Planning with Eyes of Kinship

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Abstract

Every planning tradition inherits an image of the world before it inherits a method. This major research paper examines how modern planning has been shaped by a representational imagination that approaches the city as an object to be rendered visible, ordered, and eventually completed. It argues that the contemporary crisis of planning is therefore not solely technical, procedural, or political-economic, but hermeneutic: cities become increasingly legible through data, financial calculation, and spatial representation while the relations through which urban life is reproduced recede from life.

In response, my research develops Eyes of Kinship, a planning orientation grounded in sociogenic hermeneutics. Eyes of Kinship asks how inherited conceptions of the human, dwelling, property, care, and community become materialized through planning practices before any intervention begins. Its central theoretical movement, The Poetics of Planning, then reimagines planning not as the administration of completed objects but as the rhythmic composition and disclosure of living worlds. Through poiesis, opacity, metabolic transparency, symmathesy, and the hermeneutic spiral, planning becomes the cultivation of conditions through which memory, ecology, participation, and relation may continually gather without being finalized or possessed.

The paper subsequently names Subprime Kinship as the financial capture of these compositional capacities, through which debt and property reorganize housing, family time, community, care, rest, and the political imagination around accumulation. Non-urban Urbanism offers a speculative response by asking how production, reproduction, extraction, dwelling, ecology, and care might become mutually responsible. Through Villagization and the Metropolitan Waystation, the paper proposes no completed model of the good city. Instead, it turns planning towards the unfinished vocation of disalienating the city and its citizens: making concealed

metabolisms publicly intelligible while preserving the opacity through which collective life acquires memory, intimacy, and meaning.
Keywords: Eyes of Kinship; Poetics of Planning; sociogenic hermeneutics; Subprime Kinship; Non-urban Urbanism

Foreword

This major Research Paper represents the culmination of my Master of Environmental Studies in Planning at York University's Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change. More than satisfying the academic requirements of the degree and the educational competencies of the Canadian Institute of Planners and the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, it gathers together the questions that have accompanied my Plan of Study from its beginning.

Each course, internship(s), public engagement, and research collaboration contributed another movement within a longer hermeneutic spiral of learning. Community planning revealed the political economy of financialization and the fragmentation of everyday life. My critical urban planning workshop class and studies of securitization exposed how visibility, surveillance, neighborhood segregation, and fear reorganize belonging. Explorations of democratic practice, social reproduction, Black and Indigenous thought, and ecological planning gradually disclosed another possibility: that planning begins not with regulation alone, but with the cultivation of relation.

Planning with Eyes of Kinship emerges from this journey. The concepts of Eyes of Kinship, The Poetics of Planning, Subprime Kinship, Non-urban Urbanism, and Villagization are offered not as isolated theories, but as successive attempts to imagine a planning practice capable of responding to the intertwined crises of financialization, democratic erosion, ecological precarity, and social fragmentation. If this work possesses a single aspiration, it is to invite planning into a renewed conversation with the worlds that continually sustain life, so that the city may become a place where relation is not merely protected, but thoughtfully composed.

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INTRODUCTION

"The path has, in a sense, been opened up for us to tread, confident that the poet was right to say:
'Some of it you yourself will see in your own heart,
and some the divinity will put in your mind.'
...They will live out their lives in accord with the sort of nature they possess... occasionally getting a glimpse of the truth."
(Plato, quoting Homer's, *Odyssey).*

The Crisis of Planning

In its most ideal state Planning has been animated by the aspiration to change and modify space and the natural world to the variegated needs of human beings. At its most generous, it is a discipline that refuses to accept that the city must remain as it is. From the neighborhood unit and the garden city models to contemporary discussions of complete communities, transit-oriented development, and fifteen-minute cities, planning has repeatedly sought to compose urban environments in which everyday life might flourish through greater proximity, accessibility, and collective well-being. Beneath these varied traditions lie a remarkably consistent ethical aspiration: that the city can be organized in ways that lessen unnecessary hardship while expanding the conditions through which both human and more-than-human life may thrive.

Few contemporary planning concepts embody this aspiration more fully than the complete community. As Jill L. Grant (2023, para. 48) argues, the concept has become an "integrative, flexible, and scalable construct" that places "a halo over high-density," promising that compact urban form can simultaneously deliver economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and social livability. Rather than functioning as a narrowly technical planning tool, the complete community has become a compelling public imagination of what good urbanism ought to be: a neighborhood where housing, employment, recreation, mobility, and public services exist in

meaningful proximity, reducing the burdens of everyday life while strengthening opportunities for encounter and collective flourishing.

This major research paper does not reject that aspiration. To the contrary, it begins by taking it seriously. The desire to cultivate places where people can live well together remains one of planning's most enduring ethical commitments. The question posed here is therefore not whether planners should seek vibrant, accessible, and equitable communities. They should. The question is quieter, but ultimately more fundamental: What image of the city accompanies the aspiration toward completeness?

Planning has long been concerned with the image of the city. Kevin Lynch's (1964) seminal work *The Image of the City*, for example, demonstrates how inhabitants orient themselves through paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks, revealing that urban form becomes meaningful through patterns of perception and memory. The image explored in my research begins elsewhere. It does not concern the cognitive organization of urban space but the more originary horizon through which the city first becomes imaginable as a particular kind of world. Before planners inherit methods of seeing, they inherit an imagination of what the city is, what it is for, and what forms of life it ought to sustain. This deeper image does not organize streets so much as it organizes the conditions under which streets become thinkable at all. It belongs less to the visible landscape than to the subterranean inheritances of Western thought — to the cave before the map, to the poetic stream before becoming congeals into fixed being. The task pursued here is therefore not simply the reinterpretation of an existing planning image, but a creative undoing of the imagination from which planning itself proceeds. It seeks, in this sense, not another representation of the city, but another beginning.

Every planning tradition inherits an image of the world before it develops its methods. Concepts such as resilience, sustainability, optimization, integration, and completeness do not emerge in isolation; they are sustained by deeper assumptions about what cities are, how they change, and

what constitutes their successful realization. The language of the complete community is therefore philosophically significant not because it is misguided, but because it reveals a persistent planning desire: the hope that urban life might ultimately be brought into coherence through sophisticated forms of spatial organization.

