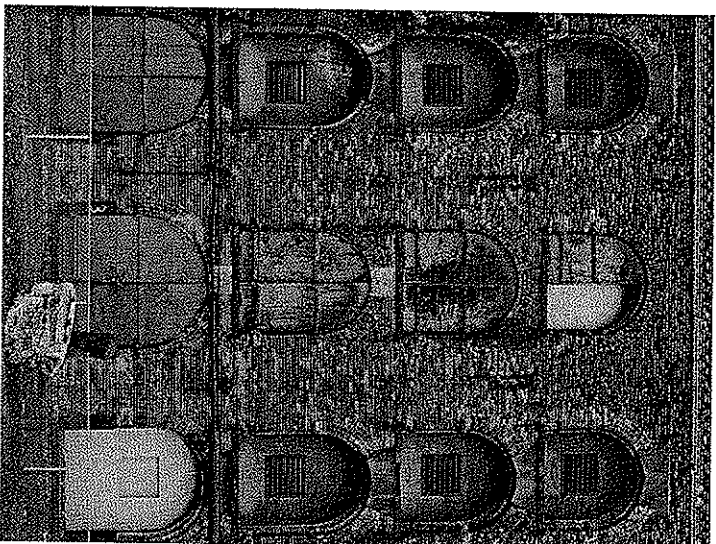


NAKED CITY

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THE DEATH AND LIFE
OF AUTHENTIC
URBAN PLACES



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ethnic identity, environmental stewardship, and sweat equity to create permanent legal roots: a new form of collective entitlement between public and private ownership. The gardeners could learn from community-based organizations such as Harlem's Abyssinian Development Corporation and East Brooklyn Congregations, which develop housing in low- and middle-income neighborhoods in partnership with state agencies and private developers; Business Improvement Districts such as the Union Square Partnership, which manage shopping streets and public parks; and nonprofit trade associations, such as the Red Hook Food Vendors Association, a group of small business owners who formed a partnership of sorts with a city government agency. Each of these models uses the legal form of a nonprofit organization to carry out public duties in common space; no organization legally owns the space it manages, but each represents the public interests of a community. In any case, keeping the gardens "sustainable for many generations into the future," as Edie Stone of Green Thumb says, requires the government to favor the yearning for roots of the urban village over the corporate city's pressures for mobility.

In the present political climate elected officials try to balance the "sustainability" of the urban village and the visible signs of growth represented by the corporate city. On one side, growing healthy food in community gardens and making it available in local farmers' markets nurtures the people who live in the urban village. On the other side, electronic signs, chain stores, sidewalk cafes, and giant billboards dramatize the corporate city's allure. It's not clear, though, whether this balance will work. The continued urge to build a "destination culture" destroys city dwellers' ability to put down roots—and fails to restore the city's soul.



Conclusion

Destination Culture and the Crisis of Authenticity

Do the dedicated yearners who would roll back this tide look fondly on the charred South Bronx of the eighties? Would they stick by the most depressed and derelict expanses of Brooklyn, or the cracked-out squats around Tompkins Square Park, or the blocks of boarded-up windows in Harlem? *That* New York was not authentic or quaint; it was miserable and dangerous.

—Justin Davidson, *New York* magazine, September 7, 2008

When Jane Jacobs wrote *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* in 1960, death was all too evident around her. New York City's port was shutting down, factories and neighborhoods hadn't altered their look since the beginning of the century, and middle-class families were fleeing from declining public services and expanding dark ghettos to the suburbs. The city, it was clear, lay in the grip of two malevolent forces, government and developers, though Jacobs directed her ire at architects and bureaucrats, whose plans, she said, destroyed lively neighborhoods and extinguished all sparks of social life. In Jacobs's view the monolithic office towers, large

public housing projects, intrusive highways, and monumental cultural centers that marked postwar cities brought on a “great blight of dullness” and reduced residents to passive pawns. Followed to a logical extreme, these were not plans for growth; they were a design for catastrophe. The city’s life, on the other hand, required preserving the old streets, buildings, and blocks that seemed so old-fashioned, for these sustained the delicate fabric of social uses and cultural meanings that wove people together. On this authenticity the city’s future would depend.¹

“Authenticity” was not a word in Jacobs’s vocabulary. She talked instead about density and diversity, about “character and liveliness,” and how to “avoid the ravages of apathetic and helpless neighborhoods.” For the most part, she advocated resisting overscale development and permitting good design of urban spaces to encourage community involvement. It is not clear that following her suggestions would have allowed cities to avoid the lack of investment in public institutions and the miscarriage of racial and social equality that depressed so many neighborhoods in the next generation. By now, though, we have enough critical distance from those neighborhoods to see them as “authentic,” and we can use our Jacobs-influenced vision to transform their authenticity into equity for all. We already use the streets and buildings to create a physical fiction of our common origins; now we need to tap deeper into the aesthetic of new beginnings that inspires our emotions. Authenticity refers to the *look* and *feel* of a place as well as the social connectedness that place inspires. But the sense that a neighborhood is true to its origins and allows a real community to form reflects more about us and our sensibilities than about any city block.

Yearning for authenticity reflects the separation between our experience of space and our sense of self that is so much a part of modern mentalities. Though we think authenticity refers to a neighborhood’s innate qualities, it really expresses our own anxieties about how places change. The idea of authenticity is important because it connects our individual yearning to root ourselves in a singular time and place to a cosmic grasp of larger social forces that remake our world from many small and often invisible actions. To speak of authenticity means that we are aware of a changing technology of power that erodes one landscape of meaning and feeling and replaces it with another.

When the cultural theorist Walter Benjamin wrote in the 1930s about “the work of art in an age of mechanical reproduction,” he pointed to a dramatic change in visual technologies of power that took place during his

lifetime. Benjamin asked how we can make sense of unique and original creations when we also have them available in the photographs of glossy magazines, on postcards, and in movies. Does the new technology of Hollywood destroy the aura of the *Winged Venus* and *Mona Lisa*? What meaning can an original have when we see it outside of the culture that made it? A century later, in a world filled with copies, clones, and outright fakes, his questions about the authentic work of art are even more important. And they apply not only to art but to all other forms of culture, including cities.²

If we feel that cities have changed in the renewal and revitalization since Jane Jacobs’s time, and in these processes have lost their authenticity, we are reacting to more than just a measurable change in the built environment: a larger than usual number of buildings torn down, replaced, and renovated beyond recognition. Quantitative has morphed into qualitative change, for both our visual and our emotional experience of the city have been altered. This isn’t just a structural shift from an industrial to a postindustrial society or the result of a periodic boom in investment and construction. We are eyewitnesses to a paradigm shift from a city of production to a city of consumption, and from a resigned acceptance of decline to a surprising disillusionment with growth. We see skyscrapers in which work becomes invisible despite transparent glass façades; districts such as SoHo or the Northside in Williamsburg, where the city’s business of media, tourism, and entertainment takes place; and chain stores and boutiques where squat factories and abandoned houses once stood. We also see the upscaling of areas like the East Village and Harlem that had become poorer, been abandoned, and lain derelict for years, reflecting a return of capital investment to the dark ghetto, from one point of view, and forced removal of the poor or ethnic succession in reverse, from another.

