boston Ranger pencil sharpeners, compartmentalized school lunch trays, and glass and steel Pyrex beakers just like the ones your doctor used to keep tongue depressors in. These are the nostalgic mementos of the communities we left behind.
>
> *(Brooks, 2000, p. 240)*

The Romantic strategy of recovering the past has always acted ideologically, picking from the trunk of history the periods that best fit with the aesthetic of scarcity—simplicity, naturalness, honesty, and authenticity. At the end of the nineteenth century, it opted for the preindustrial age, choosing social groups with austere ways of life that the modern project had condemned to extinction: artisans, farmers, fishermen. Today, the nostalgia of millennials is more eclectic, it focuses on different periods both in the preindustrial and industrial past. In London, the epicenter of retro-chic has moved to Brick Lane, in Shoreditch, the global mecca of the creative class. A myriad of shops and markets satiate

FIGURE 1.2 London: Labour and Wait store.

that generation's longing for all things retro, with the sale of products from the postwar decades, like radios, typewriters, or old-fashioned television sets. The selling point of Labour and Wait, a Shoreditch store that specializes in clothing, home, and work utensils, states: "We believe in a simple, honest approach to design, where quality and utility are intrinsic. From hardware to clothing we offer a selection of timeless products that celebrate functional design and which are appropriate in a traditional or contemporary environment" (Labour and Wait, online). The "simple and honest design" it refers to is 100 percent based on the blue-collar worker. In the clothing section one can find the indigo denim jackets with which big manufacturing companies dressed their employees and in the household items section objects such as screwdrivers, hammers, wooden folding rulers, paint brushes, and toolboxes are on display.

The emergence of this nostalgia towards the past has had a profound impact on our relationship with technology. David Sax describes as "the revenge of the analog" the growing and paradoxical interest that contemporary society shows towards the analogical objects that digital technology has rendered obsolete, some of which he covers in his book *The Revenge of Analog* (Sax, 2016): vinyl records, despite their questionable sound quality; photographic film and Polaroid cameras, despite their expense; board games, despite the unbeatable appeal of videogames; printed books, despite being more expensive to produce and distribute than e-books; or stationery articles, the first victims of digital technology.

This fact may seem bewildering since millennials actually make intense use of computing and telecommunication technologies. The intention of the "analog avengers", therefore, does not seem to involve a return to an idyllic pre-digital state, but the normalization of nostalgia towards the past. They have simply undone the reputation of inefficiency and anachronism that hung over the realm of the analog, allowing it to interact naturally with the digital sphere. As Sax stated, the Moleskine notebook has thus become the best companion of the MacBook (Sax, 2016, p. 31). This is what is known as "techno-relativism", the pragmatic albeit cautious use of technology.

One of the virtues the practitioners of the eco-lifestyle have discovered in the analog is its appeal to the senses. Sax mentioned the example of vinyl records:

> the act of playing a record seemed more involved, and ultimately more rewarding, than listening to the same music of a hard drive: the physical browsing of album spines on the shelf, the careful examination of the art on the sleeve, the diligent needle drop, and the one second pause between its contact with the record's vinyl surface and the first scratchy waves of sound emerging from the speakers. It all involved more of our physical senses, requiring the use of our hands, feet, eyes, ears, and even mouth, as we blew dust from the record's surface.
>
> *(Sax, 2016, p. xiii)*

Sax extended this capacity of seducing the senses to the stores in which analog objects are commercialized. Referring to the New York bookstore Strand, he commented:

> With its towering shelves, creaking wooden floor, and quirky staff spread over three floors, the Strand is perhaps the most romantic and famous bookstore in New York. … This new generation of bookstores all define themselves as enlightened, more pleasurable retail alternative to Amazon and big-box stores. They are warm, inviting, often beautiful spaces, with friendly, knowledgeable staff, refined inventory, and a sense of place.
>
> *(Sax, 2016, pp. 127–128)*

The case of the Strand bookstore is indicative of a phenomenon that can be interpreted as a spatial consequence of techno-relativism: the renaissance of bricks–and–mortar. In 1995, William J. Mitchell predicted that many of the economic, social, and cultural activities that had traditionally taken place in physical premises would in a near future happen in cyberspace. In this sense, the task of architects would no longer be to give shape to buildings, but to develop software to create virtual environments and electronic interconnections (Mitchell, 1995). The future has proven him wrong. The rise of the past and of techno-relativism has made physical space at least as equally important as it always was before information technologies burst onto the scene.

A term exists to designate the nostalgia towards the past that emerged with retro-chic and expanded with techno-relativism: "anti-progress". Zygmunt Bauman explained what fuels it in the following terms:

> This prompted the pendulums of the public mindset and mentality to perform a U-turn: from investing public hopes of improvement in the uncertain and ever-too-obviously un-trustworthy future, to re-inventing them in the vaguely remembered past, valued for its assumed stability and so trustworthiness. With such a U-turn happening, the future is transformed from the natural habitat of hopes and rightful expectations into the site of nightmares: horrors of losing your job together with its attached social standing, of having your home together with the rest of life's goods and chattels "repossessed", of helplessly watching your children sliding down the wee-being-cum-prestige slope and your own laboriously learned and memorized skills stripped of whatever has been left of their market value.
>
> *(Bauman, 2017, p. 6)*

He also added:

> The first thing to leap to mind whenever "progress" is mentioned is, for many of us, the prospect of more jobs for humans—those requiring

intellectual skills as much as the already-vanished manual ones—that are bound to disappear, replaced by computers and computer managed robots; and yet steeper hills up which the battle of survival will need to be fought.

(Bauman, 2017, p. 58)

Bruno Latour placed the unveiling of the chimera of progress three decades ago:

Whereas until the 1990s one could (provided that one profited from it) associate the horizon of modernization with the notions of progress, emancipation, wealth, comfort, even luxury, and above all rationality, the rage to deregulate, the explosion of inequalities, the abandonment of solidarities have gradually associated that horizon with the notion of an arbitrary decision out of nowhere in favor of the sole profit of the few.

(Latour, 2018, p. 19)

His diagnosis was clear, the modernization project had failed, a foreseeable outcome since it has always been an unrealizable enterprise for one ecological reason: "precisely for want of a planet vast enough for their dreams of growth for all" (Latour, 2018, p. 22).

Therefore, the discredit of the progress metanarrative is behind contemporary nostalgia. Svetlana Boym categorizes it into two types: restorative and reflective nostalgia. The former responds to an essentialist project that hopes to reconstruct a national past, recovering symbols and monuments to do so:

The past for the restorative nostalgic is a value for the present; the past is not a duration but a perfect snapshot. Moreover, the past is not supposed to reveal any signs of decay; it has to be freshly painted in its "original image" and remain eternally young.

(Boym, 2001, p. 49)

In the 1980s, restorative nostalgia first appeared in the public spaces of European and North American cities. Encouraged by the boom in urban tourism, they embarked on an explosive promotion of identitarian features the aim of which was to differentiate them from one another. City councils used urban design to restore the "Past", in capital letters, of their cities, from the repaving of streets (prioritizing the uses of cobbles and paving stones) to the installation of street furniture—fake wrought iron benches, nineteenth-century style streetlamps, or signage written in period typeface. This overdesign and over-codification, habitual in Slow cities, produces a dense, formal, and artificial atmosphere that is alien to the relaxed nature of the eco-lifestyle. In fact, the tendency towards restorative nostalgia is one of the key factors behind the clash between the latter and the Slow City movement.

FIGURE 1.3 Seville: restorative-nostalgic street furniture.

However, flashes of restorative nostalgia can also be seen in the eco–lifestyle. David Brooks perceived this in neobohemian fascination for the preindustrial age, a manifestation, according to him, of a longing to rebuild connections to a world of order, stability, and coherence that is long gone. In this sense, he branded so–called progressive Bobos (or neobohemians) as "spiritual

FIGURE 1.4 London: Columbia Road Market.

reactionaries", that is, temperamental, rather than ideological, conservatives: "Many Bobos would fight like hell against being labeled conservatives, but often the ones in the hemp clogs and ponytails are the most temperamentally conservative of all" (Brooks, 2004, p. 268). Columbia Road in London is an example of the restorative throb that takes place in the land of the eco-lifestyle. On Sundays, this street, with its cobbled pavement and stone sidewalks, along with its streetlamps imitating the old gas lamps, becomes a flower, plant, and tree market, a mecca for neobohemians. The public space is staged with period trucks placed here and there, and with swing bands setting the pace of couples dressed in 1930s' garb. Restorative nostalgia is especially patent in the businesses, where post-materialist consumerism is practiced: alternative bookstores, vintage clothing boutiques, rustic furniture stores, artisanal upholstery studios, etc. The facades of these establishments share an architectural style: exposed brick plinths, windows with small glass panes, fluted wood pilasters crowned with listels and cornices with cymantium moldings, corbels with Ionic volutes ... all in subtle pastel colors. This kind of catalog of Victorian architecture is not happenstance; it alludes to a very specific past, spatially and temporally speaking: the age of the glorious British Empire, an ideological restorative gesture that reveals the bourgeois and conservative spirit of the neobohemians.

FIGURE 1.5 London: shop on Columbia Road.

The second type of nostalgia identified by Boym is reflective and it is the opposite of the restorative kind, it is progressive and closer to the ideals of the eco-lifestyle: "The focus here is not on recovery of what is perceived to be an absolute truth but on the meditation on history and passage of time" (Boym, 2001, p. 49). In this sense, reflective nostalgia could resemble a form of melancholia, in which the past is reflected upon but there is not an attempt to restore it. In spite of this, it has a very important function: it turns the past into a positive asset that helps understand and inhabit the present, where it can have infinite potential. Reflective nostalgia, in this case, has enabled the anti-progress movement to visualize, disseminate, and apply the ecosophical values, without aspiring to any sort of authenticity. In fact: "reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space" (Boym, 2001, p. 49). Raphael Samuel perceived this trend in the irony and manipulation of retro-chic: it did not reproduce the original, it reinvented it, selecting objects under aesthetic criteria, encapsulating the new and the old, mixing styles (Samuel, 2012, pp. 95–113). The same can be said of the preindustrial nostalgia of neobohemians, of the industrial nostalgia of millennials, and of techno-relativism. All are expressions of reflective nostalgia, all use the past as a strategy to redesign the present according to the values of ecosophy.

Another similar example is the recovery of artisan thinking, which has enabled the transference of these values to aesthetic. Techno-relativism was

crucial in the materialization of one of the greatest triumphs of the anti-progress movement: the return of handicrafts, the very first victim of the modern project. This was masterfully intellectualized by Richard Sennett in *The Craftsman* (2008), in which he called for artisan thinking, a form of reasoning that attempts to find an answer to a basic human impulse: "the desire to do a job well for its own sake" (Sennett, 2008, p. 9). The following reflection defends that this form of thought brought about the eco-aesthetic, which has been able to visually express the eco-lifestyle. This new exercise of reflective nostalgia is presented as a reaction against modern design, which applied to the field of design the values and tactics of the modern project (materialism, technologism, efficiency, etc.). It was inspired by the artistic avant-garde, was linked to the architecture of the Modern Movement, and received the blessing of the academic and cultural institutions of the twentieth century.

The eco-aesthetic results from a series of reconsiderations that affect design, production, and management processes in the creation of objects. With regards to design, it takes on a new attitude, that of pragmatism (Sennett, 2008, p. 286), from which three strategies derive: openness, simplicity, and materiality. The first is inspired by the common sense of the craftsperson, someone who has always dealt with technical and economical contingencies and limitations. Modern designers spurned this approach considering it unsophisticated, the result of a rudimentary mindset. Despite their call for functionalism, they were

FIGURE 1.6 Eco-aesthetic design.

profoundly intellectualist. Their commitment lay in the avant-garde art theories, the starting point of a creative process that continued with the definition of a precisely determined "artistic idea" (normally abstract and conceptual) and aspired to reach a perfect materialization. As Sennett pointed out, the craftsperson, however, considered that the design process was over with a simple undefined sketch open to the changes and improvisations that, with absolute certainty, would arise during execution (Sennett, 2008, p. 262). The same is applicable to the eco-aesthetic. The intellectual dimension is not a priority. Its commitment resides in its fight against a consumerism driven by ephemeral trends. Hence the first of its traits: openness, the relative lack of definition of form that enables its transformation and adaptation in the future and, therefore, guarantees its durability.

The second characteristic of eco-aesthetic design, simplicity as a choice, is closely linked to the first trait. By shunning trends it has been able to shift its focus from innovation and originality—obsessions of modern design—to what is known and part of the everyday (Sennett, 2008, p. 66). The eco-aesthetic looks to familiar objects for inspiration, but it reinvents them, making them simpler and reducing them to the basics: tables only made out of a board and four legs, lamps a mere light bulb fixed to an electrical connection, fences just boards joined by crossbeams ... By turning these objects into archetypes, the eco-aesthetic gives these pieces a new meaning, without forgetting that, above all, they are useful tools.

Materiality, the third trait of eco-aesthetic design, is part of this commitment to the real world. There is a predilection for natural products, mainly wood and clay, two expressive and relatively inexpensive materials that fit in with the values of the eco-lifestyle—authenticity, simplicity, or harmony with nature, among others. Eco-aesthetic design shows the matter it works with exactly how it is, without hiding its humble origins through polishing or lacquering, but dignifying it by revealing its texture and age. In this sense, it shows its aversion to luxury, its belief that, as Aureli stated: "Less is enough" (Aureli, 2013). This also yields commercial results. The eco-aesthetic is aware that, nowadays, neatness can be counterproductive. Sax argues that one of the reasons the analog is so popular is precisely the level of perfection that digital technologies have achieved, leading consumers to find the defects and clumsiness of analog technologies charming (Sax, 2016, p. xiii). The materiality of the eco-aesthetic celebrates imperfection for similar reasons: the refinement of machine finishes results cold and distant, it numbs the senses; on the contrary, humanity emanates from the imprecision of manual finishes, stimulating the sense of touch.

This leads to the second aspect of artisan thought that inspires the eco-aesthetic: the value placed in the production process. In contrast with modernist creators, who ceded it to machines in order to focus on design, the craftsperson was involved in both tasks, in what Sennett calls the "intimate connection

between hand and head" (Sennett, 2008, p. 9). Indeed, what brought practice and theory together in artisan thought to create a whole were skills, both manual (a sensitive sense of touch, good hand-wrist coordination, etc.) and technical (the use of tools, the knowledgeable manipulation of materials, etc.). In the eco-aesthetic, these two types of skills have come together again. The idea is that the designer not only creates, but also knows how to produce. In the purest techno-relativist spirit, craftsmanship and technology work together: the manufacturing of an object can begin, say, with an artisanal turning, continue by being faceted using numerical control, and be given the final touches returning to the warm hands of the designer-producer in order to guarantee a human touch of imperfection.

Finally, there is the issue of management, which affects design and production processes. The novelty here is the cooperative nature that artisan thinking has brought to both, again in sharp contrast with modern design, which was based on individual genius. As Sennett points out, medieval guilds never competed against each other, they cooperated with one another (Sennett, 2008, p. 32). The same occurred within the workshop, where craftspeople and apprentices shared their knowledge of techniques, tools, and, equally important, the same work space to enable these exchanges (Sennett, 2008, p. 53). In the eco-aesthetic, cooperative management has translated into collective design, with the participation of non-experts, and working in community workshops (one of the most novel contemporary social cohesion spaces). The DIY movement is a good example of this. It first appeared in the 1960s and 70s, during the incubation period of environmentalism, and linked to the counterculture spirit of the time. Its anti-consumption stance was based on having people make the objects they needed themselves, without the help of an expert. During the 1990s, the rise of the Internet opened up the movement to cooperativeness; web pages such as hometips.com allowed people to share information regarding the production of furniture and utensils. In later years, the provision of open-source software made it possible for "makers" to transcend the production phase and enter the world of design.

In short, a new culture of design, production, and management is the legacy passed on from artisan thinking to the eco-aesthetic in an exemplary exercise of reflective nostalgia. This section finishes with a pioneer case study of its application to the field of street furniture: the example of the Assemble group (Assemble Studio, online). The synchronicity of this multidisciplinary collective with the eco-aesthetic occurs at the three levels mentioned above. With regards to management, it is important to highlight the cooperative nature of their work. Their London work space, Sugarhouse Studios—a former school in Bermondsey—functions as a community workshop: it is open to artists, designers, or mere makers, to share services, ideas, and projects; and, occasionally, it is open to the neighborhood to organize events and courses. This trust in community work transcends the studio space. Such was the case with the

TABLE 1.1 Comparison between modern design and the eco-aesthetic

Phase	Modern Design		Eco-aesthetic	
	Approach/Attitude	Strategies	Approach/Attitude	Strategies
Design	• Intellectualism	Precise and finished definition of the object	• Pragmatism	Openness: relative definition of the object
		Search for innovation and originality		Simplicity: reinterpretation of what is known and of the everyday
		Abstraction: industrial products and refined faultless finishes		Materiality: natural products and imperfect finishes
Production	• Machine-based	Use of the latest technology	• Artisanal	Techno-relativism: combining manual skills and technology
Management	• Individualism	Author design	• Cooperativism	Collective design and workshop mentality
		Professionalism (performing the role of artist)		Amateurism (DIY).

exhibition *The Rules of Production* (Tokyo, 2018–2019), for which the furniture and shelves on display were designed and produced on site in the Shisido gallery itself, for two weeks turning the space into a workshop where visitors cooperated in both tasks.

In 2015, Assemble opened the Grandby Workshop in Liverpool. They co-founded it with the neighbors of Granby Four Streets, who were interested in reclaiming the many abandoned homes that existed in the area. The group took on the creative direction of the workshop, sharing it with artists and local designers. This experience was important in the elucidation of their interests in the field of design. Bathroom tiles, door handles, and fireplaces had to be defined, awakening their vocation towards the ordinary. Assemble declares that the everyday objects that we create also create us, something that shows the important role that the eco-aesthetic can have in the assimilation of ecosophic values (Assemble Studio, online). The street furniture that they design reveals

FIGURE 1.7   Assemble: Sugarhouse Studios (London).

Image by Charlotte Swinburn_(charlotteswinburn.com), courtesy of Assemble.

this didactic potential. The chairs and tables of the Harrow Lowlands Park (2014) were made of wood from tree trunks cut down by the Epping Forest Conservation Arborist Team. In order to enhance their tactile dimension, they selected the pieces with the most striking dark grains, caused by fungi, thus highlighting the irregularities and imperfections of the wood. After processing and drying, it was cut into slivers that were randomly recombined and rejoined with small boards. Finally, the legs and backs were made out of an equally rudimentary steel supplementation painted in bright colors. The result is an ecosophic manifesto, a celebration of simplicity and austerity.

The Granby Workshop, where ceramic products for the building sector are made, is governed by a set of rules that prioritize the use of experimental methods and the development of technical skills, evidencing the importance that Assemble gives to the production process. In some projects, it has even competed with design for the leading role, by the sheer complexity of the former and the extreme simplicity of the latter. This is the case of pavement at Factory Floor (2018), where they applied an encaustic clay tile-making process; the display cases of the Lina Bo Bardi exhibit (2012–2017), for which they used snow-crete with vermiculite aggregate; or their intervention in the Kamikatz Brewery (2017), in which they recycled brewer's yeast by using it in the enameling.

The case of Assemble shows that, for architects interested in ecosophic values, the eco-aesthetic is easier to assimilate than the notion of slowness. If the Slow

FIGURE 1.8 Assemble: street furniture for Harrow Lowlands Park.

Image courtesy of Assemble.

City movement felt conservative and exclusivist to them, in the eco-aesthetic they have found a formula that encourages creativity and experimentation, offers the opportunity of social commitment, and, most importantly, may serve as bridge between the eco-lifestyle and urban and architectural designs.

Dalston: The Arcola Theatre and the "Third Places" of Neobohemia

While the previous section dealt with the transfer of ecosophic values to aesthetics, now their implementation in the architectural space will be addressed, mediated by interior decor and design. Two complementary approaches can be identified in this process: the first is marked by "un-design", the ideological

renunciation of professional design; in the second, this is supplemented with the "as found" and eco-aesthetics. These concepts will be contrasted with case studies located in Dalston.

The two approaches share the same goal: that the architectural spaces help create community. The reinforcement of collective bonds has been one of the historic constants of Romantic thinking. Nowadays, it is once again a priority for those who practice the eco-lifestyle. As seen at the beginning of this chapter, the *Deloitte Global Millennial Survey 2019* highlights that millennials are more interested in helping their community than in establishing a family or a business (Deloitte, 2019). The boom in volunteer work proves this: thousands of people generously give their time to help NGOs, clean beaches, or plant trees. That same survey reveals that the mistrust that millennials have towards their surrounding world has led them to search for places of refuge. They often find them in what Ray Oldenburg (1989) called "third places", public premises such as cafes, bars, or restaurants that serve as "sorting areas" where people with similar interests and lifestyles meet. Over the last decades, typically neobohemian third places, such as coffee shops, have flourished while those associated with the working classes have declined—in the United Kingdom the number of pubs has fallen from 60,400 in the year 2000 to 48,006 in 2013 (McWilliams, 2016, p. 61).[5]

As mentioned, to create community and quench the feeling of alienation, the advocates of the eco-lifestyle use two complementary approaches that

FIGURE 1.9   Dalston: Farr's School of Dancing Pub.

spatially stage their commitment to ecosophic values. The first one is un-design, an anti-professional and non-commercial aesthetic that only aspires to transform values into tangible experiences. In order to transfer ecosophic values to the architectural space un-design applies three strategies. First, the reflective recovery of pieces and articles from the past takes place, as in the retro-chic style. Then, everyday objects, in many cases rendered obsolete, are recycled, showing commitment to the sustainability of the planet. And lastly, the technical response comes into play, solving problems with standardized, prefabricated, and cheap elements. In sum, pure common sense.

FIGURE 1.10 Dalston: Farr's School of Dancing Pub.

An example of un-design is Farr's School of Dancing, a pub in Dalston that opened in 2013 in what used to be a dance school built in the 1930s and later squatted.[6] The space gives an unfinished impression: on the facade the paint is peeling, and within there are walls on which the plaster has disappeared exposing brick surfaces. The old board floor remains unlevel and neither the doors nor the windows have been replaced. The interventions have been minimal, and seem to have been executed in a hurry and by DIY aficionados: irregularly applied paint, electric cables stapled to the ceiling, plumbing rudimentarily attached to the wall ... All in all, a display of anti-professionalism which produces the desired results: spontaneity, irreverence, and a feeling of authenticity. Concerning the furniture, it is a hodgepodge collection, neither styles nor colors nor materials coincide. Around the same table, chairs are mismatching and they do not fit in with the table itself. There are more than a dozen different kinds, all of which are unassuming. This informality is enhanced by the accumulation of recycled objects, school coat hangers, theater seats, etc., that appeal to the ethics of scarcity. Never is the deterioration of materials hidden. Farr's School of Dancing rounds off this eco-lifestyle atmosphere with retro-chic pieces hooked onto the wall or shown on shelves: period radios and clocks, an analog telephone, a piano. Many of the articles range from the 1950s to the 1970s, recalling the dwellings and habits of the working classes: sober factory table-lamps, a pinball machine, a motorcycle hanging from the ceiling.

The second approach to implement ecosophic values in architectural space is characterized by the reconciliation with professional design. The strategies that architects and interior designers use are much more complex and sophisticated than those of un-design, which to a great extent originate from the study of neoboemian psychology. Two tactics stand out: on the one hand, users are stimulated by sensations, that is, by physical, spiritual, and intellectual experiences leading to meetings and exchanges; on the other hand, space is intensified, that is, activities not specific to a place are added in order to guarantee its massive and permanent occupation.

The use of this double strategy is easily recognizable in Dalston's third places. The first thing that stands out upon entering these premises is the high quality of their atmosphere; they are extremely welcoming. Usually, they have wooden floors and exposed brick walls, the star materials of the eco-aesthetic. The generation of a domestic atmosphere is the prime objective of the architects and interior designers of these spaces. The furniture is clearly homely: couches, cupboards, standing lamps, kitchen tables, and a vast number of plants. These pieces of furniture and accessories are easily recognizable by the clients, who immediately feel at home, among family. Moreover, they share an un-designed and eco-aesthetic tone. They are simple, everyday, and anonymous. There is no room for pomp and sophistication, but neither is there for kitsch, vulgarity or frivolity. Neobohemian third places are always restrained and low key. Their commercial names already announce this seen, for example, in that

of a cafe located on Kingsland Road that calls itself Bread & Butter Farmhouse Coffee. In other cases, this adherence to simplicity goes even further. On that same road there is a restaurant that presents itself as "Un-titled". And there is another that shuns a name altogether, the sign on the facade just reads "Beer + Burger". In these cases, restraint becomes a form of laconism.

As seen above, stimulating the senses is supplemented with spatial intensification. Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams refer to several examples:

> Wash & Coffee, in Munich, combines a launderette, a coffee bar and community meeting place. In Copenhagen, Fotocaféen combines a print shop, meeting places for the photography scene and coffee bar. In London, Drink, Shop-Do, which started as a Christmas pop-up, is a design shop and cafe bar that sells products from emerging designers and, as the name suggests, also hosts activity workshops in knitting, card and hat making and . . . Scrabble.
>
> *(Bishop and Williams, 2012, p. 69)*

This promiscuity of uses hits the nerve of reflective nostalgia because it adds a preindustrial touch that counters the rigid mono-functionality of modernist architecture.[7] Nowadays, this tactic is used to encourage more relaxed social behaviors as well as casual encounters. In order for this to take place, different functions must feed back to each other. Neobohemian third places often combine hospitality businesses with office, commercial, and productive uses.

Coffee shops epitomize the combination of hospitality and office uses. The availability of free Wi-Fi, large tables, drinks, and snacks have led many millennials, who often do not have their own office space and therefore miss out on the sense of belonging that work environments provide, to use them as their daily work places. The aforementioned Bread & Butter is totally equipped to carry out work activities, even if it is at the cost of domesticity. There are neither couches, armchairs nor low tables, but individual chairs placed along large tables that allow setting up computers and strewing papers. A bookshelf completes this work atmosphere. As to the stimulation of the senses, in these establishments it is normal to feel that one is among people that are healthy and in good shape, two priorities of millennials. This atmosphere is attained by the display of food products. Trays of avocadoes, baskets of oranges, bunches of celery, and boxes of pumpkins are placed on shelves and kitchen tables, spaces shared with packages of organic food and "homemade" baked goods (one of the most filmic and literary representations of the idea of home).

Next on the list of combinations of uses are commercial third places that include hospitality uses: bookstores with cafes, clothes shops with tearooms, gyms with supermarkets, or supermarkets with restaurants. In these cases, the goal of spatial intensification is to transform the act of shopping into a

FIGURE 1.11   Dalston: Bread & Butter Farmhouse Coffee.

social event, thus extending the amount of time clients spend in the premise. Spearheading the strive for this complementarity were the bookstores-cafes, for which hospitality services provide the opportunity to organize snack parties for book groups or cocktails for book presentations. In this case, the goal of the stimulation of the senses is to transform shopping, making it less of a materialist routine and turning it into more of a spiritual experience. To do so, neobohemian businesses take special care of personal treatment and elaborate on everything that has to do with the senses. At some clothes stores, a small cafe serves as the reception space. There, the manager doubles as a waiter, offering clients a hot drink and small talk among clothes hangers, shelves, and changing rooms infused with the aroma of coffee.

Lastly, there are the productive third places that incorporate hospitality spaces. In Dalston two stand out for their uniqueness. The Dusty Knuckle Bakery is a bakery-coffee shop where the cafe tables and a bread sales counter share the same space, so that clients can see how the bread is made. Ovens, sacks of flour, and bakers; flat whites, MacBooks, and millennials ... a superintensified refuge of the eco-lifestyle where even courses to make artisanal bread are imparted. The other example is the Little Duck-The Picklery Restaurant, which has integrated the dining area into the kitchen. Here, the chefs use

FIGURE 1.12   Dalston: The Dusty Knuckle Bakery.

the central table where clients eat as their workspace, making the preparation of orders visible. This ploy is highly convincing: on the one hand, it transmits domesticity (the kitchen has always been the symbolic center of the dwelling); on the other, it conveys honesty (there is nothing to hide, everything is impeccably clean, the produce is fresh, and the cooking methods are correct).

In short, cafes where one works, stores where one drinks coffee, bakeries where classes are given ... These examples show how the eco-aesthetic has been applied to interior design. Next, and to finish the chapter, the focus is placed on how the eco-aesthetic has been taken to architecture, a field that had already tackled the ethics and aesthetic of scarcity during the postwar years, when architects were faced with a severe lack of material resources. It was the Independent Group who introduced in the British art scene of the time an interest in Dadaist every day and unassuming *objets trouvés*. During their walks through the working-class neighborhoods of East London, the photographer Nigel Henderson showed Alison and Peter Smithson a new way of looking at these elements: "children's pavement play-graphics; repetition of 'kind' in doors used as site hoardings; the items in the detritus on bombed sites, such as the old boot, heaps of nails, fragments of sacks or mesh and so on" (Smithson and Smithson, 1990, p. 40). This fresh take on things led them to define the "as found" aesthetic, a clear precedent of un–design and the eco-aesthetic that,

FIGURE 1.13   Dalston: Little Duck–The Picklery Restaurant.

as the latter, also called for a commitment to asceticism. That new aesthetic became part of the Smithsons' architecture, not only in their interest and innovative approach to everyday objects, but also in the way they highlighted the importance of mass-produced industrial products, placed their efforts in the honest use of materials, and called for incorporation of the citizenry in the design process. This led to a specific design strategy: minimal intervention,

FIGURE 1.14   Dalston: Arcola Theatre.

which considers pre-existence a crucial part of the project and reduces to the bare minimum the transformation of the "as found" reality.

Dalston possesses a prime example of minimal intervention upon a preexisting building: the Arcola Theatre. Ever since it opened in 2001 in a former textile factory on Arcola Street, it has functioned as a super-intensified space. Its founders supplemented what were strictly theater-related activities with charitable uses in which more than 100 volunteers participate. They also created Arcola Energy, a local energy company that provides hydrogen and fuel cells, zero-emission energy products.[8]

In 2010, the Arcola Theatre had to give up the textile factory where it was originally established, which was demolished to make way for a residential building. The Hackney Council proposed relocating it at the former Colourworks paint factory on Ashwin Street, a publicly owned building that had been squatted for years. The first phase to adapt the building to this new use was guided by the precepts of un-design. In order to get the theater going as quickly and as inexpensively as possible, the personnel and a small group of volunteers spent nine months exploring the building, demolishing only the partitions raised during more recent refurbishments, and exposing the original brick walls and steel structure.

FIGURE 1.15   Dalston: Arcola Theatre.

The final remodeling of the building took place a few years later.[9] This sec-
ond phase was also led by personnel from Arcola, even though some professional
tasks were externalized: Arup Associates and Arup Venue Consulting served as
advisors regarding the general design of the building, and Cragg Management
produced the detailing and oversaw its construction. The work was carried out

by a group of 400 volunteers, neighbors, and theatre aficionados, supervised and trained on site by the aforementioned companies. The guiding theme was minimal intervention, something that was justified both by a commitment to the ethics of scarcity and by the limited resources available. In order to reduce the need to purchase materials, objects from elsewhere were recycled: light and sound systems were brought over from the original venue, along with numerous seats; the bathroom appliances and glass doors came from a set of temporary installations that had been built for the 2012 London Olympics. Doors and windows, concrete and wood floors were maintained "as found"; the brick walls were exposed, leaving plastered areas with peeling paint; and the wood residue produced by the construction work was stored to fuel the new furnace installed in the building. Lastly, where the recycling and "as found" strategies were not enough, low-cost and mass-produced industrial products were used. The railings of stairs were made with chipboard placed on frames, for example. Electricity, plumbing, sewage, and HVAC were left exposed, inundating ceilings and walls with pipes, ducts, and cables.

The new Arcola Theatre was inaugurated in 2012. In this way, Dalston recovered one of its most emblematic third places, making a super-intensified space available to the practitioners of the eco-lifestyle.

Notes

1. Forty-two percent of millennials declare to have initiated a commercial relationship with a business based on the perception that their products or services have a positive impact on the environment and society (Deloitte, 2019, p. 18).
2. According to the *Deloitte Global Millennial Survey 2019*, four out of five millennials feel attracted to the gig economy, a work market where temporary contracts and freelancing prevail. Among the reasons stated for this, the possibility of choosing a work schedule in accordance with one's personal life stands out (Deloitte, 2019, p. 15).
3. 2019 data.
4. Only five out of the 30 countries where Slow Cities are located are developing countries.
5. As Douglas McWilliams points out, this phenomenon is further certified by an annual increase of 10 percent in the sale of coffee and a 41 percent decrease in the consumption of beer during that same period (McWilliams, 2016, pp. 59–61).
6. The well-known graffiti artist Stik lived there for a time.
7. During the preindustrial period, the mix of uses was normal. Rooms within houses did not have predetermined functions, but rather were used depending on their nature.
8. In 2008, the Arcola Theatre became the first carbon-neutral theatre in the UK.
9. The program included a coffee shop, office spaces, along with 100 and 200-seat performance halls on the ground floor; two rehearsal spaces, workshops, two meeting rooms, and the offices of Arcola Energy on the first floor; and another bar, restrooms, changing rooms, and mechanical rooms in the basement. To this, the construction of two staircases was added along with a new entrance from Ashwin Street.

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2

ON THE ENVIRONMENT

From Sustainability to Resilience

This chapter deals with the changes in the environmental debate that have supported the reinvention of the city in the aftermath of the environmental crisis, that is, the evolution from the idea of sustainability to the concept of resilience. The thread of argument starts in ecology, specifically in the so-called "deep ecology".

The Environmental Debate: Reformist Ecology vs. Deep Ecology

The environmental debate emerged in the 1970s. A little over a decade later, the concept of "sustainable development" had become institutionalized and had spread internationally. At present, this notion is questioned by movements like deep ecology, which defend more demanding postulates. This section summarily describes the evolution of such a debate from sustainability to resilience.

At first, the debate was limited to environmental matters, focusing on atmospheric pollution and the depletion of natural resources. Its terms had been sketched by the unexpected publishing successes mentioned in the preceding chapter. In *The Closing Circle* (1971), Barry Commoner denounced that industrial developmentalism and some forms of technology were devastating the "ecosphere". According to Jeremy Caradonna, this simple argument set the grounds for a new conceptual framework, connecting the environment to human beings, economic activities, and technology, and associating its degradation with the exploitation of natural resources. Thus, a system of integrated thought which transcended the field of ecology in order to propose a complete vision of the world took shape (Caradonna, 2014, p. 110).

In tune with that vision, a school of economic thought emerged, that of "ecological economics". It was articulated by a group of professionals that were drawn together around the Club of Rome, which opposed the principals of the "neoclassic economy" represented by Milton Friedman and the Chicago School of Economics—the intellectual backbone of industrial developmentalist policy. The ecological economists accused the neoclassic economy of considering the environment as a mere supplier of resources that ignored the costs that came with its degradation. By contrast, in agreement with the postulates of ecosophy, they rejected the indiscriminate use of technology as well as "hard" energy sources, pinpointing atomic energy and fossil fuels. They also questioned the supposed beneficial nature of growth, rejecting the idea that GDP data were truly indicative of a society's welfare.[1]

The latter issue is particularly relevant to the interests of this book. Economic growth was one of the obsessions of Enlightenment thinking. Its modernization project never set any limits to growth, taking for granted that it was something intrinsically positive. The questioning of this belief appeared in 1972, when the Club of Rome published *The Limits to Growth*, a report that stated: "If the present trend in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continues unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years" (Meadows, 1972, p. 23). Therefore, the Meadows Report warned that, in order to control pollution and preserve natural resources, it was necessary to impose "biophysical limits" to growth. In this way, the first step had been taken: growth ceased to be something that had to be promoted no matter what and became something that had to be controlled.

In the 1980s, the debate went beyond the environmental question. *Our Common Future*, a report commissioned by the United Nations and produced by a group of scientists led by Gro Harlem Brundtland (1987), played a crucial role in this. The three interconnected Es, "Environment", "Economy", and "Equality", on which a new society had to be founded, were established in that report. Thus, the environmental approach, which up until then had focused solely on the first E, was transcended to include the economy, politics, society, and culture in the equation. Regarding the limitation of growth, the report attached it to the concept of "sustainable development", which was defined in the following way: "Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987, p. 41). The idea was the following: growth and the protection of nature are compatible processes if some limits are established to the pressure humanity exerts on the natural medium.

The notion of sustainable development gained extensive political consensus. The United Nations institutionalized it and integrated it in countless international agreements, which facilitated its spreading to all kinds of

fields—education, energy, agriculture, housing, transportation, commerce, etc. The environmental metanarrative thus permeated all fields of knowledge, in the same way as the idea of progress had done a century earlier. The uphill leg of the environmentalist struggle was over and now it entered a comfortable plateau. From then on, the question was how to strengthen concepts and prioritize objectives. The three Es of *Our Common Future* ceased to be considered on the same level and were organized hierarchically. The apex was occupied by equality, because it was clear that democracy, justice, and poverty had a major impact on the environment. The "sustainable society" was identified with a welfare society that would enjoy a high quality of life, which disseminated the objectives of equality in numerous directions: towards people's physical and mental health, towards respect for the rights of minorities, etc. The debate on the E of environment stressed circularity. In opposition to the linear "produce-consume-dispose" process, which results in the generation of waste, the idea was to close the ecological matter and energy cycles until waste is eliminated. Mainly, such a goal, where recycling and the use of renewable energies are the key, was entrusted to smart and eco-technologies (photovoltaic, geothermic, wind, hydraulic, solar and biomass power, among others). Finally, the E of economics became dependent on the other two Es. So that it could be in tune with the environment, the ecological economists proposed a "green economy", low on carbon and environmentally sustainable. In order for it to support equality, they advised on the need to direct capitalism towards social justice and the quality of life. Both approaches joined eco-consumption to praise eco-capitalism.

The institutionalizing, spreading, and consolidation of the sustainability paradigm did not end the debate. Quite the contrary, a new readjustment of concepts and priorities started to take shape at the beginning of the millennium, when scientists identified climate change as the number one threat to the planet. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimated that human activity had brought about an increase of one degree in the average temperature of the planet with regards to the preindustrial period. It also warned that if such an increase surpassed 1.5 degrees, uncontrolled feedback loops would appear that would destroy a great many ecosystems. In a 2018 report the IPCC stated that, in order to prevent that catastrophe, it was necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent (in relation to 2010) and proposed a very tight deadline to do so: before 2030 (IPCC, 2018). That pressure caused institutions to approve "climate emergency" declarations. The first national parliament to introduce one was the United Kingdom's in 2019. In its statement it alerted about the devastating impact that climate change would have on food production as well as in the spreading of floods and forest fires, in the disappearance of animal and plant species, in the increase in the concentration of CO_2 levels in the atmosphere, etc.

The alarm has reached the street. The climate change phenomenon is clearly perceived by ordinary people, who witness extreme meteorological events and

the dislocation of seasons with concern. The mobilization capacity of Extinction Rebellion, a group that is considered radical by many, shows that a growing number of citizens think that it is necessary to go beyond the terms agreed by consensus in the 1990s in regards to the concept of sustainable development.[2] Since then, demands have grown, promoting the spread of more essentialist ecological movements that, until recently, were relatively marginal—such as eco-feminism, social ecology, bioregionalism, or humanistic environmentalism. Most of these trends agree on the need to overcome what has become known as "weak sustainability", which merely attempts to make humanity give up its destructive habits in order to stabilize the climate and ecosystems. Instead, these movements propose to take steps toward "strong sustainability", which demands that humanity begin to repair the damage it has caused. Here, the focus is placed on one of the tendencies of radical ecology, deep ecology, founded in 1973 by the aforementioned Arne Naess as a version of ecosophy. Later, it was reformulated as a movement based on the eight principals of the Deep Ecology Platform (Naess and Sessions, 1984).