Yet contemporary urban experience resists this aspiration. The same historical moment that celebrates complete communities is also marked by intensifying housing precarity, ecological degradation, infrastructural opacity, and widening forms of social fragmentation. Cities become denser while many residents experience growing isolation. New housing rises alongside deepening unaffordability. Sustainability strategies proliferate even as climate instability accelerates. The paradox is not simply that planning has failed to achieve its objectives. Rather, it suggests that the city itself may not conform to the image through which planning has learned to imagine it.

Perhaps, then, the crisis confronting planning is not primarily one of implementation, governance, or technical capacity. Perhaps it is first a crisis of imagination. As Julie-Anne Boudreau (2022) reminds us, cities are not completed objects but sites of ongoing maintenance — partial, improvised, and collectively carried. They persist not because they achieve equilibrium, but because they remain open to revision and transformation. Their vitality lies less in their completion than in their capacity to continually reproduce the relations that sustain collective life.

It is here that this research paper begins. Instead of asking how planning might finally complete and achieve the city, it asks whether completion has become the wrong horizon altogether. If cities are constituted not by closure (being) but by ongoing acts of relation, repair, and becoming, then the crisis of planning cannot be resolved simply through better techniques or more comprehensive plans. It requires a reconsideration of the imagination from which planning itself proceeds — and how planning produces incompleteness in the first place. The following section argues that this imagination cannot be understood apart from the financialization of urban life,

through which the city comes to be organized less around the reproduction of collective life than around the circulation and accumulation of capital.

Financialization

If the previous section questioned whether the city was ever capable of completion, a second question immediately follows. Why has planning become progressively more so committed to this horizon of completeness precisely at the historical moment when urban life appears evermore fractured? The answer, this paper argues, cannot be found within planning alone. It requires understanding a broader transformation in the political economy of urbanization. During the last half-century, the city itself has become one of capital's primary frontiers of accumulation.

Henri Lefebvre (2003) anticipated this transformation more than five decades ago (in *The Urban Revolution* originally published in 1971) when he argued that urbanization was progressively supplanting industrialization as the dominant terrain through which capital reproduced itself. As profitability within industrial production declined, investment progressively migrated toward urban land, real estate, and the built environment, making property speculation a central mechanism for the realization of surplus value (Lefebvre, 2003). Rather than just accommodating economic development, the city itself became its principal commodity. As Madden and Marcuse (2016) would later observe, real estate in many parts of the world has become more profitable than industry itself, fulfilling Lefebvre's warning that speculation in land and housing would become one of capital's primary means of accumulation.

This historical shift fundamentally altered the meaning of housing. A home no longer functioned principally as a place of dwelling, memory, or intergenerational continuity (as a use-value). It became an investment vehicle, a financial instrument, and a speculative asset whose value extended well beyond the lives of those who inhabited it. The financialization of housing therefore represents more than the commodification of shelter. It signals a broader

transformation in which everyday life itself becomes enrolled within the circuits of global finance. As Costas Lapavitsas (2011) argues, contemporary financial institutions over the longue durée of the late twentieth century into the twenty-first extract profits directly from wages, pensions, mortgages, insurance, education, and everyday household revenues rather than solely from industrial production or traditional banking activities (i.e. loans to businesses). Financialization thus reaches beyond the factory into the ordinary infrastructures through which social life is reproduced.

Perhaps nowhere is this transformation more visible than in the mortgage system itself. Thus, in light of these wider structural transformations, housing emerges as the privileged site through which financialization becomes legible. It is here that the abstractions of contemporary capitalism enter the ordinary rhythms of dwelling, offering a diagnostic horizon from which political action can begin. Melissa Garcıa-Lamarca and Maria Kaika (2016) demonstrate that mortgage securitization fundamentally altered the social relationship between borrower and creditor. What had once been an embodied relationship with a local financial institution became an abstract relation to distant, opaque, and globally circulating financial entities. Debt no longer possessed a face. The creditor became dispersed across investment portfolios, pension funds, hedge funds, and mortgage-backed securities whose operations remained largely invisible to those whose everyday lives sustained them. As Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika observes, this transformation intensified practices of alienation precisely because the social relation underpinning indebtedness could no longer be encountered as a human relationship at all.

Financialization therefore changes more than the ownership of housing. It changes the object toward which planning orients itself. Neighborhoods and buildings become portfolios and revenue streams. Mortgages turn into globally traded assets. Urban land is transformed into a vehicle for speculative accumulation. Capital no longer merely exploits labour; it dwells within the walls of everyday life, reorganizing the conditions through which housing, care, and collective reproduction become possible. The city remains inhabited, but its underlying logics

start to more so respond to distant financial markets whose temporalities often bear little resemblance to the metabolic rhythms of neighborhood life.

It is here that the paradox identified in the previous section begins to sharpen. Planning continues to pursue complete communities while the material conditions of urban life become organized through financial abstraction. The question therefore is no longer simply how cities are planned, but how they have become intelligible through forms of reasoning that privilege investment over social reproduction. Before these transformations can be fully understood, however, it is necessary to examine the epistemological horizon that makes them appear both rational and desirable. It is to this horizon of transparency that the discussion now turns to.

Transparency

If financialization transformed what planning plans for, transparency explains how planning learned to see. The previous section argued that the contemporary city has become reorganized around the circulation of capital, where housing begins to function less as a place of dwelling than as a financial asset circulating through global markets. Yet financialization alone cannot explain why these transformations continue to appear rational, desirable, or even inevitable. To answer that question requires moving beneath political economy toward the (onto)epistemological horizon from which modern planning itself emerges.

Planning has long assumed that better cities follow from better knowledge. Surveys are now more precise. Models have become more predictive. And data is more comprehensive. The city appears exceedingly more visible, measurable, and intelligible. This aspiration is rarely questioned because it appears synonymous with good planning itself. Yet behind this confidence lies a much older inheritance: the belief that the world reaches its fullest truth only when everything hidden has been brought into the light of reason. Modern planning did not invent this inheritance. It simply received it.

This paper names this inheritance the City of the Transparent I (also named as the Glass City) **(**da Silva, 2007**)**. It is the city imagined not primarily as a lived relation but as an object awaiting complete intelligibility; not as an unfinished social world but as a text whose meaning has already been written and merely awaits correct interpretation. Transparency, in this sense, is not simply an epistemological preference. It is a civilizational aspiration. It imagines that uncertainty, ambiguity, opacity, and mystery are temporary conditions destined to disappear before the progressive illumination of knowledge.