Calling these changes “gentrification” minimizes and oversimplifies the collective investment that is at stake. A lot of organized effort has gone into shaping the transformations we see. Real estate developers, joint partnerships between the public and private sectors, and community organizations have turned gritty streets, old loft buildings, and former docklands to gold. But this shining city is so rich it stirs our unease. “I couldn’t keep up with the rate of change,” the writer and director Woody Allen says about New York from the 1970s to the present, echoing a common view about the city that he has often portrayed in films, “and the change was always the progression, really, of opulence.” On a deeper level, though, to say that the city

is no longer authentic reflects our inability to grasp the shifting meanings of space and time. If this is not the end of history, at least it is the end of place-bound cultures and local identities that we thought, mistakenly, would last forever.³

Intimations of change, and pressures for it, build up over many years. Though most American cities trace their origins to the industrial economy and massive European immigration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the new beginnings that we see today crept into view in the 1920s, were repressed by the Great Depression and World War II, and reemerged in force in the 1950s, in the last days of the urban village and the first days of the corporate city and the new urban middle class. This threshold period of the 1950s and 1960s was marked by both massive urban renewal projects that tore the guts out of the “original” city of the early 1900s and stirrings of resistance to that forced march to progress by both old and new city dwellers. Not until the 1980s did these changes reach a tipping point, when hipsters, gentrifiers, creative retail entrepreneurs, community gardeners, and new immigrants established niches that reshaped the urban experience in many ways, making the city as a whole cleaner, safer, more interesting, and more modern. Their actions, limited to the small scale of individual neighborhoods and blocks, were fleshed out by journalists and politicians who gave voice and image to their efforts and spread them first citywide and then around the world. Local transformations were shaped by different kinds of social and cultural capital that greased the wheels of larger political and economic forces: the rise of lifestyle media and blogs; zoning changes, policing strategies, and government subsidies; officials’ developers’ and investors’ interest in supporting new construction.

Eventually the city as we knew it was gone. It became the corporate city of transnational headquarters, big-box stores, and Business Improvement Districts—the “business-class” city, as the architecture critic Herbert Muschamp writes, that no longer “recognizes the difference between creating and consuming.” Somehow, in the illusion of smoothing the jagged edges of uneven development, the city also lost its moral authority.⁴

In this process one group’s interests and desires often opposed another’s. Land, after all, is a finite resource, and the developer’s mantra—*Location, location, location*—expresses the eternal competition to control it. Opposing groups found common ground, though, in reinventing the city, turning its pervasive image of decay into an emotionally and aesthetically

satisfying, and sometimes even cool and glamorous, lifestyle. What drove a wedge between them was the material means and symbolic language that made this new image possible, a wave of capital investment that bid up rents and the rapid growth of consumer culture. Each of these, in its own way, embodied the neoliberal thrust of the market economy since the 1980s and its global coordination by transnational investors, developers, and marketers. Together capital investment and consumer culture encouraged both city governments and city dwellers to think they could have it all: a postindustrial revolution with no human costs, both a corporate city and a new urban village.

We experience the conflict between the corporate city and the urban village as a crisis of authenticity. To understand the loss of the city that matters it is important that we take a close look at both historical origins in economic and demographic changes and new beginnings in cultural representations, especially media images and elected officials’ rhetoric of growth. It is also crucial to look at the tastes and lifestyles of the upper middle class, for these dominate the cultural representations of cities today.

At the start of the threshold period, in the 1950s, the economic base of the old urban village was dying. Most manufacturers of heavy goods were migrating to the West Coast, lured by tax laws and federal government support for national highways as well as by an emerging market of new consumers who were themselves migrating from the East and Midwest. Smaller manufacturers were moving to the suburbs or rural areas, where land was for sale at reasonable prices, wages for even skilled workers were lower than in the city, and employees tended to be more obedient to authority. Factory owners and investors were also tired of dealing with city government’s bureaucracy and political Machine, aging streets and buildings, and traffic congestion. Moreover voters outside the city often subsidized the costs of opening plants and changed zoning laws to suit them. New industries didn’t think about locating inside cities because they needed large amounts of open floor space; they formed their own new clusters, sometimes around the transportation hubs of airports or highway interchanges or around universities. With jobs already gone or drying up, the urban village of white, Latino, and African American workers lost its livelihood.

Its culture survived in the streets where people continued to live and shop and in popular dramas, television shows, and movies. Even today

the urban village is familiar to anyone who has watched Jackie Gleason and Art Carney in old episodes of *The Honeymooners* (1950s–1960s) or seen Spike Lee's films *Do the Right Thing* (1989) and *Crooklyn* (1994). This is a vibrant culture. When the theaters of social life are the home and the block, passions run deep over who owns every crack in the sidewalk. Housing—mostly in small tenement apartments and modest, single-family homes—is poor, but everyone is well fed, and married children tend to settle down close to their parents. The strong ties between people are both a form of repression and a source of pride, half *Goodfellas* and half *Everybody Loves Raymond*. Without new jobs, though, and without fresh investment in housing, these working-class neighborhoods become rundown and are stigmatized as “blighted.” Powerful people in the city see them as a deviant space, looking down on their mean streets as on a slum. The strong web of reciprocity among residents is regarded as a trap even by those who grow up there and now yearn for respectability. Outsiders often blame the bad reputation of such a neighborhood on residents’ lack of organization, but its “problem,” says the sociologist William Foote Whyte, who studied the Italian working-class North End of Boston at the end of the 1930s, is not that the neighborhood is disorganized, but that its own kind of organization—intensely family-oriented, suspicious of outsiders, and distrustful of achievement—fails “to mesh with the structure of the society around it.”⁵

Redeveloping these old neighborhoods in the 1950s was only a small part of the nearly worldwide campaign to modernize cities by driving out factories, ports, and wholesale food markets and expanding financial and government districts. Though cities with the biggest financial players and strongest base of national elites—New York, London, and Paris—created redevelopment projects on the largest scale, smaller cities also eagerly tore down and remade their centers. “Visionary” urban planners who knew how to juggle the demands of federal bureaucracies and local business leaders removed the bars and low-rent rooming houses of each city’s Skid Row and nearby working-class neighborhoods, replacing them with office towers, hotels, apartment houses for the middle class, and other prestige-bearing projects. They built urban extensions—and the ubiquitous interchange—to the expanding national highway system. Some urban renewal money even paid for renovating “historic” tenements for tenants who would pay higher rents and built new housing for the teaching staffs of private universities.

Elected officials in different cities marched to the same drum. Though they didn’t admit it, the urban sociologist Herbert Gans, who studied the demise of Boston’s Italian West End in the 1950s, suggests that they were chiefly motivated by the desire to attract affluent residents who would pay higher rents and spend more money in downtown stores. Partly officials wanted to clear out the ethnic neighborhoods that had grown so close to downtown financial districts that they threatened to overrun them. But officials were also desperate to compensate for the city’s declining tax base, which reflected in Boston, as elsewhere, decades of movement out of the city by both old manufacturing firms and high-income residents and the gradual loss of appeal of shopping in the downtown core. Politicians wanted to please local real estate developers by subsidizing the cost of acquiring inner-city land and providing incentives to start new construction. Caught up in the universal desire for growth, for visible signs of progress that would attract new investment, and for money to finance the police and firefighters, public schools, streets, and all the other things that local governments provide, mayors and city council members sealed the old neighborhoods’ doom. The urban village had few powerful defenders, certainly not among mayors and urban planning czars such as Robert Moses, who proved to be adept at bridging the needs of federal government agencies and local real estate developers.⁶

Jane Jacobs saw the urban village on the cusp of these changes. By the time she moved to the West Village, though, many of the old Irish and Italian families had moved on, and the port that had provided them with a livelihood was finished. She also witnessed the changing of the political guard with the election, first, of a reformist mayor who ran against the Machine and got rid of Robert Moses, and then of another reformist mayor who opened the era of New York as “Fun City” and personified the ideal of New York as both a corporate and a cultural capital. In *Death and Life* Jacobs described cities on the threshold of these momentous changes, though she was unaware of both the influence she herself would have on responses to them and the impact of an intensified market economy.