Deep ecology opposes the so-called "reformist ecology" or "shallow ecology", which is committed to the defense of the sustainable paradigm. This confrontation can be synthesized into four discrepancies: vision, values, objectives, and instruments. The first refers to the standpoint from which environmental problems are considered. The view of reformist ecology is partially anthropocentric: in spite of giving intrinsic value both to the human and the non-human realms, it admits that the former can exploit the latter in order to achieve certain goals. The stance of deep ecology, on the other hand, is radically non-anthropocentric: it bestows on the non-human world the same intrinsic value as on the human world, independently from any use value that it might have for people. The difference in values refers to the traditional disagreement between spiritualism and materialism that pitted Romanticism against the Enlightenment. Once again, the economic system is placed at the epicenter of the debate. As seen above, reformist ecology accepts capitalism, although it aims to reform it so that it can be in accordance with environmental interests. By contrast, deep ecology stands side by side with the anti-globalization movements and believes that eco-capitalism (a green economy that they translate into a "greed economy") leaves vital decisions regarding the environment in the hands of multinational companies. From this difference in values comes a critical discrepancy in objectives. Reformist ecology subscribes to the principal of sustainable development whereas deep ecology rejects it because it considers that it is merely an image campaign whose ultimate goal is to ensure the continuity of economic growth ad infinitum.

The final discrepancy, regarding the instruments that are used to implement objectives, also rekindles another age-old confrontation between the thinking of the Enlightenment and Romanticism: the attitude toward science and technology. Reformist ecology makes intensive use of both: science to

define the limits of sustainable development—which later transfers to laws and regulations—and eco-technology to reach its goals. On the contrary, deep ecology is techno-relativistic. In its view, the challenge of the reconciliation between human life and the environment is not a scientific or technological matter but an existential one. In other words, it must be tackled by redefining the role of the human being on the planet. That involves the launching of a cultural revolution that might turn the ethics of scarcity into a way of life.

The vision, values, objectives, and tools of deep ecology propose a change of paradigm in the environmental debate. As mentioned above, the conceptual turn that supports it has been prompted by global warming and could be summarized in the following idea: if the essence of the problem is the transition from one climate scenario to another, the challenge should be to readapt and resist instead of maintaining the initial situation, as the sustainability paradigm defends. In order to fulfill this task, it would be much more appropriate to utilize the concept of "resilience", which has been defined as: "The capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks" (Walker et al., 2004, p. 5).

Reformist ecology understands that sustainability and resilience are two complementary terms—as a matter of fact, it uses the latter to promote the former. On the contrary, by rejecting the idea of sustainable growth, radical ecological movements entrust to resilience most of the challenge involving the adaptation to climate change. The conceptual differences between both approaches are remarkable and they are reflected in their ways of proceeding. Thus, while the sustainability paradigm puts forward objectives that must be achieved complying with predetermined deadlines (with respect to the emission of greenhouse effect gases, to the use of renewable energies, to the recycling of waste, etc.), the resilience paradigm offers strategies for surviving a transition that has no deadline. To use a metaphor, whereas the former plays soccer, with the aim of scoring goals, and knowing that the match will last 90 minutes; the latter practices surfing, concentrating its efforts on riding the wave, and not knowing when it will reach the shore. As shown next, such

TABLE 2.1 Comparison between reformist ecology and deep ecology

	Reformist ecology	Deep ecology
Vision	• Partially anthropocentric	• Non-anthropocentric
Values	• Materialistic • Eco-capitalism (green economy)	• Post-materialistic (ecosophical values) • Anti-establishment
Objective	• Sustainable growth	• Zero growth or de-growth
Tools	• Science and technology • Laws and regulations	• Techno-relativism • Cultural revolution

supremacy of process over results will become one of the keys to the reinvention of the city in the wake of the ecological crisis.

From the Sustainable Urban Model to the Resilient Vision: The Transition Town Movement

Over the course of the last decade, geographers, sociologists, and economists have transferred the notion of resilience to their respective disciplines. This section extends it to the city. It starts by outlining the keys of the concept of "sustainable urban model", led by the assumptions of reformist ecology. Then, and in contrast, it sketches a "resilient vision" of the city, using the Transition Town movement as an example. Finally, it lays out the general lines of a "resilient urban design".

One of the most important proposals of the Rio Summit (1992) was the Local Agenda, suggesting that municipalities should move towards sustainable development in their planning processes. City planners and theorists started to work to define an urban model that could be called "sustainable". Even though this reflection took place in the 1990s, when the environmental debate prioritized the E of equality, the confluence of the interests of environment and economy was thought to be especially relevant. This posture has to be understood in the context of a decade in which the cities were involved in a cut-throat competition to attract global capital.

The creators of the sustainable urban model focused on reducing the ecological footprint and assumed the logic of circularity, which involved an infinity of actions in the city: for the building sector it meant the replacement of demolition for deconstruction; for the maintenance of parks and gardens it entailed the use of organic refuse as compost; for energy suppliers it meant the burning of non-recyclable waste to produce electricity, heating, etc. Regarding the notion of sustainable development, it meant the acceptance of urban growth albeit with some limits. The concept of "infill development", advanced by Bernardo Secchi (1984), proposed to circumscribe new developable land to the obsolete inner areas of the cities, while preserving the periphery. In these new developments sustainability was entrusted to "bioclimatic urban design", whose main fronts were harmony with the natural territory (relief features, water systems, subsoil, etc.); the adaptation of green zones to local moisture and evaporation conditions; the orientation of the street and road network depending on dominant winds as well as the sun exposure of the buildings; and other issues of a morpho-typological nature. One of the most distinguishing marks of the sustainable urban model, compactness (i.e., the choice of medium and medium-high densities that usually materialize as four- to six-story-high collective housing perimeter blocks), was precisely related to the morpho-typological concerns. Other measures had an urbanistic character. They affected zoning, with the option of mixed uses and proximity between working areas and

residential areas. They also had an effect on mobility, another star of the sustainable urban model, which turned public transport, pedestrianization, and "eco-friendly" vehicles (ferries, street cars, cable cars, bicycles, skateboards, etc.) into truly sacred cows.

The coalescence of environmental and economic interests took place at different levels. On the one hand, there was the support for the green economy sectors that had representation in the city, usually with fiscal measures. On the other hand, there was the financing of "green infrastructures", such as floodable flatlands, biotope corridors, peri-urban beltways, water-management systems, waste processing plants, etc., which involved very lucrative investments for a certain business sector. Finally, there was the commitment to energy efficiency. The objective in this regard being to secure a post-carbon city, where fossil resources would be replaced by renewable ones. Such a city was often seen as a smart city, dependent on a colossal technological network. Jeremy Rifkin, the prophet of the "Third Industrial Revolution", spoke of buildings that would function as peripheral data centers, of micro-plants for the generation of electricity, of energy stores, and of transport and logistics centers. All of these features would be connected to networks that were efficient in terms of energy and inserted in the matrix of the Internet of Things (IoT) (Rifkin, 2019). Powerful industrial groups discovered in that display of technologies a gold mine of similar proportions to that of green economy.

That was how, in broad terms, the sustainable urban model was defined. Three decades of its generalized application in every corner of the planet have proved that it was a rather loose principle. Jean Haëntjens was surprised by the wide array of expressions in which it manifested. In some cases, a territorial system that concentrated population in cities had been chosen, whereas in others the model followed relied on self-sufficient villages. Sometimes, the option had been to build compact neighborhoods, while on other occasions the alternative had been low-density ones. Some had adopted the idea of a perimeter block of collective housing, but others preferred rows of single-family homes, and so on. All of these apparently opposing solutions had been considered sustainable. Haëntjens thought it was due to the blurry, even contradictory, character of the model, which had neither filtered nor established priorities among the infinity of positions that were behind it as a result of five decades of debate (Haëntjens, 2011, pp. 13–29).

When compared to the standpoint of deep ecology, such questioning is yet another factor to be added to the extreme disagreements that appear at the four levels mentioned above. As for vision, the sustainable urban model favors environmental matters over social ones; as far as values are concerned, it has turned into a business, and with respect to objectives, it accepts urban growth. Regarding tools, the discrepancy is twofold. On the one hand, the sustainable urban model depends on eco-technologies, a costly resource that excludes the cities of poor countries from reaching the smart city status. On the other hand,

it contemplates too many laws and regulations. Its response to the huge number of questions that are advanced by the local agendas (air and water quality, waste recycling, biodiversity, etc.) results in dozens of rules. To those norms, one must add the ones related to urbanism, since the implementation of circularity, infill developments, bioclimatic urban design, etc. also requires regulations in local and regional plans.

This accumulation of discrepancies is encouraging the search for alternatives that might transfer the paradigm of resilience to the city. Steps in this direction still have not been sanctioned either by international institutions or the academic world, so they lack the elaborate and agreed-upon corpus of principles that the sustainable urban model has. So far, what there exists are roughly articulated groups that are trying to show that regarding urban issues it is also possible to take the leap from weak to strong sustainability—though the word "sustainability" may not be the most appropriate to define their position. From their practices and manifestos some guidelines can be extracted. They reflect, rather than a model, a resilient vision of the city. In agreement with the paradigm that supports it, the objective is not to plan its sustainable development but to prepare the city for climate change.

To reach that goal, such a vision can be entrusted to neither eco-technologies nor government regulations, but it has to rely instead on two self-sustainable tools: a change in lifestyles and urban design based on the principles of minimal intervention as well as the "as found" aesthetic. The first, the need to change current behaviors, is recognized even by United Nations' institutions such as the IPCC, which has appealed to the citizens of the United Kingdom to reduce their consumption of meat and dairy products by 20 percent, to use bicycles and public transport, to give up on long-distance flights, to keep thermostats set below 19°C, etc. The call for a different lifestyle is one of the aspects of the cultural revolution that radical ecology supporters strive for, with the rejection of anthropocentrism underlying it all. The idea is society must learn to coexist with a natural and animal environment and renounce its exploitation. This would require, among other things, the adoption of everyday habits that comply with the ethics of scarcity: hanging out clothes to dry, reusing printed paper, eating leftovers, buying secondhand merchandise, drinking tap water, sharing goods and services, etc. Is all of this realistic? Is it truly possible to persuade people of the need to change their lifestyle to such extremes? Misgivings of this sort fan the utopian—and sometimes even Malthusian[3]—reputation that plagues undertakings such as the deep ecology project.

However, the advocates of radical ecology consider that their proposal is viable, and appeal to the information and education of the citizens by using a concept that even surpasses lifestyle: "community resilience". Kristin Magis defined it as follows: "Community resilience is the existence, development, and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and

surprise" (Magis, 2010, p. 402). In other words, it would be a question of adopting the change in habits as a community, and of associating this to the commitment of working for resilience within the environment where the community lives. To make this possible people would have to be educated on how to interact with the territory: how to use local water, food or energy cycles; how to restore environmental systems; how to practice agriculture, animal farming, and forestry—an entire world of knowledge and skills that in most of the planet was lost generations ago.

In present-day society, one of the groups that has made more progress in relation to the mentioned behavioral changes are the neobohemians. Although their eco-lifestyle comes into conflict with the anti-capitalist ideology that most radical ecology movements profess—their aversion to eco-consumption is a good example of this—both have frugality as a common denominator. Neobohemians minimize the generation of waste because they conscientiously consume less; they support circularity because they recycle waste and repair electrical appliances; they do not squander territory because they choose to live in apartment blocks; they save energy because they wear sweaters when it gets cold at home; they do not use the car because they prefer skating, cycling, or walking—it is moving to see how Thoreau's *Walden*, which has been reprinted numerous times during the last decade, continues to be a moral reference for them. The same can be said regarding education in resilience. Neobohemians flock to courses on urban agriculture, waste management, and energy saving. In addition, their community spirit makes them especially prone to collective commitment.

Nevertheless, trusting the implementation of the resilient vision to this social group is inconsistent with the values of the radical ecology movements. Thus far, the eco-lifestyle is the patrimony of highly educated communities that dwell in countries with high levels of economic and human development.[4] That class element worries the bases of ecological activism, which call for greater "eco-populism" and less "eco-elitism" (Van Jones, 2008). In short, in order to be consequent with its values, the resilient vision must insist on educational policies that can spread their cultural revolution beyond neobohemian circles. Furthermore, such propagation will be very atypical. The dependence that the resilient vision has on community resilience has a relevant consequence: its dimension is determined by the human groups that voluntarily decide to adopt it, which makes the neighborhood or the village, instead of the city, its proper scale. For that reason, its propagation will be achieved only by "pollinating" the territory with communities working as a network.

Founded by Rob Hopkins, the Transition Town movement is a good example of this. Its aim is to adapt urban environments to climate transition by using the two characteristic instruments of the resilient vision: a lifestyle in accordance with ecosophic values and a kind of urban design based on minimal intervention. Hopkins justified the former as an alternative to the excessive

regulation inherent in the sustainable urban model: "What would it look like if the best responses to peak oil and climate change came not from committees and Acts of Parliament, but from you and me and the people around us?" (Hopkins, 2011, p. 13). To educate in community resilience, Hopkins created the Transition Network, an organization that helps registered groups to develop their capacity for adaptation, forecasting, self-evaluation, and analysis. Its *Essential Guide to Doing Transition* defines guidelines that go from how to form a group to how to create an Energy Descent Action Plan (EDAP)—a plan to eliminate the dependence on fossil fuels within 20 years (Transition Network, online).

To initiate the transition advanced by Hopkins, the communities that join the Transition Network submit proposals. At present, there are about 1,000 of them from 24 countries.[5] Many come from small towns, such as the iconic Totnes, the British locality of just over 8,000 residents where the movement began in 2006. Some others have originated in neighborhoods within big cities. In London, where there are about 40 proposals, the case of Brixton stands out. In 2010, Transition Town Brixton was established, a community interest company that has triggered projects such as Brixton Energy, an energy-generating company; the Brixton Pound, a local currency; Community Draught Buster,

FIGURE 2.1 Totnes (United Kingdom): edible plants in concrete tubs.

Image by Phil Gayton, available under a CC BY 2.0 license.

an educational program about energy saving; the Whole Organic Food Coop, a cooperative that grows and commercializes organic products; the Slade Gardens Permaculture Demonstration Site, a plot where permaculture is practiced; the REconomy Project, a platform to re-address local economy; and Remade in Brixton, a program to encourage its neighbors to reduce, reuse, recycle, and repair.

As for the second tool of the resilient vision, urban design based on minimal intervention, Hopkins claimed that: "then there are those who believe technology can solve all our problems. … This school of thoughts assumes that design is our most powerful tool, that cities can be redesigned and reimagined as zero-carbon, lean, green, highly efficient urban centers" (Hopkins, 2011, p. 40). The founder of the Transition movement pointed to permaculture, a discipline that he taught, as a source for this design:

> Holgrem's scenarios are so useful because they help distinguish between a more business-as-usual sustainability approach, which attempts to reduce the carbon emissions of our current model, and the Transition approach of designing for a very different economic model—one based on resilience and localization.
>
> *(Hopkins, 2011, p. 41)*

David Holmgren and Bill Mollison are the Australian environmentalists that fused the words "permanent" and "agriculture" to coin the term "permaculture". The concept was born in 1978 as a design methodology inspired by climatic forests, which are capable of surviving and reproducing for thousands of years without any kind of external help. Permaculture transferred the way they work with agriculture in order to boost its self-sustainability. The aim was to have yearly harvests produce the seeds for the following year at the end of the season, to have fallen leaves fertilize the soil with a layer of organic matter, for trees to give shade and protection, to have animals both control plagues and fertilize and so on. It is important to indicate that permaculture did not design an agricultural space but an open process that was guided by observation and trial-and-error dynamics, a process that was able to react in the face of unforeseen circumstances.

At present, permaculture is self-defined as a "permanent culture" and shelters four interrelated meanings: a methodology, a social movement, a philosophy, and a design method. The latter was synthesized by Holmgren (2002) in 12 principles inspired by the mechanisms that allow natural ecosystems to be resilient. They could be applied to urban design at many scales (home gardens, housing blocks, neighborhoods, parks), but few design professionals take advantage of that. An explanation for this could lie in their lack of education in the matter. In addition to that, there is the difficulty in applying to the urban space a design that originally was created for agriculture and which focuses

more on process than on physical results—a kind of logic that is hardly exercised in their disciplines. Regarding the subject of this study, however, there are two reasons that make permaculture especially relevant. Firstly, its didactic vocation. An educational movement that spreads ecosophic values throughout society has originated precisely from it. Initiatives such as the Permaculture Design Course, a two-week course that has been taken by over 100,000 people in the United States alone, encourage students to turn into teachers, the "pollinizing bees" of the resilient vision. Secondly, it is in tune with eco-aesthetics and the ethics of scarcity, sharing with them the values of moderation, sobriety, and self-sustainability. This shows the convenience of adapting permaculture to urban design, a task that has not been tackled with the proper intellectual consistency. The phases that were used in the previous chapter to define eco-aesthetics (design, construction, and management) are a good point of departure in that direction.

Regarding the first, a kind of urban design inspired in permaculture would comply with the principles of minimal intervention and the "as found" aesthetic. Both would define the elements and compositional strategies. With respect to elements, it would require that the materials already existing on the site of the intervention (soil, vegetation, debris, ruins,) be considered "as found", encouraging the recycling of demolition pieces or obsolete artifacts—principle six of permaculture's design methodology says: "produce no waste". In the same way, it would favor simplicity, smallness, and lightness, as much as the use of low-cost and easily installed materials—principle nine states: "use small and slow solutions". In this sense, standardized products could be a good choice: they are rational and efficient, and usually present an excellent price-quality ratio.

As for compositional strategies, urban design inspired by permaculture should opt for pragmatism—principle three: "obtain a yield". In other words, it should be directed more towards performance than towards theory and pay more attention to solving the problems of the community than to the application of artistic-intellectual parameters that are often incomprehensible for the majority of people, which provokes a lack of consonance between users and urban spaces. To connect with the users, the urban designer should observe their habits and behavioral standards so as later to re-order, re-interpret, and reflect them in design details—principle seven: "design from patterns to detail". As in the case of eco-aesthetics, the objective here would be to turn urban space into something familiar, allowing the community to recognize itself in it.

Diversity would also be key as a compositional strategy—principle ten: "use and value diversity". Permaculture appeals to it because it enables adaptation. In terms of urban design, diversity would oppose the aesthetic codification of styles, which makes reacting to unforeseen circumstances difficult—partial changes de-program general composition. As demonstrated by the lack of coordination in the furnishings of third places, a space which is dominated by the

contrast between pieces and materials can assimilate the addition, suppression, or dislocation of objects naturally. Such an adaptive capacity ought to be reinforced with the faculty of assembling, that is, the possibility of connecting the elements to each other, including those "as found"—principle eight: "integrate rather than segregate". Just as Maurice Mitchell and Bo Tang defended: "a loose fit array of components is open, easy to understand and capable, not only of repair and remodeling but also of reassemble into a different configuration with other elements added or of deconstruction, partial reuse, refurbishment and/or reassignment" (Mitchell and Tang, 2018, location 52.1).

After the design phase, the construction stage begins. To be consistent with the principles of the resilient vision, it should be considered as an educational activity, a "learning by doing" process. Participation of the residents in the building process would be advisable, which involves taking into consideration what are probably limited technical skills of the members of the community. Another issue that must be considered if this path is taken would be to adapt construction phases to the rhythm of life of community members' (availability, work pace)—principle four: "apply self-regulation and accept feedback". If the possibility of dealing with all sorts of contingencies (unforeseen personal circumstances, financial difficulties, bureaucratic readjustments) is added, it is easy to understand the idea of an extended construction period. The carrying out of urban design inspired by permaculture would be, by definition, a slow process, the different stages of which should be planned generously and flexibly—principle nine: "use small and slow solutions". As seen in Chapter 1, behind the strategy of working unhurriedly (something usually incompatible with the rigid deadlines that building contracts impose) pulsates a moral precept. As Matthew Barac indicated: "It flags an ethical imperative, suggesting that by attending to deeper, less insistent and less [urgent] or [articulate] claims on urbanity, we will be able to draw on the anchoring rhythms rooted in [the concrete circumstances vested in] places" (Barac, 2011, p. 39).

Finally, the management stage is reached. A resilient urban space should adapt permanently to all kinds of changes, the most frequent ones resulting from its appropriation by different groups and for different purposes—principle 12: "creatively use and respond to change". Here would lie one of the main components of the new paradigm postulated by the sort of urban design that is inspired by permaculture. As described, in agricultural spaces permaculture proposes trial–and–error dynamics that are based on a preliminary design that is not literally implemented, but which sets off a process. The same would happen with urban space: the intervention would have to continue beyond the point at which professionals usually decide that it has concluded, with the end of construction work.[6] A management phase would then start, where modifications and repairs would have to be tackled and agreed upon. It would also be necessary to elaborate a program of activities that may transform urban space into a node where the community gathers, interacts, and displays its eco-lifestyle.

The resilient vision would give priority to the organization of events that may educate in community resilience, which could be achieved by using the space as the venue for courses, workshops, talks, etc.; by sheltering activities such as farmer's markets or urban gardens; or by providing room for projects like bartering, time banks, exchange of local currency, etc. The question is, who leads the management phase? Design that is committed to the anti-materialistic values of the resilient vision would exclude private for-profit developers from this task. Because of the diffidence expressed toward bureaucratic red tape, it would not be logical, either, to pass it on to public administration. Instead, it should be left in the hands of the residents or, an even more realistic option, in those of the third (communal/voluntary) sector, that is, non-profit institutions that would establish decision-making mechanisms where community members would be represented.

The above has been a preview of the adaptation of permaculture to urban design (see Table 2.2 for a summary). The resulting blueprint could be called "resilient urban design". Several interventions that already have been carried out permit its implementation to be examined. An example of is the Nomadic

TABLE 2.2 Keys to "resilient urban design"

Phase	Objective	Strategy	Principle of permaculture related to design methodology
Design	Defining composition elements	Recycling pre-exising elements "as found"	Principle six:"produce no waste"
		Simplicity	Principle nine:"use small and slow solutions"
	Defining composition strategies	Pragmatism	Principle three:"obtain a yield"
		Following the community's behavioral patterns	Principle seven:"design from patterns to detail"
		Diversity	Principle ten:"use and value diversity"
		Assembling	Principle eight:"integrate rather than segregate"
Construction	Educating in resilience ("learning by doing")	Adjusting to the community's rhythms and skills	Principle four:"apply self-regulation and accept feedback"
		Extending deadlines	Principle nine:"use small and slow solutions"
Management	Self-managing	Adapting to changes	Principle 12:"creatively use and respond to change"

Community Garden (NCG), an urban garden in Shoreditch. It is located in a one-hectare plot between two railway viaducts—principle 11: "use edges and value the marginal". Although it belongs to the Londonewcastle company, the plot was vacant for years, waiting to be developed. Nomadic Community Garden, a non-profit organization that transforms empty lots into agricultural spaces, presented the owners with the proposal of occupying it temporarily by a meanwhile-use lease on a six-month rollover on social rental basis. The idea was to use the intervention as an excuse to start a resilient community, not an easy task. Two social groups converged in the area, the Shoreditch neobohemian creative class and the conservative Bangladeshi community of Whitechapel, that is, millennial professionals and Muslim housewives, each with quite different lifestyles, resources, and skills. In the face of such a reality, education in resilience was entrusted to the universal language of agriculture, an intercultural, pan-religious activity that could be undertaken by all the residents, independently from their origin, age, or gender.

The NCG was self-built by the neighbors with the external help of volunteer professionals and artists. It was a slow process that took four long years plagued by all kinds of contingencies. This, however, helped to create bonds among the heterogeneous community members. The surprising urban space that resulted has an area of urban gardens that is complemented with over 160 planters with native vegetation and two beehives. There is also room for art:

FIGURE 2.2   London: Nomadic Community Garden.

a modest music hall, Trash Art sculptures, and a mural that is offered to street artists. Finally, the NCG shelters many leisure spaces: resting areas, stages for events, playgrounds, a café, and a gallery. The interesting synergy elicited by all these activities is a component of the education-in-resilience project.

All of the elements that make up the NCG can be easily transported and taken apart. The garden beds are set up on plasticized pallets that were built *in situ* and can be moved by using a forklift and flatbed truck. The foundations of the buildings are placed above ground level. As far as materials are concerned, the choice of the diverse and inexpensive, as well as of standardized building solutions, is obvious. There are plastics, tin sheets, and textile-netting for roofing. The floors are either earthen, made of concrete, and sometimes cobblestones. It is true that wood, an eco-aesthetic material *par excellence*, dominates the scene, especially in the furnishings and partitions. These elements, which were assembled by hand, are complemented with countless recycled objects: chairs, sofas, lamps, barrels, a slide, a piano, a three-wheeler van, and a boat that was going to be incinerated—the beehives were also a gift. In other cases, reclaimed materials have been used, such as doors, windows, stairs, and so on. As for water and electricity, since there is no connection to the municipal networks, they are collected naturally, water in containers placed around the site and electricity by means of solar panels.

FIGURE 2.3 London: Nomadic Community Garden.

The NCG is an example of management of a resilient urban space, the design of which was not considered concluded on the day it opened to the public in 2015. The premises are managed by the community under the coordination of the NCG technicians, who make sure it is financially self-sufficient. The resources needed for maintenance and for the acquisition of soil and seeds come from the rental fees charged for events and filming, and they also originate from the sale of the garden's produce, the registration fees for educational workshops, and user donations. Nor was construction considered finished after its inauguration. Many changes have since been introduced that have helped the garden adapt to new circumstances—there is an open area set aside to store materials and objects that can be reused for that purpose. The diversity and heterogeneity of the elements that make up this pioneering example of resilient urban design have permitted these changes to be integrated in the most natural manner.

De-growth and Urban Obsolescence: The Rewilding of the City and the Birth of Cool Neighborhoods

The previous section dealt with the transference to the city of the vision, values, and tools of deep ecology through the resilience paradigm. This one focuses on objectives, the fourth discrepancy that separates deep ecology from reformist ecology. It places urban growth at the center of the debate. The change of approach that the resilient vision proposes in this regard has ignited an interest in obsolete areas. There, neobohemians have found a favorable ecosystem where the eco-lifestyle can be put into action, transforming some of them into cool neighborhoods.

As seen above, the debate regarding growth began in the field of ecological economics, when the report *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows, 1972) advanced the proposal of establishing thresholds that would guarantee its sustainability. Nowadays, there is a burgeoning argument that no growth is sustainable in time for a simple reason: the planet is not an infinite space, so sooner or later its limits will be reached. What, then, is the alternative to an economic system that has been based on developmentalism for ages? Herman Daly came up with the idea of "zero growth", after demonstrating that in 1970, when industrialized countries had reached a sufficient level of human welfare, the repair costs of development started to be greater than the profit (Daly, 1977, p. 148). From that point on, it did not make any sense to keep on growing, since it damaged the environment without generating economic or social dividends.

The idea of zero growth, however, has not gained consensus among ecological economists. Some believe that just putting a stop to growth in selected areas like Europe, the United States, or Japan, whose ecological footprint is equivalent to three to ten planets, still involves the ongoing depletion of planet Earth. In these countries preventing growth is not enough, and it is necessary

to go further and begin to de-grow. Serge Latouche is one of the best-known advocates of this idea. His proposal is that the Western world should recover the ecological footprint that corresponds to it, equivalent to only one planet, which would mean reducing its existing footprint by 75 percent. That would involve diminishing natural resource extraction by 75 percent, material consumption by 50 percent, energy use by 75 percent, and production by 66 percent (Latouche, 2009, p. 56). How to overcome such a colossal challenge, one that would mean going back to the social-productive standards of the 1960s? The French economist coincided with what the supporters of radical ecology prescribe: the implementation of the "post-development" economic system would require a cultural revolution, one capable of transforming Western society into a "society of de-growth". Latouche based this idea on the combination of eight interdependent changes, "the eight Rs of circular economy": re-evaluating (prioritizing community resilience), re-conceptualizing (notions such as the quality of life), re-structuring (adjusting the production system to ecosophic values), re-distributing (among social classes and generations, but also between north and south), re-localizing (prioritizing the local over the global), reducing (production as much as consumption), re-using, and recycling (Latouche, 2009, pp. 33–43).

Over the course of the last decade, de-growth has gone beyond the boundaries of the economic debate to enter the realms of urbanism and architecture.[7] The parallelism between economic de-growth and the shrinking cities phenomenon has been one of the dynamic forces that prompted this interest. It was first detected in several European cities in the 1930s, but it reached its peak during the decades following the Oil Crisis in highly industrialized regions, such as Germany's Ruhr Basin, the Rust Belt in the United States, and the British Midlands. In the 1990s, one in every five cities on the planet was losing population and a parallel process to this demographic decline was being observed: physical de-growth. The wave of obsolescence provoked by de-industrialization, which was relentless in working-class neighborhoods, led to a tsunami of destruction.[8] Public administrations began undertaking physical de-growth programs that pitilessly affected postwar social housing developments. The French government planned the destruction of 200,000 apartments, while in Germany the idea was to demolish 360,000, and in the United Kingdom 500,000. In the United States, the Department of Housing and Urban Development went from financing their construction to allotting most of its resources to their demolition. Consequently, at the beginning of the present century, over 15 percent of the urban land within North American cities was vacant, according to Pagano and Bowman (cited in Németh and Langhorst, 2014, p. 144).

Many town planners predict that the wave of physical de-growth that broke out in the 1990s was not temporary, and that it has turned into a structural component of developed cities.[9] This has stimulated interest in obsolete areas,

which are beginning to be considered as a challenge for the future. The attitude towards them once again reveals the gap that separates the urban policies inspired by the sustainable model from those supported by the resilient vision. The former believes that they are potential infill zones and, therefore, must be demolished to make room for new developments. That approach does not fit into the logic of the shrinking cities, where the tendency is to generate vacant land instead of consuming it. On the contrary, the latter considers them as biological capsules, an opportunity to repair part of the damage cities have caused to the natural environment. Its proposal is to preserve them. Next, the measures that are most commonly taken are reviewed, establishing a distinction between those that are applied to areas that have been vacated because of neglect, like lots and ruins, and those implemented in decaying residential areas, which are potential cool neighborhoods.

Traditionally, the areas that have become vacant from neglect have been considered decadent and anti-aesthetic anomalies to be corrected. This view started to change in the 1970s and 1980s, precisely when their appearance in the cities rose dramatically. Urban ecologists were the first to become interested in them, where they discovered processes that had hardly been studied until then. After activity stops, these areas are colonized by seasonal plants thanks to wind-blown seeds, first creating a meadow that is gradually replaced by perennial bushes four to six years later.[10] Most surprisingly, such "urban forests" are more biodiverse than many natural environments, where plant species tend to adjust to the specificity of their medium. This is due to the distortions introduced by human presence and to the soil characteristics of abandoned urban tracts of land, in which earth becomes mixed with brick, mortar, concrete debris, or ashes. In addition, urban forests serve as a refuge for wild animals, mammals as well as birds and insects. In short, urban ecology discovered the high ecological value of neglected vacant areas, which started to be mapped[11] and protected. As Matthew Gandy stated, that put an end to centuries of conventions that linked the authenticity of nature to non-urban environments (Gandy, 2016, p. 161).

Presently, one of the best-known advocates of the conservation of these areas is the French botanist and landscaper Gilles Clément. In his *Manifeste du Tiers paysage* (2004), he defines "third landscape" as the set of spaces where human beings have relinquished the evolution of landscape to the hands of nature. He distinguishes three categories: "primary spaces" are zones that have never been exploited, such as alpine meadows, climactic plains, the tundra, etc.; "reserves" are environments thought to be fragile or rare and that are protected by law; and "residues", the third category, refers to spaces, usually urban areas, that have been once used and later neglected. Clément requested from public administrations that the latter category should be kept free from urban development and transformed into "biodiversity capsules" as a means of devolving to nature tracts of the land that the city has taken away from it (Clément, 2007, p. 59).

FIGURE 2.4   London: city re-wilding in Regent's Canal.

Indeed, the resilient vision responds to the commitment to repair some of the damage caused to the environment by means of the re-wilding of the city. The strategy that has most attracted the attention of urban theorists has been the use of those vacant areas as leisure spaces that are an alternative to traditional parks and gardens, which are accused by radical ecology of representing nature in a fallacious way and of being typically anthropocentric acts of dominion. The randomness of their layouts and ruins, which no longer respond to the functional logic that they were designed for, turns neglected lots into extraordinarily evocative environments.[12] In contrast with the aesthetically codified and functionally regulated traditional park, where people just consume the space designed by the landscape planner in a passive way and follow the behavioral rules prescribed by the authorities, the lack of order and deterioration of obsolete areas elicits creativity and personalization. There, people can carry out spontaneous activities that would hardly belong in a conventional park, such as camping, partying, farming, or setting up bartering markets.

The intervention methods that are used to transform a neglected area into a leisure space are diverse but fluctuate along the thin red line that separates minimal intervention from no intervention. Some cities have turned them into "garden forests", tree groves where eatable products can be found—fruit, berries, mushrooms, tubers, etc.—which the neighbors can harvest, an activity known as "urban

FIGURE 2.5 Berlin: Tempelhof Field.

Image courtesy of Luca Girardini.

foraging".[13] However, few cases have attracted as much attention from the media as the old Berlin airport of Tempelhof, which was inaugurated in 1941 and closed in 2008. Two years later, it was reopened as Tempelhof Field, a huge 303-hectare meadow (bigger than Central Park) located in the heart of the city and bound on its north-west corner by the old terminal—a 1.2 kilometer-long building which is representative of the best national-socialist architecture. In 2014, a referendum was called to decide on its future and Berliners voted in favor of leaving the place as it was, even rejecting any sort of building on its perimeter.[14] Today, two sections can be clearly differentiated in Tempelhof Field. In the outer ring there are community gardens, dog parks, picnic areas, and sport facilities. The two old landing strips are in the central meadow, and they are used by cyclists, skaters, joggers, and walkers, although 80 percent of the surface is maintained as a valuable biotope where 329 species of wild plants coexist, as well as several endangered animal species—mainly birds like shrikes, goldfinches, and larks.

Over three million people visit Tempelhof Field every year. The impressive acceptance that Berliners have offered to a wild area that shows minimal intervention and is very different from traditional parks, hints to the fact that the cultural revolution demanded by both deep ecology and de-growth theory may have actually begun. Matthew Gandy insisted on the cultural dimension that underlies the reevaluation of the obsolete:

> Parts of Berlin are returning to nature, the distinctions between nature and culture becoming progressively more indistinct, as remnants of human activity such as rubble, rusting metal and other objects become gradually absorbed into a new kind of socio-ecological synthesis.
>
> *(Gandy, 2011, p. 150)*

Slavoj Žižek went even further by encouraging the exploration of the aesthetic side of the obsolete and its assumption as the banner of environmentalism: "To rediscover a poetic dimension to this sort of scene is, I think, the proper reaction to ecology. To rediscover the aesthetic dimension of life, not in the sense of let's get rid of the trash, let's re-create the beautiful universe, but let's re-create, if not beauty, then an aesthetic dimension in things like this, in trash itself" (Žižek, 2009, p. 166).

Precisely these aesthetic and cultural values have raised to the podium of resilient vision the second type of obsolete area mentioned above: the neighborhoods that entered the spiral of demographic decline and physical decay in the 1970s. Christopher Mele (2000) and Richard Lloyd (2006) have analyzed this fact in the transformation of New York's East Village and Chicago's Wicker Park, respectively. Both spaces went from being socially marginalized areas to becoming residential paradises for neobohemians. Four stages can be distinguished in the process: the arrival of underground artists, the aestheticizing of obsolescence, the spreading of the phenomenon in the media, and the disembarking of new residents and economic activities.

FIGURE 2.6   London: graffiti in Shoreditch.

The first phase dates back to the 1970s. Techno music appeared in areas of this sort in Detroit; British punk and house in similar neighborhoods of Manchester; Trash Art in the wild public spaces of New York's Lower East Side; and illegal and often-spurned graffiti in Shoreditch's mostly unguarded walls. The arrival of underground artists to these neighborhoods was at first motivated by the low rents. The fact that, at the time, some of these movements were immersed in a spiral of violence and hard-drug use explains why they found a kind of natural ecosystem in those spaces. In addition, the adoption of decay and neglect as identity signs allowed these groups to position themselves against the institutionalized cultural industry. In fact, displaying an attitude of resistance was extremely important for them. Dick Pountain and David Robins defined "cool" as a stance against authority. Originally, it was associated with Black subcultures, but in the 1950s, it was adopted by the intellectuals of the Beat Generation (Pountain and Robins, 2000, p. 19). The underground artists of the 1970s recovered it and staged it in obsolete neighborhoods.

Third places played the leading role in the second phase of the metamorphosis, the aestheticizing of obsolescence. Pountain and Robins pointed out that the key to community cohesiveness around the cool notion consists in sharing the knowledge of something that the "respectable" sectors of society ignore (Pountain and Robins, 2000, p. 154). Thus, third places began to play their part. They placed themselves at the end of dark lanes, did not advertise
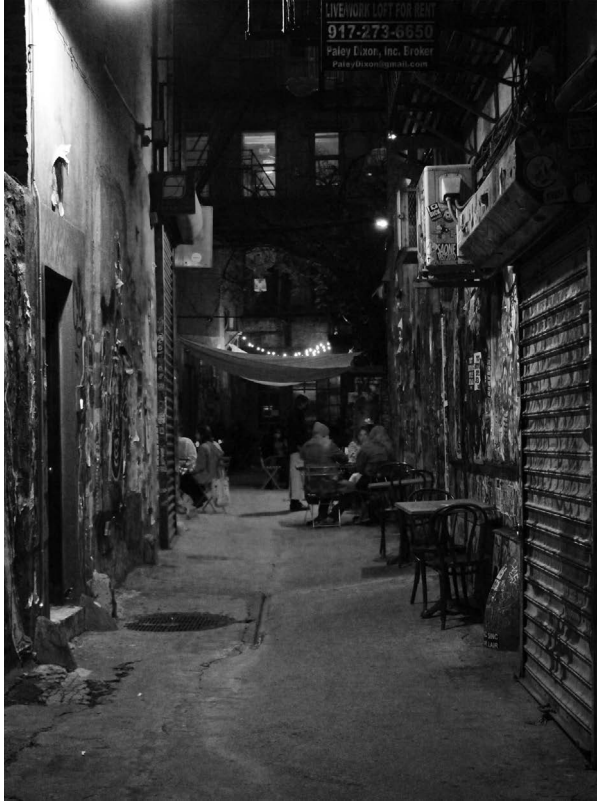
FIGURE 2.7   New York: Lower East Side.

Image courtesy of Margarita Calero.

their activities outwardly, were poorly lit, etc. That was their way of excluding outsiders.[15] The "as found" aesthetic was used to mark the territory. Their owners glorified the ruinous state of the venues in which they opened their premises, many of which had accommodated industrial uses. They respected the exposed brick walls from which the plaster had fallen, preserved fragments of the paint jobs carried out over the years, maintained the old windows and doors, and highlighted structural features, whether it was a steel truss or a concrete slab. Exposing the systems was the norm, lightbulbs, electrical wiring, water pipes, and ventilation ducts were left in plain view. Finally, any vestige of the old productive activity of the premises, like rusty machinery and rickety pieces of furniture, was incorporated. Thus, by aestheticizing obsolescence, third places succeeded in harmonizing the cool ethos of underground artists with the mystique of living to the limit, of suspense and intrigue, of the illicit and the dangerous. By reutilizing old warehouses and factories, they also enabled newcomers to identify themselves with a space where they did not

belong and with a past that they had not experienced, that of neighborhoods whose working-class identity had been forged throughout decades of struggle against the bourgeois elites.

This buoyant cultural and entertainment scene began to attract a new type of resident to these neighborhoods, the neobohemian advance party. It was made up of progressive intellectuals who valued the eccentricity of underground artists as much as the diversity of races and cultures that converged in obsolete parts of the city—resulting from the arrival of immigrants, who occupied the residences left vacant by the "white flight". These leftist neobohemians were also attracted by the cool epic of these areas, that of the combat against the cultural bourgeois establishment. Such an ideological alignment made integration easier. The intellectuals supported the causes of the young artists and got involved in the neighborhoods' activities.