The genealogy of this imagination reaches deeply into Western philosophy. Plato's allegory of the cave establishes one of its foundational metaphors. Knowledge appears as ascent into light, while shadow signifies ignorance awaiting correction. The philosopher returns from illumination bearing a vision of political order grounded in what reason alone has disclosed. Within this horizon, opacity becomes synonymous with error, and the work of politics, and subsequently planning, consists of replacing ambiguity with certainty. The city becomes governable precisely to the extent that it becomes legible.

St. Augustine of Hippo extends this inheritance by transforming not merely truth, but the world itself, into a Book (Augustine, 1991). Creation becomes a text to be read; history turns into a script already authored; and meaning precedes encounter. The world no longer unfolds through relation, and the unfolding of time in space, but through interpretation. This Augustinian imagination establishes the conditions through which the city itself comes to be understood as something fundamentally readable. The planner starts to resemble a privileged reader whose task is to decipher an order presumed already to exist.

Yet what if the city cannot be read in this way? What if urban (world) life does not precede relation, but emerges through it? As a compositional force, and not a static object?

It is here that Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007) provides the decisive philosophical interruption. Her account of the Transparent I reveals that transparency is never merely about visibility. It names a particular figure of modern consciousness: a knowing subject that mistakes its

historically situated perspective for universal reason itself. The world appears transparent because it has already been organized according to the conditions of this gaze. What exceeds that gaze becomes irrational, peripheral, or unintelligible. Modern planning inherits this posture whenever it assumes that sophisticated representation, data, or technical expertise can finally exhaust the meaning of urban life. Deciding on these terms what the good life is, and ought to be.

Henri Lefebvre (1991) demonstrates that this transparency does not merely organize thought; it produces space. Lefebvre describes transparency as an illusion through which space appears innocent, fully communicable, and immediately knowable, concealing the social practices through which it is continually produced. Under this illusion, communication becomes confused with transformation, representation substitutes for practice, and the written plan gradually displaces the lived rhythms of everyday life. The city appears fully illuminated precisely because the labour, care, conflict, and reproduction that sustain it have disappeared beneath its representations. Transparency therefore reveals less than it conceals. It overconfidently mistakes legibility for understanding.

Katherine McKittrick (2006) extends Lefebvre's insight by demonstrating that transparent space is never politically innocent. It organizes whose histories become visible, whose movements become legible, and whose geographies disappear beneath apparently neutral spatial representations. In this respect, Black geographies expose the limits of transparent space because they reveal forms of inhabitation, memory, and resistance that cannot be reduced to the categories through which modern planning has learned to read the city. Transparency thus produces not only visibility but also erasure.

It is against this inheritance that Édouard Glissant (1997) offers one of the most profound philosophical departures of the late twentieth century. Against the Book, he proposes Relation, opacity and errantry. Not transparency or filiation. Opacity, however, is not the refusal of Platonic dialectics or Gadamerian understanding. It is the ethical refusal of total possession. It acknowledges that persons, communities, and places always exceed what can be known of them.

The world, Glissant insists, cannot become a Book because a Book closes meaning, fixes legitimacy, and presumes that order precedes encounter. Relation moves differently. It remains unfinished. It must continually be narrated, revised, and recreated through the unpredictable labour of living-with.

The implications for planning are profound. If the city is not a Book but a relational poiesis, then planning cannot remain primarily a practice of perfecting representation. Its task becomes something else entirely. Instead of exhausting the city through transparent forms of knowledge, planning must learn to cultivate the conditions through which new relations can emerge without demanding that they first become fully intelligible. Transparency gives us the city as object, whilst relation returns the city as world-in-becoming.

Alienation

If transparency describes the epistemological horizon through which planning has learned to know the city, alienation names the lived condition produced by that horizon. It marks the gradual separation of persons from the relations that sustain them — not only from labour, but from dwelling, ecology, historical and spatial memory, infrastructure, and one another. Alienation is therefore not simply an economic category inherited from political economy. It is the ordinary experience of inhabiting a world whose conditions of existence disappear from view. The city remains visible, yet the relations that make urban life possible recede ever further into abstraction. What once appeared as a living choreography of mutual dependence increasingly presents itself as a collection of autonomous objects, each seemingly complete unto itself. This atomistic rendering of social life is the most inmost telltale sign of an arrivant or incoming totalitarian mode of being-in-the-polis (Arendt, 1973).

Long before alienation became associated with capitalism, Gaston Bachelard (1994) observes that Western metaphysics repeatedly organizes existence through the opposition of inside and outside. These are never merely spatial descriptions. They become ontological divisions through which being itself is imagined. Quoting Jean Hippolite, Bachelard (1994) writes, "beyond what

is expressed in their formal opposition lie alienation and hostility between the two" (p. 212). The boundary separating interior from exterior gradually becomes more than a line upon a map; it becomes a way of thinking that fragments experience itself. The home is severed from the watershed that nourishes it, the neighborhood from the labour that built it, and the resident from the extracted ecological sites and social worlds upon which everyday life depends. Alienation begins, not with estrangement from work alone, but with the philosophical separation of what was once understood as fundamentally relational.

Maria Kaika (2005) demonstrates that contemporary urbanization reproduces this same separation through the fetishization of the built environment. Roads, buildings, parks, utility networks, and neighborhoods appear before us as finished objects, seemingly detached from the labour, ecological transformation, negotiation, and political struggle through which they were produced. The city presents itself as though it had always existed in its present form, concealing the human and more-than-human relations that continually sustain it. As Kaika (2005) argues, the production of the urban remains fetishized because the social relations of its production remain largely unspoken. The city is experienced as a completed landscape replete with manicured lawns that stretch for kilometres instead of as an ongoing metabolic process. Alienation therefore no longer concerns only the worker's separation from the product of labour. It characterizes the resident's separation from the metabolic processes that reproduce urban life itself.