The world has changed since Jacobs praised the small shopkeepers and stay-at-home housewives of Hudson Street and denounced Robert Moses for ruining neighborhoods with highways and big construction projects. Cities are different now. The decay—or “blight,” as Moses and others called it—which seemed so overwhelming from the 1940s to the 1980s has itself been overwhelmed by new buildings, revitalized centers, and preservation and

reuse of historic landmarks. The word "slum" and its close relations, "inner city" and "ghetto," have vanished or been transformed either into brand names or into low-income or gentrified communities, terms with fewer negative connotations. Most surprising, the people who live in cities have changed. Though not all of them are suburbanites "returning" to the city, as some journalists predicted in the 1980s, and though not all cities have benefited from this reverse migration, many more young people, especially those with college, professional, and art school degrees, are moving into cities now, and new immigrants from every region of the world are shoring up their economic and cultural base. To the city's origins in the uneven development of rich and poor neighborhoods, with longtime conflicts between power holders and urban villagers, the recent changes have added unexpected new beginnings. They have turned the city's image from a fearful place that many fled in Jacobs's and Moses's time into a destination culture.⁷

Only one of New York's "best neighborhoods," according to a recent issue of *Time Out New York*, a magazine that reaches out to readers in their twenties and thirties, gets good scores because of its affordability, while the others rate high because of their aesthetics: architecture, design, shopping, food, bar scene, arts community, and new immigrant diversity.⁸ This palette of urban highlights reflects the new beginnings of old neighborhoods such as Williamsburg, Harlem, and the East Village, as well as the new attractions of consumer culture along Houston Street, in Red Hook, and at Union Square. The idea of what makes a good neighborhood also reflects Jane Jacobs's influence on the way we see the physical landscape. Mixing old and new buildings, limiting the scale of many streets, assuring a diversity of uses that attracts people 24/7: these are the building blocks of the vibrant city that Jacobs proposed. Most of all, though, Jacobs's elegant description of interdependence and social control, the ballet of the street, created an ideal to which many new city dwellers aspire.

But Jacobs romanticized social conditions that were already becoming obsolete when she wrote about them in 1960. In the years that followed, second-generation immigrant shopkeepers were replaced by chain stores; housewives who had time to look out the window to see what was happening in the street entered or returned to the workforce. A mix of machine shops and small factories, butcher shops and dry cleaners, and homeowners and tenants was crushed first by old residents moving out, businesses failing to meet competition, and landlords abandoning low-rent properties, and then by new waves of boutiques, condos, high-rise development,

and gentrifiers. Underneath it all, the rootedness that connects people to place was made weak by new forms of mobility: police officers who had walked a daily beat would occasionally drive by in a patrol car; children who had walked to neighborhood public schools would disperse to charter schools and private schools outside the district or take the school bus and avoid the street altogether. Giant billboards and pervasive advertisements urged passersby to drop their old buying habits in neighborhood shops and choose new products of giant corporations that they could find in branded stores. Local roots would finally be destroyed when the state eliminated the social safety net of rent controls, and real estate investors and developers replaced low-cost housing with expensive luxury apartments.

Though Jacobs blamed urban planners for making neighborhoods into slums and building high-rise business centers and public housing projects that alienated their users, she was too smart a journalist, and too experienced a community activist, to ignore the forces that structured, and structured still, what is built and how: the force of money and state power. Jacobs preferred "gradual" to "cataclysmic" money, believing that small amounts of residents' savings invested in individual houses will save a neighborhood from decline; dramatic infusions of capital investment, especially in state-funded urban renewal projects, will destroy both residents' homes and the fine-grained texture of neighborhood life. She didn't realize then, or acknowledge later, that gradual investments by highly educated, higher income people like herself might, over time, grease the wheels of developers' high-stakes, large-scale projects, even without concerted planning by the state. Neither did she blame developers, except for Robert Moses, the public sector entrepreneur, when it is they rather than the planners who work for them whose financial priorities move investment capital around. The sociologists John Logan and Harvey Molotch said it best: city dwellers want to enjoy the use-values of their communities and homes, but developers are interested in maximizing exchange values—in making money.⁹

Despite her good intentions, Jacobs's ideal vision of urban life has shaped two important vehicles that enable developers to pursue their goals: elected officials' rhetoric of growth and media representations of cultural consumption. Skeptics may scoff that these are only words and images; both together and alone, they lack the power to make material changes in the city's built environment. These words and images, though, create a language that embodies our desire for a good place to live. In time this language persuades us, or just confirms our belief, that the good life

depends on building more cultural attractions to draw tourists to the city, opening more new cafés and boutiques, and restoring more old houses to elegance. These images of the urban good life camouflage a basic conflict. Dependent on both private developers to invest and build and voters to keep them in office, officials walk a fine line between promising support for affordable housing that will help to preserve communities and redevelopment projects that will change them.

For the past thirty years many big-city mayors have taken their cue from market-oriented administrations in national government and the unanticipated success of gentrification. Their priority was “making markets,” as the entrepreneurial slogan puts it, rather than helping poor people and small businesses to stay in place or permitting local communities to veto developers’ plans. If developers could build in a way that is environmentally sustainable and preserve the aesthetic qualities of old neighborhoods that still attract interest, so much the better, for both green construction and historic preservation have a high market value. Nonetheless these strategies leave little room for examining who gains and who loses from upscale redevelopment.

Media representations both drive and reflect this vision. In the old days of print media, when local newspapers and magazines thrived on paid subscriptions and advertisements, they needed a growing population. In our time, the age of multiple lifestyle magazines and countless websites and blogs, the media’s hunger for content leads them to support the generic goal of growth as well as specific processes of revitalization. More often than not they support replacing poorer residents with richer ones who renovate houses and gardens, hiring famous architects to design spectacular buildings and opening more stores, restaurants, art museums, and themed districts, all of which provide them with things to write about. The media don’t cause neighborhoods to be upscaled, but they capitalize on it. Alternately mourning, glorifying, and dramatizing the city’s gritty past, the media help that image to recede into social obsolescence while recycling it into the aesthetic code of a new urban lifestyle. Loft dwellers and historic townhouse owners, hipsters and gentrifiers lay claim to the bricks and mortar of the historic city, while the media either romanticize or form a collective amnesia about who, and what, has been displaced. Both mainstream print media such as magazines and nontraditional new media such as blogs stimulate our appetite for consuming the local, the past, the edgy, the different—the cultural tastes for authenticity that take spatial form in

loft living, hipster neighborhoods, and the new Harlem Renaissance but also support farmers’ markets, community gardens, and the Latino food vendors of Red Hook.¹⁰

These tastes would not be so important if they did not exert pressure for changes in both the physical landscape and the social community. New owners who restore houses to architectural glory usually kick longtime tenants out of their small, low-rent apartments. Superwealthy homeowners replace middle-class gentrifiers. New boutiques displace cheap, often ethnic stores, disrupting longtime residents’ means and sites of social interaction. Overall the tastes of new, mobile, upper-income and highly educated residents—including editors, writers, and bloggers—create a cultural climate where older, poorer residents feel unwelcome, if not downright threatened.