At the end of the 1980s, the third phase of the transformation process of obsolete residential neighborhoods began, that regarding its media spreading. Paradoxically, third places played a crucial role in making visible the cultural movement that they strove to conceal. Their concerts, exhibitions, and presentations brought to light the incredible musical, theatrical, and artistic scene that had emerged there. The media became interested in the phenomenon, which they baptized as the "culture of insurgency". The East Village became known as the "third art district" of Manhattan, on a par with SoHo and Greenwich Village. It also put the spotlight on these third places themselves, making bars and clubs fashionable that until then had tried to remain off the radar. As a result, the aesthetic of obsolescence became mainstream. Magazines, documentaries, and advertising campaigns spread fascinating images of the interior of dismantled factories, of street walls covered with graffiti, of infrastructures taken over by weeds. The poetic dimension that Žižek called for made it to the covers of the trendiest publications all over the world. Urban obsolescence was no longer something marginal and unpleasant, but central and intriguing, at least on the surface. Mele commented: "While the images and symbols of urban decay remained the same, their representations and attached meanings shifted from fear and repulsion to curiosity and desire" (Mele, 2000, p. 233).

As a result, these neighborhoods became appealing places. Tourists and dwellers from other parts of the city started to visit them to listen to talks, go to shows, have drinks or, simply, live "intense" experiences in a socially and physically degraded environment. A great many of those visitors belonged to the second generation of neobohemians, that of the 1990s, for whom mingling with the homeless, prostitutes, and drug peddlers was an extremely cool anti-bourgeois manifesto. These young people also considered as "authentic" the stark physical realism of third places, whose rough textures they found really stimulating. Tim Edensor explained why:

> This sensual unfamiliarity contrasts with the frequently de-sensualized outside world, with its de-odorized environments and its constraints

on noise, the unbroken smoothness of its pavements and floors, the prevailing textural sheen and the predictable design that effectively insulate the body against jarring sensations in its encounter with urban space.

(Cited in Franck and Stevens, 2007, p. 242)

This is when the real estate sector discovered the commercial potential of obsolete neighborhoods. The austere architectural typologies of the working class, represented by New York's dumbbell apartments, Berlin's Mietskasernen, and London's Victorian terraces, all ill–ventilated, ill–lit, and ill–equipped buildings, were reconverted into lofts. To them, old factories and warehouses were added, which were recovered and turned into the headquarters of creative sector businesses. Neobohemians took over these places *en masse*. This group was now represented by a new set of individuals who were less idealistic than the intellectuals of the 1980s: they did not feel politically committed to any specific cause and hardly ever shared physical space with the original neighbors.

Thus, the full circle of gentrification had been completed. In the sequence that has just been described, the stage models that scholars use to measure the process that governs it can be perceived (Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock, 2012, p. 63). The first step corresponds to the arrival of underground artists, an educated but economically insecure group that coexists elbow-to-elbow with the autochthonous population. The second stage coincides with the arrival of intellectuals, people emotionally involved in the life of a neighborhood they strive to belong to, and where they invest heavily both on a personal and at a financial level. The third phase is less respectful: developers and affluent people acquire and renew buildings with the only intention of speculating with them. The newcomers lack a sentimental connection with the neighborhood and a great deal of the original inhabitants move away, taking advantage of the opportunity of selling their homes at a reasonable price. Many underground artists, who cannot afford the rent increase, leave as well. Finally, in the fourth phase, real estate is placed once again on the market and is acquired by high purchasing power classes, upsetting the social and economic makeup of these neighborhoods. Paradoxically, this results in the destruction of one of their main appeals: diversity.

Dalston: Gillett Square, Community-Led Regeneration

This section shows Dalston's evolution from being one of the poorest neighborhoods in the United Kingdom in the 1990s to its designation by *The Guardian* as "the coolest place in Britain" in 2009. Dalston Square and Gillett Square are analyzed as two contrasting examples of interventions in the area: the first, a

typically speculative development; the second, a community-led urban regeneration project.

East London—the most important manufacturing area in the United Kingdom at the beginning of the 1970s—epitomizes the de-industrialization of British working-class neighborhoods. The Oil Crisis hastened its rapid decline, something that was spurred on by the closing down of London's docks in 1980. Over 10,000 people were left out of work while it is estimated that another 100,000 lost their jobs in related activities. Unemployment reached 60 percent in some areas and the population shrunk by 20 percent. In Hackney, where companies as iconic as Clarnico (1975) or Lesney (1982) went bankrupt, unemployment soared above 20 percent. It comes to no surprise to see junkyards and scrap-metal ventures among the few businesses that survived this debacle.

The physical expression of this economic collapse was clearly perceptible in Dalston. The closing down of factories and warehouses was followed by the vacating of homes and the clearance sales of shops. Even facilities as emblematic as the German Hospital and Dalston Junction station were shuttered, cutting off the area from the center of London. Hackney Council reacted to this wave of obsolescence with a demolition program that brought down 23 social housing estates. Because of this measure, the borough became riddled with neglected lots. In the best of cases, these sites were used as parking lots, although usually they were colonized by the homeless and alcoholics. Crime statistics rose dramatically. Drug trafficking and consumption proliferated, finding in the infamous "crack houses" their saddest manifestation. In Hackney, which began to be known as "Crackney", the number of burglaries was four times higher than the UK average, and muggings were eight times higher.

Dalston had plunged into one of the worst economic, social, and environmental crises in its history. Only its famous nightlife, which had competed with that of the West End since the end of the nineteenth century, was able to resist the impact of all this. The great protagonists were the clubs where Black music was played. Passions, Blushes, Visions, or Passing Clouds had made Dalston an international mecca for jazz, reggae, and hip-hop. The Four Aces Club was especially iconic. It had opened in 1966 within the entrance hall of the old Dalston Theater. Count Shelly, Stevie Wonder, Desmond Decker, Otis Redding, and Billy Ocean had all played there. Bob Dylan and Bob Marley had visited it. In the 1980s, it became The Labyrinth, an equally legendary premise for percussion and acid house music at whose rave parties thousands of people congregated.

In the mid-1980s, attracted by the lively music scene but also after having been expelled from the nearby and newly gentrified neighborhoods of Shoreditch and Hoxton, underground artists started to arrive in Dalston, many of whom set up their studios in abandoned factories and warehouses. They were accompanied by writers, politicians, and people in show business. Among them, the actors Stephen Fry, Hugh Laurie, and Emily Lloyd, the

musician Alan Spenner, and Tony Blair,[16] the future Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, stood out. Two decades later, the neobohemian advance party had consolidated its presence. Tim Butler and Robson Gray's research on the area adjacent to London Fields showed its infiltration into Dalston's kaleidoscopic sociological scene:

> The ACORN report describes these areas as being concentrated in the under 45 age range, with a disproportionate number of ethnic minority people making up a third of the population. There are high numbers of single person households. They are described as being generally unhappy with their standard of living and much more likely than average to be vegetarian, although the two are not linked. One of their more likely purchases is ski clothing, which is perhaps indicative of an aspirational middle-class population. There is an income peak of £30,000–40,000 per year.
>
> *(Butler and Gray, 2003, p. 62)*

This neobohemian group, the majority of which was comprised by white hipsters, had chosen Dalston as their place of residence out of personal conviction. They were patrons of Turkish food establishments and mingled with the Afro-Caribbean community in the nightclubs. They also brought new life to the dying Broadway Market, where art galleries began to open. The changes that they introduced into the urban setting were minimal. The respect they professed for the industrial and working-class past of the area became clear in the architectural renovations that were undertaken in the dilapidated Victorian terraces, which had been bought at bargain prices. Butler and Gray stressed the fact that the outside of those houses was scrupulously respected while the inside was fully refurbished, usually with the living room and kitchen fusing into one space to become the heart of the dwelling. They interpreted it as an "aesthetics of gentrification" and identified the model it followed in the suburban houses of the middle class—the childhood space of most neobohemians (Butler and Gray, 2003, p. 114).

In short, at the beginning of the millennium, Dalston was going through the initial stages of gentrification, more specifically through the second phase of the process described above. Butler and Gray stated that, during those years, the middle class barely accounted for over 25 percent of the population even in the London areas most affected by the phenomenon (Butler and Gray, 2003, p. 1). The Hackney Council data confirmed this. In 2001, 49 percent of Dalston's residents lived in social rental housing,[17] while only half of them had formal jobs with adequate salaries—usually in the service sector—20 percent lived on charity or had no qualifications, and 7 percent were unemployed (LBH, 2007).

In 2006, Channel Four described Hackney as "the worst place in England to live". By that time, Dalston was weighed down by a threefold burden that, albeit carved in its past, continued to be fed through different sources. On

one hand, it had the reputation of being a proletarian area, an idea fostered by media. For some time, *EastEnders*, a very popular BBC television series that portrays the everyday life of a typical working-class borough (first aired in 1985), was filmed there. In addition, Dalston had an aura of un–redemption that had originated in the 1930s and lingered until the 1960s, a period during which the followers of Fascist leader Oswald Mosley held provocative gatherings there protesting the presence of an important Jewish community, leading to strong clashes with the neighbors.[18] Finally, the last ingredient of Dalston's thrilling history was the stigma of criminality, firmly rooted in the preceding decades, which also seemed to fascinate both the media and show business—Britney Spears' music video "Criminal" (2011) was filmed in Dalston.

Despite this dark legend, Dalston was about to embark on an urban and social metamorphosis that would raise it to the podium of cool neighborhoods. A turning point in its history started with the preliminaries of the London 2012 Olympic project. This new phase was not encouraged by groups that looked for an alternative lifestyle; instead, it was promoted by an alliance between political power and real estate capital. In 2004, the mayor Ken Livingstone announced the extension of the London Overground with a new line crossing the borough before the Games' opening. Furthermore, the London Plan, which had been approved by the Greater London Authority (GLA) during that same year, had designated Dalston as a preferential area for regeneration, conferring that mission on a grand real estate operation: the building of Dalston Square.

The project included the building of the above-mentioned light rail station (Dalston Junction), a bus station, and a library. It allotted 3,200 square meters to commercial areas, 4,000 square meters to public spaces, and most importantly, it contemplated the construction of a 553-unit residential complex. It was a typical infill development operation, set within the heart of Dalston's commercial district and making use of two lots that were affected by obsolescence: the site of the old Dalston Junction, where there was a row of ramshackle terraced houses and a warehouse; and Dalston Lane South, where the remains of Dalston Theatre were located. Each one of them became the subject of a masterplan that complied with the guidelines that the sustainable urban model dictates: high density (the highest tower, Dalston Point, had 16 stories), large pedestrian areas, intermodal public transportation, and so on. The core of the area was to be occupied by a square of minimalistic design: sleek streetlights, prismatic benches, and a pavement of textured stone.

The character of the housing in Dalston Square reflected the socio-cultural sector which it intended to attract. The blocks had first-rate facilities: a 24-hour concierge service, roof gardens, and gyms. Two-thirds of the 553 apartments had one or two bedrooms, which made them appropriate for people who live by themselves or for childless couples, but inappropriate for larger families. Most likely, the developers had in mind professionals who worked in the City's financial sector and those of the creative industries of Shoreditch and Hoxton,

FIGURE 2.8 Dalston: impact of the Dalston Square operation on the neighborhood's character.

two areas that, thanks to the expansion of the London Overground, would be at a stone's throw away from Dalton Square.

To attract these social groups the developers also resorted to subliminal resources. An article by Gethin Davison, Kim Dovey, and Ian Woodcock called attention to the fact that only two of the 16 photographs included in

FIGURE 2.9   Dalston: Dalston Square.

the advertising leaflets had been taken in Dalston.[19] Both were clearly aimed at the neobohemian public: a jazz club and a fruit stand at Ridley Road Market (Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock, 2012, p. 55). There were those who thought that even its legendary roughness served that purpose, as it fit in with a cool scene that was enormously attractive to neobohemians. Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock gathered the opinion of a community leader:

> they're actually just using this situation—they like the frisson, the wall-paper of the edginess and the feeling that they're, you know, in the raw reality and so on. … They [the vulnerable and marginal groups] just decorate, they create a nice background so we can sit in the cafes and watch people falling over on their drug overdoses in the street and think how groovy—we're really where it's at now.
>
> *(Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock, 2012, p. 60)*

The construction of Dalston Square coincided with the crowning of Dalton as one of Europe's coolest neighborhoods. It took place in April 2009, when *The Guardian*, the temple of British progressives, called it "the coolest place in Brit-ain": "Long dismissed as a fading east London suburb with a chaotic daily market, a strip of cheap Turkish restaurants and a rudimentary relationship

with street hygiene, Dalston E8 now finds itself the unlikely owner of Britain's coolest postcode" (Flynn, 2009). The article praised the clubs, frequented by Pam Hogg, Terry De Havilland, and Jimmy Choo. It also admitted that part of Dalston's charm was due to its wild side: "Wander around at 11pm and the feeling is not dissimilar to being in the lower east side of Manhattan at its mid-90s peak" (Flynn, 2009). Hanna Hanra, the publisher of *Pix*, pointed out: "For architectural beauty, cleanliness, stench factor, road safety and trying to walk at a normal pace down the pavement, definitely not. For being somewhere exciting, absolutely" (Flynn, 2009).

The article in *The Guardian* marked an inflection point in Dalston's reputation. A few months after its publication, the Italian edition of *Vogue* declared that it was "the trendiest, coolest, most *caldissimo* neighborhood in London". The snowball effect of media praise started to roll. According to Lloyds TSB, the price of housing rose 39 percent in Dalston between 2005 and 2010, more than in any other London neighborhood. Dalston had gone from being one of the cheapest sections of the city to being 8 percent more expensive than the average. The apartments of the Dalston Square operation, which was carried out in phases between 2010 and 2012, were sold at prices that fluctuated between £210,000 (one bedroom) and £470,000 (three bedrooms)—although those in Dalston Point tower went on the market at a price of £580,000. Nearly half of them were bought by investors, and one third by people who did not live in the United Kingdom— most of whom were East Asian[20] (Altheer, 2012). That was proof that Dalston had reached the third stage of gentrification: private investors acquired houses with the sole intention of re-selling them or renting them, that is, of speculating with them.

This brought significant changes into the sociological makeup of the area, as the 2011 census data showed. According to the *Dalston Ward Profile*, which referred just to the central area of the neighborhood, where Dalston Square is located, 53.1 percent of the population were between 25 and 44 years old, whereas in London the percentage was 35.5 percent. And 16.8 percent of the people were self-employed, as compared to 11.7 percent in London. Only 26.5 percent of the residents owned their home, while in London 48.2 percent were proprietors of their dwellings; 20.7 percent of the homes were shared, compared to a mere 4.8 percent in London. Single-person households amounted to 36.4 percent, while the average in London was 31.6 percent. As for childless couples, here they accounted for 11.7 percent of the households, almost doubling the 5.5 percent of the rest of the city (LBH, 2015). In short, the residents of this area were young, self-employed, and lived in rented homes that were shared or occupied by singles or childless couples. Everything indicated that the goal of attracting the professionals of the City and Shoreditch had been achieved.[21] Needless to say, rent increases forced a great many young artists to leave the borough, most of them to find a new home in Hackney Wick, the new "Wild East" of London. That did not mean

a decline in the artistic scene. On the contrary, artists as relevant as Matthew Stone and pop music stars like Dev Hynes, Jack Penate, and Big Pink moved to Dalston. Even cultural institutions as significant as the Victoria & Albert Museum or the Barbican began to hold events there, cementing it as a new hub of London's high culture.

Currently, the resilient vision reigns in Dalston. Many neighbors recycle their garbage, save energy, ride bikes, shop in charity stores, work as volunteers, and are involved in community projects. Courses in permaculture applicable to gardening on rooftops, balconies, and windows are taught in the De Beauvoir Park, where the growing of wild plants is allowed on lawns. The same thing happens in the open spaces of social housing complexes such as Rhodes Estate, which has compost areas, community gardens, and foraging grounds. The vaults of the London Overground viaduct shelter coffee shops, gyms, table game arcades, and vintage furniture shops. Eco-hipster fairs and street markets fill vacant plots and parking lots. In the playgrounds of Princess May School car boots are held where neobohemians (as well as have-nots) can get second-hand clothes and household goods. And the epitome of the resilient vision, eco-aesthetics, flourishes on the terraces of the third places. Board fences, pallet flooring, bamboo screens, canvas awnings, or strings of lightbulbs show to what extent the eco-lifestyle rules in Dalton.

FIGURE 2.10   Dalston: uncut meadow in De Beauvoir Park.

FIGURE 2.11   Dalston: Curio Cabal Coffee Shop.

Moreover, Dalston can be proud of being the site of a pioneer mani-
festation of resilient urban design: Gillett Square. This intervention took
place on a border condition site: a hidden plot surrounded by the backs of
buildings that was used for parking, repairing bikes, bartering for food and
medicine, and sheltering marginalized people. Until the end of the 1980s,
the only company that had been interested in it was Hackney Cooperative
Development (HCD), a non-profit local developer. It had restructured
the nearly abandoned terraced houses of neighboring Bradbury Street and
turned them into affordable-rent workshops, studios, and shops, adding
some galleries to the back from which the parking lot could be watched
over in a passive way.

In 1993, HCD advanced a proposal to the Hackney Council to transform
this site into a square, and it was accepted five years later. A series of micro-
interventions were then undertaken that were entrusted to Hawkins/Brown,
a Hackney architecture studio that had collaborated with HCD in commu-
nity development projects. In 1999, the studio designed ten metal kiosks for
the south side of the parking lot, along the backs of the terrace houses fac-
ing Bradbury Street. They were rented to local start-ups: a cafe, a computer
shop, a tailor's, a Jamaican bar, an Afro-Caribbean hairdresser's, a Djiboutian

mini-market, etc. Such a modest intervention sparked off change. The kiosks reinforced passive surveillance of the area, which encouraged more and more people to gather there.

The Gillett Square project took definite shape during Ken Livingstone's mayoralty (2000–2008), whose public-space policies were characterized by an interest in quality urban design. In view of the lack of public resources that could be assigned to this kind of improvement?, Livingstone relied on the collaboration between the private sector and the councils of the city's 33 boroughs: while the former had to put up some of the money to finance them, the public administration's role was to guarantee the compliance with strict quality standards. Gillett Square was the first intervention on the program *100 Spaces*, which was supposed to be the display window for the above-mentioned urban-design improvement plan. In 2001, the Gillett Square Partnership was designated, with the incorporation of three agents. The public sector was represented by the planning area of Hackney Council and by the Architecture and Urbanism Unit of the GLA (associated with the project in 2003). The private sector's representatives were developer MacDonald Egan, Leisure and Property Directorates, and the Vortex Jazz Club (associated in 2003 as well). Hackney Cooperative Development and Groundwork East London, on behalf of the third sector, were also part of this partnership. Leadership was left in the hands

FIGURE 2.12 Dalston: kiosks in Gillett Square.

FIGURE 2.13   Dalston: general view of Gillett Square.

of HCD, in recognition of the fact that they knew the neighborhood better than any of the other members.

The design of Gillett Square was commissioned to the studio Hawkins/ Brown, with Whitelaw Turkington as the landscaper. The square that they planned consisted basically in paving that connected the buildings around it. Three surfaces were differentiated: the general area was made of granite slabs of different sizes; around the trees, an elevated wooden platform was placed, and surrounding the kiosks a similar deck-like element was included. Such an uncomplicated composition was delimited on the east by a wall made of a steel mesh cage containing slabs of slate. At the present, Hackney Pirates, a group that offers support to children with learning difficulties, manages the wall, on which those children post ideas on subjects such as animal rights, climate change, and pollution. Thus, the wall has become a tool of education in resilience.

Work in Gillett Square began in 2003, and the first phase concluded in 2006. Currently, the square is a center for economic activities. Besides the famous Jazz Café, many local businesses have established themselves on the ground floors of Bradbury Street terrace: music shops, jewelry shops, arts-and-crafts shops, beauty parlors, hairdressing salons, bookstores, and so on. Most of the proprietors are women and members of the Afro-Caribbean community,

while a great many customers are millennials who work in the design, graphic art, architecture, and telecommunication companies of the nearby Stamford Works building. Gillett Square is also a center for cultural activity. Partly financed with income coming from the rent of the kiosks, and also designed by Hawkins/Brown, Dalston's Culture House was built on the southwest corner. It includes an exhibition gallery and several artist studios, although the heart of the building is occupied by Vortex, a well-known jazz club that vindicates Dalston's Black music tradition.

However, Gillett Square is, above all, a meeting place. It is frequented by nearly all the social groups that make up the complex and diverse Dalston community: Afro-Caribbean senior citizens and middle-aged neobohemi-ans usually sit under the trees; children run and skaters glide around the central space; millennials and teenagers hang out by the kiosks, and all kinds of people walk towards the Culture House or the Jazz Café. A few marginalized people must be added to this mix, but their presence does not seem to bother the rest. Nevertheless, it is also true that some of the aforementioned groups coexist on the square but do not interact with each other. Even so, they share the same urban space, which is a first step towards

FIGURE 2.14 Dalston: general view of Gillett Square.

getting to know each other, a *sine qua non* condition if a resilient community is to come to be.

The success of the Gillett Square project, extensively aired by the press, has made politicians and developers aware not only of the convenience of involving the third sector in the regeneration of public spaces, but also of its capacity to lead. Interventions such as this have made the so-called "community-led regenerations" fashionable. What is the role of urban design in them? In order to answer this question, the part played by Hawkins/Brown studio is very revealing. The project by this practice has been recognized by many institutions: the kiosks received recognition from the RIBA in 1999 and the Design Week Award in 2000, while the square was given the Great Place Award of the Academy of Urbanism in 2012. However, Gillett Square may disappoint those who expect to find in it the exceptional aesthetic values of the public spaces that the institutions of high European culture usually reward, such as the surroundings of the Oslo Opera or the old Marseilles port.[22] Compared to them, Gillett Square and its surroundings seem modest, conventional, and lacking an intellectual discourse. Jonathan Glancey commented on the Culture House: "It's not a flashy 'showpiece' project. It's not even a great work of architecture. But Dalston's Culture House is exactly what inner-city London is crying out for" (Glancey, 2005).

This paradox shows the change of paradigm that resilient urban design is suggesting by prioritizing process over result and use over form. Thirteen years went by from the moment when HCD proposed to Hackney Council the transformation of the sorry parking lot into a square. More than a decade was spent on exploratory work, consulting with the community, securing funds, negotiating with developers, designing and redesigning of proposals, and construction. This very long, drawn-out process left a mark among Dalston's residents, outweighing the spatial and material configuration of the square. The relevance of this fact is demonstrated by a comparison between Gillett Square and Dalston Square, examples of the resilient vision and the sustainable urban model, respectively. Despite its simple design and concealed setting among existing buildings, the former vibrates with life. In contrast, the latter plays a secondary role in the life of the neighborhood, in spite of its privileged location right outside Dalston Junction and being surrounded by over 500 homes. Most likely, that is because Dalston Square was the result of top-down planning led by politicians and real-estate developers and carried out in five years.

In light of this, contemporary urban designers ought to reconsider some notions. The parallels with the confrontation between modern designers and eco-aesthetic designers are mirrored here. Modern designers proposed artistic ideas that were supported by intellectual discourse and could only be materialized after titanic struggles with public servants, developers, builders, and

neighbors. Eco-aesthetic designers accept that the projects produced by their practices are no more than a point of departure, rough drafts that will be modified time and again to end up being impure designs that, in all likelihood, will not live up to their original expectations. Even so, they will have been successful.

Notes

1. The metric systems based on the GDP, which are purely quantitative, are currently questioned in favor of other more qualitative ones, such as Gross Domestic Happiness (GDH) or the Happy Planet Index (HPI).
2. The UK's climate emergency declaration, which was non-binding, demanded that the government set the objective of zero emissions by 2050, in accordance with the Paris Agreement. The Extinction Rebellion movement, however, demanded zero emissions by 2025.
3. In the 1984 version, principle four of the Deep Ecology Platform stated: "The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease" (Naess and Sessions, 1984). This principle is responsible for the reputation of Malthusianism that accompanies deep ecology. In the revised 1994 version, the principle was reformulated as: "Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening" (Foundation for Deep Ecology, online).
4. Extinction Rebellion is a good example of this. The movement was born in Stroud, a new-age village in the English countryside, many of whose inhabitants are intellectuals, writers, artists, and scholars.
5. The United Kingdom clearly leads with 272 initiatives (2020 data).
6. Matthew Carmona has developed a theory that considers urban design as a "*place-shaping continuum*": "an on-going journey through which places are continuously shaped and re-shaped—physically, socially and economically— through periodic planned intervention, day-to-day occupation and the long-term guardianship of place" (Carmona, 2014, p. 34).
7. The 2019 Oslo Architecture Triennial focused on this subject, as did the last German IBAs (International Architecture Exhibitions) such as the one held in Saxony-Anhalt (2010).
8. Paradigmatic was Detroit's case, where 158,000 demolition licenses were granted between 1970 and 2000, compared to 2,956 building licenses (Oswalt, 2005, p. 65).
9. The 2012 Milan regional plan (Piano di Governo del Territorio) estimated that, between 2010 and 2030, 5 percent of the physical fabric of the city will disappear, going from occupying 70 percent of the municipal area to occupying 65 percent of it.
10. In humid climate zones, over 40 species were counted after eight months, which increased to 60 species after 20 months.
11. One of the first to do it was botanist Rodney Burton, who produced the atlas of London's flora (Burton, 1983).
12. Ignasi Solà-Morales was a pioneer in showing the evocative power of the places that he called "*terrains vagues*" (Solá-Morales and Costa, 1996, p. 21).
13. A good example of this is Seattle's Beacon Hill, presently a self-sustainable forest where permaculture is practiced and where residents pick apples, herbs, and nuts.
14. A process of participation was immediately initiated that resulted in the Plan of Development and Maintenance of Tempelhof Field.

15. Christopher Mele recalled that graffiti such as "*die yuppie scum*" or "*mug a yuppie*" were usual on the walls of East Village (Mele, 2000, p. 257).
16. Blair, who lived on Mapledene Road between 1980 and 1986, described Dalston as a place located "on the wrong side of Kingsland Road", referring to the contrast with the booming neighboring areas of Islington and Stoke Newington.
17. Compared to 16 percent of private rentals and 34 percent of owners.
18. In recent years (2011 and 2017), it was the Afro-Caribbean community that led violent revolts in protest at police actions.
19. The rest of the photographs, of high-end cafés, restaurants, and shops, were taken in other London areas.
20. After the 2008 collapse of the real estate market, the developers of Dalston Square, Barratt Homes, opened offices in cities like Beijing, where they advertised London as a safe destination for global capital.
21. According to UHY Hacker Young, it is Hackney's residents who have most increased their purchasing power during the last two decades, going from an income of £6,448 in 1997 to an income of £19,261 in 2017, three times more — the United Kingdom's average has only doubled. In 2018, the average cost of a flat was £515,000, which turned Hackney into the eleventh most expensive London borough.
22. Recognized by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB) with the European Award for Urban Public Space in 2010 and 2014 respectively.

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3

ON SCALE

From Globalism to Localism

This chapter deals with the change in scale that has supported the reinvention of the city after the environmental crisis, from the global to the local scale. The thread of the argument departs from geography, more specifically from human geography, with roots in phenomenology and post-structuralism.

Localism and the City: Neighborhood Planning

This section tackles the political dimension of localism. It starts by analyzing its roots as a philosophy and its evolution towards New Localism, which has conferred it with a legal expression in countries like the United Kingdom. Its application to urbanism has been neighborhood planning, the implementation of which is analyzed by looking at the Kentish Town (London) case study.

As seen in Chapter 2, scale has played a major role in the reinvention of the city after the environmental crisis. Since the community is the most appropriate field of work and implementation of the resilient vision, the focus must be set on the scales of the neighborhood or the village. That leaves aside the traditional scale of urban studies, that of the city, and especially the scale which radical geography has promoted over the course of the last decades, that of the planet. This choice of the small in opposition to the large as a framework for reflection and action is part of a more general phenomenon that is not merely limited to urban studies. It also affects economy, sociology, and politics, where it is expressed in the preference for the local over the global.

Localism burst onto the scene in the 1990s as a kind of philosophy. Like the eco-lifestyle, which was then emerging, it was a minority movement that opposed the globalized economic model. Its vindication of the small scale found a vehicle in uncoordinated groups that had different interests in the

sociopolitical, economic, and cultural realms, among others. The first focused on the structures of government, demanding systems of participative democracy that empowered communities. The second discussed production and consumption aspects, defending local companies, neighborhood businesses, and proximity farming—"buy local" was their slogan. Finally, the third group promoted local history, claiming that preserving identity in its manifold dimensions was vital—a matter that will be approached in the third section of this chapter. Currently, localism has turned into a more articulate and holistic movement, a sort of model of thought. It advocates the small scale because it is efficient when it comes to dealing with problems, since it allows selecting resources and adapting strategies to the specificity of each place. Such an argument can be understood as an act of reflective nostalgia. Usually, the defenders of localism emphasize that, until the Industrial Revolution, most political, social, and economic structures were local ones, like medieval communes and guilds.

This localist claim has been assumed by some central governments, something which at first may seem paradoxical. The United Kingdom was a pioneer in this sense. Tony Blair's Labour government (1997–2007) took the first steps towards recognizing localism when it proposed framing the country's economic, social, and environmental challenges within the scales of the city and the neighborhood. To address these issues, the government proposed to establish a contract between the administration and civil society that would combine the ways of representative democracy with those of participatory democracy, that is, vertical mechanisms with horizontal mechanisms. The aim was to take advantage of society's capacity for self-organization by providing it with legal recognition and financial resources. This governmental philosophy was publicized as "New Localism". It differed from traditional localism in its wish to conciliate the small and large scale, the local and the global, anti-establishment and capitalism.

Eventually, it was David Cameron's Conservative government that passed the Localism Act in 2011. This law took the New Localism spirit to urban planning, a discipline that was also suffering from the ills that came from the large-scale approach. It created a set of tools that partly yields the control of planning aspects to communities: neighborhood development orders, community right to build orders, and, most especially, neighborhood plans. The first two enable neighbors to grant building licenses, and the plans allow them to define the kind of urban development that they want, to protect heritage assets that they consider of value, and to plan policies and design guidelines that bestow a certain character on the neighborhood. The launch and definition of the three figures correspond to "neighborhood forums" where both residents and shop owners are represented. After being approved by the local urban-planning authority, they become the subject of a referendum and are incorporated into the local plan.

At the beginning of 2019, there were over 750 neighborhood plans in the United Kingdom. Their uneven territorial distribution is noteworthy. According to a Publica report, 35 percent corresponded to neighborhoods located in 20 percent of the wealthiest districts in the country, whereas only 4 percent were located in 20 percent of the poorest (Publica, 2019a, p. 7). Several reasons explain this: the high cost of a neighborhood plan, which fluctuates between £20,000 and £86,000;[1] the need to have access to technical information, which can be difficult for sectors of the population with low educational levels; or the long time that goes into the elaboration of a plan (an average of 49 months from the composition of the neighborhood forum to the approval by referendum), which demands perseverance and a strong commitment from the residents, attitudes that are hard to find in communities gripped by precariousness and conflict (Publica, 2019b, p. 4).

In London there were 16 neighborhood plans in force in 2020, and about 100 forums had been established, which means that many more were in the process of being defined. Four of the 16 that had been approved were in Camden borough: Highgate, Hampstead, Fortune Green and West Hampstead, as well as Kentish Town. In the mid-nineteenth century, Kentish Town was an industrial area that specialized in the production of musical instruments. Piano and organ factories stood along austere Victorian terraces, a distinguishing mark of the working-classes that was mythicized by the fact that Karl Marx became a resident there in 1856. The proletarian character was maintained after the Second World War, when several social housing estates were built. In the 1960s, a great many activists and leftist intellectuals chose this neighborhood as their place of residence, making the snowball of gentrification roll. At present, Kentish Town is an affluent area where 53 percent of the population is white, of British origin, and highly educated.

The process of promotion, definition, diffusion, and approval of Kentish Town's neighborhood plan was completely in tune with the spirit of the resilient vision. To generate interest and raise community awareness, the neighborhood forum organized walking tours around the area, which enabled the participants to become more familiar with the available open spaces, to discuss the heritage values of the buildings, and to identify opportunity spaces. At the same time, forum members stood along the high streets to gather opinions and comments from passersby. After compiling that information and receiving the advice of professionals, they elaborated a rough draft of the plan that was presented and discussed in meetings, presentations, and workshops. The input from residents fostered the definition of specific policies and projects, a job that was carried out by task forces made up of four to 12 people. Forum members, external advisors, and neighbors formed these committees, which met in community workshops and at working parties. The final policy and project proposals were presented at events and on interactive web pages, or by such unconventional means as their printing on coasters that were distributed

in cafes and pubs. After being modified in accordance with the comments and suggestions that were received, the Kentish Town neighborhood plan was voted on in a referendum and finally approved. This culminated the slow process that had begun in 2012 and was concluded in 2016. It was an example of participatory democracy entrusted to the work of the community.

Such practices stand far apart from those of traditional urbanism. As with resilient urban design, the definition process of the plan helped to educate people in community resilience and its importance was comparable to that of the final result. Does this suggest that neighborhood planning can contribute to solve one of the greatest problems that the resilient vision faces, that is, providing it with a legal instrument which would allow it to legally institute the decisions taken by the communities? Hardly so. Even though the spirit of the resilient vision can be found in the outlining of the Kentish Town neighborhood plan, an eclectic mix of visions, values, objectives, and tools can be detected in its content. Some of the policies coincide with the mandates of said vision: they promote the biodiversity of open spaces; prioritize socially committed measures; protect traditional commerce; and set limits to non-retailers (banks, real estate businesses, amusement arcades, professional services, and so on). However, there are also measures in which the inertia of the sustainable urban model can be perceived. Among them, the predilection towards infill development stands out. The plan favors building in obsolete facilities, such as industrial warehouses or car washes, and in vacant plots, like the ones in the areas of York Mews, Frideswide Place, Wolsey Mews, etc. (*The Kentish Town Neighborhood Plan*, 2016). Most importantly, British neighborhood planning has been accused of being nothing more than a branch of institutional urbanism. As a matter of fact, the Localism Act establishes that its proposals and projects must support the urban development policies established by the local plan, which they cannot block under any circumstances. In other words, the final decision does not correspond to the neighbors but continues to be in the hands of the administration.

The "Local Project" in the Territorial Scale: Urban Agriculture

This section addresses the economic dimension of localism.[2] While the previous section studied how localism was transferred to city planning, this one deals with its transferring to regional planning. It focuses on the "local project" as defined by the Italian Territorialist school, which gives agriculture an essential role in the defense of the local environment, population, identity, geography, and production.

Alberto Magnaghi, the leader of the school, pointed out that there are three ways of understanding the relationship between the global and the local in the field of economy. The first merely intends to profit from local products in the

international market. It is a stance in favor of globalization that is very much in tune with eco-capitalism. The second one proposes a "glocal" balance that is based on the insertion of the local in the global networks. This is an intermediate position that Magnaghi considered as utopian.[3] Finally, the third stance gives priority to local development, this being an anti-globalization idea that he supported (Magnaghi, 2005, pp. 56–58). This third option has made its way into ecological economy with the theory that in order to reduce the dependence on oil prices—which are extremely volatile—it is necessary to adjust the production system to local possibilities and needs. This posture is also shared by the Transition Town movement, which has applied the principal to the building sector, advocating its management by neighbor cooperatives, promoting vernacular architectural typologies, and encouraging the use of unprocessed materials that are available in the vicinity—something that is assessed by means of the "building mile" concept.

Giving priority to local development over any other kind would require a major rewriting of the territory or, to be more precise, the dismantling of the territorial structure that Fordism imposed at the beginning of the twentieth century in order to adapt the geography of industrialized countries to its production logic. After the dismantling of the synergic relationships existing between places, people, and activities, historical and biological regions became standardized economic areas. Decades later, globalization expanded such a transformation to encompass the entire planet, and went even further by creating non-hierarchical networks that turned the territory into an even more abstract entity. Environmental economists have termed this process "de-territorialization" and have accused it of being one of the causes of the environmental crisis, as it has created enormous distances between production and consumption areas, thus increasing the use of fuel in a dramatic way. Hence, these economists have established a connection between the call for a local economy and the appeal for the "re-territorialization" of the planet.[4]

Most especially, re-territorialization concerns the discipline of regional planning. Those professionals who have accepted the challenge of dealing with it are known as "territorialists", and they are in the orbit of radical ecology. Indeed, their proposals can be understood as an extension of the resilient vision on a regional scale. One of their main contributions to the environmental debate has been to focus on the matter of territory instead of the environment, something that exceeds the realm of nature in order to include people, traditions, heritage, etc. in the discussion. In *The Urban Village* (2005), Magnaghi presented his "local project", a development methodology that he defined as "self-sustainable" (Magnaghi, 2005, p. 65). Conceptually, the term was closer to resilience than to sustainability because it referred to strategies that do not require external support, either technological or legislative, to self-reproduce. The goal of the local project was to start a re-territorialization cycle, a task that Magnaghi tackled from five different directions: one that was environmental,

another that was social, a cultural one, a geographic one, and an economic one. He entrusted the first with the adopting of new standards for human settlement, revealing a preference for a return to the countryside as a way of repopulating the territory. The contemporary work market makes that possible.[5] Unlike the medieval farmer, who was bound to the piece of land that fed him, or the Fordist worker, who was forced to settle in the conurbation where the company that he worked for was located, for the millennial generation, which has been raised in a culture of self-employment, it is easier to choose where to live, produce, and consume, and it does so according to its values and lifestyle (Magnaghi, 2005, p. 67). From the standpoint of ecosophy and the eco-lifestyle, both the countryside and the village are equally valid alternatives to the city, and they both could contribute to the aim of repopulating the territory. This matter leads to geographic self-sustainability, the final stage of the local project. Magnaghi proposed the concept of "ecopolis" as a regional planning pattern consisting in a non-hierarchical, multipolar network of small villages interconnected by farm and forested land, as well as by natural areas. Special relevance was bestowed on agriculture, which was to mark the rhythms of the ecopolis, not only as its productive activity but also as its genetic code (Magnaghi, 2005, pp. 123–134).

The emphasis on agriculture was not happenstance. It is a profoundly localist kind of livelihood: it depends on climate and soil peculiarities, it generates traditions, and gives specificity to territories. That explains why the defense of the consumption of organic food which is produced nearby was the argument of one of the pioneering localist causes, the Organic Food Movement, founded by Alice Waters in 1971. Later, agriculture became one of the main victims of globalization. Multinational food companies and the great distribution networks de-localized harvests from their traditional growing areas towards other places that permitted a more intensive, less expensive production. This entails extremely long distances between the places where food is produced to where it is consumed, consequently generating energy costs and pollution. Serge Latouche stressed the extreme irrationality of the case of Scottish prawns: "Scottish prawns are expatriated to Thailand to be peeled by hand in a Findus Factory and then returned to Scotland to be cooked before being sold in Marks and Spencer's stores" (Latouche, 2009, p. 53).

Territorialism's pledge to agriculture, and to a return to the countryside in general, reveals a line of anti-urban thought that was always present in the Romantic ideology and that the environmental crisis of the 1970s rekindled with force. Currently, the countryside-city duality has become partly blurred thanks to so-called "urban agriculture", one of the most recognizable features of the eco-lifestyle. Jennifer Cockrall-King identified three waves in its rapid expansion during the last few decades (Cockrall-King, 2012, pp. 75–80). The first surge took place in 1989, when Carlo Petrini, the founder of the Slow Food movement, denounced one of the globalization-induced icons of cultural

homogenization throughout the planet: fast food. Awareness of this subject spread the call for local food and put forth concepts like the "food mile". The second wave arrived with the new millennium and consisted in the propagation of ways of distribution that were an alternative to the ones used by the large commercial chains. Farmers' markets, where local producers sold their merchandise to consumers directly, recovered an unanticipated relevance.[6] The third and final wave was also related to Petrini, who encouraged people to go from being consumers to becoming producers. His idea was to use the land, the water, and the residents of cities to grow food.

People who adhere to the eco-lifestyle led each of these three phases. They were the first to subscribe to the consumption of organic food that is produced locally, pioneering "locavores" (people who buy at farmers' markets for environmental commitment), and customers of "community-supported agriculture" (cooperatives of local farmers). They also made up the backbone of the first groups of urban farmers. In fact, theirs was a new expression of reflective nostalgia. Added to the recovery of arts and crafts, urban agriculture falls squarely within the preindustrial universe that is so stimulating to them.