Henri Lefebvre (1991) extends this diagnosis by distinguishing between abstract space and lived space. Abstract space privileges equilibrium, repetition, administrative order, and the reduction of difference into manageable forms. Lived space, by contrast, remains rhythmic, energetic, conflictual, and continually becoming. Alienation emerges when representations gradually displace practice; when the plan supersedes the lived experience of place and image precedes and succeeds sign and symbol; when repetition is mistaken for stability and administrative coherence for collective flourishing. The city becomes evermore organized according to representations that obscure the everyday practices through which it is continually produced and reproduced.

Seen together, Bachelard, Kaika, and Lefebvre reveal that alienation proceeds from the outside inward. It is no longer confined to the factory floor or the wage relation. It enters the ordinary spaces of dwelling. Contemporary urban residents often know remarkably little about where their drinking water originates, how electricity reaches their homes, where food is grown, who constructed the buildings they inhabit, or how the infrastructures surrounding them are maintained. These absences are not accidental. They are products of an urban imagination that privileges consumption over production, representation over relation, and circulation over reproduction. In this transformed urban political economy alienation progressively starts to become residential. The home itself is detached from the wider ecological, social, and political worlds that make dwelling possible.

Residential alienation, however, is not confined to those excluded from property ownership. One of the most significant achievements of financialized urbanism has been to reorganize the aspirations of the middle class itself. As David Madden and Peter Marcuse (2016) argue, residential alienation affects homeowners as profoundly as tenants because both inhabit housing systems organized around speculative accumulation instead of human need. Homeownership promises ontological security while producing ontological precarity. The mortgage increasingly ceases to function as a pathway toward stability and instead becomes a mechanism through which everyday life is disciplined by distant financial markets. More so than this being a question of biopolitical struggle, it has also turned into a terrain of psychopolitical warfare.

Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika (2016) reveal the human consequences of this transformation with remarkable clarity. Their work demonstrates that the mortgaged home becomes less a sanctuary than a site where financial obligation reorganizes subjectivity itself. Debt extends beyond economics into family life, mental health, social belonging. Residential alienation cannot be understood simply as the absence of ownership. Ownership itself becomes one of its principal expressions. To own does not mean to dwell.

Frantz Fanon (2008) reminds us that alienation never assumes a singular form. The estrangement experienced by the colonized intellectual differs from that of the exploited labourer because alienation is always historically produced. It is sociogenic before it is psychological. This insight is crucial for planning. The indebted homeowner, the precarious renter, the unhoused resident, and the displaced community each inhabit distinct experiences of alienation even as they remain bound together within the same financialized urban order. Their struggles differ, yet their conditions emerge from a common transformation in the political economy of dwelling.

Sylvia Wynter (1971) offers one final insight that brings this section to its threshold. Reflecting upon the modern novel, Wynter argues that even while the novel emerged within market society and hyper individualism (against the troubadour tradition that preceded it), it continued to preserve a commitment to human need against the abstractions of exchange. The novel became a critique of the very fragmentation that produced it. Her reading of *A House for Mr. Biswas* by V.S. Naipaul is especially instructive. The dream of homeownership culminates not in liberation but in a profoundly fragile victory, leaving its protagonist isolated, clinging to property while remaining estranged from community. His triumph, Wynter observes, is ultimately pyrrhic. The house remains standing, yet the relations that once gave dwelling its meaning have disappeared.

Alienation, then, is not simply the condition of being separated. It is the condition of mistaking separation for normality. The worker forgets production. The resident forgets metabolism. The homeowner mistakes indebtedness for security. The planner mistakes representation for relation. What gradually disappears is not simply community, nor merely public space, but the relational intelligibility through which cities become worlds rather than collections of properties. Before planning can recover another horizon, it must first recognize what has been forgotten. The final section of this introduction therefore turns toward the disappearance of relation itself — not as an abstract philosophical concern, but as the central crisis from which the *Eyes of Kinship* emerge.

The Disappearance of Relation

If alienation names the lived condition produced by financialized and transparent urbanism, it also reveals something more fundamental. Alienation is not merely the separation of persons from labour, dwelling, or ecology. It is the gradual disappearance of relation from the imagination of the city itself. Or, more precisely, it is planning's diminishing capacity to recognize relation as the very condition from which urban life emerges. Relation has not vanished. Cities continue to reproduce themselves through innumerable acts of care, cooperation, maintenance, memory, and mutual dependence. Children are still raised. Meals are still shared. Water continues to flow through buried infrastructures. Neighbors still watch over one another, even if done haphazardly. The city remains profoundly relational. What has disappeared is the ability to perceive these ordinary acts as the very substance of urban life.

Matthew Soules (2021) demonstrates that contemporary financialized architecture increasingly participates in this forgetting. The simplification of buildings through heightened security, controlled circulation, diminished social contact, and abstract forms of locality does more than protect investment. It gradually reorganizes everyday life around the minimization of unpredictable encounters. Leaving Walter Benjamin’s wandering troubadour-like flâneur outcast from the city-now-turned-condo-office-park. In this scene architecture itself begins to withdraw from relation through this establishment of post-social space (Soules, 2021). Buildings become easier to own remotely precisely because they become less dependent upon the ordinary frictions of collective life. The social is not abolished. It is noiselessly designed out of view.

Maria Kaika (2005) locates a parallel movement within the political ecology of the modern city. The separation of extraction, production, and reproduction fragments not only urban space but everyday consciousness itself. Electricity appears without generation. Food reaches the table without agriculture — seemingly falling off thoroughfares just-in-time before spoilage can occur in local super grocery stores. Housing emerges without labour. Fragmentation therefore becomes more than a spatial arrangement. It becomes a way of forgetting relation. Forgetting the

phenomenological and para-phenomenological aspects of life that generate human consciousness and subjectivity.

Arturo Escobar (2022) suggests that this forgetting is rooted in a deeper ontological inheritance. Modern planning, Escobar argues, remains tethered to a Cartesian imagination that encounters the world as an assemblage of external objects awaiting representation and control from the cogito, ergo sum. Within this horizon, design becomes a project that monopolizes the future by presuming that only one world ultimately exists. Against this, Escobar, following Tony Fry (2015), calls for an ontological metrofitting that understands cities as open, porous, metabolic, and continually remade through the relational worlds upon which all life depends.

As discussed above it is here that Édouard Glissant (1997) offers perhaps the most profound interruption to the philosophical inheritance traced throughout this introduction. If Plato sought to secure the polis through the clarity of the Idea — banishing the poet from its governing life and relegating *poesis* to the mutable realm of sensation, space, and becoming — and if Augustine transformed the world itself into a Book whose meaning had already been written, Glissant reopens both world and city to the unfinished work of relation.