The media do not cause people to take these actions. Gentrifiers and new retail entrepreneurs respond to both their own needs and their perception of needs in their community. They would not become agents of change without necessary actions by the city government, starting with more dynamic—or more repressive—policing. They also require capital: high salaries in finance, media, and culture industries; bank loans, some provided by overseas institutions; and occasionally, as in Harlem, loans from publicly funded programs and charitable donations from the same investment banks that fell so swiftly in the recent global financial crisis. During the past thirty years, though, media images of cities and neighborhoods have forged an increasingly important connection between capital, state, and the new urban middle class, between the interests of investors, officials, and consumers. The sociologist Leslie Sklair calls culture the “glue” that connects state power and financial capital; it’s clear that media images and consumer tastes anchor today’s technology of power in our individual yearnings, persuading us that consuming the authentic city has everything to do with aesthetics and nothing to do with power.¹¹

The new urban middle class has led the way to a form of consumption that is both motivational and aspirational and feeds into the political and economic motors of urban change. The motivational desire for a looser lifestyle of the late 1960s and 1970s, which we can picture as thrift-shop chic, joined dialectically with the aspirational desire for “authentic” goods of the 1980s and 1990s, such as brownstone townhouses and lofts, to produce a widespread model of how to consume the city’s authenticity. Call it the New York model, for this city’s neighborhoods and institutions, starting with SoHo and BIDs, have created some of the world’s most influential examples.

Consumption is the key element. Consumer culture has helped many men and women to make their peace with the city, and it has pacified spaces in the city to prepare them for growth. The cultural synthesis of the early twenty-first century offers boutique gourmet cheese stores side by side with mom-and-pop bodegas, farmers' markets and community gardens across the street from branches of Whole Foods, Latino food vendors and IKEA in the same neighborhood. If postwar mayors thought their cities could have it all, so too does the urban middle class. And in a curious way, this is where Jane Jacobs and Robert Moses find common ground: the journalist who saw the city through middle-class eyes and the autocrat who tried to rebuild the city for middle-class tastes and incomes. Their opposing views converge in the desire to have both the high-rise and the interesting neighborhood, both origins and new beginnings; both Moses's desire to build a corporate city and Jacobs's desire to preserve the urban village.

The conflict between the combined legacies of Jane Jacobs and Robert Moses brings its own contradictions. While some who yearn for the urban village work in the corporate sector—and these include most gentrifiers—others, like the hipsters, see themselves as fleeing corporate conformity. This contradiction took geographic form in the split identity of the West and East Village during Jacobs's time: gentrifiers living on the West Side, near Jacobs, and Beat poets and bohemians, such as Allan Ginsberg, living on the East Side. Today conflict comes when groups representing the opposing visions claim the *same* space, not only in the conflict between housing and community gardens, but also in the conflict over authentic representations of neighborhoods like Red Hook, between old working-class homeowners, public housing project tenants, and gentrifiers between immigrant food vendors and big-box stores.

The technology of power that cities have put in place since the 1980s combines consumption and repression. The iron fist in the velvet glove—or the velvet fist in the iron glove—nourishes our desire for cultural goods while making places safe enough to consume them. Just as control over public spaces depends on both security guards and festivals, so the power of private organizations like Business Improvement Districts to remake the urban landscape is deeply entrenched in the city's consumer culture. The clean, safe spaces BIDs provide make it easier for us to go about our

business as consumers while making it less risky to operate a company, raising commercial rents, and polishing the image of cities and neighborhoods. In recent years image has become an important part of the city branding process. Just as image helps to market individual buildings and places, so it also markets cities as, if not productive, at least creative, interesting, and attractive. The process of branding always merges developers' interests and consumers' desires with officials' rhetoric of growth; branding tries to make each city appear different from and better than the competition.

The result, though, when all cities pursue the same modern, creative image is not authenticity; it is an overbearing sameness, not too different in a global view—from the "great blight of dullness" that Jacobs despised in New York City and Sydney, Australia, both have an iconic structure—a statue and an opera house—in their harbor. New York had the skyscrapers of the World Trade Center and will have Freedom Tower; a half-dozen Asian cities have already built or are building taller towers. In the 1960s France created the Centre Pompidou for modern art in the rundown Beaubourg area of Paris partly in response to the postwar success of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City; twenty years later the Basque regional government in Spain built another museum of modern art, Guggenheim Bilbao, in a rundown industrial district in the city of Bilbao, partly because of the Beaubourg's success in restoring a glow to the image of Paris as a cultural capital. Many cities copy the look and name of trendy New York neighborhoods— with SoHo in Lower Manhattan spawning SoMa in San Francisco, SoWa in Boston, NoMa in Washington, D.C., and SoHo in Hong Kong—and New York-style lofts gracing downtowns from Manhattan to Moscow.

These elements of sameness do not just speak to a universal yearning for cappuccino culture, the status symbols of the new urban middle class. They embody consumers' strivings for the good life as well as cities' conscious use of culture to polish their image and jump-start investment. Cultural strategies of renewal make up an industrial policy for a new economic age, with city officials running on a fast-paced treadmill of global competition. New York competes with London not only to be the biggest global financial capital, but also, as former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani once said, to be "the cultural capital of the world."

Competition at this level involves complex and largely unrelated procedures, beginning with decades of government deregulation of finance and moving on to art auctions that fetch record-breaking prices, nontraditional performances, and innovative bars. Smaller cities do not want to be

excluded from these global games. If they can't build world-class museums or draw the action of big auctions, they all compete for a place on the global cultural circuit by developing art fairs, film festivals, and even parades in which painted fiberglass cows or bison or moose, depending on a city's chosen symbol, are installed on the streets as public art. Other repetitive events promote the creativity of local cultural industries. More than 150 cities, from New York to Rio de Janeiro, hold annual or semiannual fashion weeks, and design festivals for the furniture trade stretch from London to Ljubljana. Every city wants a "McGuggenheim." Keeping ahead of the competition is expensive, though, and officials complain when they realize that they can never do enough to maintain their city's lead. "We see ourselves as being in a competitive race with other cities from around the world," says Daniel Doctoroff, the former New York City deputy mayor for economic development, speaking to a meeting of high-level cultural administrators and CEOs. "Many of [them] are trying to copy us, whether deliberately, or in some cases, unintentionally. . . . They're stealing our cultural institutions. There's a Guggenheim all over the world now."¹²

Cultural competition is not the only way to explain the overwhelming force of homogenization in cities today. Jane Jacobs blamed the twentieth-century modernizers who worshipped progress and planned to rebuild the city with right angles and straight lines. Architects and urban planners developed the intellectual tools and aesthetic styles that resulted in homogenized superblocks and high-rise towers. From an economic point of view, the geographer David Harvey sees the homogenization of cities resulting from the actions of investors, who tend to withdraw capital from one area or type of investment and shift it to another in a concerted effort to maximize profits. If developers can make more money and have less political interference by building ranch homes in the suburbs, they'll do so, but when that becomes too difficult or costly, they'll switch to building loft apartments downtown. Concerted, for-profit development strategies were intensified by the overexpansion of global financial markets that began in the 1980s. The Asian economic crisis of 1997 and the subprime mortgage crisis of 2008 showed that this kind of financial homogenization can bring disaster, and the movement of private investment capital into New York City housing markets at that time inflicted unexpected pain. During the 1990s and the following decade private equity funds did not just target pent-house apartments and "trophy" buildings in Manhattan, pressing prices of less costly apartments to rise, but also purchased low-rent apartment

houses in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens. Many of these apartments were rent-stabilized, but, according to residents and housing advocates, the new owners tried to drive longtime tenants from their homes so they could increase rents on empty apartments to market rates. Between 1990 and 2007 New York City lost 30 percent of nearly 120,000 state-subsidized apartments, and in just four years, from 2003 to 2007, private funds bought 90,000 affordable apartments. This kind of ownership has homogenized the city in favor of what Woody Allen calls opulence.¹³