Urban agriculture also reflects the principles of the resilience paradigm by reducing the tremendous food dependence of cities—at the present, only 10 percent of their consumption complies with the food-mile standards.[7] This explains why the resilient vision has turned urban agriculture into one of its

FIGURE 3.1   Milan: Rural Park South Milan.

most outstanding tools. Rob Hopkins defended it as one of the pillars of the Transition Town movement. He imagined that by 2030 free courses on intensive gardening would be offered locally, that there would be food platforms to help farmers sell their produce, and that farms would provide local markets with innovative products. The roofs of buildings would be occupied by gardens and the grounds of parks, factories, schools, and hospitals would be the site of community gardens (Hopkins, 2011, pp. 54–56).

Hopkins's vision is becoming a reality in many ways. Currently, urban agriculture is displayed from the territorial to the architectural scales. At the territorial scale, rural belts stand out. These are the agricultural version of the green belts that the Regional Planning Association of America devised at the beginning of last century to restrain the expansion of cities. The Rural Park South Milan was declared in 1990 to protect the intensive farming that takes place along the southernmost edges of the Lombard capital, an activity that can be traced back to the Middle Ages. In this 46,000-hectare semi-ring there are over 1,400 farms where cattle and pigs are raised, and where cereal (43 percent of the area) and rice (22 percent) are grown. The rest of the park consists of meadows and natural areas crisscrossed by canals that were traditionally used for irrigation and as waterways. This enclave of extremely high environmental

FIGURE 3.2 New York: Brooklyn Grange rooftop farm.

Image by Justin, available under a CC BY 2.0 license.

and heritage value is immersed in one of Europe's most densely populated areas, where more than four million people live.

As for the architectural scale, urban agriculture is carried out in courtyards, on roofs, terraces, and even within buildings. In this case, the ties with the resilient vision present some nuances. Some of its variations, like indoor or vertical farming, can be highly dependent on so-called High-Tech Urban Agriculture and require the intensive use of eco-technologies. The norm, however, is practices that befit the eco-lifestyle, such as planting in courtyards and gardens, the surplus of which is sold in farmers' markets or through web platforms. Especially, the resilient vision advocates for the colonization of the tops of buildings with gardens and greenhouses, a strategy of spatial intensification that is particularly effective in the case of large constructions. Some towns are promoting this practice in their industrial areas, and the productivity of some of these gardens sometimes doubles that of the factories that are below them. One of the world's largest rooftop farms is New York's Brooklyn Grange, covering an area of 8,000 square meters. Equally well-known is Montreal's Luca Farms, 3,000 square meters of gardens that yield up to 40 yearly harvests and are irrigated with the water surplus which comes from the industrial activity taking place beneath it.

However, it is on the neighborhood scale where the resilient vision most applies urban agriculture. There, it has shown a huge capacity to educate in resilience, promote the collective spirit, and strengthen the sense of belonging.[8] Gardens in plots and parks are most remarkable in this respect. They are known as "community gardens" when they are looked after by groups of volunteer neighbors, and they have turned into one of the defining features of cool neighborhoods. Their expansion over the course of the last few decades has been so great that it has forced some municipalities to revise the zoning restrictions that local plans establish for residential, commercial, and industrial land. Others have gone even further and have started to protect community gardens legally, to approve strategic plans for growing food, to manage the long waiting lists, to identify vacant plots that can be used as gardens and to assign them to the communities that request it, etc.[9]

One of Europe's best-known community gardens is Prinzessinnengärten in Kreuzgerg, one of the coolest neighborhoods in Berlin.[10] The city, which has over 1,000 vacant plots and 500 hectares of abandoned industrial land, as well as a community garden tradition that goes back to the end of the nineteenth century, has become a world capital in urban agriculture. By 2009, the 5,600 square-meter brownfield where Prinzessinnengärten now flourishes, had become a dump, after having been the site of a gas station and a parking lot for trucks. A group of 150 neighbors removed two tons of waste and persuaded the Berlin Senate to rent it to them so that they could transform it into a community garden. One of its distinguishing features is that it is a mobile garden. The produce is planted in portable beds that are moved into nearby buildings

FIGURE 3.3 Berlin: Prinzessinnengärten community garden, Kreuzberg location.

Image courtesy of Luca Girardini.

FIGURE 3.4 Berlin: Prinzessinnengärten community garden, Neukölln location.

Image courtesy of Luca Girardini.

in winter. Most of these beds are recycled food sector items: 300 rice bags filled with fertile soil contain plants and bushes that have deeper roots; 400 plastic boxes hold small vegetables, and there are thousands of Tetra Brick packages for small planters that are sold by the unit. Among other things, the garden produces 15 varieties of tomatoes and ten varieties of potatoes, carrots, and pumpkins. An area has been set aside where several shipping containers have also been repurposed to hold kitchens, cafeterias, and shops where the produce is sold. The income generated by these activities is used, for example, to pay for the rent of the plot, and around them a lively social life takes place. Finally, there is a unit which the neighbors have put together with re-used materials and all kinds of "as found" bits and pieces. Here, courses are taught, workshops held, and talks given about healthy eating and methods of organic farming. Prinzessinnengärten is conceptually very similar to the Nomadic Community Garden studied in Chapter 2, its likely inspiration.

The Debate on Local Identity and the Question of Urban Heritage: From the *"Genius Loci"* to "Assemblage"

This section addresses the cultural dimension of localism. It focuses on the matter of urban identity, one of the foundations of such a dimension. What does being local mean in a global society? To answer that question, the point of departure is the existentialist approach to the idea of place, which is based on the notion of "*genius loci*", an approximation that is currently being challenged by anti-essentialist views. Firstly, this debate is traced in the field of geography. Then, its transfer to urban theory via the concept of "assemblage" is examined.

Cultural homogenization is one of the main reasons that the advocates of localism wield when denouncing globalization. Local identity has been placed at the center of the debate, this being yet another case in which the small scale seems to be prevailing over the large scale. According to a 2018 study by the Centre for London organization, a third of the people that consider themselves Londoners identify themselves with a specific area of the city more than with the United Kingdom (Bosetti and Colthorpe, 2018). Although this deeply rooted feeling of local identity is stronger among the working classes and immigrants, it is also detected in the middle class, a group that, on its part, shows great interest in the preservation of the aesthetic and atmosphere of their residential areas. According to Parker and colleagues two out of the three reasons that make a community embark on a neighborhood plan are to preserve the culture and identity of the area and to protect its characteristic traits (Parker et al., 2015).[11]

The spatial expression of local identity is defined by the concept of "place". This notion spread throughout the academic world in the 1980s, when phenomenological geographers made local studies fashionable. A debate then arose that would be characterized by the tension between existentialist and anti-essentialist authors, a binomial that recalls the dichotomy presented by

restorative and reflective nostalgia. For the existentialists, the reference was Martin Heidegger, the founder of an ontology of place that considers the human being as a "being-in-the-world". According to this view, the identity of communities is shaped through the interaction with the parts of territory where they live, to which they are attached to by experiences, memories, feeling, preferences, and values. All of it is reflected in signs and symbols that express a "poetic way of dwelling in the world". To defend this argument, Heidegger referenced groups that had lived in delimited spaces at specific (preindustrial) times, which allowed him to present the idea of place as something coherent from the standpoint of identity.

In the 1980s, Heidegger's idea of place made its way into architecture and urbanism. Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980) introduced it by using the *genius loci* concept, by which he referred to the spatial expression of the signs, symbols, memories, and values that confer a place with an essential meaning. Since then, this notion has guided the heritage policies of much of the world, especially in Europe. The Slow City movement's principles are a direct legacy of it. Bra's local plan seems to identify the *genius loci* of the city in the residential typologies of the eighteenth century, the town's period of splendor, regulating its contemporary reproduction by means of the honey-colored stucco facades and red-tile roofs that its ordinances prescribe for new buildings. The same can be said about Kentish Town's neighborhood plan, which identifies the *genius loci* of the district with its Victorian terraces, entrusting its survival to design guidelines that are inspired by the forms, scales, textures, and materials of similar preservation areas.

At the turn of the century, after two decades of application of these heritage policies, a change in attitude appeared. Some theoreticians accused these measures of having turned neighborhoods and cities into museums—and even theme parks—for a profitable purpose: to attract tourists and affluent residents with promises of exclusivity and authenticity. In the same way, they questioned Heidegger's ideas because they had been inspired by a preindustrial society that no longer exists. Consequently, they demanded that the local identity discourse be redirected towards less essential postulates which are more in tune with the complex contemporary urban reality.

Such a path had already been outlined by geographers in the 1970s, when some of them started to tackle the idea of place from the phenomenological standpoint. In his influential book *Place and Placelessness* (1976), Edward Relph defended the identity dimension that is hidden behind the apparently superficial "everyday landscapes", which he described almost along the same lines as Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour had in *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972):

> It has lurid signs, car, parks, wires, side splits and semidetached houses, corner stores and filling stations. It is often ugly and chaotic, looks awful

> in many different ways, but it is in some respects a vital mess because it is unpretentious and uncontrived and a more or less unselfconscious expression of peoples' activities and wants.
>
> *(Relph, 1976, p. 132)*

Further on he added:

> The landscapes of present-day society express the myths of reason, of the ideal past and of the ideal future, of progress and permissiveness, of individual freedom and material comfort, of Swissness for winter and Mediterraneity for summer, and logs for North American pioneers.
>
> *(Relph, 1976, p. 138)*

This was one of Relph's most important contributions to the local identity debate: the debunking of the idea of "Place" with a capital "P". He preferred to talk about "sense of place", a concept of a quite different nature. Peter and Jane Ellery defined this notion as something that encapsulates the many complex ways in which people connect with a place: anthropologically (through symbolic bonds), environmentally (through feelings), geographically (through aesthetic), historically (through habits), and sociologically (through community attachment) (Ellery and Ellery, 2019, p. 237). For Relph, a relevant part of the sense of place is generated by the landscapes of the everyday, the streets, squares, and sidewalks where neighbors interact with each other. By retaining the memory of countless personal experiences, those landscapes are perceived as something familiar that transmits psychological comfort and security.

In the 1990s, postmodernism's interest in diversity led to further reflections on the idea of place. So-called radical geography, of Marxist affiliation, added yet another twist to the questioning of Martin Heidegger's ideas: its involvement in the territorial disputes that were taking place in the global cities. More specifically, Heidegger's followers were accused of having offered a reason to those who wanted to prevent anyone from a different class, race, or religion from living in their neighborhoods. The excuse was that they were "out of place", a twofold argument. On one hand, it was being used by white residents in neighborhoods in decline against the arrival of immigrants; on the other hand, it was being used by the ethnic minorities of neighborhoods undergoing gentrification against the arrival of yuppies. Doreen Massey explained it in the following terms:

> In the 1980s, when certain East End communities in the Docklands of London resisted the encroachment of new developments and, quite specifically, of "yuppies" there was a tendency to make the case on the basis that this was "a working-class area" (yuppies, in other words, had no place there). This was problematical on (at least) two counts. First it was

a claim for timeless authenticity (as a working-class area – implication: it should not be changed); yet a couple of centuries previously the Isle of Dogs was fields and farmland. Second, it was an essentialist claim, and the problematical nature of this aspect of the formulation is best illustrated by going back some fifteen years previously. Then, similar communities in nearby areas had resisted another "invasion". This time it had been by ethnic minority groups; and this time the claim was that the place was a *white* working-class area.

(Massey, 1994, p. 122)

Doreen Massey was a geographer who rejected Heidegger's idea of place while admitting the need that postmodern society has for it as a source to quench its thirst for references. Therefore, the challenge was not to overcome it, as some radical geographers proposed,[12] but to redefine it in order to adapt it to the current circumstances. In that sense, it was crucial to redirect the restorative nostalgia of the essentialist approach towards a reflective nostalgia that does not aspire to recover a delusional, "authentic" past. To address this challenge, in *Space, Place and Gender* (1994) Massey presented the following preliminary hypothesis: that the identity of contemporary places originates in social relationships, which globalization has increased exponentially. By interacting with the specificity of history, traditions, and local habits, those relationships generate well-differentiated environments. Thus, the identity of the contemporary place is developed as a distinct articulation of the manifold connections that exist between the people who inhabit it.

Following such a postulate, Massey proposed to rethink the idea of place according to three premises. First, since social relationships arise, wane, are renewed, and so on, local identity ought to be approached as a process that is in continuous reproduction, and not as something static. Heidegger's "being-in-the-world" would then turn into a "becoming-in-the-world". Secondly, since contacts exist on every scale (from global finances, to national political power, to neighbor relationships) the establishing of clear boundaries for identity enclaves must be discarded. Their personality is inexplicable only from the local dimension. Thirdly, in a society as complex as the contemporary one, it must be assumed that the identity of a place is not unique and exclusive but the result of the intersection of several concurring identities. Here Massey perceived one of the main weak points of the existentialist approach: the association between place and community. Patrick Wright showed how farfetched this association is when mentioning the case of gentrified Stoke Newington, a neighborhood next to Dalton. Its enclaves are felt and valued in very different ways by its diverse resident communities:

Thus, for example, middle-class incomers value Abney Park cemetery precisely because it is overgrown and four-fifths wild – a good place for

> a gothic stroll. A very different view is taken by some working class peo-
> ple (far more likely to have relatives buried in the place) who found the
> unknown and neglected appearance of this nineteenth-century cemetery
> a mark of decay, and argue that it should definitely be tidied up.
>
> *(Wright, 1985, p. 236)*

He went on to say: "The point should be clear enough. People live in different
worlds even though they share the same locality: 'there is no single community
or quarter'" (Wright, 1985, p. 237). In short, as Massey claimed about Hack-
ney: "Hackney is Hackney only because of the coexistence of all those different
interpretations of what it is and what might be" (Massey, 1994, p. 138).

Over the course of the last few years, geographers have looked for inspira-
tion in post-structuralism to redefine the idea of place according to Massey's
premises. A special interest has been raised by the concept of "assemblage",
that Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1980) used to refer to the associations
established between the different agents that shape a system. Manuel de Landa
defined assemblage as a whole whose singularity emerges from the interaction
between its parts (de Landa, 2006, p. 5). Ash Amin (2008) and Colin McFar-
lane (2011) have applied the concept to urban analysis, perceiving the city as a
territory where elements of different nature (cultural, physical, social, politi-
cal, or economic) become connected. Such elements have, instead of fixed,
pre-established functions, operative capacities that they exert in one way or
another depending on the circumstances. This means that, when understood
as an assemblage, the city is neither static nor limited nor unique—the three
premises that Massey had postulated, but an imprecise entity from the spatial
standpoint which is in constant redefinition. This makes resilience its main
virtue.

Architecture and city theorists have started to interpret place as assemblages
as well. One of the most relevant is Kim Dovey who, as mentioned in Chapter
2, has studied the case of Dalston (Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock, 2012). In
Becoming Places (2010) he proposed that places should be conceived as "territo-
rial assemblages" made of physical and human components:

> it is the relations of buildings-sidewalk-roadway; the flows of traffic,
> people and goods; the interconnection of private and public space, and
> of this street to the city, that make it a "street" and distinguish it from
> other place assemblage such as parks, plazas, freeways, shopping malls and
> marketplaces.
>
> *(Dovey, 2010, p. 16)*

According to Dovey, whose discourse echoed Relph's ideas, the sense of place
is conferred neither by materiality nor by socio-cultural representations nor
by subjective experiences, but by the assemblage of it all, which makes it an

extremely dynamic concept. Dovey admitted, however, that it has a stable aspect, since identities are consolidated and practices are reproduced. In his opinion, the factor that is responsible for this is "*habitus*", a concept that Pierre Bourdieu (1979) defined as the combination of ideas, tastes, and tendencies that are shared by individuals who have similar cultural and economic capitals. This shared stock turns into a kind of cultural trademark, reflected in their speech, clothes, and relationships, providing them with a common position in the social space.

All in all, around these notions revolved the intense debate on the matter of local identity. It could be summarized as follows. It began in the 1980s with the concept of *genius loci*, inspired by Martin Heidegger's existentialism, that considered that people and places are connected by powerful links based on memories and shared values. Such an approach was challenged by the phenomenological geographers, who denounced its anachronism. In order to adapt the idea of place to contemporariness, Edward Relph vindicated the value of everyday landscapes as well as their role in the shaping of the sense of place, an alternative concept to place. In the 1990s, Doreen Massey redefined the latter from a non-essentialist standpoint, advancing the hypothesis that local identity is built as a specific articulation of relationships between people. In the last few years, this assumption has been transferred to urban studies through the concept of assemblage, which perceives place as a set of changing relationships between physical and human agents with a stable component, human *habitus*.

This section concludes with two tables that develop and hypothesize the previous ideas. Table 3.1 defines the agents that would make up a territorial assemblage, differentiating between elements that make it up (plants and minerals in the case of physical components, and resident communities in the case of human components) and the specificities that determine its identity. As for the physical agents, monuments have been the traditional focus of the existentialist interpretation of the idea of place. They have also been the subject of preferential attention on the part of heritage policies, as well as the physical elements that most people associate with local identity. In the abovementioned

TABLE 3.1 Agents of a territorial assemblage

Agents	Elements	Identity markers
Physical	Plants	Parks
		Natural spaces
	Minerals	Monuments
		Everyday landscapes
Human	Resident communities	Social class
		Race
		Religion
		Habitus

survey carried out by Centre for London, most Londoners said that the elements that made up "their London" are, in the first place, the green areas and, in second place, the monuments and public spaces of the city center—Westminster Palace, Trafalgar Square, Brick Lane, etc. (Bosetti and Colthorpe, 2018). Regarding the human agents, one of the markers (*habitus*) comes from Dovey's discourse, whereas the three others have been chosen from the same Center for London study according to which, social class, race, and religion are significant identity markers. Social class is closely related to educational level and work. The British Government's 2009 Citizenship Survey found that people who carry out professional activities consider that their work determines their identity more than the place where they live, while those in charge of routine tasks think the opposite. In the same way, for minority groups, race or religion is more important than the town where they live, especially if they are in neighborhoods that are associated with a specific race or stigmatized for that reason (Bosetti and Cothorpe, 2018).

Table 3.2 outlines the relationships between agents—human and physical or only human. In the latter case, where relationships can be local or global, the table establishes a difference between the ones that take place within the same (social, ethnic, or religious) community and those that occur between different communities. According to Robert Putnam, intra-community exchanges generate "bonding capital" between individuals that share age, race, religion, or status, while the extra-community exchanges produce "bridging capital" between different people (Putnam, 2000). In the areas where there is strong social segregation, intra-community relationships, which are exclusive, are the norm but extra-community relationships, which are inclusive, are scarce, which creates a breeding ground for intolerance and struggle.

Dalston: Dalston Eastern Curve Garden and the Contemporary Sense of Place

This section applies the two approaches to local identity that have been analyzed thus far to Dalston. It begins by studying the *genius loci* that local heritage policies and urban planning associate to the neighborhood. Then, it proposes

TABLE 3.2 Relationships between the agents of a territorial assemblage

Relationship	Relationship scale	Relationship type
Between human agents	Local and global	Intra-community ("bonding capital") Extra-community ("bridging capital")
Between human and physical agents	Local	Between people and public spaces and facilities

an alternative view of it as a territorial assemblage. The Dalston Eastern Curve community garden is used as a case study.

All *genius loci* are rooted in an essentialist interpretation of the history of places. In Dalston's case, such a history does not go that far back, and this complicates the task of bestowing some transcendence on its *genius loci*. For a long time, from the date of the first written evidence about its existence (1294) to its urban development at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Dalston was no more than a quiet rural setting dotted here and there with aristocratic countryside villas. The metamorphosis began in 1800. London's robust industrial activity emerged through Regent's Canal, inaugurated in 1820, which attracted gas companies that transformed the coal coming from the north of England into electricity. Parallel to the thriving industry, a real estate boom occurred. Dalston Junction station, which started to function in 1865, and the expansion of the tram line network connected the neighborhood to the City. This encouraged developers to lay out new streets and build terraces as residences for office workers and small proprietors who were able to commute from there. The consequence was that, by the end of the nineteenth century, Dalston had become a pleasant Victorian middle-class suburb. Most of the buildings were two- or three-story terraces with attics and front gardens. They followed the neo-Gothic or neo-Palladian stylistic precepts and were built in brick with ornamental details in Portland stone. Two enclaves were especially remarkable: De Beauvoir new town, with its Tudor-Jacobean houses and its geometrical distribution irradiating from a central park, and Albion Square, a group of houses in Italianesque style that was also laid out around a green space. Other than that, there were no relevant monuments in Dalston. In an ocean of terraces, only the German Hospital (the construction of which began in 1845), St. Bartholomew's church (1884), and St. Mark's (1886), London's largest parish church, stood out.

Dalston's proletarianization began around 1930 when, for different reasons, the middle class started to leave the area. Many of the terraces were then subdivided into hovels to lodge another kind of residents, the workers who had jobs in Dalston's increasing number of factories. A significant percentage of them were immigrants, whom Dalston had been attracting for over two centuries. Germans had been the first ones to arrive after the accession of the Hanoverian dynasty to the throne of England at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Another significant arrival was that of the Jewish contingent, which came from central Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. When the Second World War broke out, the social transformation had been consummated, and the charming Victorian suburb had changed into a sober working-class neighborhood. During the postwar period, the destruction caused by the Blitz and Patrick Abercrombie's regional plan sanctioned such a change of direction. Hackney was the second London borough where more social housing was built (5,864 units up to 1961), a great deal of it in Dalston—Myfield Close, Holly

Street, Rhodes Estate, Morland Estate, Somerford Grove Estate, etc. Some of these large-scale complexes were architectural works of exceptional quality, designed by young professionals who experimented with models that were an alternative to those of the rationalist movement of the interwar period. Somerford Grove Estate (1947), for example, was an especially remarkable exponent of Frederick Gibberd's neo-vernacular style. New waves of immigrants found shelter in these blocks. Afro-Caribbeans came during the 1940s and 1950s as a result of the Nationality Act of 1948; Turkish and Vietnamese nationals arrived during the 1970s, and so on. Thus, the narrative that identified Dalston's *genius loci* with proletarian culture and leftist political activism was forged. All of this in spite of the fact that the neighborhood had actually been a middle-class suburb for about two-thirds of its 150 years of existence.

This brief overview of Dalston's history stops here because the events that took place beginning in the 1970s, with the advent of the Oil Crisis, have already been described in Chapter 2. Next, an analysis is carried out of heritage and urban planning policies, which have used the above-mentioned *genius loci* in a very controversial way: by declaring sacred nineteenth-century and Victorian architecture while looking down on twentieth-century and modern architecture. A clear example of this are the ten Dalston conservation areas that were in force in 2020, which correspond to the first category. Most of them are terraces: Queensbridge Road, Broadway Market, Graham Road-Mapledene, and the two crown jewels, De Beauvoir and Albion Square. Others stand out because of their industrial facilities, such as Dalton Lane (West) and Regent's Canal (which also offers environmental values). The character of the other three, Kingsland, St. Mark's, and Dalston is somewhat more diluted, although their inclusion confirms the ongoing predilection for the nineteenth century.

The same thing happens with the design ordinances providing intervention criteria regarding both conservation areas and listed buildings. The borough's *Shopfront Design Guide*, for example, uses as a model a typical Victorian-Edwardian store front: wooden stall risers, glass shopwindows subdivided by one or two vertical mullions and a horizontal transom, clearstories with glazing bars, entablatures and cornices, all of it framed by two pilasters with their plinth, shaft, capital, and corbel. In addition, the guide advises to use soft wood and forbids reflecting materials, projecting light boxes, and bright colors (LBH, no date).[13]

As mentioned, these heritage criteria are conceptually controversial. Prioritizing nineteenth-century and Victorian architecture is inconsistent with the proletarian and industrial narratives on which Dalston's *genius loci* is based. In the first place, because Dalston's nineteenth-century terraces were not working-class housing, but the dwellings of the middle and upper-middle classes. Despite their transformation into hovels, they are rather bourgeois typologically, with lots of space, a front garden, and a backyard. Hence, as seen in Chapter 2, they could easily be adapted to the new needs of the neobohemians a century later. Secondly, because such protection measures completely ignore the construction

FIGURE 3.5   Dalston: rebuilt facade in Dalston Lane Terrace with codified shopfronts.

type where Dalston's working class really lived, the postwar social housing estates, and this despite being representative of the best architecture of the time. In short, Dalston's "official *genius loci*" is conceptually arguable, and seems to have been elaborated artificially following a biased heritage vision that selects only specific episodes extracted from the chest of its history.

In addition to being conceptually inconsistent, the heritage policies that such *genius loci* have inspired have proven ineffective. Despite their protective zeal for nineteenth-century architecture, they could not prevent the demolition of two of its most representative icons during the development of the Dalston Square operation. The first affected Dalston Lane Terrace, an 1820 Georgian building that, after decades of neglect and suffering three fires, was destroyed in 2009. Over its remains rose a block of 46 modern apartments that reproduces the stereometry and facade of the original with handmade and hand cut imperial bricks. The storefronts on the ground floor comply with what the *Shopfront Design Guide* establishes. The scenographic condition of this facade becomes evident when compared to the back of the block, which is totally contemporary in style.

The other attack against Dalston's nineteenth-century architecture was much graver. It took place two years before on a nearby plot and the victim was the impressive Dalston Theatre. It had opened in 1886 under the name of North London Colosseum and Amphitheatre, a huge arena with a capacity of 4,000 people. In 1898, it became a lavishly decorated music-hall theater with

over 3,000 seats—Marie Lloyd, the queen of music hall, used to perform there. In 1920, it was reconverted into a cinema that was described as "the greatest cinema in the British Empire if not the world". At the beginning of the 1960s, with the arrival of television, the movie theater went bankrupt, and the old Dalston Theater was transformed into a supermarket. A little later, however, it recovered its original function as a show venue. In 1963, it was occupied by the Four Aces, the popular Black music club that later would become The Labyrinth. In 1977, it was bought by Hackney Council, which closed the club down two decades later. Its roof was mysteriously dismantled in 1995, which initiated a rapid process of decay that culminated in the ruin of the building.

Unfortunately, the incredible resilience that the Dalston Theater had displayed up until then was not enough to resist the pressures of real-estate developers. In 2005, in the context of the Dalston Square operation, the demolition permit was issued. It was granted as part of the demands of Transport for London in order to be able to use the plot as the site for the interchange that then mayor Ken Livingston had announced. Dalston's activist streak reawakened. Leading the protest stood the forum known as OPEN Dalston (Organisation for the Promotion of Environmental Needs), a local network of merchants, associations, and neighbors which reported the council and managed to halt the demolition of the building. Despite attracting the national media's attention, it was not enough. The courts ended up ruling against OPEN Dalston's accusation and forbade further lawsuits.

In February 2006, on the day before the demolition was scheduled to take place, a group called Everything4Everyone entered Dalston Theater and the three adjacent buildings, thus starting an occupation that lasted nine months. During that period the buildings transformed into a social center where multiple activities were organized, including talks, film sessions, open-mic nights, samba drumming, meals served by Food Not Bombs, performances by the Theater of the Oppressed, etc. Courses and workshops on video production and bicycle riding were also offered, and meetings were held to talk about the future of the area.[14] During the period of the occupation, many neighbors and merchants devoted themselves to helping the young squatters, whom they provided with food and warm clothes. Once again, this was all in vain. Dalston Theater was stormed and vacated by the police in the early hours of November 2. Finally, and after two years of struggle, it was demolished in March 2007.

The disappearance of Dalston Lane Terrace and Dalston Theatre demonstrates the inefficiency of the heritage policies inspired by the existentialist narrative of the *genius loci*, the conceptual weaknesses of which have also been noted. These two failures—both in operational and intellectual terms— reveal the need to re-approach Dalston from a non-essentialist stance and to consider it as a territorial assemblage. To do so, it is necessary to start by listing the agents, both physical and human, that conform it, thus taking into consideration Table 3.1. Next, following Table 3.2, the relationships that are established

between them are analyzed—according to Massey's hypothesis, a narrative about Dalston's contemporary identity should spring from those relationships.

As for the physical agents, a non-essentialist view of Dalston should consider three elements in addition to Victorian architecture: the social housing estates, a series of obsolete areas and buildings, and the everyday landscape. The first would be useful to recall Dalston's working-class past, which should lead to the protection of those that, like Somerford Grove Estate, are of an exceptional architectural quality. A selection of industrial ruins ought to receive similar recognition, since they witnessed a kind of activity that has nearly disappeared, while some vacant plots should also get special treatment as "Third landscapes" due to their contribution to biodiversity. In turn, everyday landscapes are key to the social integration of certain groups that have been formed around them. That is the case of the youths that usually find cohesiveness while meeting at sport facilities, parking lots, or outside staircases. The spatial transformation that Dalston has undergone in the last few years, and which has destroyed some of those everyday landscapes, could endanger these youngsters' sense of belonging in the neighborhood.

As far as the human agents are concerned, the research that Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock carried out proved that one of the main disagreements between the residents and the administration during the revolts caused by the Dalston Square operation was due to the lack of attention paid to such a factor. When residents were asked about the neighborhood's identity, they mentioned socio-cultural diversity, community spirit, commitment to local shops, tolerance, and so on. They were concerned that Dalston Square would endanger all of that: its clear orientation towards a specific market sector would attract people of one and the same socio-cultural profile; residents that had been born and grown up in the area would be encouraged to abandon it; local shops would be replaced by chain stores, etc. Indeed, residents also objected to the way in which the physical agents had been dealt with. They were indignant about the demolition of Dalston Theatre, but Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock did not associate such regret to the architectural value of the building but to its condition as a temple of Black music during the time when it accommodated the Four Aces and The Labyrinth clubs. Thus, they circumscribed the clash between the authorities and the neighbors to a deficient attention to human agents: "Local authorities saw Dalston's character as residing primarily in land use and dwelling type; in the physical and the concrete, rather than in the social, experiential, and intangible" (Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock, 2012, p. 61).

Re-approaching Dalston's identity from a non-essentialist standpoint should correct that error. In this sense it is important to take into consideration that the communities residing in cool neighborhoods are very unique: they are increasingly diverse regarding social class and *habitus*, while less so in respect to race and religion. According to the 2011 *Ward Profile* (LBH, 2015), 55.2 percent of the population in Dalston's central area had the highest possible educational level (level four), but the second majority segment was that of unqualified

people (12.7 percent), a convergence of extremes that is known as "prof–pov" and is associated with creative districts. Nevertheless, religion had lost relevance as a differentiating factor, since 41.5 percent of residents were irreligious (compared to 20.7 percent in London), 35 percent considered themselves Christian (48.4 percent in London), and only 10.6 percent were Muslims (12.4 percent in London). As for race, the decrease in diversity was even more noticeable. In 2011, white residents, who in 2001 had made up 56 percent of the total, amounted to 61.8 percent (compared to 59.9 percent in London); Black residents had gone down, from 29 percent to 18.3 percent (13.3 percent in London), and the share of Asians had fallen from 11 percent to 9.4 percent (18.4 percent in London). In short, gentrification was polarizing Dalston in terms of social class whereas it was homogenizing it in relation to religion and race.

After defining the physical and human agents of Dalston's territorial assemblage, the connections between them will be analyzed. As Table 3.2 points out, among human relationships those that are intra-community and extra-community must be differentiated. Intra-community relationships tend to be very intense in cool neighborhoods. Neobohemians cultivate their collective conscience in third places, workshops, courses, and parties, while the groups that feel threatened by gentrification try to reaffirm their presence by means of identity events like religious celebrations and national festivities. In contrast, this cannot be said about extra-community relationships. Despite race and religion not being discriminating factors in cool neighborhoods due to the progressive ideology professed by most neobohemians, dealings between communities are quite conditioned by *habitus*.[15] Segregation due to this is patent in stores and other businesses. Dalston's Afro-Caribbean community takes shelter in their churches and hairdressing salons; the Turkish community retires to its mosques and supermarkets, and neobohemians meet in their coffee shops and vegan restaurants—places where the Afro-Caribbeans and Turks are usually confined to the kitchens.

Regarding extra-community relationships, Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock emphasized a paradoxical fact. As seen, the most active group against the demolition of Dalston Theatre was OPEN Dalston, many of whose members were the intellectuals and professionals that had arrived in the neighborhood in the 1980s. Referring to the protests, a Black resident stated:

> was it the local black community that was saying we want this as a black [sic] music venue? No. Actually it was the white middle-class community saying "Oh! Black music—that's why we should keep it".
>
> *(Davison, Dovey and Woodcock, 2012, p. 60)*

Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock turned to so-called "elective belonging" to offer an explanation. The fact that neobohemians have chosen Dalston as their place of residence because of personal commitment, makes them identify with

the most symbolic elements of the neighborhood, of which Dalston Theatre was one. They represent their values, "their world", which is different from the rest of London.

How can a new neighborhood's identity narrative be constructed in an inclusive manner without ignoring all these conflicts and paradoxes? To begin with, as Massey warned, identification with a specific community ought to be avoided. It is just as ludicrous to limit Dalston's identity to a waning working class as to focus on a booming neobohemia. As previously mentioned, so far, the neighborhood has not reached the fourth and last stage of gentrification, when the massive arrival of affluent residents would destroy any remains of social diversity. Dalston still retains a good part of its past. On the one hand, its physical agents are still there. Notwithstanding the demolitions of the 1970s and the Dalston Square operation, the truth is that plans for urban renewal have been few, and most of the Victorian terraces and social housing estates are still standing, as are its more significant architectural monuments—the German Hospital, St. Bartholomew's vicarage, or St. Mark's church. In turn, neobohemian third places, which as seen in Chapter 1 tend to be unassuming, have intermixed with local shops without any sort of unnatural shrillness.

On the other hand, Dalston maintains most of its human fabric as well. According to the *Ward Profile* data (LBH, 2015), 30 percent of Dalston's neighbors continued to live in rented social housing in 2011 (compared to 24.1 percent in London). Hackney Council pointed out that, in 2014, the area was still part of the 20 percent of most disadvantaged areas in London. A revealing piece of data must be added: between 2001 and 2017, the population of Dalston's central area increased 42 percent and reached 12,764 people. Such a hike, Hackney's highest, has turned it into the fourth most densely populated neighborhood in London, all within a borough, which is in itself one of city's most crowded. This proves that the Dalston Square project did not bring about social cleansing. In other words, the recruitment of new residents did not happen at the expense of a significant expulsion of the original neighbors.

In this context, an integrating narrative of Dalston faces the challenge of finding the middle ground between the new and the old, the original and the recently arrived human agents, and the venerable and the novel physical agents. At present, this *status quo* can be sensed in spaces where the shared *habitus* of different communities converge. Good examples of this are the Vortex Club's jazz concerts or the Dalston Music Festival held in Gillett Square, which are attended by people of all social layers, religions, and races. A similar place was mentioned in Chapter 2, the Nomadic Community Garden, which succeeded in drawing together the Shoreditch neobohemians and the Whitechapel Muslims around an activity that is part of the *habitus* of both communities: urban agriculture. The present chapter concludes with a similar case in Dalston, the Dalston Eastern Curve Garden.

This community garden, in the shape of a segment of arch and hidden among party walls, is the extant trace of the Eastern Curve, a railway line built by North London Railway in 1865 to connect Camden and Poplar. After the line was abandoned in 1944 and dismantled in 1966, the plot remained vacant for four decades during which it was used as a dump. Its metamorphosis into an urban garden was an example of community-led regeneration. It began when

FIGURE 3.6   Dalston: Dalston Eastern Curve Garden.

the neighbors put forward a proposal that intended to mitigate one of Dalston's biggest deficits, the shortage of green areas (only 12 percent compared to London's 38 percent). Work was carried out without a general design to guide it, but by means of a chain of minimal interventions that were implemented in stages and financed through different sources.

The first works took place between the spring and the fall of 2010. Because of the lack of funding to remove the accumulated trash, the decision was made to clear away only the upper layer, flatten the rest, and cover it all with concrete rubble and fertile soil. The general outlines of the design were determined by the neighbors with the professional assistance of muf architecture/art and J&L Gibbons. The goal was to establish a gradation that went from a wilder area, located at the entrance through Dalston Lane, to a more cultivated part at the far end of the plot. Rewilding principles were a priority in the more natural areas. Trees and bushes (hazel, birch, hawthorns, etc.) that attracted bees, butterflies, and wild animals were planted among the scrubs and plants that grew spontaneously—like ferns, butterfly bushes, and so on. At the other end of the site were installed six huge planting beds made of railroad ties and tree trunks, where herbs and vegetables were planted. Both areas were connected by a mulch surface.

This first phase was later complemented with several micro-interventions of an architectural nature. For the access area, the EXYTZ collective designed

FIGURE 3.7   Dalston: The Barn (Dalston Eastern Curve Garden).

The Barn, a set of four simple wooden pavilions with pitched roofs and no walls. They were built by young apprentices of the Forest Road Youth Hub and are used to shelter a coffee shop and a bread oven, as well as sofas, armchairs, and tables that the neighbors donated. In 2011, Pineapple House was built next to The Barn, a workspace for the garden staff that is also used as a venue for workshops and meetings. The building was designed and built by the Dalston Eastern Curve Garden managers themselves with the help of some volunteer professionals and neighbors. Windows, doors, columns, and steel beams from other structures were reused, together with wooden leftovers from The Barn. A third micro-intervention was carried out at the east end of the plot, where a small stage was built. It consists of a tubular structure to which some panels are attached, the design pattern of which was created by the participants in a workshop led by the artist Morag Myserscough. The naïveté of the design, its bright colors, the string of lightbulbs that surrounds it, and the toys that are strewn around attract many families with children. Finally, the entrance to the garden from Dalston Lane was addressed by using a fence of vertical wooden planks that was paid for by the merchants of a nearby street food market.

Thus, the Dalston Eastern Curve Garden was built, thanks to the efforts of the neighbors and local businesses, as well as the generous assistance of several professionals. The signs at the entrance read: "Keep cities wild". Most assuredly, after crossing the gate one has the feeling of being in a magical forest that

FIGURE 3.8 Dalston: Dalston Eastern Curve Garden.

leads to discoveries of all kinds. The atmosphere is clearly nostalgic, crafted by means of a convergence of un–design as well as "as found" and eco-aesthetics. Under the trees countless recycled elements are scattered about: a spool of cables that works as a table, a washing machine drum that is used as a brazier, tin cans that have become flowerpots, and tree trunks that are seats, along with rusty stoves, and armchairs craftily made out of pallets. In The Barn, the eco-aesthetic domesticity prevails—mismatched sofas, bookshelves, fireplaces, etc., across which homemade pies and natural teas of the coffee shop flow.

Unfortunately, the human agents of Dalston Eastern Curve Garden present less variation than the physical ones. About 200,000 people visit the garden every year, but for the most part they are neobohemians and millennials. Something similar happens with the volunteers that help with management[16] and with the participants in the weekend workshops, parties, and events. The garden provides them with the perfect setting in which to practice the eco-lifestyle, an agricultural bubble that is closed, intimate, and safe.

A special network of relationships, which is representative of Dalston's contemporary identity, has been woven between these human and physical agents. The garden has a yearly program of activities that includes educational workshops on ceramics, self-help, African song, and so on; leisure events such as light festivals, Tai–Chi sessions, music concerts, etc., and children's activities like pizza making, carving of Halloween jack-o'-lanterns, and such like. However, the main force behind community cohesiveness is agriculture. On Saturdays, a group of volunteers meet at Dalston Eastern Curve Garden under the coordination of a monitor. They are the ones who have assembled the planting beds and sown, looked after, and harvested the vegetables. Their effort and commitment have made it possible to create an agricultural enclave in the heart of Dalston which, as Alberto Magnaghi expected, functions as a catalyst for a wide range of economic, cultural, social, and educational activities, in addition to yielding environmental returns. Furthermore, in this "place", urban agriculture has been able to conciliate the contemporary with the ancestral, the local with the global, becoming the axis of Dalston's new identity narrative. It explains why Dalston Eastern Curve Garden is currently a key element in the neighborhood's sense of place. Indeed, together with the Arcola Theatre, Gillett Square, or the Vortex Club, it has become one of the "monuments" of contemporary Dalston, one of the places that Londoners associate with the neighborhood.