This insight arrives with renewed urgency in the twenty-first century as the logic of the Book reappears within contemporary populist nationalisms. Across many democracies, renewed appeals to blood, ancestry, borders, and inherited belonging seek to resolve the openness of political life by fixing legitimacy within genealogies imagined as natural and immutable. The resurgence of attempts to redefine citizenship through descent rather than relation — including recent efforts in the United States to challenge the constitutional principle of birthright citizenship — illustrates this desire to publish what might be called a final edition of the political community: a text whose boundaries are no longer open to narration but sealed through blood. Democratic space animated by encounter, disagreement, and the spontaneous emergence of new forms of collective life, gradually yields to enclosure. The polis ceases to be a conversation and becomes a pungent smelling archive with a baroque façade for its exterior.

It is precisely here that Glissant's (1997) poetics converges with Sylvia Wynter's (2001) sociogenic insight. If legitimacy cannot finally rest upon blood, race, techné or nature, neither can the city. It must instead be continually renarrativized through shared meaning, collectivity, and the difficult practice of remaining in relation with difference. Denise Ferreira da Silva's (2007) critique of the Transparent I reveals that what modernity cast beyond the limits of reason was never simply irrationality, but another *poesis* — another mode of worldmaking whose significance could not be represented within the metaphysics of transparency. The poet, long exiled from the governing life of the polis, survives within these spaces of opacity, encounter, and becoming — a space to which Euro-modernity relegated the racialized Other, from which Fanon (2008) would lament, *"I made myself the poet of the world"* (p. 98). Buried within what Cartesian reason dismissed as mere extension and what imperial modernity often treated as *terra nullius*, the poetic preserves another political inheritance. The sections that follow argue that planning must recover this inheritance — not as aesthetic embellishment, but as a governing capacity capable of composing worlds through relation rather than securing them through (en)closure.

Seen together, Glissant, Da Silva and Wynter invite planning to reconsider not only its methods but its imagination. Relation cannot be reduced to social cohesion, public participation, or interpersonal trust. It is neither sentiment nor abstraction. It is the living medium through which worlds continually compose themselves. It takes material form in the ordinary infrastructures of collective existence: in the courtyard that invites lingering conversation; in the shared garden that gathers generations; in the trail that reconnects neighborhoods to watersheds; in the marketplace that renews reciprocal obligation; in the multigenerational dwelling that expands care beyond the isolated household; and in the public spaces where stories circulate long enough to become memory. Relation is always embodied before it is conceptual. It acquires texture through pathways, thresholds, kitchens, benches, gardens, soccer fields, rivers, and rituals that continually place human and more-than-human life into meaningful encounter. The task of

planning is therefore not to manufacture relation but to cultivate the material conditions through which it may continually emerge.

This is why the disappearance of relation cannot be understood as its extinction. Relation persists beneath the abstractions of financialization, underneath the representations of transparent planning, and below the fragmentations of alienated urban life. It survives wherever collective life refuses complete enclosure. Walter Benjamin's (1999) aura, Byung-Chul Han's (2024) narrative distance, Kamau Brathwaite's (2018) tidalectics, Saidiya Hartman's (2008) narrative restraint (critical fabulation), and Glissant's (1997) opacity each remind us, in different ways, that meaning is born not through closure but through intervals, and gaps that resist complete possession. These spaces of indeterminacy are not deficiencies awaiting correction. They are the very conditions through which relation becomes possible.

It is here that this paper takes its point of departure. If planning has too often understood its task as the ordering of space, then another possibility begins to emerge. Planning might instead become the cultivation of relation(s) — not as an abstract ethical aspiration, but as a material, spatial, and sociogenic practice of worldmaking. Such a practice does not seek to complete the city. It seeks to keep it open: open to encounter, repair, memory, and to the continual remaking of shared horizons. The sections that follow call this practice *Eyes of Kinship*. It is not proposed as another planning model or design framework. It is offered as a different way of seeing — one that begins not with the management/planning of space, but with the recognition that cities have always been sustained by relations that exceed the plan, and that planning's highest task is to give those relations durable, evolving, and renewable form.

1. Eyes of Kinship: Planning as Hermeneutics

The Planner's Eye

During my first year of classes at the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change, I asked what I believed was a relatively simple question. When planners develop zoning by-laws and other instruments that organize neighborhood life, do they take into account the sociocultural composition of the communities who will inhabit those spaces? The answer was immediate: no. Planners plan for land use, I was told, rather than for the demographic characteristics of the people occupying the land. The response was not delivered dismissively. It expressed a legitimate disciplinary and legal principle. Section 34 of Ontario's *Planning Act* authorizes municipalities to regulate the use of land, buildings, and structures, while section 35(2) prevents zoning by-laws from distinguishing between persons on the basis of whether they are related or unrelated (*Planning Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13, ss. 34, 35[2]). The Ontario Human Rights Commission has similarly maintained that zoning should regulate the use of land rather than the identities of its users, since land-use regulations directed toward particular groups of people have historically functioned as instruments of discrimination and exclusion (Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.).

The principle matters. A municipality should not be permitted to decide that a house may be occupied by a legally recognized family or by unrelated roommates, nor should it use the language of land-use compatibility to exclude people with disabilities, newcomers, students, low-income tenants, or residents of group homes from neighborhoods in which others are free to live. The separation between *use* and *user* emerged, in part, to protect the right of people to inhabit communities without first having to satisfy a municipality's preferred image of who belongs there. Yet the answer remained with me because the legal necessity of the distinction did not

resolve its deeper planning implications. It instead opened another question: even where planning refuses to distinguish explicitly between kinds of people, what image of the human informs the environments it permits to be built?

Land uses do not inhabit cities. People do. A residential designation may appear neutral upon a zoning map, but the dwelling forms permitted within it still materialize assumptions about how life is organized. The number and arrangement of bedrooms, the division between public and private space, the availability of communal kitchens, the distance between housing and employment, the presence or absence of childcare, and the accessibility of markets, parks, schools, transit corridors and places of gathering all anticipate particular rhythms of everyday life. A dwelling designed around two working adults and their dependent children does not cease to embody that social expectation merely because a zoning by-law avoids naming the nuclear family directly. The regulation may remain formally indifferent to the occupant while the built form subtly prepares itself for an imagined resident.