Like everyone else, investors, developers, and officials are also influenced by the flow of trendy strategies or "traveling ideas," as the urban planning researchers Malcolm Tait and Ole Jensen call them. These ideas may respond to investors' demands or specific conditions on the ground, or they may stir people's interest. When they are applied in one city after another, though, even with local variations, they lead to McGuggenization. Often developers choose a competitive response that copies what others are doing if that has proven to get media attention, politicians' support, or higher sale prices for the finished product, such as hiring Richard Meier or another star architect to design a new apartment house in a poor location, or asking Frank Gehry to design a sports stadium and then replacing his design with a cheaper building when financing disappears. Competitive strategies also travel because they are noticed by the media and promoted by business and professional groups that lobby for them in meetings with colleagues around the world. Responding to this blitz, groups in other cities take the same approach: building a Beaubourg or a Guggenheim Museum and using a Business Improvement District to revitalize—a traveling term in itself—the downtown. The net result is homogenization. Because it is notoriously difficult to come up with new ideas, the treadmill of competition condemns cities to keep on using the same strategies to outdo each other's achievements. It's aspirational production, with cities producing more modern art museums, arts festivals, hipster districts, and cafes because they want to look *different*.¹⁴

Like the market value of a rent-destabilized apartment, the value of these outposts of difference is nearly always calculated in financial terms. When the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude installed hundreds of bright orange flags in Central Park in the middle of winter in 2005, New York City tourism officials estimated that four million visitors came to see *The Gates* and bought so many souvenirs to benefit local nonprofit arts and environmental organizations that they poured \$250 million into the city's

economy. For this reason the officials and the media judged the event to be a great success, though Central Park was already attracting more visitors than any other city park in the country. As colorful as the installation was, *The Gates* did not confirm New York's uniqueness. It was only one of many projects the artists have created around the world since the 1970s, wrapping huge swathes of fabric around notable sites such as Berlin's Reichstag and Sydney's Little Bay: their own transnational luxury brand. *The Gates* was a high-class variation on the Cow Parade, a temporary version of Guggenheim Bilbao, a way to place the Christo brand for a few weeks in New York City.

In a countercyclical offensive, the economic crisis that began with sub-prime mortgage lending has not deterred public officials from the dream of presenting these installations to tourists and residents as a means of confirming the city's distinction. "We've always understood that we have to encourage big, bold projects that set our city apart," said Mayor Michael Bloomberg, when he announced that another large-scale public art work, Olafur Eliasson's *New York City Waterfalls*, had created an inflow of \$69 million in the summer of 2008. "This will be increasingly important while areas of our economy are struggling from the turmoil on Wall Street."¹⁵

These cultural strategies do bring one big benefit to elected officials: they suggest that all cities can be winners. Unlike old smokestacks and docks, they're clean. Like shopping centers and Business Improvement Districts, they make people feel safe. They create a sense of belonging. *The Gates*, the Guggenheim, and the Cow Parade, as Jean Baudrillard once wrote about the "Beaubourg effect," are a part of the "hypermarket of culture" that keeps people enthralled, "in a state of integrated mass." As a result, public art installations, modern art museums, and festivals have become a pervasive part of cities' toolkit to encourage entrepreneurial innovation and creativity, cleanse public spaces of visible signs of moral decay, and compete with other capitals of the symbolic economy of finance, media, and tourism. Together with hipster districts, ethnic tourist zones, and other cultural spaces, this toolkit of cultural strategies aims to reinvent authenticity.¹⁶

Reinventing authenticity begins with creating an image to connect an aesthetic view of origins and a social view of new beginnings. The new Harlem Renaissance connects the upscaling of an impoverished area of the city, long stigmatized by poverty and racial segregation, to a glorious cultural legacy. Hipster districts, on the other hand, connect trendy new cultural consumption to former netherworlds of tradition and transgression.

This image appeals to a mobile middle class in Europe as well as America, at least in areas of the city that are no longer seen as dangerous. "Yesterday a workers' quarter and red-light district, today a happening place," declares a large caption under a photograph of Vesterbro, a neighborhood in Copenhagen that seems a lot like Williamsburg, that was published in a recent issue of a Scandinavian airline's in-flight magazine. The article presents Vesterbro's shift from gritty to trendy as the natural result of a looser lifestyle: the neighborhood is "creative, laid back... with nothing artificial about it." Residents are a diverse, multicultural mix, but familiar and family-friendly: "students, creative types, bohemians, immigrants, returned expatriates and kids riding in bicycle wagons pulled by their fathers." In a reversal of the old division of labor between women and men, fathers take care of children while mothers manage trendy shops, and all suggest an impression of leisure, "sit[ting] at cafes that sprawl out onto the sidewalks, or brows[ing] through boutiques," though the immigrants are likely cooking in the cafe's kitchen while the returned expatriates are sitting at sidewalk tables drinking cappuccinos. These "creative types" are guides to and role models of a new urban lifestyle, "providing a sneak preview of tomorrow's trends." In fact a sneak preview had already been provided by the travel and design magazine *Wallpaper*, a Discovery channel for the global hipster set, which three years earlier declared Vesterbro to be Copenhagen's hippest quarter.¹⁷

While these magazines carry Vesterbro's image into the discourse of global culture, local cultural institutions connect the neighborhood's new beginnings with its origins on the ground. The Copenhagen City Museum offers walking tours of the area, with six different itineraries narrated by "young writers and artists," available from the museum on individual MP-3 players. "Get to know a local from Vesterbro," the official website of the city's tourist bureau invites us. "With the 'sound-literary' storytelling as your guide it feels like walking hand-in-hand with a local, showing the way around." Each doorway on the route is a doorway into the past; each house offers an overlay of individual lives and local character. "You can easily imagine how people in the old days walked around in high hats, that there was [a take-out sandwich shop] where today a bike workshop is located, and that the storyteller's great-grandmother used to look out the window that you are standing across from." For visitors who are too hip to take the museum's walking tour, a two-day Vesterbro Festival features eighty bands.¹⁸

A hundred years ago Vesterbro's biggest employer was the Carlsberg brewery. Today this redbrick urban fortress houses a museum of beer production. This is not so different from the transformation of old breweries, dairies, and warehouses into cultural centers in London, Amsterdam, Berlin, and Williamsburg. The Carlsberg *corporation* still makes beer. But since the 1960s, with beer consumption declining in Europe and growing in other areas of the world, the company has shut down breweries in its homeland and opened them in Africa and Asia. Carlsberg also pays for naming rights on the tallest observation tower on Sentosa Island, a new shopping, hotel, and entertainment development, in Singapore. Though the Carlsberg name, then, is a symbol of origins in Copenhagen, it's a symbol of Asia's new beginnings. It connects the globalization of cultural consumption in Vesterbro with the globalization of production elsewhere.