Notes

1. Data from 2013. The administration subsidizes some of that cost.
2. One of the first economists to demand the return to the local scale was E. F. Schumacher, who in 1973 published *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* (Schumacher, 1973), a book that had a tremendous influence on the environmental debate.

3. His argument was that such balance is impossible since the relationships between the two parts always depend on rules and controls established by the global market.
4. One of the eight Rs of Serge Latouche is to *Re-localize*, that is, to produce the goods that are essential for the community locally and to limit the movement of merchandise and capital to the minimum (Latouche, 2009, p. 37).
5. Rachel Botsman estimated that, over the course of the next decade, half of the planet's work force will have become self-employed workers (Botsman, 2017).
6. The 2,576 farmers' markets operating in the United States in 1998 increased to 5,274 in 2009 (Cockrall-King, 2012, pp. 75–80).
7. Fruit and vegetables must have been cultivated within a radius of 30 kilometers, while processed food must have been prepared within a radius of 100 kilometers.
8. A version of it that is specifically devised as a space for education in resilience are urban farms, which provide districts with gardens and barns where neighbors can not only plant fruit and vegetables but also see and look after animals. Most of these farms have teaching spaces where workshops, courses, and talks can be held on subjects like growing food, raising farm animals, cooking with seasonal products, etc.
9. Some countries regulate urban gardens at the national level. In the United Kingdom, the National Allotment Society defends the interests and rights of their users, while regional laws, such as the Scottish Community Empowerment Act deal with more specific aspects, like the referential sizes of lots (250 square meters in Scotland's case).
10. Prinzessinengärten is managed by Nomadisch Grün, a non-profit organization that works to change vacant lots into productive agriculture spaces. In 2020, they opened a second community garden in Berlin's Neukölln district.
11. The third reason is to revitalize the neighborhood.
12. As it will be shown in Chapter 4, David Harvey, the leader of the school, was among them.
13. Such guidelines are responsible for the Columbia Road storefronts that were considered in Chapter 1 as an exercise of restorative nostalgia.
14. OPEN Dalston presented an alternative plan for Dalton Square, which reduced suitability for building by 40 percent, foresaw the construction of social housing and studios for artists, and preserved Dalston Theatre as a cultural center. The neighbors were consulted about the proposal in different events that had large turn outs.
15. A paradoxical example of this is the way in which the remnant of working-class white neighbors who still live in these enclaves is looked down. In *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (2011), Owen Jones showed how they were disdainfully called "chavs" by neobohemians and were characterized as racist, macho, uneducated, and violent.
16. Since 2012, the garden has been managed by a non-profit company led by members of OPEN Dalston. The rest of the managing team consists of a reduced number of employees and an army of committed volunteers.

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4

ON RESOURCES

From Privatization to Commoning

This chapter deals with the change in resources that has supported the reinvention of the city after the environmental crisis, from the realm of the private to the commons. The thread of argument departs from economy, more specifically from political economy.

Responding to Austerity: The Collaborative Economy and the Urban Commons

This chapter delves into the second great challenge that has impacted the redefinition of urban spaces, the 2008 financial crisis. In this section, some general ideas are outlined. Firstly, concepts such as "collaborative economy", "civic economy", and "urban commons", are introduced as some of the responses to the austerity measures that were implemented during the Great Recession. Next, the subject of urban commons is developed together with one of their four components: forms of governance.

   Austerity has always been present in liberal economic ideas. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930 [1904]), Max Weber found that its essence could be identified with the ascetic mentality of Calvinism. The stock market crash of 2008 took this mindset to extremes. Governments imposed harsh austerity measures that spread a rather oppressive precariousness throughout society, especially because they were accompanied by the privatization of public services in key sectors such as health and education. Citizens found themselves alone in an ocean of adversities which they had to learn to navigate.

   Neoliberal economists took advantage of this situation to suggest that austerity measures should not be understood as something circumstantial but as an inevitable change of direction that would have to become the norm in the

future. The Big Society project, which the British Conservative government introduced in 2010, responded to that prediction. Its aim was to prepare the population in order to face an "austerity era". Besides focusing on localism, as seen in Chapter 3, the two other pillars of this policy were reforms in public services and in society itself, which would have to share responsibility for the common welfare. To make this possible, the plan intended to start educational programs in community self-organization, together with campaigns to encourage volunteering, subsidies for the creation of cooperatives and charities, etc.

In the preceding chapters, the discrepancies between the resilient vision and neoliberal thought have been shown—between ecosophic values, and materialism and consumption; between deep ecology, and developmentalism and the exploitation of nature; between localism, and globalization and de-territorialization. Nevertheless, as the following chapters will demonstrate, a great deal of synergy between the two positions can also be identified. As a matter of fact, the 2008 crisis fostered the ethics of scarcity and laid the groundwork for expansion of the eco-lifestyle. This fact demonstrates that, as defended by Pier V. Aureli, asceticism can also be practiced as a way of resisting the power of capitalism (Aureli, 2013, location 62).

The collaborative economy is an example of this. In the years following the crisis, the withdrawal of the state from public life and the wave of privatizations left the provision of many resources and social services unattended. This led a large number of citizens—those who did not have access to such resources through the private sector—to self-organize. This is how the collaborative economy came to be.[1] This term and others that are close synonyms of it, like "sharing economy" or "peer economy", defines a type of exchange where the users of goods and services do not merely consume but can also invest and coproduce. The practice has spread throughout certain sectors, such as lodging, transportation, consultancy, and provision of services, and it has deep ties with the Internet, since its transactions usually take place through digital platforms (AirBnb, BlaBlaCar, eBay, etc.). Jeremy Rifkin (2011) saw in these activities a silent revolution that advanced a change in the economic paradigm by blurring the limits between producers and consumers, and by replacing rights of ownership with rights of use.

The collaborative economy may present quite different features. It can be typically capitalist if it complies with the interests of a private company, or it can be social if it does not pursue a profit but favors underprivileged groups instead. In the latter case, it is known as "civic economy" and takes the form of cooperatives, charities, social innovation companies, venture capital companies, etc. In the contemporary city, the civic economy is being used to provide some of the goods and services that the state has ceased to provide. In this way, it increases citizen resilience, making residents less vulnerable to economic fluctuations, less subject to the market, and less dependent on public aid. This

fact reveals one aspect of the foreseen correlation between neoliberalism and the resilient vision.

Some authors find the origin of the civic economy in the commons, an ancient practice within some communities that self-organized to share property and the use of a specific resource while committing themselves to a set of regulations. The most widespread case refers to grazing lands, a standard practice throughout Europe from the Middle Ages until in the eighteenth century, when those lands started to become private property. It was the environmentalist Garrett Hardin who unearthed the notion of the commons from beneath the layers of history in an article that appeared in *Science*, "The Tragedy of the Commons" (Hardin, 1968). Here Hardin stated that the disappearance of the commons had been an inevitable tragedy because human instinct, which favors personal concerns over collective interests, is against the logic of the commons. As an example, Hardin used the above-mentioned case of grazing lands, which were decimated because their users relentlessly introduced more and more stock in the pastures, which ended up making the system unsustainable.

Hardin's article became a point of departure for Elinor Ostrom and her *Governing the Common*s (1990), a seminal book for contemporary commons theory. Ostrom presented cases, like that of the grazing lands in the Swiss Alps, that continue to be successful thanks to the implementation of forms of governance that restrict resource exploitation or introduce procedures to resolve conflicts. In short, according to Ostrom the "tragedy of the commons" can be prevented. The financial crisis of 2008 proved her right. A year after its outbreak, she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics, a recognition that was understood as a willingness to show the world that there is different way of managing austerity. In fact, nowadays a global movement that goes beyond the limits of the civic economy to embrace the political, social, and cultural struggle has crystallized around the notion of the commons. Plagued by the privatization of public services and the lack of aid and resources, communities of a vastly different nature and with very different goals have started commons initiatives—among them, the peasants of the Brazilian Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, the farmers of the La Vía Campesina, the Pirate Parties, the advocates of Open Educational Resources, and so on. For these day laborers, indigenous people, political activists, and software programmers, the commons are something more than a strategy to deal with privatization and austerity, they are an identity marker that responds to a specific worldview.

The academic community has not been oblivious to the flourishing of the commons. *Governing the Commons* set the bases for its scientific study. Currently, several schools with different ideologies and interests are committed to it. While Ostrom's focuses on the analysis of institutions and the design of forms of governance, the critical theory school tackles the political potential of the commons in the fight against capitalism. Many other authors fluctuate

between these two positions and perceive the commons as a resilient way of understanding society, the economy, the environment, and suchlike.

All these approaches have produced a change of focus in the subject to study. The cases that Ostrom started to research were traditional commons that were linked to the exploitation of natural resources by farmers, stockbreeders, and fishermen. However, nowadays, most of the commons are in the cities, where they are prompting the rethinking of matters like housing, workspaces, energy, and food production. These are the so-called "urban commons", and their nature differs greatly from that of traditional commons. As Dellenbaugh, Kip, and Beniok pointed out, present-day urban commons are consumed and reproduced in a different way, their management is a great deal more complex, and their users do not fit into the clear human and spatial profiles of medieval commons (Dellenbaugh, Kip, and Beniok, 2016, p. 19).

Such differences have put the limelight on the need to rethink the theoretical corpus inherited from Ostrom and to adapt it to the nature of urban commons. The present chapter traces the way in which this challenge has been tackled by adjusting to Michel Bauwens and Vasislis Niaros's definition of urban commons: shared goods which are co-owned and/or are co-governed by several users and/or involved parties according to their own rules and regulations (Bauwens and Niaros, 2018). According to this, urban commons consist of three elements: a form of governance, a resource, and a community of users ("commoners"). Actually, a fourth component ought to be added: the activities that are carried out there, also known as "commoning". In this section, forms of governance are first studied. Resources are dealt with next. After that, activities are analyzed. That leaves out the third element, commoners, which is justified because this book focuses on one of the groups that has been most committed to the creation and management of urban commons: the people who have adopted the eco-lifestyle. In urban commons they have identified many affinities with the values of ecosophy, as well as a preindustrial character which is very much in agreement with their reflective nostalgia.

TABLE 4.1 Elements and types of urban commons

Elements	Types
Forms of governance	Autonomy
	Collaboration with the state
	Collaboration with the market
Resources	Knowledge
	Social
	Physical (natural or built)
Users or "commoners"	
"Commoning" practices	

Forms of governance are the specialty of Ostrom's school, which has focused on the definition of the governing principles that can make it possible for a community to manage a resource on its own and on behalf of everyone. The formulas that have been designed reject hierarchical structures and centralized commands, favoring instead polycentric networks of an inclusive, transparent, and egalitarian nature. By contrast, other schools have prioritized the study of legal frameworks, institutional systems, and social uses that can protect the commons from the threat of eventual manipulation by neoliberal policies with which, as mentioned, they are in tune to some extent. A great deal of the debate has concentrated on the convenience of cooperating with the market and the state. Some authors believe that the commons must preserve their independence regarding both. In that case the only way of insulating themselves from the pressures of the market and the state is by confederating in the non-hierarchical networks that Ostrom postulated—in some cities "assemblies of commons" have been created. Other authors, such as David Bollier, think that few commons can operate on their own. In fact, most of them are hybrids that depend on the state or on the market in one way or another. Furthermore, for Bollier the establishment of pragmatic relationships with them is not a problem provided the commons can maintain a high degree of autonomy (Bollier, 2014, p. 137). For the commons, maintaining their self-governance is easier in relationships with the state which, on its part, besides helping to finance initiatives, can offer legal protection. Bollier specifically recommends establishing alliances on a municipal scale, since local governments are among the main beneficiaries of the commons' activities.

Italy is one of the leading countries in this kind of collaboration. The Naples council provides spaces for the development of urban commons while the city of Milan promotes the mutualization of infrastructures intended for collaborative consumption. Bologna has gone even further by developing an institutional framework of partnership between the municipality and the commons. The city's *Regulation for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons* (Comune di Bologna, 2014) invites the citizenry to take co-responsibility for the maintenance and regeneration of certain public resources. Consequently, they can make proposals with respect to material assets (streets, squares, parks, schools, nursing homes); immaterial assets (social inclusion, education, civics, environment, culture), or digital assets (apps, web pages, computer literacy programs). The initiatives are sent to a platform called Comunità della Rete Civica Iperbole and, if accepted, they are gathered in a collaboration contract where the activity and the resources needed to carry it out are specified. Along these lines, the Comitato Mascarella Vecchia signed an agreement to remove the graffiti and proliferation of notices from the arcades of Mascarella Street; La Ricotta, a cultural association, started the requalifying of the basketball court in the Donatori di Sangue Gardens; the Camst, Agricola Mezzani e Quark society proceeded to plant trees in the Carlo Urbani Park, and the Frida Project aims to

recover the kiosk of the Montagnola Gardens. This sum of minimal interventions is having a remarkable impact on the city, in spite of the modest resources that the local government has provided: its communication campaign to publicize the activities, the lending of tools or municipal spaces to prepare them, the providing of public servants to carry them out, and small sums of money that range from €300 to €1,500.

Another pioneer city in the creation of alliances between urban commons and the local public administration is Barcelona, whose government since 2015 has been an electoral coalition that flaunts the concept even in its own name: Barcelona en Comú. As in Bologna's case, the city of Barcelona has put together a series of legal instruments that allow the transfer of part of its assets to civic groups, providing they have previously submitted a tender. In some cases, grounds and venues have been temporarily lent to carry out activities of a social, farming, creative, and education-in-resilience nature. In other cases, management has been granted to these groups, which has made it possible for hundreds of municipally owned premises, buildings, and industrial facilities to pass into the hands of neighbors. Most emblematic has been the ceding for a period of up to 50 years of the old 13,000-square-meter Can Batlló industrial complex to the association that has managed it since the squatting of the building in 2011. The agreement signed by the local government and the organization thus acknowledges the thousands of work hours that its commoners yearly dedicate to managing the services offered: bar, workshops, library, auditorium, climbing wall, etc.

The unifying element in the cases of Bologna and Barcelona is that both local administrations have given the commoners full autonomy in all decision-making. In this, there is a difference regarding the neighborhood planning policies of British New Localism. The ordinances of the two cities not only refer to taking on expenses jointly and to yielding responsibilities, but also to sharing positions of power.

Common Resources: The Coworking Revolution

This section deals with resources, the second of the four elements that make up the urban commons. After listing their different types and briefly reviewing two, knowledge and social resources, the focus is set on those that are physical, the third type. Special attention is paid to cohousing and coworking spaces, which have become the most popular of these resources over the course of the last decade.

Bauwens and Niaros (2018) identified three kinds of common resources: natural, social, and knowledge. The latter has been the newest to arrive on the scene. Its commoners collaborate in peer to peer (P2P) networks, use open-source systems, spread the knowledge that they generate by means of Creative Commons licenses, and make it available to users, who are sometimes able to

have access to its software codes so as to modify it or expand it—this is the way information archives like Wikipedia or software like Linux came to be. Infrastructures such as FabLabs, tools like 3D printers, and hardware like Arduino have enabled the transformation of digital knowledge resources into architectural materiality. Some initiatives have been born from their convergence, like WikiHouse, a platform on which commoners present projects that other people can download, print three-dimensionally, and assemble by using systems from the realm of furniture kits. This is the so-called "open-source architecture". Practices such as London's Architecture00 define themselves as "collaborative" and operate as open businesses. This studio spreads a significant part of its production through WikiHouse and OpenDesk (a model of office furniture) and collaborates with Dark Matter Laboratories (a center for the development of collaborative systems) and with Impact Hub (a coworking company). As in the case of the collaborative economy, open-source architecture suggests a change in paradigm that blurs the roles of both architect and user.

As for social resources, they appeared during Fordism to support workers with solidarity mechanisms such as mutual insurance companies or production and consumption cooperatives. During the postwar period, the welfare state took over the role they played, expanding and institutionalizing them, therefore their essence as commons was lost. Nevertheless, their partial dismantling by neoliberal privatization policies has led to the recovery of certain communal practices, which are usually of modest pretensions and preindustrial

FIGURE 4.1   Project for WikiHouse.

Image courtesy of Open System Labs/WikiHouse, available under a CC BY-SA 2.0 license.

inspiration. Through them, commoners try to alleviate situations of insecurity or to voluntarily live in accordance with the ethics of scarcity. Such is the case of local currencies, which make acquisition cheaper and guarantee that the residents' economic assets stay in their neighborhoods.[2] Another example are time banks, where users exchange skills and services at an hourly rate. Finally, a social resource very much to the neobohemian taste should be mentioned, subscription systems to businesses that boost self-sustainability, like community-supported agriculture—which gives the right to receive monthly supplies of local food, or the so-called "community-supported bakeries"—which guarantee a specific quantity of bread. The Transition Town movement was a pioneer in the adopting of these examples of social resources. In 2007, it introduced the use of the "Totnes pound" in that municipality. This local currency became a reference for more complex schemes, like the "Brixton pound".

This finally leads toward the type of resource that is closer to the interests of this book, physical resources, within which a distinction must be made between those that are natural and those that are built. The former belong to the more traditional type, those that Ostrom began to research, such as farmlands, fishing areas, hunting grounds, and ponds—community gardens, one of the great protagonists of contemporary urban commons, fall into this category. The present section deals with built physical resources, such as community markets and supermarkets where customers shop and work;[3] community kitchens where guests cook and share the meals; or community libraries where readers take out and donate books. The focus here will be on those built resources that are more widespread in the contemporary city, cohousing and coworking spaces.

Cohousing is a residential model that emerged in Denmark in the late 1960s. In principle, it provided families of working parents with children with a support system to share the domestic chores. Currently, the model has spread to many other groups and it is frequently connected to specific age profiles. For example, there exists cohousing for the elderly, where residences are adapted to people with limited mobility and facilities include health services, rehab rooms, and leisure areas. Other varieties, like co-living, are geared toward young professionals. Here, private areas are reduced to a minimum while plenty of common-use spaces, work stations, cafes, and gyms are offered. These two types of cohousing are usually promoted and managed by private companies, which have found in the mentioned age groups growing and affluent market niches. This fact liberates their users from responsibilities and deprives them of the power of decision, so they cannot be considered as urban commons.

However, there is another type of cohousing that can truly be considered as such: its design promotes community spirit, its residents take on the role of commoners, and it is organized by means of its own forms of governance. The reason that usually encourages a certain human group to embark into this kind of cohousing experience is neither age nor economic need[4] but lifestyle, the

wish to live with people who have the same values, interests, and ambitions. In this sense, the eco-lifestyle has turned into one of the main drivers of cohousing projects.

The Co-Housing Association of the United States lists six of the features of these residential commons: participatory processes; neighborhood design; common facilities; resident management; non-hierarchal structures and decision making; and non-sharing economy (cited in Tummers, 2016, location 328). Legally, they are usually constituted as neighborhood associations or cooperatives. Because of the absence of a private developer, it is the commoners that initiate the process, acquire the plot, co-design the project, and supervise construction. Later they take on the management of the complex by dividing tasks and collaborate in its maintenance by forming gardening or repair teams. They share personal resources as well, like cars to go to work, and help in the care of children and the elderly. To boost the life of the community, meetings, parties, games, film viewing, etc. are organized. Group meals are one of the axes of the everyday life of such a cohousing experience. For example, it is the norm to have community dinners twice a week. The commoners agree on the menu and cook it together. These people, who are often staunch neobohemians, prefer sharing to having, and are ready to pay an especially high price for their

FIGURE 4.2 Saugerties (New York): common plaza in Cantine's Island Cohousing.

Image courtesy of Margarita Calero.

adherence to the ethics of scarcity: loss of privacy, compliance with rules, chore obligations, commitment to the neighbors, etc.

As for the architectural project, two different typologies stand out, multi-family housing blocks and single-family housing developments. In the first case, the common areas are made possible because the different housing units cede space, because the residents' association acquires one or several housing units, or because shared areas such as roofs or halls are used as common resources. In some cases, these venues are used as multifunctional halls, meeting points, communal kitchens and dining rooms, coworking spaces, guest quarters, playrooms for children, etc. In others, they are used to carry out more everyday activities: washing and drying clothes, parking bicycles. As for single-family housing developments, the number of units fluctuates between ten and 40. Although they are intended for higher-income groups, they are also characterized by how unassuming they are: their floor area is not very large (between 100 and 150 square meters per unit); the furnishings are discreet, and the materials are environmentally friendly (wood, clay, straw, etc.). On occasion, attempts are made to reinforce the collective spirit by limiting the privacy of the commoners to the spaces that are strictly necessary (bathrooms and bedrooms). The usable floor area of the units can be reduced up

FIGURE 4.3 Saugerties (New York): common house in Cantine's Island Cohousing.
Image courtesy of Margarita Calero.

to 75 square meters, and then most of the everyday activities take place in the "common house", the heart of all cohousing schemes of this kind. The common house can reach up to 1,000 square meters of usable floor area, holds the living quarters, communal kitchen, the children's area, and the dining room—designed to accommodate between 60 percent and 70 percent of the residents. The relevance of the common house is stressed by its centrality within the layout of the development, where it is surrounded by green spaces and farming areas that favor encounters amongst commoners. Parking lots are relegated to the periphery, as are the rest of the buildings in the complex, which can include coworking areas, workshops, music rooms, saunas, guest rooms, event halls, gyms, libraries, laundromats, etc.

The second built resource worth highlighting is coworking spaces, an office model that is revolutionizing the ways the millennial generation works. Its most remarkable novelties are the communal workspaces and the shared furnishings that, in the more modest cases, consist in meeting rooms, resting areas, a kitchen, a cafeteria, copy centers, showers, lockers, and bicycle parking lots, although many also include game rooms, music rooms, production studios, workshops, and laboratories.

The first building that called itself a "coworking space" was San Francisco's Hat Factory, which opened in 2003. Five years later, The Hub took the initiative to London. *The Economist* covered the phenomenon in 2008 and associated it with "urban nomads", multinational employees who wandered around the planet looking for tables where they could set up their laptops, outlets to plug them into, and Wi-Fi networks to connect to (*The Economist*, 2008). At the time, such possibilities were only found in third places. However, the coworking boom took place shortly afterward, during the Great Recession, and the users were not nomadic yuppies but startups, micro companies, and freelancers of the new economy sector, which had just become the major players in global capitalism. Ella Harris (2015) detected in these workers a twofold sort of precariousness, one in terms of work—they are the victims of labor market deregulation, and the other in terms of space. Coworking facilities enable them to cope with the latter by offering what they need most: flexibility, the option of choosing between an office or a desk; between a private desk or a shared desk ("hot desk"); between permanent use or use limited to certain days or hours; between access to more services or fewer services, and so on. In addition, they pay a rent that, depending on the kind of membership, goes from £250 to £700 a month, an amount that is quite reasonable for London and cities of the like. The new typology also provides them with the possibility of coming into contact with professionals and companies in sectors that are akin to theirs, which might, in turn, lead to new clients.

Coworking also solves an identity problem. Mould, Vorley, and Liu commented: "freelancers can be seen to have a *role* but not a *place*" (Mould, Vorley, and Liu, 2014, p. 2442). Since work environments are relevant in the shaping

of personal identities, that means that freelancers also risk the lack of the feeling of belonging through work—in Chapter 1, the preference of millennials for working in third places instead of at home was seen as an attempt to avoid this. Because of their open, informal, and communal nature, coworking spaces foster interaction, which is reinforced by the encounters that occur in kitchens and lounge areas, as well as by the partaking in breakfasts or Friday afternoon happy hours. All of this stimulates community awareness among people who belong to the same age group and share economic situations, work conditions and, very often, the eco–lifestyle.

However, the question once again is if coworking spaces can be considered urban commons. Unlike in the case of cohousing, where the cooperative model is rather widespread, most coworking spaces are owned by private companies that are often multinationals with clear commercial interests.[5] Nevertheless, there are some that fall within the realm of the civic economy and preserve an acceptable degree of autonomy with respect to the market. Sometimes these coworking spaces are in the hands of the state or charity organizations. On other occasions they belong to companies that have subscribed agreements with the public administration, which subsidizes them or provides spaces through leasing in exchange for the establishing of rent control policies, for admitting NGOs and civic economy companies, or for assuming commitments with the local community. In all these cases, coworking spaces can certainly be considered urban commons.

As in the cohousing instance, coworking initiatives also use two instruments to strengthen community spirit: forms of governance and architectural design. The managing team, which often shares space with the commoners in the work rooms, handles governance. One of its main functions is to initiate collective activities, both to offer professional support (courses, workshops, presentation of services, etc.) and to favor socialization (parties, breakfasts, barbeque, appetizers, yoga sessions, etc.). The team also works to stimulate the coworking's empathy with the local community, especially if they are located in under-privileged neighborhoods. The ways of collaboration vary: the organizing of educational courses for the unemployed, the lending of tools and technical equipment, the holding of cultural events, the sponsoring of street markets, the supporting of solidarity initiatives, etc. Because of such activities, many coworking spaces have become a reference in the communal life of the neighborhoods where they are located.

Regarding architectural design, the priority is to encourage the interaction between users and promote networking activities. Some companies reduce the number of individual offices to the bare minimum while having a wealth of communal offices—in general, the latter are the workplace of between 15 and 75 people. A design strategy that prevails is the implementation of open-plan offices, organizing the workspaces on collective desks which the commoners themselves sometimes distribute. In this same space, and usually occupying

FIGURE 4.4   Berlin: KAOS coworking space.

Image courtesy of Luca Girardini.

a relevant place, the kitchen and the cafe are located. As in third places, the purpose is to create an atmosphere of domesticity, thus turning the coworking spaces into "homes away from home" (Ross and Ressia, 2015).

As seen, just as important as the fostering of the interaction between users is the reinforcing of the feelings of belonging, an objective towards which the architectural space itself can contribute by providing a sense of place. This explains why 50 percent of London's coworking spaces are in industrial buildings—the one in Spitalfields run by Second Home company is located in an old carpet factory; the Workspace's one in Walthamstow is in a chocolate factory, the Hubble HQ's coworking in Lambeth occupies a handbag factory. As pointed out in Chapter 2, industrial obsolescence conveys a feeling of authenticity that is quite valued by the followers of the eco-lifestyle. In spite of this, multinationals of the sector invest large sums of money to soften the edges of these architectural shells, a task entrusted to the eco-aesthetic which is reflected in the use of hanging plants, table lamps, and armchairs. In this way, they mitigate the roughness of metal beams, brick walls, and ventilation ducts. The result is a suggestive, sophisticated space that radiates domesticity. As will be seen below, the attitude of coworking companies that are committed to the civic economy is different. They usually rely on the un-design, "as found" aesthetic, and the principles of minimal intervention regarding the adaptation of these Fordist spaces. Lack of refinement is a manifesto of their character as urban commons.

Commoning Practices in the "Common Space": Critical Urbanism

This section deals with the fourth and last element of an urban common, commoning practices, on which the interest of the critical theory school focuses. After going over a series of conceptual revisions, it proceeds to study the consideration of public space as "common space". It first analyzes some ephemeral samples brought about by political activism, and then goes on to study the more stable case of the so-called "Temporary Autonomous Zones".

The critical theory school feeds on the theories that authors of the post-1968 radical Left, most especially Henri Lefebvre, developed. In *La production de l'espace* (1974), he associated the survival of capitalism to the production of spaces that masked reality, a task that the state had given to institutional urbanism. This turned planners into accomplices of the system. Following that logic, in *Le droit à la ville* (1968) Lefebvre defended that the goals of a local plan could not be decided by professionals, since political interests were involved. Thus, he appealed to the right the people had to claim the configuration of the city as their own, therefore ignoring an authority that was considered illegitimate. The alternative to the regulative and statist nature of institutional planning was "critical urbanism". This was a kind of anti-disciplinary urbanism, which was

based on direct citizen intervention and whose final goal was to short circuit the power relationships that were dictated by capitalist elites and enforced by city planners.

During the last decade, critical urbanism has found a way of carrying out such a task in urban commons, albeit after undertaking a revision of concepts that has questioned most of the strategies studied in the two previous sections of this chapter. Among the authors that have re-approached the subject from Lefebvre's viewpoint of the right to the city, the radical geographer David Harvey stands out. In his book *Rebel Cities* (2012) he denounced that the commons and the neoliberal principles interact in several ways: the volunteer work of the commoners enables reducing budget expenditures; their self-organization mechanisms cushion the effects of de-regularization; their civic commitment replaces the state regarding its responsibility towards the underprivileged, etc. Harvey accused the rest of the schools of being complacent about this use and manipulation of the commons. For example, he criticized Ostrom's enthusiasm towards administrative decentralization and local autonomy for being in tune with neoliberal objectives. As made evident in Chapter 3, neighborhood planning policies brought about by the Localism Act demonstrated that those measures are easy to hinder once they enter the rigid structures of the state. According to Harvey, the sort of de-centralizing that Ostrom wielded as a form of governance only worked in the case of traditional commons, which had few commoners (Harvey, 2011, p. 102). By contrast, the government of contemporary urban communities cannot be entrusted to endless negotiations between local agents. It needs powerful hierarchical structures that can transfer resources between localities to balance inequality. For this reason, Harvey disqualified localism as something reactionary and anti–progressive by nature—an idea that the geographer Doreen Massey disagreed with, as discussed in Chapter 3.

An important ideological discrepancy lay behind such criticism. Ostrom's approach to commons has an economic tilt: the idea is to survive the system by using alternative methods of exchange. On the other hand, Harvey's strategy is political: the objective is to change the system. Specifically, his intention was to start an anti–capitalist transition that eventually would turn the whole city into a common. As Bauwens and Niaros (2018) said, the idea was to go from "cities that have urban commons" to "cities that *are* urban commons", the care and exploitation of which would entail the involvement of "residents–commoners" depending on to their needs, likes, or skills.[6] Along the same lines, Ida Susser and Stéphane Tonnelat insisted on considering as commons the following: "public space, the public infrastructure, such as streets and squares, train stations, cafés, public gardens, and all forms of space where urbanites can rub shoulders and gather" (Susser and Tonnelat, 2013, p. 111). Thus, a major conceptual approach emerged: the understanding of public space as a potential urban common.

The development of this potential has been left in the hands of commoning practices, which has boosted their importance over the remaining elements of the commons. In order to reach this goal, such practices cannot follow the rigid, stable norms that rule private resources such as cohousing and coworking spaces, for the simple reason that those norms respond to the profiles of their users, usually millennials and neobohemians, while excluding many others. According to Stavros Stavrides (2016), the places that he called "common spaces" should be regulated by norms that ought to have these four characteristics: "comparability"—they had to be flexible so as not to force the establishing of predefined roles; "translatability" —they should build bridges between people with different political, cultural, or religious backgrounds; "power sharing"—they ought to distribute power; and "gift offering"—they should prioritize giving over receiving.

Harvey provided several examples of public spaces that had been transformed into common spaces symbolizing the resistance to neoliberal policies:

> Syntagma Square in Athens, Tahrir Square in Cairo, and the Plaza de Catalunya in Barcelona were public spaces that became an urban common as people assembled there to express their political views and make demands. The street is a public space that has historically often been transformed by social action into the common of revolutionary movement, as well as into a site of bloody suppression.
>
> *(Harvey, 2012, p. 73)*

The actions Harvey mentioned had been performed by anonymous citizens who acted spontaneously in the face of deep economic or political crises. The first had taken place in Latin America with the advent of the new millennium—Stavrides referred to the case of the "Argentinazo" in 2001. The occupation of Cairo's Tahrir Square by 300,000 people between 15 January and 11 February 2011 provided this kind of practice with a spatial component that the Latin American cases had lacked. It was not a matter of banging saucepans in demonstrations throughout the city. Instead, it involved the seizure of a specific public space. The consequences of the 2008 financial crash spread this sort of protest around Europe and North America. Madrid's Puerta del Sol was occupied on 15 May 2011 after a demonstration against the austerity measures imposed by the Spanish government, with the occupation lasting until 12 June. A few days later, on 27 June, tens of thousands of people repeated a similar action in Athens' Syntagma Square. Towards the end of that year, the strategy was adopted by the Occupy Movement in New York's Zuccotti Park opposite Wall Street, where a protest camp was set up from 17 September to 9 October.

Critical theory usually mentions these four occupations, which all took place in 2011, as examples of the transformation of public spaces into common spaces by means of commoning practices.[7] Even though these events happened in very

specific places, the purpose behind them was far-reaching and they became exemplary actions that spread throughout the planet. They were not limited to specific groups of people, either. Although most of those who spent the night in these camps were young and belonged to the far-left of the political spectrum, there was an effort to make ideology non-exclusive. The occupations were disassociated from political parties and the petitions (for example, in defense of public education and public health services) were shared by many segments of the population. As a matter of fact, as the day went on, the activists were joined by all kinds of people—senior citizens, families, tourists, homeless people, etc.

On the other hand, the forms of governance of these actions followed the guidelines that Stavrides demanded from commoning practices in common spaces. They did not depend on any external authority, they avoided group or personal leadership, and power was shared. Usually, the managing bodies were committees and work groups. The committees specialized in subjects like legislation, infrastructure, activity programing, relationships with the press, and so on, and were in charge of the correct functioning of the common space, prioritizing communal living. In Puerta del Sol, the leadership role was assumed by the Comisión de Servicios Internos y Seguridad (Internal Services and Safety Commission), which was in charge of, for example, cleaning, eliminating political party posters, and freeing up the streets for supplies deliveries. The work groups were also organized by subject, such as politics, economy,

FIGURE 4.5 Madrid: occupation of Puerta del Sol in 2011.

Image by Ben Sutherland, available under a CC BY 2.0 license.

education, culture, the environment, feminism. Their job was to elaborate proposals that had to be debated and agreed upon in assemblies.

As for commoning practices, a great deal of them consisted in basic actions of communal living in spaces that were adapted to carry out everyday activities, like dining halls, libraries, kindergartens, medical centers, and so on. Commoners were able to enjoy all these services thanks to the gift offering that Stavrides called for, the generous work of tens of volunteers. Intellectual debate was the axis of a different kind of commoning practices. Countless talks took place which were given by lawyers, economists, activists, and ordinary citizens, among others. At the end of those talks, the audience partook in debates—in Syntagma Square, around sunset time, the commoners intervened by taking strict two-minute turns.

It is important to clarify that these commoning actions turned the public space into a common space illegally—by occupying it without permission, and temporarily—for a period of under a month. Their symbolic and awareness-raising value was huge, but their exceptionality and short duration have cooled down the expectations of critical theory, which hoped that these practices would initiate a transition towards a change in the system. In the mid-1980s, the anarchist writer Hakim Bey expressed how critical urbanism was burdened with the feeling of an unfinished task:

> History says the Revolution attains "permanence", or at least duration, while the uprising is "temporary". In this sense an uprising is like a "peak experience" . . . But such moments of intensity give shape and meaning to the entirety of a life. The shaman returns—you can't stay up on the roof for ever—but things have changed, shifts and integrations have occurred—a "difference" is made. You will argue that this is a counsel for despair. What of the anarchist dream . . . the autonomous zone with duration, a free society, a free culture?
>
> *(Bey, 1991 [1985], p. 100)*

Further on, Bey seemed to give up on the final goal of changing the system, bowing to the evidence of the gigantic power of the state: "our own particular historical situation is not propitious for such a vast undertaking. Absolutely nothing but a futile martyrdom could possibly result now from a head-on collision with the terminal State" (Bey, 1991 [1985], p. 100).

Even though democratic mechanisms have come a long way since 1985, the year when Bey stated those ideas, the blow of realism that led him to them is still difficult to avoid. The question that critical urbanism faces currently is: can the common space transcends the grave political, economic or social situations that triggered the above-mentioned commoning practices in order to become a kind of permanent space that is tolerated by the authorities and generated and managed by common citizens, and not political activists? Bey himself thought

it can and used the Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ) notion as an example of this. For him, those zones are places where actions that challenge the established order have taken place, but without attacking the state in an explicit way, thus preventing them from being immediately dismantled. Bey mentioned the 1960s' "tribal" encounters, the *eco-saboteur* assemblies in the forest; neo-pagan Beltanes, and the homosexual "radical fairy" circle meetings:

> Because the state is concerned primarily with simulation rather than substance, the TAZ can "occupy" these areas clandestinely and carry on its festal purposes for quite a while in relative peace. Perhaps certain small TAZs have lasted a whole lifetime because they were unnoticed, like hillbilly enclaves.
>
> *(Bey, 1991 [1985], p. 101)*

Critical urbanism shows an interest in such spaces that challenge the dominant social and economic standards despite the fact that they do not attempt to destroy them. They are ephemeral common spaces and yet they replicate over the years; they are a-legal or illegal and yet they are tolerated by authority. The TAZs established by ethnic minorities stand out as some of the most resilient. In *Le droit à la ville* (1968), Lefebvre had encouraged citizens to reformulate the abstract space that, complying with the Athens Charter, institutional urbanism had created in the cities during the postwar decades, and which had resulted in thousands of modulated and standardized social housing blocks where mass society was confined. The challenge would be to undo such urban sameness and turn it into a "differential space" where the otherness of gender, race, or class would emerge. This explains the special attention that critical urbanism pays to ethnic minorities. Socio-political movements like the Black Panthers or the Young Lords, which provided the Black and Latino communities in the United States with food and services in the 1960s and 1970s, inspired the birth of the so-called ethnic urbanism. Black urbanism was groundbreaking. It accused institutional urbanism, or "white urbanism", of being led by the prejudiced values of the white Western man. As an alternative to the hegemonic world vision of institutional urbanism, Black urbanism proposes exploiting and experiencing the city through "Blackness"—hip-hop culture, jazz, etc.

Nowadays, ethnic urbanisms have spread throughout Europe and North America because of the arrival of immigrants and asylum seekers that have projected their cultural and religious differences on cities. An example of this are the space occupations that Latino communities have undertaken in the United States, a phenomenon that has been studied by Latino urbanism. These commoning practices often take place in the street: around bus stops that street sellers colonize with their portable stands; on sidewalks and green spaces that the neighbors transform into meeting places by setting up parasols, chairs, and tables; or in empty suburban sites that day laborers, expecting the arrival of

FIGURE 4.6 Los Angeles: Latino urbanism in MacArthur Park.

Image by Joey Zanetti, available under a CC BY 2.0 license.

prospective employers, change into waiting areas with their shades and stalls. On other occasions, commoning occurs in private spaces that are underused: parking lots turn into street markets; front-yards become small squares that include fountains and benches, and vacant plots are used as sports courts, event venues, and leisure spaces to play dominoes, have barbecues, or dance salsa.[8] Finally, the occupation of facilities that have been abandoned due to obsolescence can also be considered as TAZs. Such is the case of the Los Angeles gas stations that are used as taquerias or the factory ruins that have been reconverted into food markets and service venues. James Rojas pointed out that the reassembling of the physical agents that make up these spaces is transforming North American residential suburbs, which were designed for car use, into Latin American *barrios* where a mixture of activities and the presence of pedestrians have become the norm (Rojas, 2010, p. 38).

Rojas revealed another significant fact. Latin TAZs are not just functional. They are also colonized with altars to Our Lady of Guadalupe, revolutionary murals, and pre-Columbine symbols. This bestows a solid cultural mark on them that challenges the white Anglo-Saxon community's predominant codes (Rojas, 2010, p. 41). Indeed, as Stavrides pointed out, people do not just use common spaces but also shape them according to their aspirations:

> Whereas public space, as space marked by the presence of a prevailing authority, is space "given" to people according to certain terms, common

space is space "taken" by the people. A community of common space
users develops by appropriating space and by transforming it into poten-
tially shared space.

(Stavrides, 2016, p. 106)

Such is the way that commoners have of visually expressing the values that
they share and of attracting attention to their condition of otherness regarding
the system. During the occupation of Madrid's Puerta del Sol, this "taking"
of the common space occurred through the adopting of symbolic gestures,
such as raising hands using the codes of sign language; slogans like "they do
not represent us", or nicknames like "*indignados*", just to name a few.[9] How-
ever, there were not any remarkable cultural manifestations. The camp was an
example of the purest un-design pragmatism. It was set up in the center of the
square and consisted of a series of awnings anchored to streetlamps and kiosks
and several pallet-made canvas-covered vaults. Tents, sleeping bags, folding
tables, mats, and chairs were spread out around it. Unlike the Latino TAZs, the
physical transformations of the European public space were merely functional.
The explanation behind this lies in the fact that the identity of the commoners
coincided with that of the cultural majority. By contrast, the Latino TAZs have
the need to mark their territory. Theirs is an act of colonization, and cultural
expressions work to vindicate their presence.