Neutrality, in this sense, does not mean the absence of interpretation. It means that an interpretation has become sufficiently ordinary to disappear.

This is the first proposition of Eyes of Kinship: cities are interpreted before they are planned. Long before a line is drawn upon a zoning map, a decision has already been made about what kinds of activity constitute residence, what forms of proximity appear desirable, what arrangements of care remain private, and what modes of collective life are legible as community. Planning does not encounter an uninterpreted world and subsequently imposes order upon it. It approaches the city through inherited concepts — property, family, safety, density, nuisance, compatibility, character — that have already organized what the planner is capable of recognizing. The technical instrument arrives later. Interpretation has gone ahead of it.

The planner therefore never looks upon the city with an empty eye. The eye has been educated. It has learned which differences matter, which conditions constitute evidence, which patterns signal disorder, and which aspirations deserve material support. It sees a parcel where a

gathering place is already emerging; a transportation corridor instead of the route by which a grandmother carries groceries home; an underutilized site rather than the informal games, desire paths, and obligations through which that landscape has long entered neighborhood life. Even the categories through which planning protects the public interest are shaped by prior understandings of what the public is and what kind of life is presumed to be in its interest. Seeing is never merely optical. It is historical, institutional, and interpretive.

I began to understand this more clearly through an image I encountered outside the classroom. At North York's Sheridan Mall a surveillance sign displayed a large blue eye. Its message was simple: this space is being watched. The eye did not need a body. It possessed no face, memory, neighborhood history, or relationship to the people moving beneath it. It offered visibility without encounter. Suspended above the mall, the blue eye condensed an entire theory of urban order into a single image: safety would be secured by making conduct observable, risk identifiable, and movement accountable to an unseen authority.

That disembodied eye resembled the Transparent I described earlier. It appeared to stand outside the world it surveyed, watching without being implicated in what it saw. Its authority depended upon precisely this imagined distance. The eye did not ask how the mall had become a gathering place, which forms of exclusion shaped the surrounding neighborhood, or why some bodies were more likely than others to be read as suspicious. It simply watched. Yet the apparent neutrality of its gaze concealed an interpretive decision already made: that the primary relationship between observer and observed would be organized through the anticipation of risk.

Planning often learns to see through a comparable arrangement. Its surveys, maps, demographic profiles, models, consultations, and site visits bring indispensable dimensions of urban life into view. The problem does not reside in seeing more. It arises when visibility is mistaken for understanding, or when the capacity to observe a neighborhood is confused with the capacity to recognize the worlds being lived within it. A census might disclose how many people occupy a dwelling without revealing the relations of care that hold the household together. A land-use map

may identify a park while remaining silent about who feels welcome there after sunset. A transportation model can calculate movement while overlooking the obligations that give a journey its meaning. The city becomes visible as information while remaining opaque as relation. It is a narration in foreclosure (Han, 2024).

The question, then, is not whether planning should attend to difference by assigning predetermined spatial forms to racial, cultural, or familial groups. Such an approach would merely replace one enclosing gaze with another, reducing living communities to demographic types and turning culture into a design prescription. Eyes of Kinship proceeds in another direction. It asks how planning might remain attentive to the social and cultural composition of urban life without claiming to possess, finalize, or speak on behalf of the people it seeks to understand. It questions how planners might recognize that formal neutrality can coexist with material partiality: that a regulation directed toward no particular user may still privilege particular ways of dwelling, caring, moving, and belonging.

This distinction is crucial. The alternative to universalism cannot be a planning practice that freezes people inside cultural identities imagined to be permanent. Neither can the answer be a facile empathy in which the planner claims to see through another person's eyes. As Saidiya Hartman (1997) cautions, empathy may obliterate otherness when identification merely installs the self within the place of the other. The planning task is more difficult. It requires neither distance disguised as neutrality nor intimacy achieved through projection. It requires a practice of interpretation capable of being altered by encounter. It necessitates that we collectively see an issue and "imagine what it looks like when it's fixed" together (Whitzman, 2024, p. 14).

The planner's eye must therefore become conscious of its own horizon. It must learn to ask what it has been trained to notice, what it has been permitted to disregard, and which assumptions have become invisible through repetition. This does not require the planner to abandon expertise. It asks expertise to become answerable to the worlds it enters. Interpretation begins here: with the recognition that one's own field of vision is historically situated and therefore partial. Such

partiality is not a professional failure to be overcome through the accumulation of total knowledge. It is the ethical condition from which understanding can begin.

The classroom answer that first unsettled me was therefore both correct and incomplete. Planning must not regulate people as though communities were land uses. Yet planning cannot escape the human consequences of the spatial forms it authorizes by declaring itself indifferent to who will inhabit them. Between these positions lies the central problem of this section. How might planning protect people from discriminatory classification while remaining responsive to the different relations through which people actually dwell? How can it recognize sociocultural life without converting that life into a fixed identity, a marketable image of neighborhood character, or another object to be surveilled beneath the blue(st) Transparent I/eye?

These questions reveal that the crisis of planning's vision cannot be resolved through better observation alone. Before planners can learn to see otherwise, we must understand how ways of seeing become socially produced in the first place. The planner’s eye is neither natural nor autonomous. It is narrated into existence. Its categories belong to a larger symbolic order that teaches societies whom to recognize, what to value, and which arrangements of life appear reasonable. Planning is never neutral because seeing is never neutral; seeing is already organized by a story about what the human is. To uncover that story, the discussion must move from interpretation toward sociogenesis.

Sociogenic Hermeneutics

If planning is first a way of seeing, then the central methodological question is no longer how planners intervene in the city, but how the city first becomes intelligible to them. I have argued so far that cities are interpreted before they are planned. The task now is to ask where this interpretive horizon originates. The answer offered here is sociogenic and hermeneutical rather than techno-biological, and procedural. Planners do not first inherit methods; they inherit stories. Before they are taught to regulate land, they learn to recognize worlds.