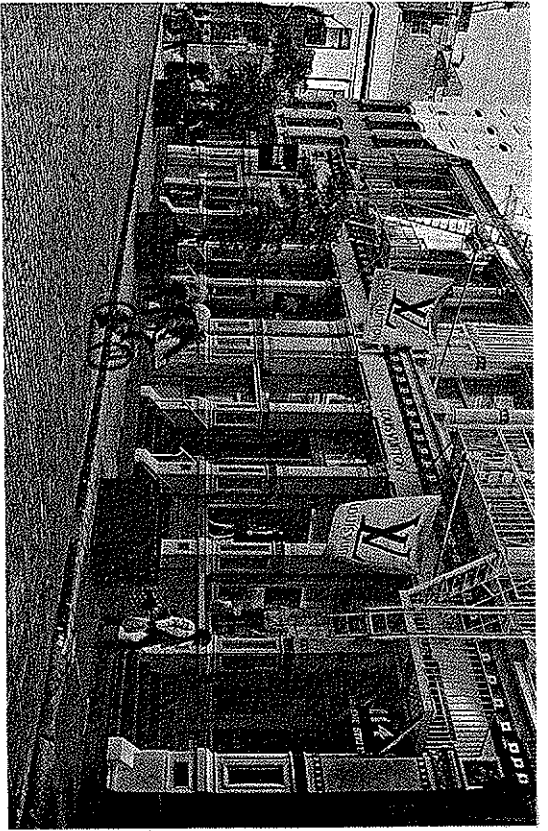
Neighborhoods that offer opportunities for cultural consumption also play an important role in cultural production. The interplay of production and consumption creates a distinctive *terroir* that nurtures specific forms of originality and innovation, which become a marketable brand for the district, its residents, and their products. The products are not necessarily manufactured there; the crucial fact is that they are conceived or designed there and identified with the lifestyle of the new middle class.

Despite the media buzz about these districts, the idea of urban *terroirs* is not really new. Just as the Latin Quarter of Paris and New York's Greenwich Village have served as models of creative districts for several centuries, so the new Bohemias of Williamsburg in Brooklyn, Hoxton in London, and central Shanghai near the Suzhou River are industrial districts for today's new economy. Not only are these neighborhoods incubators of new cultural products, styles, and trends, but they are also serious workplaces for graphic artists, fine artists, fashion designers, software designers, music producers, jewelry makers, metalworkers, and furniture builders. Artists and craftspeople seek spaces in these districts because they are built large and sturdy; their old wooden floors, solid walls, and lack of residential neighbors can take paint splatters, banging, and all-night work sessions. Local laws permit the noise of welding and smell of artists' paint and silk-screen printers' chemicals. Like more traditional forms of manufacturing, creative work leads to and benefits from clustering in special districts, whether or not these are recognized by a legal designation such as "artists' district." Creative clusters mobilize the social networks that are needed at every stage of the production process: getting commissions from firms in

the mainstream economy, finding workers with specific skills for different projects, getting the work done, and forging collaborations for future jobs. Like SoHo in the 1970s, the East Village in the 1980s, and Williamsburg in the 1990s, a neighborhood's social networks support the local concentration of skills and talent. From an economic point of view, the bars, cafés, and boutiques that emerge in creative districts are important to production. They're like the office water cooler or coffee machine where colleagues and work mates gather, but unlike in an office, cafés and boutiques can so reinvent the character of a neighborhood that it becomes too expensive for the locals to live and work there.¹⁹

Unlike factory owners who in the early days of industry built workers' housing near the mill, media firms that hire creative producers have no interest in whether they can afford to live in the trendy neighborhoods where they have set up shop. They often hire artists, musicians, media producers, and fashion models as freelancers or for specific projects. Lacking a steady job and looking for their next gig, cultural workers are the "creative types" whom we see eating brunch in Vesterbro at 1 p.m. or tending bar in Williamsburg at 1 a.m. Their life as flexible workers creates a production of leisure and an image of idleness that stage authenticity, helping to make these neighborhoods a cultural destination.²⁰

For the past few decades Destination Culture has offered a general model of a city's new beginnings in postindustrial production and leisure consumption. It suits real estate developers who seek to encourage the high value of urban land, especially in the center, by converting it to high-rent uses and appeals to a younger generation who trend toward an aesthetic rather than a political view of social life. Cities invest in different forms of Destination Culture, most often building spaces of consumption for shopping, museum hopping, or entertainment, but also building spaces of production such as artists' studios, live-work lofts, and cultural hubs. With media buzz and rising rents, these spaces shift the city, one neighborhood at a time, from traditional manufacturing to arts and crafts production, and then to cultural display, design, and consumption, testing the market for higher rents and creating "new" space for more intensive uses. Like *The Gates*, all forms of Destination Culture are judged according to their financial results. In the end upscale development triumphs over authenticity, whether that is the authenticity of origins or of new beginnings.



Destination Culture: SoHo, Greene Street, luxury chain stores in landmark district.
Photograph by Richard Rosen.

SoHo's recent transformation illustrates the process. In the 1970s the legalization of loft living for artists in SoHo created a space of city-sponsored, though not publicly financed, cultural production. At that time nearly all street-level spaces, the neighborhood's storefronts and first-floor lofts, were used by small manufacturers and suppliers that catered to them. By 1980, a few years after the artists' district was formed, most of these spaces were still used by factories or factory suppliers, but almost as many housed art galleries. The district attracted an enormous amount of media attention in lifestyle magazines and art world journals and in "New York" movies as well. Foot traffic swelled. By 1990 art galleries dominated the storefronts, joined by new, individually owned boutiques and professional services, while manufacturing visibly waned. SoHo was now known as an artists' district, but it was also becoming an interesting place to shop for new art, trendy clothing, and fine imported cheese. By 2000 art galleries began to be outnumbered by boutiques, and chain stores of every sort planted themselves on Broadway, near the subway stations, as well as on the side streets. Only five years later, with rents dramatically rising, chain stores outnumbered boutiques two to one, a small number of art galleries remained, and factories had all but disappeared. An elderly landlord who

bought a building on Broadway in 1966 and is now replacing one of his longtime tenants, a well-known modern dance company, with an expansion of Banana Republic, says of the rents that chain stores are willing to pay, "The sky's the limit, what they offer me."²¹

By 2005 SoHo was no longer an artists' district; it was an urban shopping mall. There were the low-price quasi-discount clothing stores such as H&M, the high-end designer fashion stores such as Chanel, and almost everything in between. For that matter, SoHo offered few brands of clothing, jewelry, or shoes that could not be found Uptown on Fifth or Madison Avenue or in most other big cities around the world. Though the city government's historic preservation laws prevented developers from destroying the physical fabric of the old cast-iron loft buildings, the local character that New Yorkers took to be "authentic"—the distinctive cultural meaning the neighborhood derived from use of the space for either manufacturing or art—was overwhelmed by the homogenizing force of new chain stores and multimillion-dollar lofts. It isn't possible to sustain this model through a long economic recession: manufacturers and artists produce things, chain stores do not.