Dalston: The Ridley Road Market as a Temporary Autonomous Zone

This last section analyzes the ideas that were previously examined in relation to
two urban commons in Dalston. The Ridley Road Market is interpreted as a
TAZ in which commoning actions are carried out that are key to the neighbor-
hood's sense of place. On the other hand, the coworking space that Bootstrap
Charity manages on Ashwin Street is presented as an example of a physical
resource that is committed to the community's development.

   As has just been seen, many of the Latino TAZs are street markets. Lefebvre
thought that these places are very special because the proximity of the stalls and
the free access to the area favor the development of corporal and affective expe-
riences that create group awareness (Lefebvre, 1974). That might explain why
nowadays they are frequented by highly educated members of the middle and
upper classes, the socio-cultural nutrient of neobohemia, as Pierre Bourdieu
revealed (Bourdieu, 1979). As a matter of fact, however, not every street mar-
ket is to the liking of neobohemians. Some of them, like London's Borough,
Camden Lock, and Portobello markets, are repudiated because they cater to
tourism, which is incompatible with the authenticity that they aspire to, which
is found in other more local, specialized markets. Dalston has one of those,
Broadway Market. In 2004, eco-hipsters changed part of this street market,

FIGURE 4.7 Dalston: Broadway Market.

one of London's oldest, into a farmers' market. At present, it is recognized as one of the neighborhood's best-known icons. The feeling of authenticity that it conveys relies on an austere implementation and on the absence of staging— except for the street musicians and the occasional retro-looking oyster seller's cart. Typical eco-consumption articles, like vintage clothes, arts-and-crafts, organic food, flowers, and plants, are advertised in chalk on blackboards standing on the ground. Removable stalls made out of simple tubular structures sustaining mismatching awnings occupy the street. The goods are displayed on folding tables that are covered with ordinary tablecloths. Wooden and plastic boxes of the sort used to store stuff at home are also set on those tables. In the clothes stands, items are arranged on movable coat racks with full-length mirrors leaning against them. Definitely, such a combination of un-design and eco-aesthetics makes it clear that Broadway Market is neobohemian territory.

It is not always like that. One of the most emblematic places in Dalston is the Ridley Road Market, the biggest of the five that Hackney Council manages. It was founded, 20-stall strong, in the late 1880s, although it was not recognized as a municipal market until 1927. Nowadays, it is visited by 70,000 people every week, most of them—18,000—on Saturdays. The specialty of this market is not eco-consumption but essential goods. Although clothes predominate (20 percent of the merchandise that is offered) together with fruit and vegetables (15

percent), a whole variety of products can be found there, such as meat and fish, lingerie, costume jewelry, textiles, household goods, handbags, slippers, etc.

Ridley Road Market has always been quite diverse from an ethnic viewpoint. In the 1930s and 1940s, most of the stalls were in the hands of Jewish families, but during the postwar years this situation changed because of the Jewish religious prohibition to work on Saturday, the busiest market day. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Afro-Caribbean populations entered the scene, and then the Turkisk, the Greek, and the Cypriot communities during the 1970s. The last few decades have witnessed the arrival of Eastern Europeans and Latin Americans. Such ethnic diversity explains the fact that the market has been one of the main settings of Dalston's political activism. As mentioned in Chapter 2, in the 1930s it became a battleground for the confrontations between Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists and the 43 Group, an organization of Jewish former members of the military. The most serious disruptions, however, occurred after the war, on 1 June 1947 and on 31 July 1962. In both cases, Dalston's neighbors stood up against far-right demonstrators to defend the Jewish community.

Markets such as this attract the attention of contemporary critical theory. Stavros Stavrides considers them examples of public spaces that can be transformed into common spaces, since the relationships between the human agents (sellers and buyers) and physical agents (kiosks and merchandise) create conditions for communal life (Stavrides, 2016, p. 149). Despite this, considering Ridley Road Market as an urban common is somewhat arguable. For one thing, it lacks one of the four characteristic elements that have been described: autonomous forms of governance. Like any other London market, it is regulated by the London Local Authority Act, and is managed by Hackney Council, which is responsible for providing and maintaining services, grants selling licenses, and makes decisions regarding the sort of merchandise that can be commercialized. And yet there are commoners in it as well as physical resources and commoning practices are carried out. The commoners have a strong relationship with Dalston. The stalls have passed from generation to generation of neighborhood residents, like the Caines, Moseleys, Greys, and Lamberts. Forty-seven percent of current stall owners have run their business for over ten years. Also, most of its customers (45 percent) have been born and raised in Dalston and live there. A report by Retail Group classified them in the category of "urban adversity", that is, people of different ethnic origins with low wages and a lower educational level, many of whom are heads of mono-parental families who find it difficult to make ends meet (cited in LBH, 2015). Such data explains why Ridley Road Market is one of the most inexpensive in London. Over 80 percent of the goods for sale there cost less than £10—nothing like the costly organic products and the highly educated buyers (41 percent) of the neobohemian Broadway Market.

FIGURE 4.8 Dalston: Ridley Road Market.

The thing is that Dalston's gentrification has not had much impact on the Ridley Road Market. Its physical resources are proof of this: 180 stalls (120 permanent and 60 removable), a storage area, and its main asset, Ridley Road, a public space located in the heart of the neighborhood. The atmosphere is totally different from that of Broadway Market. In Ridley Road Market authenticity is not simulated but very real, and gives it a decadent feel that turns into a stern laconic style. The south side consists of a series of commercial premises that are attached to the Richmond-Stratford subway line and extend onto the street through tables, boxes, and fridges which are sheltered by old awnings. The north side is made up of the shops on the ground floor of buildings. These stores are tiny, under 10-square-meter premises that accommodate shabby sewing rooms, clothes shops, or beauty parlors. These ventures often take up the sidewalk too with rickety stalls covered with metal sheets, separated by pallets, and protected from the rain with plastic curtains. On the asphalt of Ridley Road, removable stalls are set up. A gradation in quality can be perceived from the western access through Kingsland High Street—resolved by means of simple-but-attractive white sunshades that create an atmosphere of freshness and informality to the liking of the millennials that come out of nearby Dalston Kingston Station—to the eastern end, where the feeling of being in a Caribbean market is complete.

This harsh, albeit tremendously suggestive, physical environment is the background for the fourth element of any urban common, commoning practices. The atmosphere of Ridley Road Market is not easy to find in the codified street markets of the United Kingdom. The sellers, donning the original hairdressing styles of their countries (Indian turbans, Jewish kipas, Palestinian kufiyahs, Ottoman fezzes), attract customers with songs, slogans, and gestures that only they understand. The exchanges between human agents are most eclectic: Russian traders offer Indian saris, Nigerian bakers make Turkish pastries, Afghan fishmongers sell parrotfish from the Red Sea, Jewish merchants offer Islamic hijabs. To all of this, one must add Jamaican rhythms, exotic food, certified halal or kosher meat, together with habits that do not seem very British, like a chaotic sort of organization and generalized noise pollution. Can Ridley Road Market be considered as a TAZ? In the strict sense of the term, it cannot, since it is a space that is occupied legally and permanently. However, one of the most distinctive features of TAZs is easily observed there: the redefinition of the public space through cultural codes that are alien to the ones that socially prevail. Posters in languages other than English and in alphabets other than the Latin one, flags from many different countries, reggae rhythms, and the reciting of texts from the Koran mark a territory, or rather an archipelago of differential territories, where identity expressions that challenge Anglo-Saxon culture converge.

This nature of space that questions bourgeois codes, joined to the "real authenticity" that comes from its harsh physical roughness, have turned Ridley Road Market into an irresistible place for neobohemians. The Retail Group report (cited in LBH, 2015) categorized 35 percent of market visitors as "rising prosperity" citizens, the second largest group after the "urban adversity" category (45 percent)—another manifestation of the "prof-pov" phenomenon in creative districts. The phrase "rising prosperity" refers to well-educated people in their mid-thirties, who usually live on their own, and whose main pastimes are going to the gym and patronizing cafes and restaurants. Indeed, neobohemian third places have already sprung up in the market. In 2005, the old Ridley Arms pub, a traditional meeting point for traders and regular customers, closed. A few years later, the Ridley Road Market Bar opened its doors a few meters away. It is an establishment whose design includes all the sorts of eco-aesthetic features: handmade benches and tables, wooden floors and walls, colored light bulbs on the outside of the premises, fruit boxes on the counter, and the like. The bar, which was praised by *Time Out* magazine, boasts that it is the first "cash-free" bar in London, as it does not accept cash.

Ridley's, a pop-up restaurant inaugurated in the summer of 2011, attracted even more attention from the media. It was designed by The Decorators and Atelier Chan Chan, and consisted of a rather simple two-story scaffolding structure—the kitchen was on the ground floor and the dining room on the upper floor—that was closed on the sides by means of a sliding plastic curtain.

FIGURE 4.9   Dalston: Ridley's Restaurant.

Image courtesy of The Decorators.

It used a creative formula called "food-for-food". For lunch, customers picked food for a value of £3 from a list by the door. They then bought the food from the market and finally delivered it to the kitchen. That process gave them the right to eat the menu for the day. For dinner, the products collected during the morning were cooked. Diners paid £15 for this service, from which £5 was recuperated as a coupon to use at the market. The money that was collected in this way was used to cover the next day's lunch. Such a food cycle, an action of education in resilience, established bonds between the restaurant and the market, the cooks and the customers, the consumers and sellers.

Both the Ridley Road Market Bar and Ridley's Restaurant are proof that gentrification is already encroaching on the Ridley Road Market, though in a contained and respectful way. However, the fear that it could take hold is in everybody's mind. In an *Al Jazeera* documentary that was broadcasted internationally, the owner of a modest stall reflected on the consequences the Dalston Square operation had had for him:

> That new development made me lose 50 percent of my customers … people that live in those luxury places, they don't need me. They don't even know that I'm here. … In the morning, all you can see is bikes riding towards the city. And at 7:00 pm, riding back to their places. They have nothing to do with this place.
>
> *(Rippingale, 2019)*

The dismantling of the conditions that make Ridley Road Market a TAZ, and therefore its transformation into a larger version of Broadway Market, would be devastating for Dalston's sense of place which, as seen in Chapter 3, depends on maintaining the present *status quo* existing between the new and the old.

This chapter concludes by going back to the subject with which it opened: the collaborative economy. Hackney is remarkable in this respect. There are subscriber organizations like Growing Communities, which supports local farmers. There are social cooperatives, like the Hackney Co-operative Developments, which helps neighbors to have access to workspaces. There are cohousing projects—unfortunately one of them, the Hackney Cohousing Project, failed. There is even a segment in which Hackney is the leader at an international level, the coworking sector. The massive appearance of new economy companies in Hoxton and Shoreditch during the Great Recession, especially after 2012, explains the fact that, as early as 2014, Hackney had 23 spaces of this kind, making it the London borough, and probably the district in the whole of Europe, that had the most (URS Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited, 2014, p. 15).

One of these coworking spaces, the Bootstrap Charity, is in Dalston. It shares its headquarters with the Arcola Theatre in a building complex between Ashwin Street and Abbot Street, next to the Dalston Eastern Curve Garden. No doubt, it can be considered an urban common. This non-profit enterprise moved into the neighborhood during its darkest period, in 1977, to help residents to enter the work market and rise out of poverty. At present, it is one of the driving forces behind Dalston's economy. The over 500 commoners in its coworking building meet in the neighborhood's third places and go shopping in the local businesses and in nearby Ridley Road Market. Furthermore, thanks to the many events that it organizes, Bootstrap Charity gives a boost to Dalston's cultural life.

The company has an agreement with Hackney Council, which leases the building in exchange for maintaining its strong social commitment. Bootstrap's level of dedication to the community is reflected in its three preferential objectives. To begin with, it offers logistic and educational support to its 150 customers, among which there are professionals—with architects, photographers, and designers standing out among them; start-ups—mainly from the fashion world and the food industry, and NGOs—which assist refugee women, people without resources, and so on. While these NGOs are provided with their

own offices with subsidized rents, the other users can access workstations with reduced rents. The second objective is the education of the neighborhood's unemployed youth, who are offered specialization courses, traineeships in the coworking companies, and the professional sponsorship of its commoners. The educational projects of the Bootstrap Campus are financed with the earnings that the charity receives from renting its workspaces and restaurants. The third and last objective is the organization of cultural events that are open to the local community: film viewing sessions, exhibits, concerts, plays, etc.

As usual among coworking companies, Bootstrap occupies obsolete industrial facilities. They consist of three joined buildings: Print House,[10] an old ink factory; Fitzroy House, a shoe factory, and Colourworks, the paint factory that Bootstrap shares with the Arcola Theatre, where it occupies the two upper floors. Bootstrap has colonized these spaces in an utterly complex way. To promote the idea of cross pollination, the commoners are distributed among Fitzroy House (2,500 square meters of office space), Print House (2,500 square meters), and Colourworks (1,000 square meters). The common work room is on the first floor of Fitzroy House, whose upper level is used as a multi-functional room for talks, workshops, courses, film viewing sessions, etc. The ground floor of Print House holds an exhibit gallery as well as the Café Oto, one of the best known third places of Dalston. In the remaining space of the three buildings private offices, meeting rooms, shared facilities, and so on, are interspersed.
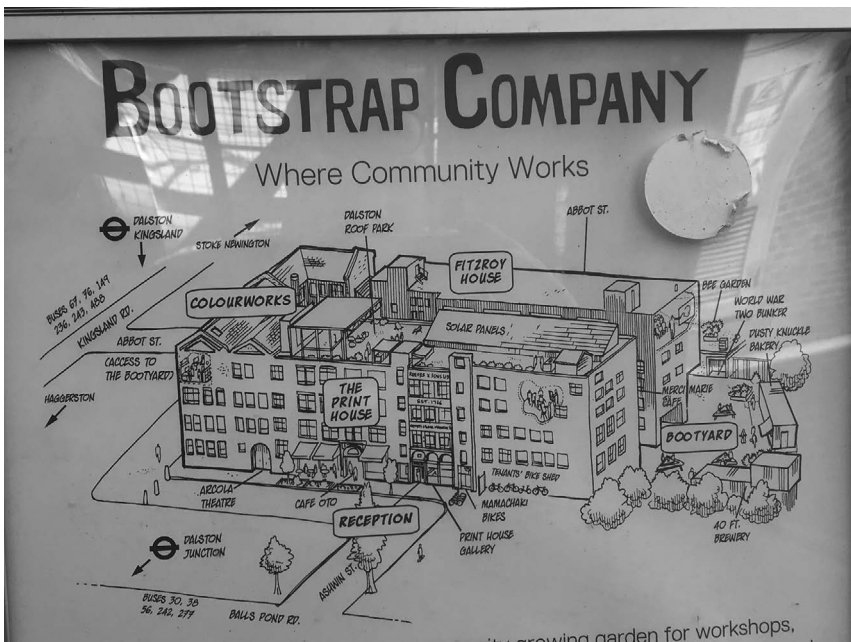
FIGURE 4.10   Dalston: Bootstrap space complex.

Bootstraps's managing team has observed a marked difference between the habits of the users of private offices, who do not usually relate to each other, and those who work in the common room of Fitzroy House, who have formed "coffee groups" and hold "pie day" every Thursday. With the objective of spreading the communal spirit to all the commoners, Bootstrap has taken to the roofs of the buildings. It has planted community gardens on the Colour-works rooftop, which are looked after by volunteer commoners. During the summer, the roof of Print House turns into Dalston Roof Park, a terrace where people have lunch and cocktails. The idea is to transform these spaces into the commoners' main meeting place. Eventually, areas where they can do gymnastics, yoga, dance, attend film viewing sessions, etc. will also be available there.

Along with the rooftops, Bootstrap has three other open-air spaces. The largest is the Bootyard, an old parking lot at the end of Abbot Street where containers that are rented to different companies have been installed. Currently, one of them is the office and brewery of a company that makes craft beer. Another container is used by Dusty Knuckle Bakery, which was mentioned in Chapter 1. Next to the Bootyard there is a Second World War bunker that has become an exhibit room, movie house, and theater. In the vicinity, the Bee Garden can be found, which used to shelter beehives, although it is going to be reconverted into a kindergarten for the commoners' children.

In short, the Bootstrap complex is a combination of work rooms, classrooms, exhibition galleries, community gardens, beehives, and all of it distributed among offices, rooftops, yards, bunkers, and containers. This rather intricate fragmentation of uses and spaces is one of Bootstrap's great virtues because it promotes synergy. The commoners have lunch at the Café Oto, attend courses in Fitzroy House, and go to the Arcola Theatre once their workday is over. The old industrial facilities of Ashwin Street have turned into a universe in itself, a micro-city that is shared by Bootstrap's users and Dalton's neighbors.

The renewal of the different buildings for these uses took place gradually, through minimal-intervention projects designed by architects who worked at Bootstrap and carried out by small construction or carpentry companies that had also settled there. This myriad of interventions, which have taken place on what was an already hyper-fragmented architectural space, is unified by materials and colors: polished grey cement floors, exposed concrete ceilings and brick walls—both painted in white. The result is a sober-but-elegant bichromaticism that unites work spaces, stairs, offices, and rest areas. The common work room is rather austere, it follows an open-plan distribution divided by shelves that open on to a central hallway. There, 80 desks have been distributed with the commoners adding personal touches by placing plants and posters. Fluorescent lights hang from the ceiling, along with exposed installations such as power strips and fire safety system pipes. At the back end there is a modest kitchen, which is not unlike the ones in the miniscule apartments where the

FIGURE 4.11   Dalston: Bootstrap common work room.

millennials who work there live. The creators of the project have not allowed themselves too many liberties beyond discretion.

   This austere design is in contrast with the seductive interiors of coworking buildings that belong to multinationals like Second Home. Its Spitalfields head-quarters includes hanging gardens, over 1,000 hydroponic plants, fake chip-board wooden ceilings, curved glass partitions, and carpeted floors color-coded to indicate the spaces that are accessible to each type of member—ground floor blues for hot-desk members, second floor oranges for studio members, etc. Contrasting with such an instrument of spatial segregation, Bootstrap's bichro-maticism emerges as an egalitarian manifesto that vindicates the nature of this coworking space as an urban common.

Notes

1. Rachel Botsman, the author of the book *What's Mine Is Yours* (2010), is considered the intellectual godmother of collaborative economy.
2. Some alternative currencies are not associated to a specific area but to products that encourage community resilience, like local food or renewable energy. Such is the case of the "kilowatt dollars".
3. At the London People's Supermarket members can work as volunteers in exchange for discounts on their shopping.
4. Although it is estimated that the cost of living in cohousing is on average 20 percent lower than the cost of living in a free market residence.

5. In London, such companies hoard 75 percent of coworking spaces (URS Infra-structure & Environment UK Limited, 2014).

6. With this in mind Michel Bauwens and Yurek Onzia elaborated the *Commons Transition Plan for the City of Ghent* (2017).

7. A fifth case that is usually mentioned occurred two years later, on 28 May 2013, when a group of activists camped out in Istanbul's Gezi Park to protest about its dismantling in order to build a shopping center.

8. An example of this are the "*casitas*" of New York's Puerto Rican community.

9. OPEN Dalston used similar strategies in the protests against the demolition of Dalston Theater. They publicized their struggle with slogans like "Keep Dalston Different", banners that read "No Demolition Without Public Consultation", graffiti with a question "Dalston Who Asked U?", and t-shirts with the motto "I love Dalston: Keeping it Crap"—an ironic reference to some controversial statements made by Hackney's mayor.

10. Print House was built in 1866 by Reeves & Sons, a company that supplied stationery and drawing material to schools and artists—it is said that in the earlier days it had been the supplier for Joseph M. W. Turner and John Constable. Because these facilities were bombed during the Second World War, the facade is the only element remaining from the original building.

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5

ON AGENTS

From Top-Down to Bottom-Up Processes

This chapter deals with the change in the types of agents involved in the rein-vention of the city after the environmental crisis, a result of the U-turn from top-down to bottom-up processes. The thread of the argument starts in the field of urbanism, more specifically in the so-called "bottom-up urbanisms".

Bottom-Up Theories and Practices: DIY, Everyday, Temporary, and Tactical Urbanisms

This section unravels the complex skein of bottom-up urbanisms. To do so, it selects four movements—DIY, everyday, temporary, and tactical urbanisms—that tackle very representative issues such as denunciation, the ordinary, tem-porality, and planning, respectively. These movements are presented in a genealogical sequence, from the earliest—related to critical urbanism, to the most recent—orbiting around New Urbanism, showing how their objectives, interests, and tactics have evolved.

The subject of agents entered the realm of public debate at the end of the 1960s, coinciding with the outbreak of the environmental crisis and the irrup-tion of social protest in Western Europe and the United States. It was brought to light by civic movements that demanded public consultation regarding deci-sions that affected the everyday life of people, which were nevertheless taken by political representatives who were out of touch with local realities. The subject infiltrated the field of urbanism straightaway. As critical theory argued, science-based institutional urbanism, the offspring of modernity, had placed professionals at the apex of the decision-making pyramid, relegating citizens to the role of passive receivers. Two books were seminal in the questioning of this top-down model: Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* (1960) and Jane Jacobs's

The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961). Ten years later, other writers questioned the model from the viewpoint of urban design. Among them, Jan Gehl (*Life Between Buildings*, 1971) and William H. Whyte (*The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, 1980) were noteworthy. Basically, all of these authors shared Lefebvre's ideas: the city could not be defined by professionals whose interests (efficiency, functionality, and modern design) were not social.

The first conceptual assessment on the matter of citizen participation was provided by Sherry Arnstein, who defined the "ladder of citizen participation" in 1969. It had eight rungs. The bottom two, "manipulation" and "therapy", were considered as "non-participation" stages, in which professionals make the decisions while residents are mere spectators. The next three steps, "informing", "consultation", and "placation", known as "tokenism", involve consulting the neighbors although the final decision is still in the hands of urban planners. The last three stages, "partnership", "delegated power", and "citizen control", which made up the "citizen power" series, are the true bottom-ups: not only are citizens entitled to their opinions, but they are also empowered to make decisions (Arnstein, 1969).

Not until the advent of the 2008 financial crisis did the public administrations dare to begin to tread the field of "citizen power". Once again, the initiative rose from neoliberal policies. In 2009, within the framework of the Big Society project, the British government issued a decree that forced local authorities to empower citizens. This celebration of direct democracy came as part of a typically neoliberal discourse that praised individualism while discrediting state interventionism. In such a climate, many scholars and professionals looked toward the so-called "bottom-up urbanisms", a myriad of informal practices inspired by Lefebvre's appeal to the "right to the city" that, for decades, had been peppering cities by means of outlandish urban actions. The promoters of such interventions claimed that, since institutional urbanism did not provide a solution to the needs of ordinary people, they had to address issues on their own. They boasted about the fact that, despite not being experts, they had managed to infiltrate a highly professionalized structure and succeeded in "hacking" it. The final goal was to empower the agents that were at the base of the institutional urbanism pyramid, that is, neighbor communities, shared interest associations, political activists, artists, underprivileged groups, civic economy companies, local entrepreneurs, etc.

That was only the beginning. The empowering of these agents made bottom-up urbanisms rethink cities' governance mechanisms, funding, management, and production. Their objectives spread towards the offering of services, economic promotion, social equity, etc., and their interests moved towards politics, ecology, and aesthetics. Such a display explains the many labels that are currently attached to bottom-up urbanisms: collaborative urbanism, generous urbanism, grassroot urbanism, guerrilla urbanism, handmade urbanism, informal urbanism, insurgent urbanism, micro urbanism, open-source urbanism,

participatory urbanism, provisional urbanism, unplanned urbanism, unsolicited urbanism, and so on.

The aim of this section is to clarify this complex puzzle. To do so, it assembles a brief genealogy of bottom-up urbanisms from their origins to the present. As mentioned, the focus is set on four especially representative types: DIY urbanism, everyday urbanism, temporary urbanism, and tactical urbanism. The first two fall within the circle of critical urbanism while the latter belongs to the realm of New Urbanism. The genealogy shows a dramatic evolution that goes from insurgency against to agreement with neoliberal policies, from citizen leadership to company sponsorship, from temporality to a drive for permanence, from spontaneity to codification, and from autonomy to coordination with institutional urbanism.[1]

DIY Urbanism

Precedents to bottom-up urbanisms can be found in the 1960s, after Jacobs and Lynch published their books. At the end of that decade, a crucial event took place that characterized the initial stages of such urbanisms: Lefebvre placed the matter of citizen participation within the framework of critical theory. As previously seen, in *Le droit à la ville* (1968) he encouraged people to take over the city, thus planting the seeds of bottom-up urbanisms. Lefebvre's "right to the city" became the nexus that connected the first generation of bottom-up urbanisms, those linked to critical urbanism. DIY urbanism and everyday urbanism are among them.

As is the norm in the confusing bottom-up scene, the term DIY urbanism is not precise but has several meanings. In this section, Gordon C. G. Douglas's definition is adopted: "DIY urbanism in general is an inherently individualistic act, reflecting the values and priorities of one person or small group acted out upon urban space without permission or oversight" (Douglas, 2019, location 802). In other words, the term refers to practices undertaken by individuals or groups privately and for ideological reasons. Those practices are usually illegal or a-legal. As Michel de Certeau said, the right to the city, since it is not officially recognized, is exerted by using a tactic that: "must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 37).

In this sense, DIY urbanism is the oldest among bottom-up urbanisms. Its first actions took place in the 1970s within the counterculture context, with practices such as squatting, graffitiing, and vandalizing that usually affected street furniture. The propagandistic potential of such actions was evident right away. In 1973, Liz Christy organized the Green Guerrilla, a group of volunteers that decided to act on their own to stop the wave of obsolescence that was expanding around their New York neighborhood. Their unauthorized

FIGURE 5.1   New York: Bowery Houston Farm and Garden.

Image courtesy of Margarita Calero.

initiatives consisted of actions such as throwing "seed green-aids" into abandoned empty lots, planting sunflower seeds in neglected road medians, and placing planters on decrepit cornices. The intervention that made Green Guerrilla internationally known took place on a plot at the intersection of Bowery and Houston Streets. A dump was turned into a community space, the Bowery Houston Farm and Garden. During the following years, similar actions were replicated in cities around the world, and Green Guerrilla ended up becoming a global movement, Guerrilla Gardening.

Even though a great deal of Green Guerrilla's interventions took place in private plots, DIY urbanism has concentrated its actions in the public space, sometimes protesting its privatization, other times denouncing its neglect, and on occasions reacting against its usurpation by the automobile. An example of the first case were the "ad-bustling" initiatives that the BUGA UP (Billboard Utilising Graffitists Against Unhealthy Promotions) group undertook in Sidney during the 1980s, by making protest inscriptions on billboards advertising tobacco and alcoholic beverages. In 1999, the London Space Hijackers "anarchitects" also rebelled against the commercialization of public space, against its scrutiny with CCTV cameras, its fortification with fences, or its segregationist out-fitting with anti-indigent street furniture. Not unlike ad-bustlings, their

space "kidnappings" consisted of subliminal messages that in this case were written on benches, bus stops, or telephone booths.

The case of Space Hijackers demonstrates that, despite DIY urbanism's original display of amateurism and anti-professionalism, urban planners and architects ended up subscribing to Lefebvre's call for the right to the city. That explains why this anti-establishment-like movement has been incorporating into its discourse other complaints of a more technical character, such as the shortage or decline of public space. During the last few decades, actions geared towards providing public space with facilities as well as the decorum that austerity policies have denied it, have taken on growing prominence. Ground-breaking was the intervention that the City Repair group carried out in 1997 at the intersection of Portland's 9th Avenue and Sherrett Street. This action, making striking drawings on the deteriorated pavement, was carried out with the cooperation of the community, and it dignified the entrance into the neighborhood, which became a meeting point for the proud neighbors. From that point on, painting on the pavement became one of the icons of DIY urbanism.

Along with protests against the privatization and neglect of public space, DIY urbanism opened a third front by demanding that pedestrians take over

FIGURE 5.2 Portland: City Repair reclamation project "Sunnyside Plaza" South East.

FIGURE 5.3 San Francisco: Rebar's first experiment in PARK(ing).

Image by Rebar Group (Bishop and Williams, 2012, p. 106).

the spaces that institutional urbanism reserves for automobiles. In 2007, Urban Repair Squad, a cycling association, intervened by modifying the pavement traffic signs on Toronto's streets, thus turning some sections into bicycle lanes. During that same year, Depave went even further, to the point of removing the asphalt of streets and parking lots that were considered unnecessarily paved and prevented rainwater from filtering through. After removing the rubble, this Portland group covered the area with permeable soil and transformed it into gardens and recreational areas. Nevertheless, the champion of the DIY battle against the rule of cars was San Francisco's Rebar group. This collective made headlines in 2005 after turning a parking space into a miniature park by spreading a piece of artificial grass over the paved surface and placing a bench and a planter on top. Blain Merker, one of the members of the group, called these actions "generous urbanism" because the citizens are offered something for free. According to him, in our overly privatized neoliberal economy, such an action raises suspicions and seems almost subversive, which bestows a tremendous transformational value on DIY urbanism (Merker, 2010 p. 51).

Everyday Urbanism

At the turn of the century, bottom-up urbanisms became less radical, which deemed many of their actions tolerable to the authorities. Everyday urbanism was important during this phase. This name was coined by John L. Chase,

Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski in their book *Everyday Urbanism* (1999). The point of departure was still Lefebvre's ideas, but the focus was set on a line of his discourse that was less conflictive than the claim of the right to the city: the vindication of the everyday. These authors proposed to consider the three factors on which Latino urbanism would later be based: everyday activities, the artifacts that make them possible, and the spaces where those activities take place. Thus, everyday urbanism was in tune with Edward Relph's "everyday landscapes", which Crawford renamed "everyday spaces":

> Southern California's banal, incoherent and repetitive landscape of roads is lined with endless strip malls, supermarket, auto-repair facilities, fast food outlets, and vacant lots that defeat any conceptual or physical order. According to Lefebvre these spaces are like everyday life: "trivial, obvious but invisible, everywhere and nowhere".
>
> *(Crawford, 2008, p. 26)*

With those interests and that intellectual framework in mind, Chase, Crawford, and Kaliski laid out the main lines of everyday urbanism. The idea was to reinterpret real-life uses, objects, and spaces in a creative way, to "de-familiarize" them in order to "re-familiarize" them—one of the strategies that "as found" and eco-aesthetics had already put into practice. In the same way, those real-life elements had to be de-merchandized, their use value prevailing over their market value—for example, a vacant plot is more valuable as a potential children's playground than the amount of money that speculators are willing to pay for it. As in the case of permaculture, everyday urbanism detected its opportunities in enclaves that are underused or used ambiguously and intermittently— vacant plots, residual areas, sports fields, sidewalks, alleys, steps, etc. Crawford perceived in them a "loose" nature, making them especially suitable to be redefined by means of everyday activities. The founders of everyday urbanism left it at that. For them, its relative vagueness had to contrast with the rigidity of institutional urbanism. Everyday urbanism had to be tactical, empirical, and local rather than strategic, normative, and universal; it should be no more than a set of ideas and practices that could be configured in a thousand ways to adapt to the specificities of each case.

Over the last few years, a number of authors, like Daniel Campo (2002), Giovanni La Varra (2003), Jeffrey Hou (2010), Anastasia Loukaitou and Vinit Mukhija (2015), Karen A. Franck and Quentin Stevens (2007), and others, have elaborated on Chase, Crawford, and Kaliski's ideas. Franck and Stevens have developed the concept of "loose spaces", pliable spaces lacking a predetermined functionality that are in contrast with the "tight spaces" of institutional urbanism, which are functionally deterministic and regulated by rules of behavior. Giovanni La Varra, who coined the phrase "Post-It City" to describe such places, understood that the activities that take place in them express a form of

resistance against the formalization of citizen behavior that occurs in the established public space—such as traditional parks and gardens, and therefore a way of demanding the right to the city (La Varra, 2003).

Other authors have tried to provide everyday urbanism with procedures and instruments that could make it more effective regarding the definition of cities. While searching for references, some of those authors have looked at informal urban areas in developing countries, where urban-planning regulations and codes are not applied. The *favelas* in Brazil and the African *bidon villes* are designed and built by their own residents using construction techniques associated with underdevelopment, therefore, traditionally, their eradication has been the ultimate goal. Nowadays, however, those spaces are scrutinized in search for codes that may enable people to define their living environment according to their everyday needs and through self-management, with a minimum of external technical support.[2] Maurice Mitchell and Bo Tang (2018) have studied the process in the outskirts of cities in Ghana and Sierra Leone and come up with another concept: "loose fit city". The term applies to a series of guideline principles that, as everyday urbanism defends, proposes to reuse small, lasting, and everyday objects in a creative way.

Temporary Urbanism

Most of the aforementioned actions of DIY urbanism were ephemeral, a result of its tactical confrontation with the system by means of illegal or a-legal skirmishes. At the present, temporality is so interwoven in these movements that many authors use the terms "bottom-up urbanism" and "temporary urbanism" indistinctly (for example, Bishop and Williams, 2012; Beekmans and De Boer, 2014; Madanipour, 2017). Here, however, the latter is applied to a set of transitory practices that can no longer be linked to critical urbanism and are often applied from top to bottom. This proves that both private companies and public institutions have begun to show an interest in the bottom-up universe.

Two different kinds of uses can be distinguished within temporary urbanism. One is the so-called "meanwhile" use, that is, the usage of plots and commercial premises until they are developed or sold. The other use is known as "pop-up" and responds either to marketing strategies or to a desire to test the feasibility of a commercial project. The main difference between them lies in that while the former takes advantage of an interim situation, for the latter temporality is a goal by itself.

Usually, a meanwhile use is adopted by developers to attract the attention of possible investors during administrative process periods or during the construction of their proposal. For months, and sometimes for years, plots are occupied by stands and business tents or shelter cultural events, neighborhood parties, sports fields, community gardens, educational workshops—among these uses, street markets are common and are clearly aimed at neobohemian customers. In other cases, a meanwhile use has social goals. In 2012, the muf

FIGURE 5.4   London: Mercato Metropolitano of Elephant & Castle, a meanwhile
use of a site where 600–700 new homes will eventually be built.

architecture/art studio transformed a 35,000-square-meter Croydon (London)
plot, where hundreds of housing units and offices were to be built, into two
cricket fields. For several years they were used by a community of Afghan ref-
ugees who were waiting for their asylum-seeking applications to be resolved
in the neighboring office of the UK Border Agency. Lisa Fior, one of the
members of muf architecture/art, explained the importance of this kind of use:
"three or five years is a short time in the life of a city, but quite a long time in
the life of a child—or an asylum-seeker, for that matter. Better a cricket pitch,
then, than an empty lot" (cited in Tonkiss, 2013, p. 320).

As for the other type of temporary use, the term "pop-up urbanism" was
popularized by Jeroen Beekmans and Joop De Boer (2014). In their blog pop-
upcity.net they pointed out that ephemeral activities have spread throughout
numerous sectors of the contemporary economy: culture, gardening, the food
industry, sports, commerce, leisure, art, production, etc. Temporary urban-
ism seems to have transcended the orbit of the circumstantial (meanwhile)
to respond to new social habits. Well-known brands such as Adidas, Lacoste,
Uniqlo, and DKNY use it for commercial purposes. As Zoe Williams admit-
ted: "It's instant, it's temporary, but most of all, it doesn't need a huge amount
of cash to set it up, so the door opens to people who are outside the wealthy
elite, younger, cooler, more subversive and less conventional" (cited in Bishop
and Williams, 2012, p. 69). Indeed, the millennial generation finds it cool to

patronize these "pop-up shops",[3] which are open for a few weeks or months and sometimes located in exciting places (vacant lots, ruined buildings). Their existence becomes viral in social networks, a phenomenon that has not gone unnoticed by large franchises.

Sometimes pop-up and meanwhile uses overlap. London boasts the first pop-up shopping center in the world, Boxpark. It was built in Shoreditch in 2011 as a meanwhile use on a plot that had been vacant for 40 years. It has 60 pop-up shops inside containers lined up to create commercial streets. The containers are rented to young designers for a year, and the tenants are responsible for remodeling them. Thus, Boxpark has become the representative of a kind of "meta-temporary-urbanism", accommodating ephemeral activities in a provisional space.

The popularity of temporariness has also encouraged the public administration to make a top-down use of temporary urbanism, in this case in order to revitalize cities. A common strategy is to colonize public space with pop-up activities. Bookstores, art galleries, swimming pools, and even public facilities move around neighborhoods in trucks, vans, and carts drawn by bicycles, or are placed inside containers that are carried from one place to another. The food truck boom has been especially remarkable. As urbanist William H. Whyte

FIGURE 5.5 London: Boxpark.

Image by Clyde Darra, available under a CC BY-SA 2.0 license.

FIGURE 5.6   London: food trucks in a Brick Lane parking lot.

(1980) used to say, street food is a magnet for urban activities. Stands, chairs, tables, and planters are set up around food vans, and the atmosphere of a place changes drastically. Councils usually grant licenses to concentrate these food trucks in underused parking lots or in vacant plots to turn them into lively meeting points.

The implementation of pop-up uses sometimes requires a stark transformation of the public space. Tubular structures, planters on wheels, roll-up pavements, movable fountains, and bleachers that can be taken apart enable turning a public space into a surprising setting for a short period of time. One of the best-known examples of this are the Paris Plages. With their parasols, lounge chairs, palm trees, ice cream trucks, drinks-and-snacks kiosks, etc., they turn several kilometres of the banks of the Seine into sand-covered surfaces for a month in the summer. The beaches of the Seine, a pilot experience that was first tested in 2002, currently attract millions of people.

Finally, councils have also resorted to pop-up uses to reactivate declining commercial areas, where vacant, hard-to-rent business premises are plentiful. The PopUp Hood program managed to regenerate three blocks of downtown Oakland by offering suchlike spaces to young entrepreneurs who had innovating proposals but lacked the resources to rent those places. The proprietors agreed not to charge rent for several months in exchange for the future reimbursement of this income once the business was up and running. In that sense,

FIGURE 5.7 Paris: Paris Plages.

Image by Vania Wolf, available under a CC BY-SA 2.0 license.

PopUp Hood, which has since become a civic economy company, operated as a kind of business incubator that checked out the viability of commercial initiatives.

Tactical Urbanism

The end of the commitment of bottom-up urbanisms to critical theory was seen in May 2009, coinciding with the unfolding of the Great Recession. Janette Sadik-Khan, the commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation at the time, dared to close off Times Square to traffic, providing the pedestrianized public space thus created with a series of unassuming planters. Unexpectedly, the new square filled with crowds, so much so that the city council was forced to improvise and buy hundreds of garden lounge chairs so that people could sit. This unique form of street furniture, which was set up by a public administration instead of a group of activists, surprised everyone and unleashed rivers of ink in the international press.

The intervention in Times Square is considered the point of departure of tactical urbanism, a perfectly structured movement that has very favorable connections with institutionalized power, and that has been capable of articulating the fragmented interests, practices, and theories of bottom-up urbanisms—although it is also true that it threatens to put a definite end to their character. Independent from the political discourse of critical urbanism, tactical urbanism

aspires to transcend its endemic temporality while considering the administration as the preferred partner in its actions.

Tactical urbanism is an offshoot of New Urbanism, and it adopts its principles as gathered in the *Charter for the New Urbanism* (CNU, 1996).[4] It was founded by the group Next Generation of New Urbanists, more specifically by Mike Lydon and Anthony García, the directors of The Street Plan Collaborative studio, in 2010. The movement chose its name in reference to the differentiation that Michel de Certeau (1984) made between the "strategic", a plan for a specific zone designed by the administration, and the "tactical", an unofficial intervention that infiltrates anywhere. Oli Mould explained it as follows: "So, like a computer virus slowly infecting a hard drive, or a tumbu fly larvae burrowing into its human host, a tactic infiltrates the totality, subverting it from within, while never claiming a functional or identifiable space" (Mould, 2014, p. 533).