Frantz Fanon (2008) provides the decisive point of departure. Rejecting explanations that locate human conduct solely within biology or individual psychology, Fanon (2008) insists that "beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny" (p. 13). Human beings become who they are neither through genetics alone nor through isolated personal development, but through the symbolic worlds that teach them how to perceive themselves and others. Society, Fanon (2008) reminds us, "cannot escape human influences" because it is humanity that continually brings society into being (p. 13). Planning, therefore, cannot be understood as a neutral technical response to an objective urban reality. It is already situated within a sociogenic order that precedes every map, policy, and design intervention.

Sylvia Wynter (1995) extends this insight beyond the individual toward the very constitution of collective life. Human societies, Wynter (1995) argues, are not held together by biology alone but by representational systems — stories, symbols, and founding narratives — that organize cooperation and induce what she describes as "generalized altruism" (p. 31). The Word, in this sense, is not merely speech; it is the symbolic architecture through which a particular world becomes livable and a particular genre of the human comes to appear self-evident. Planning belongs to this narrative political economy. Zoning by-laws, official plans, urban design guidelines, and policy frameworks do more than regulate land. They participate in narrating whose dwelling is seen as legitimate, which neighborhoods appear orderly, and whose mobility, and displacement is rendered reasonable. Read sociogenically, planning documents become archives of meaning before they are turned into instruments of governance.

Hans-Georg Gadamer (2013) helps explain how these narratives become habits of perception. Understanding, Gadamer argues, never begins from neutrality but from what he calls a historically effected consciousness. Every act of interpretation emerges from a horizon already shaped by history, language, and inherited prejudices. The task of hermeneutics is therefore not to escape one's situatedness but to become conscious of it, allowing one's horizon to enter into dialogue with another through what Gadamer famously calls the fusion of horizons (*horizontverschmelzung*) (Gadamer, 2013). The planner's eye, then, is never simply

observational. It is historical. Every survey, consultation, site visit, or policy analysis is already conditioned by inherited assumptions regarding property, family, risk, care, productivity, and community. Before planning becomes technical, it is interpretive.

This paper therefore joins Fanon and Wynter's sociogenic insight with Gadamer's hermeneutics. If Fanon (2008) and Wynter (1995) reveal that human worlds are socially narrated into existence, Gadamer (2013) demonstrates that these narrations become the horizons through which reality is encountered. Together, through my hermeneutic lens, Fanon, Wynter, and Gadamer suggest that planning is not merely the administration of urban space but an ongoing interpretation of human possibility. Cities become intelligible through stories before they become governable through plans. The planning question is consequently transformed. Rather than asking only what should be built, sociogenic hermeneutics first asks: What conception of the human has made this urban future appear reasonable?

Tsenay Serequeberhan (2012) deepens this hermeneutical orientation by returning interpretation to its mythic origins. Hermeneutics, Serequeberhan reminds us, derives from Hermes, the messenger god who translated between worlds. Far from constituting a technical method, philosophical hermeneutics explores the possibilities of human existence from within the limits of our shared finitude rather than attempting to transcend them (Serequeberhan, 2012). This return to myth is not an abandonment of reason but a recovery of narrative as a legitimate mode of world disclosure. Planning, viewed through this lens, ceases to be the search for final solutions. It becomes an interpretive practice attentive to the unfinished conversations through which communities continually compose themselves.

Lastly, Cornel West's (1993) genealogical materialism carries this conversation into the material world. Genealogy traces how narratives sediment into institutions, while materialism insists that these narratives acquire concrete spatial and political consequences. Stories become laws. Laws become planning doctrines. Planning doctrines become housing typologies, neighborhood forms, infrastructures of care, and everyday rhythms of dwelling. The symbolic and the material are

therefore inseparable. The city is not simply constructed through concrete and regulation; it is continually reproduced through the narratives that authorize particular forms of urban life while rendering others unimaginable.

It is from this convergence that I derive the methodological orientation of Planning with Eyes of Kinship, which I call 'sociogenic hermeneutics.' This methodology is *sociogenic* because it begins from Fanon and Wynter's recognition that human worlds are produced through symbolic orders before they are administered through institutions. It is *hermeneutical* because, following Gadamer and Serequeberhan, it understands every act of planning as an historically situated encounter whose horizon remains open to transformation. It is *genealogical* because, with West, it follows these symbolic orders into their institutional and spatial materializations. Finally, it is *speculative* because planning must imagine worlds that existing categories cannot yet perceive. In this sense, methodology is not an appendix to theory. It is itself a planning practice: a disciplined effort to renarrativize the city so that different forms of relation might become thinkable before they become buildable.

Eyes of Kinship emerges from this methodological horizon. This planning orientation does not ask planners to observe more carefully; it asks them to interpret more truthfully. Before another neighborhood can be designed, another horizon of recognition must first be composed.

Philosophical-Poetics as Secondary Planning Method

If sociogenic hermeneutics explains how planners inherit worlds, philosophical-poetics (the manifestation of my speculative theoretical orientation) asks how new worlds become thinkable. Philosophical-poetics does not begin from the assumption that planning simply represents reality more accurately through improved techniques, more comprehensive datasets, or highly efficient models. It begins from a different proposition altogether: planning participates in the continual disclosure of worlds. Before a city is constructed, it has to first make itself narratable. Planning therefore belongs not only to the administration of space but to the composition of horizons within which human and more-than-human life may appear, gather, and flourish within.

This point marks the methodological intervention advanced in this paper. Philosophical-poetics is not proposed as a style of writing, nor as an aesthetic supplement to conventional planning research. It is offered as this paper's secondary planning methodology to that of sociogenic hermeneutics. Its central concern is neither representation nor optimization, but disclosure. Rather than asking how planning can describe the city more precisely; philosophical-poetics asks what kinds of worlds our planning practices permit to emerge, and which possibilities they prematurely foreclose. Method, in this sense, becomes a practice of opening rather than enclosing.

Martin Heidegger's (2014) understanding of truth as *aletheia*, or unconcealment, provides an important point of departure. In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger (2014) argues that the work of art does not merely represent an already existing world; it discloses one. The Greek temple, for example, gathers an entire historical world into presence, allowing beings to appear as meaningful within a shared horizon. Truth therefore precedes correctness. It is first an event of disclosure through which things become intelligible before they can be judged as accurate or inaccurate. Planning, viewed through this lens, cannot be reduced to the technical arrangement of parcels, infrastructures, and regulations. Every plan discloses a world, subdivision, transportation network, and housing typology. And every public square proposes an answer to the question of how life ought to be lived.