In the 1970s no one expected artists' lofts in old factory buildings to become the "wienie," as Walt Disney called the attraction that lures customers to an amusement park, that would make SoHo a cultural destination. So compelling a vision of renewal did the artists' district become, though, that the same sequence of events—the conversion of unused or underpriced industrial buildings into live-work spaces for artists, with local government support, followed by the emergence of a market for cafés, boutiques, and bars developed by new cultural entrepreneurs, leading in turn to higher rents, chain stores, and luxury housing—became a model of Destination Culture, a model that soon spread to cities around the world. Hoxton, in the East End of London, offers another example, which is quickly summarized: "In the late 1980s," says *The Times* of London, Hoxton "was a derelict place, unaffected by the property boom. Artists marked it as their own and after a few years a community had developed and the area was slowly rejuvenated. There was a thriving creative scene incorporating a trendy nightlife, which attracted an influx of people, dramatically pushing up property prices and finally driving the impoverished art community out."²²

By now the idea of the cultural hub has traveled from New York and London, to rapidly growing Shanghai. Some conditions in all three cities are similar. With Chinese political and business leaders supporting a market

economy, rents in the urban center, coupled with lower wages for less skilled workers in distant regions, have driven factories out of the city, leaving their old buildings empty. Most have been torn down and replaced by expensive housing and offices for foreign corporations, overseas entrepreneurs, and wealthy business people. Local officials reflect pride in this sort of development, their rhetoric of growth expressing a nationalism and urban boosterism that even displaced low-income residents cannot resist. The officials aim to develop a global financial center that will successfully compete with the city's closest rivals, Beijing and Hong Kong, using projects constructed for World Expo 2010 and the skyline of the city itself, where seventy-story skyscrapers spring like mythical dragon's teeth. This doesn't sound so different from the rhetoric of growth in New York City. In China, though, local officials are directly involved in real estate development. They don't just change zoning laws; they direct development as planners, investors, and partners with private firms. In the 1990s Shanghai's local officials worked with a Hong Kong developer and his American architect in developing Xintianli, a modern, upscale shopping district installed partly in old houses that, at the architect's instigation, had been saved from demolition by a historic district designation. Keeping a watchful eye on interest in the commercial reuse of old buildings, as well as on the cultural ambitions of their Asian rivals, Shanghai officials then encouraged the conversion of an old textile factory complex at 50 Moganshan Lu into artists' studios and galleries. Following British practice, the Shanghainese called the old factory a cultural hub.²³

The hub began in an unplanned way, like artists' lofts in SoHo in the 1970s. In the first years of the twenty-first century the artist Xue Song moved into studio space in the vacant 1930s-era factory complex at 50 Moganshan Lu, near the Suzhou River, in central Shanghai. The factory was owned by Shangtex, a large textile and apparel holding company, which had recently moved to a new development zone on the Pudong side of the city, near the airport. The empty factory buildings that Shanghai left behind appealed to Xue Song and other artists, who not only knew about SoHo and Hoxton but also had heard of Factory 798, a complex of artists' studios and galleries that recently opened in Beijing. But local political officials and business leaders also knew about cultural districts and creative hubs, and they saw the site's potential for both creative production and upscale real estate development. Indeed, in Beijing Factory 798 was already generating media buzz and spurring the development of a hip district of galleries, cafés, and boutiques. Like artists, cultural

entrepreneurs were eager to take advantage of the cheap rents and central location of the empty Shangtex plant.

Within a couple of years 50 Moganshan Lu drew artists from other parts of Asia as well as cultural entrepreneurs from Europe and the United States who opened galleries of contemporary Chinese art. In these raw, cement buildings people began to produce and display not only traditional landscape paintings and sculptures, but also self-conscious, avant-garde art that pictured Mao, the Red Guards, or a fat, communist bourgeoisie: images that until recently had been not only discouraged but banned by government and party leaders. This work was now a "wienie," a positive attraction, for foreign tourists and investors, who were prepared by the experience of SoHo to come to a gritty industrial district in Shanghai to "discover" new Chinese artists. The high prices paid for new Chinese art at auctions in Europe and the United States encouraged investors and officials to support the idea of artists' hubs, a traveling idea that joined art and power in any would-be global city.

As the hub's landlord, Shangtex became an eager patron of the arts. An image of creativity fit the company's branding strategy, which promotes Shangtex as an innovator for combining technology and fashion to produce new synthetic fibers for the clothing industry. The fledgling cultural hub also enjoyed the support of local party and government officials. In 2002 Shanghai's Municipal Economic Committee named the complex of twenty-one buildings an official industrial park; two years later this title was changed to "art industrial park."²⁴

Spaces at 50 Moganshan Lu are occupied by a variety of creative concerns, from art galleries and graphic arts and design studios to architects' offices and facilities for TV and film production. The hub's own branding strategy explicitly borrows from New York, with the slogan "Suzhou creek/Soho/loft." Its website explains this slogan in the familiar terms of authenticity, for Suzhou, SoHo, and loft "embody that M50 [50 Moganshan Lu] is an integration of history, culture, art, vogue [fashion], and originality." This combination represents not just the appearance but the *experience* of authenticity: "The shabby factory buildings contain certain value, because the naked steel structure as well as the old brick walls and the mottled concrete make people feel the truthness and perfection of being existent." The cultural hub couldn't make a better connection between gritty origins and shiny new beginnings—the very basis of reinventing authentic urban places.²⁵

As SoHo and Hoxton demonstrate, however, reinventing authenticity as Destination Culture destroys the original aura of the place. Supporting a cultural hub at 50 Moganshan Lu starts out well. It suits the ambition of local officials to preside over a financial and cultural capital, but it prevents them from doing there what they have done all over town: aggressively demolishing old buildings and districts and removing businesses and residents to make a cleaner, more modern, conspicuously global city. They have accomplished great things, including cleansing the Suzhou River of years of industrial pollution. But continued redevelopment around Moganshan Lu creates a financial hardship for artists even if the city government permits them to stay in the center. Rents are already too high; few artists can afford to live there, and some have moved their studios to the outskirts of the city, leaving the cultural hub to galleries and other commercial facilities. This suggests that, in Shanghai as in New York and London, reinventing a neighborhood's authenticity serves mainly to establish the market value of its buildings and location, even at the cost of preventing artists, residents, and small business owners from putting down roots. When an influential leader of the movement to make SoHo a historic landmark district in the 1970s was asked, years later, how she felt about the area's morphing into an urban shopping mall, she said, "That's the price of getting something saved. There's got to be money in it for someone."²⁶

We still have this yearning kind of element, this urban feeling of being in the city and trying to survive.

—Lizzi Bougatsos, lead singer of Gang Gang Dance, quoted in *New York Times*, October 21, 2008

Changes in the city's habitus, its social and cultural environment, reflect the massive changes in ownership that have slowly built a corporate city around the core of an urban village. It's not just in artists' districts like SoHo or hipster districts like Williamsburg where you see these changes. Walk down any neighborhood shopping street: chain stores are filling prescriptions and selling groceries, bank branches are dispensing cash from ATMs, the multiplex is a giant black box, and the greasy-spoon diner has either been transformed into a cocktail bar or replaced by Starbucks. The comic writer Amy Sedaris is right to fear "that New York is turning into everywhere else and street names will eventually be replaced with corporations"

names: Meet me on the corner of Johnson and Johnson, west of Procter and Gamble, take the Costco 1 train, switch at Bell South. I'll be in front of Mega Wal-Mart next to the Pfizer Museum." Since the 1990s the commerce of most neighborhoods has flowed through transnational firms instead of mom-and-pop stores, and though this has given some customers a better deal than they used to get from longtime landlords and merchants, it has changed the scale and character of urban life.²⁷

This process has moved fastest in the original, *nr*-neighborhoods in the centers of cities, where the old urban village has been restored or rehabbed to conform to an "interesting" aesthetic vision, while losing the low-key, low-income, and low-status residents who gave it an authentic character. Walk around the remaining cobblestone streets; they are ghostly reminders of an *nr*-neighborhood's modest origins. It is hard not to sound nostalgic about these traces of the past when so many of them have been replaced by redbrick pavements and high-rise apartment houses of little character. It is harder to look at your own tastes as a contributing factor of these changes. But along with the power of capital and the state, our own tastes have shaped a habitus of lattes, Whole Foods, and designer jeans that has the cultural power to displace chicken shacks and dollar stores. Our tastes for consuming the city unconsciously confirm the official rhetoric of upscale growth.