In the second volume of *Tactical Urbanism* (2012), The Street Plans Collaborative compiled 24 intervention tactics for public space that the movement took under its wing (Lydon et al., 2012). For the most part they were actions undertaken by different bottom-up urbanisms during the course of previous years. From DIY urbanism they gathered cases from City Repair, Rebar, and Depave, and from temporary urbanism, they took pop-up shops, meanwhile uses, moveable shops, and food trucks. A full-page image of the intervention in Times Square introduced others that, following in its steps, took place in the subsequent years. Such was the case of Build a Better Block, a project that was begun in 2010 by Go Oak Cliff, a group of residents from that Dallas neighborhood. It involved furnishing the desolated surroundings of a block with planters, benches, and parasols, all of which were recycled or donated. At a minimal cost, sidewalks that had been previously empty became lively spaces where people could meet and stay. In 2011, DoTank group took a similar approach in Brooklyn. Sidewalks and squares in the neighborhood were filled with chairs made from recycled pallets. This intervention, which became known as "chairbombing", brought to light the concept of "tactical bombardment", which DoTank repeated by attaching handmade bicycle racks to the streetlights of Williamsburg (New York).

However, a clear difference in purpose separates tactical urbanism from bottom-up urbanisms: the desire to transcend temporality. In Mike Lydon's words:

> It's so important people understand that the best projects are those that are tied to the feasibility of doing something in the long term. If you're not tying the one day project to the long-term investment then it's not tactical. It's not achieving a larger outcome.
>
> *(Steuteville, 2017)*

The slogan of tactical urbanism is "short-term action for long-term change", making it clear that the final intention of their temporary actions is to test the

efficiency of an idea before its definite implementation, thus avoiding unnecessary expenses and without wasting time.[5] Therefore temporality, one of the main features of bottom-up urbanisms, is questioned.

This is also the case regarding the rejection of institutions and professionalism—it is important to recall that the intervention in Times Square was promoted by New York's municipality. Lydon and García have expressed their admiration for the urban activism of the 1960s and 1970s, and for the everyday urbanism of Brazilian *favelas*, but they have clearly pointed out a key aspect that differentiates their proposals from these precedents: they are determined to have a plan. In this way, even though they claim that the actions of tactical urbanism can be undertaken by a variety of agents, including nonprofit organizations, urban communities, or simply groups of annoyed neighbors, for them the public administrations are the main agent. Anthony García admitted:

> I think [it is] starting to infiltrate the public works departments. That's where we want to take our tactical urbanism fight. I think that having city staff buy into this idea is critically important, just like having city planning staff buy into New Urbanism was critically important to that rise and that change over the past 20 years.
>
> *(Steuteville, 2017)*

With this second swing of the pendulum, from spontaneity to planning, tactical urbanism intends to build an interesting bridge between bottom-up urbanisms and institutional urbanism, the framework within which it hopes to function. To achieve this, it has been necessary to codify the non-regulated tactics that inspired bottom-up urbanisms. That is the reason behind the publication of the *Tactical Urbanist's Guide to Materials and Design*, a handbook of design processes, materials, and criteria. It includes a "toolbox" (chalk, utility knife, paint roller, shovel, tape measure, pressure washer, power drill, utility vehicle) and a material palette (barrier elements, surface treatments, street furniture, landscaping elements, and signs). It also includes a set of instructions showing how to use them in pedestrian crossings, bikeways, interactions, and other public spaces (The Street Plans Collaborative, 2016). The great number of objects used to control traffic is particularly striking: cement bollards, yellow cones, asphalt paint, the New Jersey barrier, or the Berlin speed cushion. Tactical urbanism shows its thirst for planning by adopting artifacts taken from the highly codified handbooks published by the transportation departments. Each administration is supposed to assign different pieces and colors to the different tactics: blue cones could mark the bus lane; yellow ones could widen the sidewalk; New Jersey barriers could separate terraces; cement bollards could create areas for people to rest, etc.

Tactical urbanism's adhesion to permanence and to the reconciliation with official planning has generated a great many returns for bottom-up urbanisms.

FIGURE 5.8   Barcelona: use of the New Jersey barrier to restructure parking spaces for leisure activities.

Many of its practices, which initially were illegal or a-legal, have been institutionalized and some of those who promoted them collaborate as municipal advisors. For example, City Repair is currently a partner of Portland's Bureau of Transportation. The activists of Go Oak Cliff are consultants for Fort Worth city council. Depave receives financing from the US Environmental Protection

FIGURE 5.9   Philadelphia: rain garden at Eadom Street (parking lot depaved by the Philadelphia Water Department).

Image by Louis Cook for Philadelphia Water Department, available under a CC BY 2.0 license.

Agency. Rebar's intervention in a San Francisco parking place has turned into Park(ing) Day, a yearly event in which over 100 cities take part. Paradoxically, in 2013 Bowery Houston Farm and Garden was included in the National Register of Historic Places of the United States.

Nevertheless, tactical urbanism has paid a price for these achievements. According to Mould, it is increasingly more "urbanism" and less "tactical":

> the urban neoliberal development discourse co-opts the reactionary and tactical (in the De Certeauian sense) moments of creativity, creating a Lefebvrian urbanism that can be replicated across space. What must be stressed at this point though is that due to its relative novelty, tactical urbanism as "urbanism" is still in a process of becoming urbanism.
>
> *(Mould, 2014, p. 537)*

In this way, tactical urbanism has sealed the process that has brought bottom-up urbanisms and institutional urbanism closer over the course of the last two decades. That process started with the acceptance of top-down mechanisms by temporary urbanism, and it continued with the relinquishing of the ephemeral condition and with the open collaboration with the public

administration by tactical urbanism. Thus, bottom-up urbanisms have taken a U-turn from critical theory to neoliberal ideas. This course is not unlike the one studied in the previous chapter when dealing with the resilient vision of the city: both were born at the margins of the system but are finding their place at the very center of it.

The Conciliation of Bottom-Up and Top-Down Approaches in Institutional Urbanism: Placemaking

This section examines the possible conciliation between bottom-up and institutional urbanisms, which has already been put into practice by tactical urbanism. First, the use of bottom-up urbanisms made by neoliberal politics is analyzed. Next, the focus is set on the main contributions that bottom-up urbanisms have made. Finally, the masterplan of King's Cross in London is approached, which can be considered as a reference in this respect.

Developers discovered bottom-up urbanisms during the Great Recession. Business bankruptcies left countless commercial premises vacant, while the halting of building projects placed hundreds of developments on stand-by. With the real estate market in a comatose state, landlords and proprietors saw in meanwhile uses a survival means that enabled carrying out some of the transient activities that neighbors demanded. At the same time, they prevented physical decay, vandalism, and even squatting. Councils went through the same process. After their budgets were devastated by austerity policies, they found in the micro-interventions of bottom-up urbanisms a low-cost means of responding to pressing citizen demands, albeit provisionally. In 2013, at the height of the budget cuts, Frank Tonkiss detected four kinds of "austerity urbanism". A group of cities, the strictest ones, left little room, or no room at all, for bottom-up practices, which they kept a tight rein on by means of fines and police control. Another group did not overtly promote such practices although they did not repress them either—they tolerated temporary activities and buildings in certain spaces and under certain circumstances. A third group decided to pass laws that authorized the interventions and even facilitated them. Finally, a small number of cities went as far as to leave urban regeneration in the hands of citizens, usually because they were immersed in deep financial crises (Tonkiss, 2013, p. 314).[6]

As pointed out in Chapter 4, the austerity policies which came into effect after the 2008 crisis were not actually temporary but intended to be preserved in a post-crisis scenario. The same can be said about the interest of developers and governments in bottom-up urbanisms, which has been prolonged beyond the financial crisis. There are several reasons for this. On one hand, meanwhile uses have proven their efficacy with regards to the adaptation of cities to the fluctuations of the real estate market. On the other hand, community self-organization continues to replace some of the management deficits generated

by the withdrawal of the state from the public realm. Lastly, the social goals of bottom–up actions mitigate the shortage of facilities due to privatizations and budget cuts, albeit in a precarious form.[7] In short, once again, neoliberalism has found an unexpected ally within the orbit of the resilient vision of the city.

This fact has turned the reconciliation of bottom-up and institutional urbanisms into an obligation rather than an option. It is obvious that bottom-up urbanisms will never replace institutional urbanism. The processes by which contemporary cities are transformed are extremely complex, and a huge number of factors and interests that bottom-up urbanisms cannot deal with converge in them. However, in the context of economic and social insecurity of the last decade, the latter's flexible practices have shed some light on the deficiencies of orthodox, bureaucratic, and rigid institutional urbanism, which no doubt would benefit from subjecting itself to a profound reformulation. The most relevant of those deficiencies is its lack of resilience, its difficulty to adapt to change. This is especially grave in the face of the kind of dynamics that society has been undergoing since the 1970s, a period marked by a series of crises of every nature. In this context, the need for reinvention is a must, and an appropriate point of departure would be the four most significant contributions that bottom-up urbanisms have made: new tactics, new times, new places, and new processes.

The new tactics fall within the framework of the establishing of specific, short-term, local objectives. This stands in contrast with the aims of the long-term strategic plans of institutional urbanism, which go beyond the scale of the city and are as ambitious as they are generic. The six goals stated by the 2016 London Plan are a good example:

> 1 A city that meets the challenges of economic and population growth, 2 An internationally competitive and successful city, 3 A city of diverse, strong, secure and accessible neighborhoods, 4 A city that delights the senses, 5 A city that becomes a world leader in improving the environment, 6 A city where it is easy, safe and convenient for everyone to access jobs, opportunities and facilities.
>
> *(Mayor of London-London Assembly, 2016)*

To move towards such vague but also such basic results, institutional urbanism, accustomed as it is to scientific dogmas and to the technical inclinations of modernity, relies on complex and costly macro-projects and infrastructures.[8] By contrast, bottom-up urbanisms base their tactics on simple, inexpensive micro-interventions that infiltrate the urban fabric. Certainly, as Lydon and García claim, for institutional urbanism to undertake those kinds of projects, legally recognized urban planning tools are required. Due to institutional urbanism's adherence to the culture of masterplans[9]—based on the use of instruments that are extremely prescriptive, contemplate long-term actions, and do not comply

with tactical logic—this task is not easily accomplished. This recalls the resilient vision's denunciation of the tendency to overregulate, which the sustainable urban model has spread for the last 30 years. The result of such excesses has been an over-planned and over-controlled city where it is impossible to improvise, where citizen participation is inhibited, and where it is difficult to adapt to the effects of climate change.

The second contribution of bottom-up urbanisms has been the discovery of transience, another relevant aspect of the resilience paradigm that permits a more ready response to the unforeseen. Institutional urbanism ought to contemplate this new temporariness regarding several issues. On one hand, it should consider if, in the face of cyclic crises and climate change, it is still possible to design the city for the long-term. Mitchell and Tang understood that, under such circumstances: "Prediction should be considered to be akin to a weather forecast, which is based on current temperatures, wind speed and direction, but with a limited certainty of a precise outcome at a particular place and time" (Mitchell and Tang, 2018, location 494).

In the face of such uncertainty, it would be sensible for institutional urban planning to focus on the short term or, at least, for masterplans to be divided into phases that can be revised, which would permit their adaptation through a feedback process.

On the other hand, institutional urbanism should create a legal framework for temporary land uses. Many urban planning systems do not recognize them, and that generates a kind of uncertainty with regards to the future, discouraging both citizens and entrepreneurs when it comes to investing time and money in the places where they come into effect. The problem is that the acceptance of temporary activities questions another of the main instruments of institutional urbanism, zoning. With respect to this, the challenge would be to overcome the strict functionalism of the Modern Movement and to define a "flexible zoning" where uses are undefined or can be changed without the need to undertake long administrative processes. The generalized implementation of urban agriculture in Berlin would not have been possible without the approval of a management model called "*Zwischennutzung*" ("intermediate use") in 2005. It legalized citizen initiatives such as the Prinzessinengärten, which are not defined from the temporary viewpoint.[10] Urban planning could go even further, delimiting "zones of tolerance" where the coexistence of formal activities and informal or spontaneous ones are allowed. That would favor the intensification of the urban space, which could complement its assigned uses with others that are compatible with them. Such a strategy was studied regarding neobohemian third places, and is the place of Latino urbanism and everyday urbanism: sidewalks that are used as an extension of businesses, sports fields that become leisure activity venues, parking lots that turn into street markets, etc.

One other contribution of bottom-up urbanisms has been the discovery of new places: obsolete facilities, abandoned plots, ruined buildings, parking

FIGURE 5.10   London: expansion of business premises on sidewalks.

venues, dumps, and so on. This falls within the issue of growth, one of the hot buttons of the confrontation between the sustainable urban model and the resilient vision. Due to its rejection of growth, the resilient vision requires such sites to give a response to functional demands. Bottom-up urbanisms have shown that unlikely areas can often accommodate activities that would hardly find room in the speculative contemporary real estate market. An example of

FIGURE 5.11   London: use of the space under an overpass as a food court.

this are the spaces under highway overpasses, which cities like Vancouver and Melbourne have turned into skate parks, or in places like Bandung have been equipped with playgrounds and outdoor movie theaters. As for obsolete buildings, the Amsterdam municipality has figured out how to take advantage of them by implementing its "breeding ground" policy, which gives artists and creative professionals the opportunity to use abandoned facilities as workspaces.

The fourth, and probably the most relevant, contribution of bottom-up urbanisms has been new processes or, more specifically, the prioritizing of process over result. The innovative character of a great deal of bottom-up interventions has lain in the way in which they were conceived, agreed upon, and carried out. The fact that all this resulted in mediocre aesthetics or in precarious functionality was secondary. As seen in Chapters 1 and 2, a similar sort of spirit guided eco-aesthetics, permaculture, and resilient urban design. As the latter showed, for institutional urbanism to set the focus on process rather than on result would mean a change in paradigm. It would force professionals to design, instead of spaces, sequences of actions in which a great many agents would become involved. Bishop and Williams called it "*four-dimensional* urbanism", since the dimension of time had to be added to the three spatial ones (Bishop and Williams, 2012, p. 182).

Over the last few years, the design of participative processes has resulted in a technique, placemaking, which is considered by many as the key to bridging

top-down and bottom-up urbanisms (Brain, 2019, location 163). Project for Public Spaces, an organization that leads the promoting of placemaking world-wide, defines it as the action of urging the connection between people and the places where they live—in other words, the sense of place. They entrust this to the creation of public spaces intended to become referential centers for the community (Project for Public Spaces, 2015). To achieve this, "engage-ment" is a must. It is one of the fetish words of placemaking, and it refers to the involvement of residents in the design and the construction of the physical agents, therefore making them co-responsible for the results and encouraging them to take maintenance into their own hands. In exchange, they are amply rewarded with a sense of belonging, community interaction, and identity reaf-firmation. As the founder of Project for Public Spaces, Fred Kent, pointed out, the bonding of places and residents is not linear but cyclical and they mutually influence each other. He called it a "virtuous cycle": a community transforms its environment while such an environment also transforms its members (Kent, 2013, p. 11).

To get this cycle going, placemaking gives priority to process. Silberg and colleagues stated that: "the most successful placemaking initiatives tran-scend the 'place' to forefront the 'making' … In placemaking, the important transformation happens in the minds of the participants, not simply in the space itself" (Silberg et al., 2013, p. 3). As a matter of fact, for Silberg and col-leagues the reiterative collaborative actions that are carried out during a place-making process nurture a community's leadership capacity, thus enabling its empowerment to exert the right to make the city. "Empowerment" is another fetish word of placemaking. It means that bottom-up processes are not just tokenism, but that they actually lead to "citizen power" on Arnstein's scale. As Peter and Jane Ellery said:

> In this role, the community makes decisions during the planning and design process that best meets their needs and uses professional design personnel and services in a consultative role. This level of participation is a 'community driven' placemaking strategy and provides the host com-munity with complete control of the planning process outcomes.
>
> *(Ellery and Ellery, 2019, p. 245)*

Peter and Jane Ellery distinguished three phases in placemaking processes: inspiration, ideation, and implementation (Ellery and Ellery, 2019, p. 242). In order to complete the process, two other stages should be added, one at the very beginning and another at the end: preparation and maintenance. Each has its own objectives as well as its own specific techniques and instruments.

During the preparation phase, the first matter to decide is who starts the pro-cess. Traditionally, in institutional urbanism such a task would correspond to the administration. Nonetheless, under current socioeconomic circumstances,

and because of the administration's withdrawal from the public sphere, three new agents spearhead these initiatives: private developers and entrepreneurs, the neighbors themselves, and the third sector. The second matter to clarify is whether there should be either a person or an organization leading the process. The most orthodox theoreticians of citizen participation are against this, defending that the presence of a leader denaturalizes the horizontal essence of bottom-up processes. This is not easy to assume by institutional urbanism because it would mean the administration relinquishing the power to set goals, to ensuring the compliance with protocols, to apply regulations, and so on. Leadership, therefore, is necessary. The matter is if certain, previously selected, community members should exert it or if the leaders should come from outside the community. This depends on the urban planning tool applicable. In neighborhood plans, members of the community take on the role by means of the neighborhood forums, while in masterplans leadership is entrusted to urban planners or professional intermediaries, so-called "placemakers". Lastly, the third issue to deal with during the preparation stage is funding. A placemaking process is usually a costly one, including expenses for hiring staff, organizing events, acquiring material, and marketing. In a context of economic austerity crowdfunding is often the only way of securing funds.[11] This practice, however, tends to exclude certain communities, those who are less socially aware or have fewer resources.

During the inspiration phase, placemaking leaders begin to interact with the community in order to generate expectations as well as to gather information about its needs and preferences. Such a dialogue, in which both neighbors and professionals participate, often occurs during walking tours around the area where the intervention is intended to take place. On those tours, available physical resources (cultural spaces, urban commons, vacant business premises, etc.) as well as social resources (neighbor communities, interest groups, artists, activists, etc.) are identified—the data thus collected is reflected on a map. At this stage, it is essential for the team leading the process to empathize with the neighbors—this is even more important when the leaders are urban planning professionals, whose technicalities can turn into barriers that must be overcome. Obtaining the community's trust is a *sine qua non* condition to engage its members. Such engagement does not only consist in involving, that is, in having people vote or attend informative meetings. Also necessary is an active form of commitment to the collective actions undertaken by the placemaking leaders. To achieve this, events such as community luncheons, children's games, sports competitions, are organized, and temporary uses like street markets, pop-up shops, food trucks, and so on are displayed. Cultural activities such as concerts, performances, movie-viewing sessions, and theater are especially effective. Graffitiing walls can do more for neighborhood engagement than dozens of talks about neighborhood awareness.

The main mission of the ideation phase is the definition of whichever urban planning tool applicable—neighborhood plan or masterplan. To achieve community empowerment it is necessary for the community to co-produce the proposal. That means that it must become involved in the design stage and not only in consultation. It can be a community-led design, in which neighbors create the design autonomously, or a participative design, in which urban planners and neighbors co-design as a team. One of the techniques that New Urbanism uses to facilitate co-design is by organizing a *charrette*, a kind of workshop that takes place for several days and in which community representatives, a team of multidisciplinary experts, and a group of moderators participate. Although its structure can change, participants usually divide into subgroups and develop specific parts of the proposal, which later are put forward to be agreed on with the rest. After the projects are defined, there is a variety of tools that are used to consult the designs with the neighbors: workshops, talks, informal discussions, etc.[12] The final agreed-upon design is publicized by means of fliers, pamphlets, exhibits, newsletters, and web pages, or in stands at fairs and events.

The implementation phase responds to the postulates of tactical urbanism and consists of the physical making of a model of the proposal on site for a limited period of time, which makes it possible to check its adequacy. After that, a last revision of the project is undertaken, and then it is carried out. Finally, the maintenance stage aims at consolidating the social capital that has been obtained during the placemaking process throughout time. To achieve this, it is essential that, as in the cases of Gillett Square and Dalston Eastern Curve Garden, resulting urban spaces be managed by the community and a yearly programming of events for them be defined.

Finally, it is important to underscore that the sequence of the preparation, inspiration, ideation, implementation, and maintenance phases requires many aspects: taking the initiatives, studying the context, defining objectives, selecting the actors, finding alliances, securing funds, finding legal ways, carrying out, and managing. Furthermore, all of this must be agreed upon one step at a time by countless agents who have different educational backgrounds and interests. That explains why placemaking requires extended periods of time, as does resilient urban design. There is no room here for the instantaneity that bottom-up urbanisms preach. Instead, this is the moment for the kind of slowness that the Slow movement calls for.

This section concludes with the study of an example of conciliation of the bottom-up and top-down approaches in institutional urbanism: the masterplan for King's Cross, the process of which was described by Bishop and Williams (2016).[13] It was one of the United Kingdom's longest and most complex recent urban interventions—it took six years and over 30,000 people were consulted. It was a typical infill operation in which 27 hectares of obsolete land located north of the King's Cross railway station were developed. This land is in the very center of London and it was occupied by abandoned railroad tracks and industrial buildings. The administration responsible for the area was Camden

TABLE 5.1 Phases of the placemaking process

Phase	Objectives	Techniques/Options
Preparation	Starting the process	Administration Private developer Third sector Neighbors
	Deciding on process leadership	Without a leader Led by community members Led by external agents (developer or placemakers)
	Securing funding	Public administration Private developer Community crowdfunding
Inspiration	Gathering information about physical and human resources	Walking tours Surveys
	Creating expectations and empathizing with the neighbors to get their engagement	Events (especially cultural ones) Temporary uses
Ideation	Empowering the community	Community-led design Participative design (co-design)
	Co-defining the project (in participative design)	Design phase: workshops (*charrettes*) Consulting phase: debates and surveys Publicity phase: pamphlets, stands, etc.
Implementation	Building the proposal	Short-term: provisional model Long-term: definitive construction
Maintenance	Maintaining the acquired social capital	Communal management of the space Event programming

Council, while Argent was the developer. The architecture studios Allies & Morrison and Porphyrios Associates wrote up the masterplan. Therefore, the design was not entrusted to the community but to prestigious professionals hired by the developer. It could not have been otherwise, given the magnitude of the political and economic interests at play.

The preparation phase was typically top-down. Argent and Camden Council agreed on key issues such as transport systems, environmental measures, public space management, land uses, and the percentage of affordable housing units. During the next stage, inspiration, the map-making of the physical and social resources that existed within a one-kilometer radius surrounding the intervention area was carried out. After that came the ideation phase, which consisted mostly of consulting the neighbors since, as mentioned, the proposal was designed by two architecture studios. Initially, these practices

worked on drafts that were disseminated around the community through pamphlets and in stands that were set up for that purpose. Once the neighbors were informed, over 200 meetings (mostly workshops) were organized to gather their opinions—4,000 people and 100 community groups participated. The second stage of the consultation period, which already addressed specific proposals, lasted 16 weeks and it was organized by means of exhibits, workshops, talks, and surveys. Participants in these activities included local authorities, residents, religious and cultural groups, as well as preservationists and shared-interest associations. The neighbors' comments, which were expressed in a form that all of them received, were used to check the draft of the masterplan, which was subjected to consultation once again.

The implementation phase of placemaking, corresponding to construction, was commissioned to a specialized company. The developers' main purpose was to awaken the interest of possible investors. Three instruments were used: artistic actions, events, and community acts. The curators of the cultural program planned a series of temporary interventions, like the setting up of a huge bird cage with a swing, the wrapping of several Victorian buildings with aluminum sheets, or the installing of a 40-meter-long pool. Regarding the events, most took place in Granary Square, the main public space contemplated in the masterplan and the object of one of the first phases of the intervention. Movie viewings, sports activities, music shows, and poetry recitals took place there. The square also accommodated temporary uses, like yard sales and street-food kiosks. As for the acts engaging the community, their aim was to keep the neighbors involved in the project. They included two weekly guided tours through the building site, the setting-up of a pop-up café on the plot, and the creation of Skip Garden, a movable community garden that changed places as construction advanced.

The King's Cross intervention is a good example of the way in which top-down and bottom-up approaches can converge in institutional urbanism. It was not a micro-intervention in a neobohemian neighborhood, but a large-scale operation where powerful economic and political interests were in play. This precedent shows the uphill battle that this convergence faces. The process took off with a series of key decisions that were taken by the developers and Camden Council, and were carried out following a top-down approach. On the other hand, professionalism prevailed over amateurism. The neighbors' participation in the design of the masterplan was limited to consultation, which left the plan in the hands of architects, urban planners, and engineers. Placemaking, which was entrusted to specialized companies, followed the same line. Furthermore, in this case the commercial interests of the developers were as important, or even more so, than the wish to generate sense of place. In short, the King's Cross experience was a lesson in realism. It demonstrated that the tactics of bottom-up urbanisms cannot be transferred to institutional urbanism literally, and that it is necessary to make sacrifices and lower expectations.

FIGURE 5.12 London: Skip Garden in King's Cross.

Dalston: The *Making Space in Dalston* Proposal as "Tactical Masterplanning"

This final section is dedicated to the proposal *Making Space in Dalston*, which stands as a second example of the merging between top-down and bottom-up approaches in institutional urbanism. It first deals with the matter of the

aesthetic of bottom-up urbanisms, which has been one of the reasons why these have been accused of elitism and promotion of gentrification. This allegation is challenged by the Dalston experience. After analyzing the facts and circumstances that preceded the writing up of *Making Space in Dalston*, the methodology and the placemaking process are studied. Finally, a set of conclusions are drawn about the role that the agents involved in the plan had.

In the previous section, the four main contributions of bottom-up urbanism that institutional urbanism should consider in order to move toward the resilient vision were described. A fifth contribution, a new aesthetic, should also be added. As a matter of fact, one of the unifying elements of bottom-up urbanisms is a rather specific sort of aesthetic that is mainly defined by two components: the materials and the artifacts used. The materials are always modest, often being plywood, synthetic canvas, artificial grass, sand, sawdust, and all kinds of paint—acrylic, reflective, etc. All are available and easily applied or assembled, usually by hand. As for the artifacts involved, they are usually recycled or donated, and rather than building fixed elements in place, bottom-up aesthetics chooses to distribute these objects around the urban space. These artifacts can be the abovementioned traffic-related ones, such as bollards, solid barriers, curbings, etc., to which folding tables, water tanks, packing boxes, straw bales, planters, parasol, barrels, or tires are added, along with the two main fixtures

FIGURE 5.13   Barcelona: tactical urbanism intervention.

FIGURE 5.14   London: "favela chic" in Nomadic Community Garden.

of bottom-up aesthetics, pallets and containers. All these elements, everyday and familiar, light and moveable, accessible and inexpensive, are totally eco-aesthetic, they could have come from a neobohemian third place.

The undeniable attunement of bottom-up aesthetic with the likes of eco-lifestyle followers is one of the reasons why critical theory has cast a shadow of doubt, that of social elitism, over the former. Certainly, as seen in previous sections, as time went by, bottom-up urbanisms entered a process of superficiality that has blurred their initial ideological commitment. Currently, they are better known for their fun, fresh, open, provoking, and irreverent aesthetic—which makes them so popular among young architects, than for subscribing Levebvre's vindication of the right to the city. This change has not been to the taste of the leaders of the first generation of bottom-up planners, who were educated in the precepts of critical urbanism. Bruce Sterling called that unique form of aesthetic "favela chic", referring to the celebration of informality, amateurism, the ephemeral, DIY, self-building, etc. (cited in Deslandes, 2013, p. 216). The message is devastating: bottom-up urbanisms have turned misery and precariousness into a fashion for preppies that lacks both substance and consideration. Thus, one of the dangers that Pier V. Aureli sensed in the ethics of scarcity, the glamorization of poverty, is materialized (Aureli, 2013, location 298).

This public condemnation by critical theory has been supported by research. In a study carried out in the United States, Gordon C. G. Douglas revealed that the setting for most of the actions of bottom-up urbanisms are areas socially and culturally similar to cool neighborhoods (Douglas, 2014, p. 18). Lydon himself admitted that one of the trends that encourages tactical urbanism is the demographic change that has produced the boom of this kind of area: "This has occurred while more and more people—especially the young and well educated—have continued to move into once forlorn walkable neighborhoods" (Lydon et al., 2012, p. 3). Indeed, bottom-up urbanisms have offered neobo-hemians a mixture of eco-aesthetic and insurgent rhetoric that is irresistibly cool, even if their acts of "transgression" are nowadays limited to minor and usually tolerated wrongdoings, such as painting on the pavement or setting up furniture in the public space. And the aforementioned attunement is not only aesthetic. Unlike what occurs in other parts of the city, the residents of cool neighborhoods are well aware of the importance of citizen engagement, they can fund placemaking processes through crowdfunding campaigns, have the necessary technical and legal information to undertake them, and are willing to dedicate the long hours of voluntary work that they require. Anthony García expressed it in the following way:

> Those communities tend to be a little more educated, higher income possibly. One of the challenges with this idea is that volunteers need free time to make these projects happen. So, there's an unspoken prerequisite that you need to have the capacity of an engaged community.
>
> *(Steuteville, 2017)*

Indeed, placemaking has not found a fertile ground in underprivileged neigh-borhoods, where mistrust towards these citizen participation practices often prevails among residents.

The spreading of bottom-up urbanisms in cool neighbourhoods has made crit-ical theory denounce that they are being subsumed by neoliberal strategies geared towards the exploitation of the city, one of which is the entrusting of urban regen-eration to gentrification. However, this diagnosis is unfair or, at the very least, biased. On countless occasions bottom-up urbanisms have created egalitarian public spaces that foster the communal spirit and are definitely more democratic than those promoted by institutional urbanism through top-down processes.

Dalston's experience proves that. This neighborhood was gentrified within the framework of institutional urbanism.[14] As seen in Chapter 2, the 2004 London Plan initiated the process after designating Dalston an area of preferential regeneration. The task was entrusted to the "area action plan" approved that same year. Thus, a typical top-down process began. In 2005, the Dalston Square operation was announced, which was defined by the Dalston Junction and Dalston Lane South masterplans. Without previous consultation

with the neighbors, developers determined the aforementioned exorbitant building heights and densities, which they justified as needed to fund the new railway station. They also reduced the percentage of affordable housing to a scant 13, well under the 50 percent that the London Plan contemplated.

Both masterplans were submitted for public consultation in exhibits that lasted only three days and were attended by fewer than 200 people. In addition, Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock remarked on the extent to which the consultation was deficient:

> with attendees asked to state the level at which they agreed or disagreed with statements such as: "Dalston will benefit from the East London Line", "Dalston needs more shops and homes", "Dalston will benefit from regeneration" … This was clearly a rather manipulative discourse, and responses were unsurprisingly positive.
>
> *(Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock, 2012, p. 54)*

The consultation was sheer tokenism. As a matter of fact, it would have been nearly impossible to revise the masterplans if the neighbors had expressed any disagreement, because Transport for London had committed itself to inaugurating the station in 2010, which forced construction to begin immediately. The London Development Agency approved the masterplans in 2006, pushing Dalston up to the third step of the gentrification process. That explains why Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock deemed the Dalston Square operation to be an: "aggressive form of state-led gentrification" (Davison, Dovey, and Woodcock, 2012, p. 65).

Bottom-up urbanisms entered the scene as a reaction to all of this. This occurred in 2007, when infuriated by the recent demolition of Dalton Theatre and the belittlement that they had endured in the Dalton Square operation, neighbors found out that a new masterplan which intended to bulldoze several buildings on Ashwin Street was in the works. In this instance, the administration decided to take a more transparent approach. Design for London, an agency belonging to the Greater London Authority, convened a series of informative meetings. Two women who were involved in the Dalston Square works came together in those meetings. One was Johanna Gibbons from the J&L Gibbons LLP studio, who drew up the design of the central square, while the other was Liza Fior from muf architecture/art, the author of the project for the public library located in the square. In those meetings they met other agents that would be key to reframing what was by then the poisoned debate around Dalston's future: the OPEN Dalton group, the managers of the Arcola Theatre, the director of Hackney Cooperative Developments, among others. On the shoulders of the three-part structure formed by Design for London—representing the administration, J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art—as the technical team, and a series of neighborhood groups, the proposal *Making Space in Daltson* came into being.
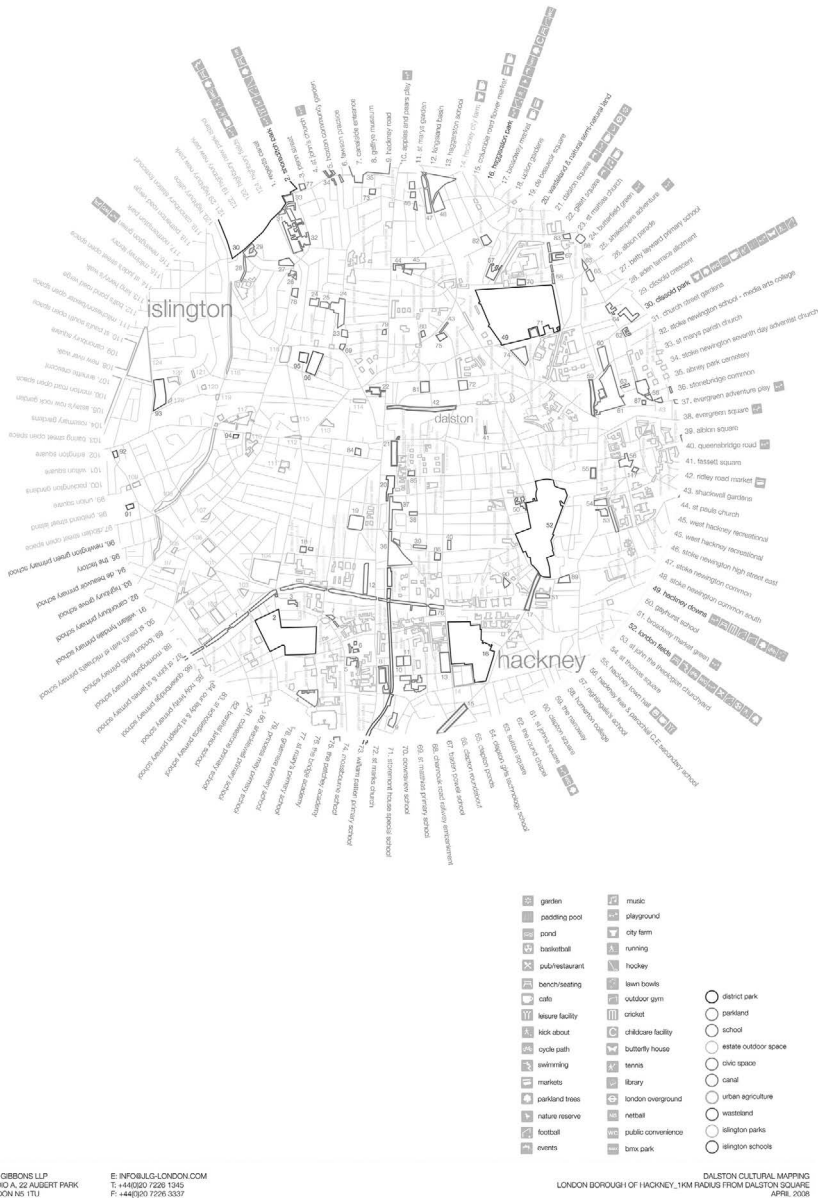
FIGURE 5.15 *Making Space in Dalston*: Dalston Cultural Mapping.

© Making Space in Dalston J & L Gibbons and muf architecture/art.

The proposal's first step involved scanning the area, a task carried out by J&L Gibbons, muf architecture/art, and a group of neighbors on a meager £5,000 budget. The objective was to transfer onto a Cultural Map the many artistic and cultural spaces existing in Dalston (J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art, 2009, p. 13). The scanning included other spaces that were viewed as areas of opportunity, like plots, vacant business premises, schools, and so on. The publication of the map and its exhibition in the Arcola Theatre during June and July 2008 made Dalston's huge creative potential visible to the whole of London. The interest aroused helped Design for London secure funds to finance a second phase, *Making Space in Dalston* in itself. It was initially planned as a report that had to identify ten projects and come up with an action plan regarding places for leisure, cultural programming, and the management of public space. The projects had to be put together in a scant eight months and they could not collide with the land uses that institutional urbanism prescribed.

The methodology created by J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art was one of the most significant contributions of *Making Space in Dalston* to the debate regarding the conciliation of top-down and bottom-up urbanisms (J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art, 2009, pp. 16–17). It avoided technicalities, generalizations, and universality. Instead, it was qualitative, specific, and local. It sprung from three principles. The first, "valuing what is there", corresponded with the phase that had already been carried out. It demanded departing from the Dalton values that had been reflected on the Cultural Map: its green areas (the gardens of the social housing developments, church surroundings, etc.); vacant plots (very numerous during the years of the financial crisis, when *Making Space in Dalston* was developed); and, most importantly, its over 200 artistic and cultural spaces (J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art, 2009, pp. 19–35). The second principle, "nurturing the possible", called for caring for and fostering those values through micro-interventions, rather than setting off new initiatives that, because of their lack of a true affinity with the place, would require the execution of costly mega-projects. Finally, "defining what is missing" referred to those cases where it was necessary to undertake some actions to compensate for deficiencies—such cases would be dealt with by the ten projects that were mentioned in the initial report (J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art, 2009, pp. 39–111).

The inspiration phase of the placemaking process was used to select these projects. The point of departure was once again the Cultural Map, which had revealed Dalston's shortages. J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art invited the neighbors and organizations that had collaborated in the drawing up of the map to meet on a monthly basis in order to discuss the issues that they considered as priorities. They also put together a steering group where two administrations (Design for London and Hackney Council) were represented. In addition, they held 74 gatherings with individuals and top-level meetings with the institutions involved—Transport for London, the Greater London Authority, etc.

Furthermore, there were also presentations and debates with politicians, artists, creative and interest groups, representatives of the third sector, etc. (J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art, 2009, pp. 36–37). During those sessions, with over 200 participants, 76 micro-projects were identified and collected on a rolling list where relationships and possible overlaps were shown, together with the capacity of venues to hold cultural events, potential collaborators, cost, and management (J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art, 2009, p. 45).

During the ideation stage, the micro-projects thus gathered were grouped into ten categories (J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art, 2009, pp. 40–41). The first, "High Streets", proposed cutting back the amount of street furniture that filled the sidewalks of high streets, either by removing some units or by combining them into elements such as "streetlamp-ads". "Release Spaces" contemplated the creation of breathing places that would invite people to relax at the intersections of the busiest streets. "Host Spaces" selected locations that could hold meanwhile uses or cultural pop-ups. "Wayfinding" intended to put an end to secrecy, one of the habits of the third places of the first cool neighborhoods, by means of signs that would reveal the location of the dens where Dalston's "dark cultural life" flourished. "Heritage" stressed the value of the neighborhood's legacy by articulating it through a Heritage Walk. It went beyond merely considering listed buildings and included abandoned facilities, murals, and signs as assets. Another category, "Temporary Enhancement", was
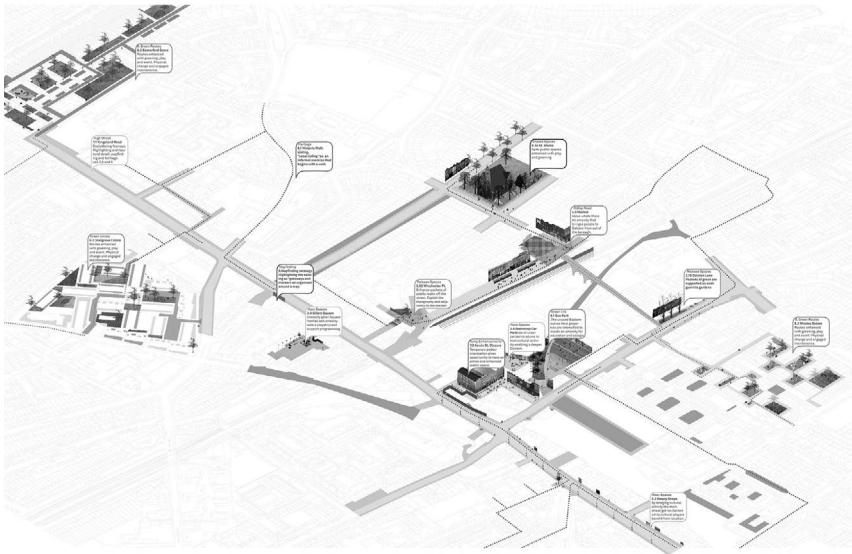
FIGURE 5.16 *Making Space in Dalston*: examples of projects.

© Making Space in Dalston J & L Gibbons and muf architecture/art.

dedicated to temporary uses. At the time, Ashwin Street was closed to traffic due to the ongoing construction, so it was pedestrianized, landscaped, and adorned with posters designed by the neighborhood's youth. "Green Routes" attempted to correct the huge deficit of parks in Dalston by exploiting one of the most overlooked aspects of its heritage, the social housing estates, with their ample green areas. The idea was to connect them by means of pedestrian and bicycle routes that would include benches and playgrounds. In turn, "Semi Public Spaces" encouraged an intensive use of sites such as church gardens and school yards. Finally, "Cultural Programming" delegated the consolidation and maintaining of the community bonds that had been established during the placemaking process to the planning of artistic events (J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art, 2009, pp. 39–111).

The fragmentation of the plan into 76 micro-interventions and its phasing into flexible stages—each of which depended on the outcome of the previous one—made it possible to noticeably shorten the implementation phase of *Making Space in Dalston*. The projects were designed, approved by the administration, and built in 12 months, something inconceivable in both institutional urbanism and placemaking processes.

All of the case studies considered in this book owe something to *Making Space in Dalston*. The Ridley Road Market was chosen to illustrate the principle of "valuing what is there". The Bootstrap coworking space and Gillett Square were boosted by the "nurturing the possible" principle, which assigned temporary uses to them to make them work as "Host Spaces". The Bootstrap's Bootyard was selected to hold 12 yearly Temporary Events Notice (J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art, 2009, pp. 62–63). Gillett Square was chosen as the venue for an experimental game day, which required adapting it into a playground. For that purpose, J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art set up a container covered with mirrors, the Play Box, on the northwest corner. Ping-pong tables, children's games, audiovisual equipment, easy-to-assemble tubular structures, etc. were stored there. A group of volunteers was responsible for opening it and taking everything out so that users could redefine the square as they saw fit (J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art, 2009, pp. 60–61). Play Box remained in Gillett Square after the event and turned out to be essential for its future. It facilitated another of *Making Space in Dalton*'s initiatives: a yearly plan of events that was defined and managed by Hackney Cooperative Developments. Thanks to it, currently all kinds of events take place in Gillett Square: African street markets, skating competitions, artistic performances, children's festivals, jazz concerts, musical parades and carnivals, electronic music workshops, charity events, courses and workshops, summer schools, photography festivals, and even the celebration of independence days of countries like Jamaica or Senegal. The programming of such events has been crucial in reinforcing the sense of place of Gillett Square and its condition of communal mainstay.

FIGURE 5.17   Dalston: Play Box in Gillett Square.

Without *Making Space in Dalston*, another case study included in this book, the Dalston Eastern Curve Garden, would have been inconceivable. It was born as one of its 76 micro-projects and it was linked to its third principle, "defining what is missing"—Dalston, as mentioned, is one of London's most densely populated neighborhoods as well as one with the fewest green areas. When this space was little more than a waste dump, J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art discovered its potential as an eco-park. To demonstrate its appropriateness for that use, they offered it to Barbican Art Gallery as an enclave in which to develop cultural activities. The gallery commissioned EXYTZ to design an installation, The Dalston Mill, which would be part of the exhibit *Radical Nature: Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet 1969–2009.* The group selected agriculture as the subject. By means of reusable industrial materials like scaffolding structures and plywood panels, they built a 16-meter-high flour mill, a communal kitchen, and a pizza oven. The Arcola Theatre joined in by setting up a small stage that received its energy supply from a pedal generator. The Barbican's intervention also included a recreation of the famous *Wheatfield* that Agnes Denes planted in New York's Battery Park in 1982. During the three weeks that the exhibition lasted, the Eastern Curve plot worked as a space for education in resilience where 17,000 people were able to attend cooking and baking courses and talks about the environment. The success encouraged OPEN Dalston to demand that the Eastern Curve become a community garden. Design for London supported

the proposal and succeeded in having the landowners lend the plot to be used as a meanwhile use for a period of two years that could be extended (J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art, 2009, pp. 86–87).

Such was the short history of *Making Space in Dalston*. What conclusions can be drawn from it? First of all, it is important to point out that the proposal is inseparable from the historic context in which it took place, that is, between June 2008 and May 2009, in the midst of the outbreak of the financial crisis and as Laborite Ken Livingston yielded the ceremonial staff of the London government to Conservative Boris Johnson. That is, a double inflection point. As a matter of fact, *Making Space in Dalston* can be considered as an advance operation of "austerity urbanism": small-scale interventions, carried out on a tight budget, and dependent on the good-will and voluntarism of both neighbors and professionals. It was also a premonition of the kind of city-making that neoliberal policies lavished in following years. Kieran Long saw it as a precedent of the Big Society:

> A few flower beds, a strange and charming timber barn, and a field of vegetables. These might not seem like evidence of a profound cultural shift. Yet these small changes in Dalston could be the first built example of what the coalition government might call Big Society design.
>
> *(Long, 2010)*

He also perceived in it a precedent of the Localism Act: "Making Space in Dalston is a rare example of what localism might mean for places, if the agenda is taken at face value" (Long, 2012, p. 16).

In short, *Making Space in Dalston* was the product of the specific political and economic crossroads derived from the 2008 crisis, which launched bottom-up urbanisms. That explains why it was one of the first experiences that attempted to transfer a great many of its precepts to institutional urbanism: the commitment to micro-interventions, the choice of temporality, the discovery of threshold spaces, and the prevalence of process over result. In this sense, could *Making Space in Dalston* be considered as the complement of resilient urban design, that is, as an exponent of a kind of "resilient urbanism"? In fact, *Making Space in Dalston* is not easy to define as an urban planning tool. It is neither a neighborhood plan nor a masterplan—it was commissioned as a report and an action plan. At most, it remotely resembles a strategic plan that goes beyond the mere definition of good intentions and generic aspirations. Nevertheless, its spirit is the opposite: it is tactical and not strategic. For such reasons, if *Making Space in Dalston* had to fall into an urban planning tool, such a tool would have to be invented. As Peter Bishop suggested, a possible label for it would be "tactical masterplan" (Bishop and Williams, 2012, p. 183): it is guided by a (resilient) vision; it has some (specific) goals; it detects some (real) opportunities, and it defines some (modest) actions that it organizes sequentially. In this way, *Making*

Space in Dalston sketches a winding path to be followed throughout a process of transition that is likely to be highly changeable, and it does so by combining top-down and bottom-up approaches in a revolutionary synthesis. Several conclusions can be extracted from this in relation to the role that the different agents must play in the definition and construction of resilient enclaves.

On the Role of the Administration: To Facilitate

Despite its bottom-up spirit, *Making Space in Dalston* would not have been possible without the active role played by the administration, more specifically by Design for London, the organism that Ken Livingston created in 2006 to replace Richard Rogers' emblematic Architecture and Urbanism Unit. Its founding director was Peter Bishop, a prestigious urban planner and academic, a partner in one of the firms that drew up the King's Cross' masterplan (Allies and Morrison), and a staunch believer in the benevolence of citizen participation. As an administration agency, Design for London was quite unique, a consultant to the mayor in matters of urbanism and urban design that had no budget of its own or executive power. In this sense, Bishop adopted the sustainable urban model that Rogers had presented in his influential report *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (Rogers and Urban Task Force, 1999), directing Design for London towards the development of public space and the regeneration of the less favored urban enclaves of the city.

The starting point for Design for London in Dalston was not an easy one: it did not control the land, which belonged to a great number of proprietors, or the legislation, which depended on Hackney Council. Consequently, it could neither direct nor control the process. However, it was able to facilitate it. For that purpose, it supported the professionals who managed the process, looked for funding and collaboration from different organizations, and mediated between businesses and administrations, all of this through the symbolic sort of authority that it had as a representative of London's mayor. Thus, Design for London made it possible to bring to fruition some projects that were probably up in the air, neighborhood initiatives that had not been materialized because of lack of funding and professional advice.

On the Role of the Neighbors: To Get Engaged

As commented, no placemaking process is successful if the neighbors do not engage with it. In the case of *Making Space in Dalston*, the neighbors' engagement was huge and immediate. From the very beginning, a great many residents dedicated long hours to attending meetings, discussing proposals, looking for resources, and collaborating in the carrying out of the projects.[15] The generosity of this engagement persists. Each *Making Space in Dalston* proposal had a management structure that was entrusted to the community. The cultural

activities in Gillett Square are nowadays managed by Hackney Cooperative Developments; a team connected to OPEN Dalston is in charge of Dalston Eastern Curve Garden; the community gardens of Somerford Grove Estate are looked after by the residents, and the planters on Ashwin Street are taken care of by Café Oto through volunteers who are paid by gaining guest access to use the cafe.

Some people wonder if the success of *Making Space in Dalston* would have been possible in a neighborhood with a different socio-cultural profile. Critical theorists think it would not, that the practices of bottom-up urbanisms depend on the pre-existence of a well-educated and aware community with economic resources and with time on their hands. Dalston meets all of these criteria: a powerful third sector whose flagships are Hackney Cooperative Developments, Arcola Theatre, and Bootstrap Charity; neighborhood associations like OPEN Dalston that have shown a tremendous ability to mobilize the community, and above all, a powerful creative sector cemented on the affluent neobohemian community. It was not by chance that J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art based *Making Space in Dalston* on temporary uses of a cultural and creative nature. It proved to be essential to get community engaged because, as Gibbons and Fior admitted: "Dalston is naturally a cultural district, and doesn't need to brand itself as such" (J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art, 2009, p. 17). The many artists and creators of the neighborhood make up a network of entrepreneurs who transform cultural vitality into economic dynamism. This made a great number of interventions possible. Would the Barbican have given it a try anywhere else?

On the Role of the Professionals: To Initiate, Design, and Manage the Process

Two architects were responsible for the *Making Space in Dalston* idea, Johanna Gibbons and Liza Fior—who lives and has her practice, muf architecture/art, in the neighborhood. Both took on the placemaking design and management stages, and it was not an easy task. The process was initiated when the wounds that the demolition of Dalston Theatre and the Dalston Square operation had inflicted had yet to heal. The top-down arrogance exhibited by institutional urbanism in those two interventions had caused great mistrust between residents and administration. To put an end to skepticism and rebuild bridges was a chore that could only be undertaken by professionals, who are supported by the alleged neutrality of their technical knowledge.

J&L Gibbons and muf architecture/art went further. They got the neighbors involved from the very beginning, even before anything had been defined. Moreover, they did not just consult them about their designs, they invited them to partake in them as well as in their carrying out and their management. As mentioned, methodology was one of the most relevant contributions of *Making Space in Dalton*. Rather than drawing up a masterplan, J&L Gibbons and

muf architecture/art launched a socio-spatial analysis, the Cultural Map, whose outcome was a diagnosis that was used to outline strategies open to participation. In such a way, they managed to blur the lines that have traditionally separated citizens from professionals, one of the Gordian knots of the top-down/bottom-up dialectic.

In short, the role played by the different agents involved in the tactical masterplanning that conciliates the top-down and bottom-up approaches could be summarized as follows: the administration facilitates, the neighbors get engaged, and the professionals initiate, design, and manage the process. It has been over a decade since the *Making Space in Dalston* micro-projects were implemented, and many of the seeds that were planted have germinated and grown to become powerful neighborhood epicenters—Dalston Eastern Curve Garden and Gillett Square are good examples of this. The communal bonds that spawned during the long hours that the neighbors spent in meetings, exhibits, and presentations, or planting gardens and setting up street furniture, remain, ready to be activated whenever Dalston must once again face its future.

Notes

1. Kurt Iveson diagrammed the practices of bottom-up urbanisms into vectors that went from temporary to permanent, periphery to centre, public to private, authored to anonymous, collective to individual, legal to illegal, old to new, unmediated to mediated (Iveson, 2013, p. 943).
2. John Turner and Robert Fichter, the authors of *Freedom to Build* (1973), had already undertaken such a task in the 1970s.
3. The term "pop-up shop" was coined by trendwatching.com in 2003.
4. The relationship between New Urbanism and bottom-up urbanisms was not always good. Andres Duany, one of its founding members, described the resulting products of everyday urbanism as "inevitably ugly" (cited in Chase, Crawford, and Kaliski, 2008, p. 14).
5. Tactical urbanism was born as an instrument to test the projects of New Urbanism. Its aim was to speed up the processes involved in consulting the neighbors, by replacing sketches and renders by the *in situ* building of proposed prototypes.
6. Some cities legalized the social and cultural centers, community kitchens, charity shops, or kindergartens that activist groups had opened in squatted spaces.
7. As Ali Madanipour stated:

   > While container architecture may be a fashionable trend and a critique of corporate architecture, it may also reflect lower levels of expectation for the quality of alternative spaces. The results of the "shoestring buildings and micro-budget parks", as the Los Angeles Times architectural critic calls them, may be better than nothing, but their long-term impact on cities is far from clear and agreeable.
   >
   > *(Madanipour, 2017, p. 405)*

8. The rejection of macro-infrastructures has started to spread through many countries. In Italy, there have been striking massive demonstrations to protest the Lyon-Turin high speed rail line, the bridge over the strait of Messina, or the Mose project for the Venice lagoon.

9. Although it depends on the country, the norm is for a masterplan to define the stereometry of buildings, the shape and character of public spaces, and land use distribution.

10. The administration exempted the community that undertook such an action from paying taxes for a period of time, made compliance with certain norms more flexible, and allowed the carrying out of minor work on the site.

11. There are specific Internet platforms whose purpose is to finance bottom–up urban projects, like Neighbor.ly (USA), Peoplefund.it (the United Kingdom), and Spacehive (the United Kingdom).

12. Sometimes these activities are carried out in "urban rooms", places that have been specially created so that citizens can meet to talk about the future of their towns. In the United Kingdom there are about 20 urban rooms, such as Glasgow's The Lighthouse, London's New London Architecture, and Bristol's Architecture Centre.

13. The flexibility of the United Kingdom's urban planning legislation has turned that country into a privileged laboratory of top–down/bottom–up conciliation. Unlike the urbanism laws of many European countries, British regulations only define a framework of general policies—nationally through the National Planning Policy Framework and locally through the local plans. Cities like London also have their own plan, the London Plan, which prevails over local plans. With such a base, each case—either the construction of a building or the making up of a masterplan, is dealt with separately and by negotiating among agents in a rather subjective and unstructured way.

14. Three urban planning tools control Dalston. The London Plan sets the objectives and general guidelines regarding the growth of Greater London. Hackney's local plan affects the borough and determines land uses as well as urban development management. The "area action plan" involves the so–called Dalston Area (basically the central area of the case study that is considered in this book). It is a kind of guide where development and design aims are expressed. When the Dalston Square operation was undertaken, the urban planning documents that were in effect were the 2004 London Plan, the 1995 London Borough of Hackney Unitary Development Plan, and the 2004 Dalston Area Action Plan.

15. Kieran Long thought that this is one of the weak points of tactical masterplanning. Such a long, crucial process cannot depend on the neighbors' and professionals' volunteer work. To guarantee a truly democratic nature and an acceptable level of quality, it is necessary for projects to be appropriately funded (Long, 2012, p. 16).

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CONCLUSION

Cities After the Covid-19 Crisis

This conclusion returns to the initial hypothesis of the book. It intends to analyze if the way in which cities were planned and built after the environmental crisis of the 1970s and further developed in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008 will prevail once the coronavirus health crisis is overcome.

The pandemic, which broke out in Wuhan towards the end of 2019 and spread throughout the planet during 2020 and 2021, was an utter catastrophe. Zadie Smith (2020) called it a "global humbling". It forced the governments of over 100 countries to lock down their citizens and triggered the third major economic and social crisis of the last 50 years. Its long-term consequences are yet unknown. However, history proves that humankind responded to similar disasters with radical paradigm changes that brought economic, social, cultural, and scientific resurgences. In his book *El día después de las grandes epidemias*, historian José Enrique Ruiz-Domènec studied five of those critical episodes: the plague that devastated the Byzantine empire brought about the splendor of Islam and of Late Medieval Europe; the Black Death of the fourteenth century led to the Renaissance; the smallpox epidemic that destroyed the Aztec empire laid the political and economic grounds for contemporary Latin America; the succession of plague outbreaks that swept Europe during the seventeenth century catapulted the Enlightenment, and the so-called "Spanish flu" of 1918 gave origin to the welfare state and universal healthcare in the years after the Second World War (Ruiz-Domènec, 2020, location 108). Would the same thing happen regarding Covid-19? Was the planet on the threshold of a huge social, economic, political, and cultural revolution that would bring a new renaissance to humankind?

At the beginning of 2021, with the world immersed in the second wave of the pandemic—but also with the first vaccination campaign underway, a

great many intellectuals thought that it would. After months absorbing all kinds of shocks—such as experiencing the curfews and movement restrictions imposed by democratically elected governments, it seemed like society was ready to make changes in its mentality, suggesting that the time was ripe to adopt measures that were daring and bold from a political viewpoint. If this happened, if the world undertook such a revolution, would it affect the way cities were conceived? During the pandemic, urban planners and architects were forced to confront problems that were both urgent and unexpected: public space became insufficient, public transport inadequate, public facilities out of bounds, and so on. The rushed, improvised solutions that were given to these matters needed to be reflected upon. If they proved to be appropriate, they should be implemented in the long term since, according to *Cities Policy Responses*—a report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) focusing on how cities responded to the first wave of the pandemic—everything indicated that: "Life after Covid-19 will likely be a life with Covid-19" (OECD, 2020, p. 22).

In accordance with the issues addressed in this book, these questions should be rephrased into the following: is it possible that, in a mere few months, the pandemic had brought about the cultural revolution that the advocates of the resilient vision had been calling for and entrusted to the wrenchingly slow process of education in resilience? Had the pandemic enabled the resilient vision to surpass the boundaries of cool neighborhoods and spread to the rest of the city, becoming the foundation of a new urban paradigm? To tackle these matters, this concluding chapter first analyzes the aspects of the health crisis that boosted the resilient vision regarding the five subjects dealt with in the book—values, the environment, scale, resources, and agents. It later focuses on the aspects that dwelled on the opposite of this, that is, the consolidation of the sustainable urban model.

On Values: The Obligation of the Ethics of Scarcity

As with the 1970s' Oil Crisis, which propelled environmentalism and was the germ of ecosophy, the coronavirus health crisis made scarcity a widespread phenomenon. People had less income and less work, there were fewer leisure activities and there was less travelling and, in general, there were fewer resources. During the weeks of lockdown, citizens were forced to reuse old utensils and economize on food—goods such as flour, sugar, and eggs quickly disappeared from supermarket shelves. The ethics of scarcity, which everyone suddenly had to adopt, was no longer a choice, but an obligation. On the other hand, the close presence of death, which was daily aired in the media and expressed in hair-raising figures, unleashed an existential crisis. Was the rat-race after the enticing carrot of progress actually worth it? Millions of people, who until then had never worried about climate change and who saw neobohemians as entitled

lefties, reconsidered their rushed form of life. The coronavirus appeared to be an ally of the eco-lifestyle. Materialism yielded to spiritualism. Community, friends, and family became priorities. Improving one's quality of life turned into the most recurrent New Year's resolution for 2021, and a different way of managing time seemed to be the key to achieving this: more time spent going for walks, cooking, enjoying hobbies, being with the family, etc. Such a purpose encouraged some municipalities to pay attention to the Slow City charter and to reformulate their cities' times and rhythms: schools and administrative offices with more flexible schedules; shops and facilities with longer opening hours; public transport with extended timetables, and so on.

This change in values was reflected in consumption habits. Luxury and superfluousness started to be regarded as irresponsible whims. While tourism, hospitality services, and night-time leisure activities suffered tremendous losses, the acquisition of personal and domestic hygiene products and food—especially fresh fruit and vegetables—increased over 30 percent. According to some polls, people intended to keep up with these habits once the health crisis was over—over 60 percent of those interviewed claimed that they would continue to buy local products.

In short, a change in values and a change in consumption habits took place. The pandemic seemed to have expanded the binomial of ecosophy and eco-consumption beyond neobohemian circles, thus spreading the eco-lifestyle as well.

On the Environment: The Experience of the Advantages of De-growth

Not only people had to adapt to countless changes during the health crisis. Cities also had to undergo such a process. The message was to resist, and that forced them to take a crash course in resilience. The concept made the headlines and became one of the words of 2020. It grew stronger with the succession of contagion waves, making everyone suspect that health emergencies would occur again. Scientists issued a warning: mankind had invaded the habitats of animals like mice and bats, which entailed a high risk of disease transmission.[1] In other words, more pandemics would come and with them more economic and social crises. This foretold a future plagued by mutations that would require adapting to. Many public administrations, which had been working with the sustainability paradigm for decades, began prioritizing resilience.

The spread of coronavirus also brought about economic de-growth. As Bruno Latour pointed out, humanity learned that it was possible to shut down the economy in a matter of days:

> The incredible discovery is that there was in fact in the world economic system, hidden from all eyes, a bright red alarm signal, next to a large

steel lever that each head of state could pull at once to stop "the progress train" with a shrill screech of the brakes.

(cited in Watts, 2020)

In 2020, the GDP of developed countries fell by a rate of 9.5 percent—an unprecedented figure last seen during the 1930s' Great Depression. In cities the phenomenon was even more noticeable: Paris's economic activity fell by 37 percent; Barcelona's GDP decreased 14 percent, and Madrid lost 5.4 percent of employment (OECD, 2020, pp. 6–7). De-growth was not only a matter of economy. During the first strict lockdown (in March and April 2020) road traffic throughout the world decreased between 50 percent and 75 percent, while urban traffic went down by 95 percent and the use of public transport diminished 50 percent. Consequently, CO_2 emissions were reduced by an average of 8 percent—17 percent in April only, and air quality improved spectacularly.[2] Pollution fell between 10 percent and 30 percent in Chinese cities and 50 percent in New York. The levels of nitrogen dioxide, a contaminant associated with the automobile, plummeted by 66 percent in New Delhi, 54 percent in Paris, and 45 percent in Madrid, Milan, and Rome (OECD, 2020, p. 10). The advocates of de-growth were then able to prove their hypothesis, that the reduction of economic activity resulted in gigantic benefits for the planet.

One of the most striking consequences of de-growth was the rewilding of cities, another precept of the resilient vision. While the pandemic took the lives of millions of people, nature flourished. During the lockdowns, a great many municipal governments stopped removing the weeds and wild flowers that grew in parks, gardens, and sidewalks, which exponentially increased the level of pollen available to insects. A great number of wild animals reclaimed spaces in the cities. Deer were seen grazing on the lawns of Washington's suburbs, wild boars were observed prowling around Barcelona's garbage containers, mountain goats roamed the streets of coastal towns in the United Kingdom, and coyotes crossed San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. Some thinkers saw in this sudden rewilding of the cities a form of rebellion of the planet against humanity.

On Scale: The Valuing of Proximity

Localism was one the principles of the resilient vision that was more clearly strengthened by the pandemic. The quick, dramatic spread of the virus revealed what up until then had been a seldom scrutinized risk of globalism: the transmission of infectious diseases. The chain of pestilence epidemics that razed Europe in the seventeenth century took 36 years to spread. It was detected in Lyon in 1628, in Milan in 1630, in Seville in 1649, in Naples in 1656, in Amsterdam in 1663, and in London in 1664. China communicated its first coronavirus case to the World Health Organization on 8 December 2019. The ICUs of Milan's hospitals, at the other end of the planet, collapsed only three months later.

Mobility restrictions, the circumscribing of human existence to reduced ranges, also contributed a great deal to the promotion of localism. Proximity—living near a local shop where one could get supplies, near a park to exercise, near a health center where help was available—became highly valued. To be close to sources of fresh food was highly appreciated. As proved by the increase in sales of seeds, compost, and gardening equipment, the practice of urban agriculture skyrocketed. Having access to a garden at home, to a community garden in the neighborhood, or to a rural belt in the outskirts of the city enabled self-sufficiency, a key factor in times of pandemic.

The appeal of proximity had an impact on urban policies. Cities started to give priority to accessibility over mobility, establishing "chrono-urbanism" projects that were based on how long it took citizens to reach services and public facilities. The concept "15-minute city" was especially successful, ensuring the connection between six essential functions—to live, to work, to supply, to care, to lean, and to enjoy—in under a quarter of an hour on foot or by bicycle.

This kind of proposal favored the neighborhood scale. However, the territorial scale also benefited from the value bestowed on proximity. The disruption of supply chains due to the blockage of transport systems was a warning sign for cities regarding the risks involved in the huge distances that separated them from sources of energy, water, or food.[3] The Territorialist school took the opportunity to remind everybody that the de-territorialization practices of globalization were responsible for the situation. Thus, they reaffirmed their call for activating a cycle of re-territorialization, something that they entrusted to the establishment of new settlement patterns. Among those was a return to the countryside, which began to seduce many urbanites. Electronic engineers from New York moved to villages in the Appalachians and businesswomen from Barcelona took up shepherding in the Catalonian Cerdanya. This migration from the city to the countryside, which before the pandemic had been associated with nineteenth-century agrarian utopianism, had now become easier than ever thanks to teleworking, a practice that became widespread during the weeks of lockdown. Even though not everyone would be able to work in this way in the future,[4] the prediction was that teleworking would experience a remarkable growth—as wished by 90 percent of Belgian and 87 percent of British workers (Doward, 2020). If all of this is to be confirmed, in a near future millions of people will be able to choose where to live according to their values and lifestyles, and it is evident that the booming ecosophy/eco-lifestyle binomial points towards the countryside.

On Resources: The Flowering of Communal Solidarity

The coronavirus exacerbated the social inequalities that had been dogging cities after decades of neoliberal policies. Once again, the weakest were specially affected. The homeless did not have places to self-confine; the elderly had no

social support networks; workers with precarious jobs were not able to tele-work; immigrants crammed into tiny apartments. The concentration of these groups in certain areas of cities explained why the virus ravaged poor neighborhoods. According to an analysis by Mark Nichols, Mitchell Thorson, and Carlie Procell for *USA Today*: "In ZIP codes where median household income was less than $35,000, the overall infection rate was more than twice as high as in neighborhoods with household income of more than $75,000" (Nichols, Thorson, and Procell, 2020).

People reacted to the social emergency unleashed by the pandemic with a tsunami of communal solidarity. Mutual aid networks multiplied, enlisting volunteers to carry out shopping for senior citizens, to organize food banks, or patrol the streets distributing clothing and food among the homeless. The public administrations reacted in a similar way, despite having exhausted their resources by austerity policies. They stopped evictions, started food distribution programs, prohibited cutting off water and electricity supplies, rented hotel rooms to lodge the homeless, provided children of low-income families with computers and internet connections, and so on. It seemed as if the misfortunes of others, which the neoliberal society had become used to for decades, had suddenly become unbearable.

In such a context, urban commons proved their tremendous potential.[5] In order to ensure the reception of permanent feedback from their citizens, local administrations adopted some common forms of governance. According to a report by Global Cities Resilience Network (cited in OECD, 2020, p. 20), 94 percent of the cities studied engaged the affected groups in the definition of their recovery plans, by giving them the power to make decisions instead of by merely gathering information about their needs. As for common resources, analysts foresaw that, if teleworking became an established practice, the need for office space would diminish, which would go to show the advantages of coworking spaces—some pointed out that, in countries like Spain, this urban common would go from representing 5 percent of the office market to reaching 30 percent in 2030 (*Expansión*, 2019). On the other hand, cohousing was one of the residential types preferred by those who decided to leave the city, many of whom went to live in "ecovillages" whose management was like that of cohousing developments. Also, the occupation of co-living buildings shot up after the first lockdown.[6] People wanted to live in places where they could share spaces with people with whom they also shared interests.

All in all, the pandemic proved the need for social solidarity and public resources, as well as the efficiency of mutual aid networks and urban commons. In mid-2020, only a minority advocated for a return to the neoliberal notion of "business as usual". According to a YouGov survey published by *The Guardian*, 31 percent of British citizens wanted the economic model to change radically, while 28 percent demanded moderate changes, and only 6 percent

wanted to go back to the pre–Covid-19 model (Proctor, 2020). The health crisis had unleashed a horrifying economic crisis: 300 million people had lost their jobs and 450 million companies were on the brink of bankruptcy (OECD, 2020, p. 6). Collectiveness, collaboration, and civic economy seemed to be the only ways of facing a future with increasingly precarious jobs and two-figure unemployment rates.

On Agents: The Institutionalization of Tactical Urbanism

The pandemic became tactical urbanism's letter of presentation to the public. Its founders' wishes came true and a great number of public administrations adopted it to tackle the multiple emergencies that rigid institutional urbanism was unable to respond to. On one hand, they embraced its new tactics, prioritizing an immediate, short-term response—containers were installed in the public space when it was necessary to carry out massive Covid-19 tests, trucks and vans were transformed into social service offices when people's mobility was restricted. On the other hand, the public administrations also embraced the

FIGURE C.1 New York: tactical urbanism interventions as part of the Open Restaurants program.

Image courtesy of Margarita Calero.

transient nature of tactical urbanism, accepting temporary uses—convention centers became hospitals and sports facilities became lodgings for the homeless and displaced. Finally, new areas of tactical urbanism were incorporated, permitting open spaces and buildings to intensify their uses in order to hold unexpected activities—children and teenagers received classes in parks and gardens, while merchants were permitted to display their products on sidewalks and squares.

In general, public administrations used tactical urbanism with two main objectives. First, to offer alternatives to public transport, the use of which was advised against to avoid crowds. Most cities chose to expand bike-lane networks: Berlin equipped 15 km worth, Brussels 40, and Paris 50—among them the emblematic Rue de Rivoli. They were the "pop-up corona cycleways", interventions that enabled the number of cyclists to rise by 40 percent and 65 percent in Brussels and Paris respectively. Secondly, public administrations used tactical urbanism to extend the public space in order to ensure social distancing. Many local councils permitted the occupation of parking spaces and traffic lanes for the outdoor seating of bars and restaurants. New York's Open Restaurants program enabled 11,000 establishments to benefit from this measure. Other cities chose to limit streets and avenues to pedestrian use. Paris pedestrianized 30 of them in the surroundings of schools and New York 83 miles within the program of Open Streets.

In all of those cases the response to the emergencies provoked by the pandemic came by means of quick and reversible interventions, but they did not relinquish to the slogan of tactical urbanism, "short-term action for long-term change". Although in the week immediately following the 2020 March–April lockdown most of those measures were revealed to be temporary, many ended up becoming definitive, like New York's Open Restaurants program or some bike lane extension initiatives—21 km in Barcelona, 30 km in London, or 35 km in Bogota.

Barcelona was one of the flagship cities of tactical urbanism during the pandemic. The surroundings of 25 schools were freed from vehicles and the spaces thus recovered were provided with wooden bleachers and planters so that the school children could use them as playgrounds. Along some of the downtown streets, sidewalks were widened by taking over traffic lanes. Thus, they could be used by pedestrians, cyclists, or bars and restaurants. The elements and materials included in *Tactical Urbanist's Guide to Materials and Design* (The Street Plans Collaborative, 2016) flooded the city: concrete bollards, plastic cones, New Jersey barriers, and tons of asphalt paint—yellow stripes all over Consell de Cent street, black polka dots on Via Laietana, blue "*panots*"—the traditional design of Barcelona's street tiles—stenciled all along Rocafort street, etc. The outcome was gaudy, nothing to do with the restrained elegance of the avant-garde Barcelona that tourists and visitors were used to. Although the interventions

FIGURE C.2   Barcelona: tactical urbanism strategy to widen the sidewalk.

were temporary, associated to the pandemic situation, many suspected that a real change in paradigm had taken place. The city, which in the 1990s had been baptized as the world capital of minimalistic urban design—sophisticated, cosmopolitan, top-down, and costly—had fallen for the mundane, everyday, bottom-up, and humble nature of tactical urbanism. The health crisis seemed to have worked a miracle.

However, it soon became evident that the path was not as clear as it seemed. These tactical urbanism interventions were questioned by a wide sociological spectrum. Fifty-three business organizations, professional guilds, and merchant unions, all members of the so-called Platform for Free Mobility, claimed that such interventions made it impossible for customers to have access to shops and services in their cars, which threatened the existence of 50,000 jobs. To this, the discomfort of many ordinary citizens was added. They were disconcerted, to say the least, by the New Jersey barriers and the colored polka dots. A survey carried out by the newspaper *La Vanguardia* showed that 77.8 percent of readers did not approve of such an aesthetic (Sierra, 2020). Interestingly, employers, merchants, and residents agreed on one thing: none of them had been consulted. As a matter of fact, Barcelona's tactical urbanism interventions looked a great deal like a typical exercise of top-down imposition, planned and carried out by politicians and urban planners.

And Despite Everything …: The Inertia of the pre-Covid-19 World

The pandemic undoubtedly spread the dictates of the resilient vision by means of the obligation of the ethics of scarcity, the experience of the advantages of de-growth, the valuing of proximity, the flowering of communal solidarity, and the institutionalization of tactical urbanism. Many people who had never considered adopting the eco-lifestyle, letting native plants grow in their gardens, living in an ecovillage, working as volunteers in food banks, or having coffee in parking lots protected by New Jersey barriers, did precisely that for the first time during the months in which humankind was brought to its knees by the coronavirus. Did this mean, as mentioned above, that the cultural revolution that the resilient vision demanded had finally prevailed?

Not exactly. According to a study carried out by the European Investment Bank (EIB) in October 2020, the issue of climate change had gone from being the third most important concern in 2019 to being the sixth for those interviewed. The pandemic was now the main worry of 73 percent of US citizens and 72 percent of Europeans, followed at a considerable distance by two of its consequences: unemployment (37 percent and 41 percent respectively) and the financial crisis (34 percent and 37 percent). Climate change was considered as a priority by a mere 27 percent of US citizens and 33 percent of Europeans (EIB, 2020).[7]

This shift in opinion was understandable. In the face of the ongoing social, economic, and health emergency, people had more pressing concerns to tend to: avoiding infection, keeping their jobs, or looking after their elderly. This pragmatism gave newfound wings to Enlightenment thought, which neobohemia had shunned given its hold on the powerful technocrats that preyed on the planet. Society's new heroes were professionals (led by doctors), scientists, pharmaceutical multinationals, large logistics and transportation companies, and so on. Revisiting the preindustrial era did not bring about any kind of reflective nostalgia, only the memory of the bubonic plagues that took the lives of millions. Fifty years after the beginning of its decline, the Enlightenment metanarrative of progress, the assumption that the future would only be better if it were entrusted to science and technology, took off.

The same thing occurred with reformist ecology and its "weak sustainability" approach. In a scenario where human beings were the victims and a yet-to-be identified wild animal was the vector of the virus, the anthropocentric vision of the world ceased to be considered selfish and patriarchal. On the contrary, nature had to be tamed in order to protect people. The values of reformist ecology, its collusion with globalization and eco-capitalism, were also reinforced. Many international organisms strengthened their commitment to the green economy with the objective of reversing an economic de-growth that, despite being beneficial for the planet, they were not willing to allow. The World Economic Forum (WEF) estimated that, over the course of the next decade, the

food, renewable energy, and environmentally friendly infrastructure and construction sectors would generate $10.1 billion in business opportunities as well as 395 million jobs (WEF, 2020). Such figures enticed anxious national and local governments to return to the path of growth, aware as they were of the fact that, as the European Investment Bank survey revealed, a significant number of their citizens (over a third) demanded that they boosted the economy by any means. In other words, the main objective of reformist ecology, sustainable growth, also seemed to be on a roll. Finally, regarding the instruments, the pandemic strengthened the two tools that characterized reformist ecology. Firstly, the use of norms and laws. Most citizens obediently complied with the countless regulations that governments implemented—imposed curfews, schedule restrictions, social distancing, hygiene guidelines, etc. Secondly, the importance of technology. Techno-relativism yielded to the huge number of apps, databases, web pages, and digital platforms that proved their efficiency regarding monitoring the spread of the virus, controlling the movements of the population, enhancing remote learning, or providing services like telemedicine.

The political, economic, and social recognition that the reformist ecology approach gained during the pandemic favored the sustainable urban model. The crucial role that digitalization played in the fight against the coronavirus persuaded municipal governments of the advantages of the smart city. Projects for the collection of real-time data and the setting up of IoT sensors, electronic congestions tolls, or smart parking systems received a major boosting. Administrations also concentrated their financial stimulus plans on the green economy sectors, approving programs to improve the energy efficiency of buildings and promote the installation of renewable energy generators, especially solar panels. Eco-friendly mobility, another mantra of the sustainable urban model, maintained its spearheading position, even though the pandemic forced a shift in focus from the implementation of streetcars, ferries, and cable car lines towards means of transport of individual use, such as mopeds, scooters, and driverless delivery vehicles—all of them electrical, on a rental basis, and app-based.

As for the matter of urban growth, one of the main discrepancies between the sustainable urban model and the resilient vision, its vindication was supported by radical changes of perspective regarding residential models. Countless inhabitants of densely populated central areas of the cities went through the weeks of lockdown secluded in miniscule apartments without even a balcony. When they were able to go back to work, they were forced to cram onto jam-packed buses and subway cars, as well as to move around crowded streets. After such an experience, many decided to move to the outskirts, into large, single-family homes with gardens and room to park a car—a means of transport that was considered as safe.[8] After decades of focusing on infill developments, the real estate sector once again set its gaze on suburbia, demanding new land for urban growth be put on the market. Developers began to advertise these new residential areas by including new urban and architectural design concepts

learned from the lockdown experience. The houses would be spacious and have lots of light, include teleworking areas as well as ample terraces, and have connection to 5G networks that would allow neighbors to share resources. In the case of multi-family blocks, the roofs would be equipped with photovoltaic solar panels and communal gardens for the self-supply of energy and food. On the ground floors there would be coworking spaces and workshops with 3D printers that would make it possible to produce basic utensils. In other words, post Covid-19 developments would be self-sufficient enclaves in the event of future health, energy, or food crises. People would be able to live, work, do their shopping, enjoy themselves, and rest, all in one place.

All in all, the sustainable urban model rose from the ashes of the coronavirus crisis as vigorously as the resilient vision did. The future of the cities, therefore, was open. However, one thing was clear, as the OECD stated: "Covid-19 accelerated the shift towards a new urban paradigm" (OECD, 2020, p. 3). Indeed, the pandemic deeply disrupted the livelihoods of the inhabitants of cities, making them reflect on their lifestyles, values, and priorities in an unprecedented way. These reflections, which occurred during a period of intense stress, uneasiness, and anxiety, induced change. The coronavirus crisis might not have unleashed the cultural revolution that the prophets of resilient vision intended. However, at the very least, it provoked a monumental uprising, enabling a single generation to cover a stretch of road that, otherwise, would have required a journey of several decades.

Notes

1. According to a Brown University study, the number of infectious disease outbreaks had tripled during the three decades that preceded the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. Atmospheric light pollution also reduced noticeably—by up to 60 percent in cities like Berlin.
3. Paris residents were horrified to discover that their city's food mile average was over 660 km.
4. It is estimated that only 30 percent of the population of the USA will be able to telework in the future. In France the percentage is 40 percent and in Turkey 21 percent (OECD, 2020, p. 13).
5. Ghent was one of the best examples. Its municipal government, which as seen in Chapter 4 has a transition plan in place to turn the city into an urban common, created Ghent Helps, a platform that put people who needed help in touch with volunteers who were willing to provide it. Citizen groups and NGOs started a solidarity fund, Solidary Ghent, to finance the acquisition of medicine and the supply of food for the most vulnerable. In addition, the Ghent Taskforce Relaunch approved a package of relief measures for people with financial difficulties.
6. In countries like Spain, it was expected that the offer of co-livings would multiply by five by 2022 (*El Confidencial*, 2021).
7. Only the Chinese (61 percent of the population) considered that climate change was the main challenge that their country had to face.
8. According to statistics of Spain's Association of Public Notaries, the acquisition of flats in the central areas of cities decreased by 13.9 percent in October 2020, while purchases of single-family homes in the periphery increased by 13.2 percent (Aranda, 2020)

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