Jane Jacobs seduced us with her vision of the urban village. Unlike her communitarian vision of social harmony, though, we have to go beyond the block to decide what kind of *city* we want. This should not be the city of Robert Moses, whose dictatorial ability to conceive and carry out big plans stirs nostalgia among today's power brokers. We need small-scale streets and shops, ethnic and working-class residents, and low rents that allow residents to put down roots in the heart of the city. Moses used federal government funds and local government power to give land to the cultural institutions of New York University and Lincoln Center that still provide jobs for artists and creative support staff today. The state failed, though, to provide stable long-term housing for these necessary, low- and middle-income workers. Jacobs didn't talk about housing prices, but affordable income and low commercial rents are crucial to keeping the kinds of people and stores she liked in her neighborhood. Though she advocated a mix of new and old buildings that would keep rents low, she failed to see how maintaining the physical fabric of the old city, its loft buildings and four- and five-story townhouses, would create a precious commodity that few

longtime residents and store owners could afford. This vulnerability to the displacing effects of growth is especially acute in “uncommon spaces” such as the East and West Village, in the heart of the original city.

Though *Time Out New York* applauds the Destination Culture of shopping, food, bar scenes, and arts communities that has developed in Manhattan and downtown Brooklyn, most of the magazine’s readers have already moved away to neighborhoods in Queens, where rents are lower. Even there, though, the media buzz of magazines and the self-conscious prose of blogs have begun to celebrate authentic neighborhoods, such as “the REAL Astoria,” as a post on Craigslist says. “It still has the family owned markets & delis, mom and pop shops, etc., that are now vanishing in NYC and being overtaken by these glass windowed behemoth condos. True pre-war buildings still exist, contrary to what they’re building in Manhattan... Tree-lined streets. Humility. Soul.”²⁸

This future was largely unknown when Jane Jacobs wrote about the city. But she lived long enough to see the long arm of redevelopment touch SoHo and Williamsburg and to understand the vulnerable charm of mom-and-pop stores. She didn’t believe in government action, though, to save authentic places. To the end of her life she put no faith in zoning or any other plan that was imposed from outside a neighborhood. Her work cannot guide us to devise strategies for protecting residents and businesses that would break the great power of those who own, and those who can zone, the land.

Because authenticity begins as an aesthetic category, it appeals to cultural consumers, especially young people, today. But it also has a lot to do with economics and power. To claim that a neighborhood is authentic suggests that the group that makes the claim knows what to do with, how best to represent, its “authentic” character. Whether members of this group are rappers or gentrifiers, their ability to represent the streets gives them a right to claim power over them. This right, though, is often limited to preserving the *look* and the *experience* of authenticity rather than preserving the community that lives there.

Authenticity must be used to reshape the rights of ownership. Claiming authenticity can suggest a right to the city, a human right, that is cultivated by longtime residence, use, and habit. Just as icons—in the original, religious meaning of the word—derive their meaning from the rituals in which they are embedded, so do neighborhoods, buildings, and streets. If these built forms of culture were torn apart by the state in the 1950s and

1960s in the pursuit of progress or to help real estate developers buy cheap land, they are no longer embedded in the “fabric of tradition” that Walter Benjamin describes. If we appreciate them as authentic, we are speaking from a distance of space and time, where we no longer participate in the routines and rituals of their origins. But to appreciate their authenticity in terms of *social* origins requires respect, as the food blog Porkchop Express says, for the social classes and ethnic groups that have made these spaces authentic—and a politics that enables them, and their spiritual descendants, to stay in place. Zoning, limits on rent increases, government-backed mortgage guarantees for store owners, special privileges for start-up businesses and young apprentices that will maintain crafts and trades, street vending, and even gardening: these are the basic building blocks that can produce the neighborhood self-sufficiency Jane Jacobs prized.

Jacobs was wrong to distrust the capacity of state power to protect the city’s authenticity. Neither in her time nor in ours, though, has the state been a good partner of communities, and certainly not of poor and working-class communities. The betrayal of community-based plans and values on the waterfront in Williamsburg and on 125th Street in Harlem does not build trust. Imposing expensive licensing requirements on the Red Hook food vendors and taking the land developed by community gardeners deny men and women with little money but a lot of energy the state’s protection. The city government has accepted the use of inclusionary zoning to ensure a share of affordable apartments in new residential projects, where developers are willing to be persuaded by subsidies. But New York’s political leaders have made no effort to halt the state legislature’s elimination of rent controls, and they are too tightly allied with private developers, and too stymied by New York State’s constitution, to try to establish new limits on their own. Neither has the city government supported the use of community benefits agreements, which would guarantee needed jobs and housing. In the few cases where developers have accepted such agreements public officials fail to enforce them. But without the power of state laws neighborhoods have no way to fight market forces that destroy community institutions.

What is required is to build the political will for this from the bottom up, and to build this resistance among a wide public of voters, including many in the middle class, may require a rhetoric that connects the social goal of rootedness and the economic goal of stable rents to the cultural power of authenticity. If mom-and-pop stores are more “authentic” than big-box chains, the state should mandate their inclusion in every new

building project and in every shopping block. If the social life of the streets is truly important, the state should make sure that all the men and women who use the streets have affordable rents so they can continue to live in their neighborhood.

It was easier, at the end of the past century, to see the shards of both origins and new beginnings in urban decay. Though few city dwellers want to return to those years of abandoned houses and dangerous streets, reclaiming our origins in the small scale of old buildings, the low rents of working-class neighborhoods, and fewer corporate names would take us a long way toward regaining that era's strong sense of authenticity. But we cannot limit our efforts to buildings; we must reach a new understanding of the authentic city in terms of people. Authenticity is nearly always used as a lever of cultural power for a group to claim space and take it away from others without direct confrontation, with the help of the state and elected officials and the persuasion of the media and consumer culture. We can turn this lever in the direction of democracy, however, by creating new forms of public-private stewardship that give residents, workers, and small business owners, as well as buildings and districts, a right to put down roots and remain in place. This would strike a balance between a city's origins and its new beginnings; this would restore a city's soul.

NOTES

Introduction. The City That Lost Its Soul

1. I have adapted "origins" and "new beginnings" from the distinction made by Edward Said in *Beginnings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). For public discussions of "soul," see Sewell Chan, <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/04/> has-new-york-lost-its-soul, October 4, 2007 and "The Over-Successful City: The Struggle for the Character of New York City," a lecture by Kent Barwick, the president of the Municipal Art Society, at The New School, October 17, 2008.
2. Cover story, *Time*, March 24, 2008, pp. 52-54; James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine II, *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2007); Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society* (London: Sage, 1998).
3. John Hannigan, *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 1998). I first used "domestication by cappuccino" to describe the upgrading of Bryant Park in midtown Manhattan in *The Cultures of Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).
4. I am using *terroir*, a term that usually refers to the specific combination of land, culture, and climate that produces distinctive foods and wines, to suggest that the distinctive character of urban neighborhoods is similarly produced by specific demographic, social, and cultural processes.