This movement from representation toward disclosure also transforms how planning understands knowledge itself. Gregory Bateson (1972) argues that science offers a powerful mode of perception, yet every mode of perception remains partial. Nora Bateson (2016) similarly observes that evidence alone rarely reveals the complex patterns through which living systems organize themselves. Art, Bateson (2016) suggests, directs us toward pattern rather than proof. Philosophical-poetics embraces this insight without abandoning empirical inquiry. Data remains indispensable. Yet data requires interpretation, and interpretation necessitates imagination. Planning does not fail because it lacks information; planning often fails because it cannot yet perceive the relational patterns through which urban life continually reproduces itself. The

deeper difficulty is hermeneutic. It continues to inherit a representational image of the world that not only misperceives the city through the metaphysics of transparency, but also narrows the horizon of planning itself, rendering other relational modes of composing the polis unintelligible before they can even appear as knowledge.

Arturo Escobar (2022) similarly argues that modern design has too often been captured by a dualist ontology separating observer from observed, planner/designer from world. Against this, Escobar proposes an ontological reorientation grounded in relationality and continual repair. Philosophical-poetics shares this commitment while extending it into planning. It approaches concepts not as abstract reflections upon urban life but as world-disclosing instruments capable of reorganizing perception itself. Concepts such as *Eyes of Kinship*, *Subprime Kinship*, *Villagization, The Poetics of Planning*, and *Non-Urban Urbanism* are therefore neither metaphors nor rhetorical flourishes. They are speculative planning tools that seek to disclose relationships rendered invisible by inherited planning grammars.

Frantz Fanon (2008) once remarked that there comes "a point at which methods devour themselves" (p. 14). Philosophical-poetics takes this warning seriously. It does not reject method; it resists the illusion that method alone can secure understanding.

Philosophical-poetics therefore becomes neither an escape from planning nor an embellishment of it. It is planning's turn towards an important responsibility: the careful composition of worlds within which collective life can become possible. If sociogenic hermeneutics teaches us that planners inherit narratives before they inherit methods, philosophical-poetics insists that planners must also learn to compose new narratives before anything can be built. Planning is therefore neither the management of completed realities nor the optimization of existing systems. It is the patient work of disclosing other possibilities of dwelling, relation, and common life. Before another city can be constructed, another world must first become imaginable.

Eyes on the Street: A Genealogy of the Planner's Eye

Every planning school of thought inherits a way of seeing before it inherits a way of building. If the previous sections have argued that planning is interpretive, sociogenic, and world-disclosing, a further question now emerges: what kind of eye has planning learned to cultivate? The answer matters because every form of vision carries within it an ethics of relation. What planners notice, what they overlook, and what they render worthy of intervention are never merely technical decisions. Their interventions reveal the horizon through which the city has already become meaningful.

Few figures transformed that horizon more profoundly than Jane Jacobs. Writing against the abstractions of post-war modernist planning, Jacobs (1992) returned attention to the ordinary life of the street. Jacobs challenged the conviction that cities could be understood primarily from above — through comprehensive plans, functional separation, slum clearances, and large-scale Robert Moses-like redevelopment — and instead directed planners toward the everyday choreography of sidewalks, neighborhood shops, children at play, casual conversation, and the countless routines through which urban life sustains itself. Her most enduring insight appears in what has become one of the defining passages of planning theory:

> "The first thing to understand is that the public peace — the sidewalk and street peace — of cities is not kept primarily by the police... It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves... there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street" (Jacobs, 1992, pp. 31–36).

Jacobs' contribution cannot be overstated. She relocated the planner's attention from detached observation to lived participation. Safety emerged, through the overlapping rhythms of everyday life rather than the monumental order of the master plan. The street became legible because it was inhabited. Vision, in Jacobs' account, belonged to neighbors who knew one another through

repeated encounter. Her democratic imagination restored trust in the ordinary capacities of urban communities to relate and participate in their own collective protection and becoming.

Ideas, however, rarely remain unchanged as they travel through institutional hierarchies. As Jacobs' insights entered planning practice, the relational ethic that animated *eyes on the street* gradually became translated into a technical language of visibility. Natural surveillance became one of the central principles of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), where questions of safety focused on unobstructed sightlines, lighting, territorial definition, controlled access, and opportunities for observation. These interventions could be said to have often produced meaningful improvements in public safety. Yet something subtle also occurred during this translation. An ethic of neighborly presence slowly became a technology of visual management (Fathallah & Lewis, 2020).

This genealogy reveals a deeper inheritance within modern planning. The aspiration to make space progressively more visible belongs to a broader epistemological tradition in which knowledge is secured through legibility. Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007) argues that the modern subject (for da Silva this is produced by a racial calculus that privileges whites as this Transparent I, and the racialized other as the observed, in a morbid sadomasochistic arrangement of relations) comes to understand the world through the figure of the Transparent I — a knowing consciousness that assumes its own perspective to be universal while rendering the world available for observation, classification, and calculation. Transparency, in this sense, extends far beyond architecture or surveillance. It is a way of organizing reality itself. Spaces appear governable to the extent that they are measurable; uncertainty becomes a problem awaiting illumination; opacity is approached as an absence of knowledge rather than a condition of human coexistence.

Seen through this lens, the genealogy from Jacobs to CPTED discloses more than an evolution in urban design practice. It reveals two distinct understandings of vision. Jacobs (1992) invited planners into the living rhythms of neighborhood life, trusting that repeated encounter could

cultivate mutual responsibility. The contemporary rendering of transparency, by contrast, gradually privileges observation itself. Seeing becomes detached from belonging — becoming a voyeuristic format of reading the cityscape (Kornbluh, 2024). Visibility becomes a substitute for relationality, and the eye stands above the street rather than within it.

The distinction is subtle but profound. Observation alone cannot disclose the worlds through which communities dwell. A brightly illuminated park may remain unwelcoming to those whose histories have taught them caution. Whilst a carefully monitored plaza may reveal movement while concealing loneliness. And a perfectly visible streetscape may record every pedestrian and still fail to perceive interrupted relations of care, exclusion, or belonging. Visibility enlarges knowledge, yet understanding continues to depend upon encounter. The city does not become meaningful because every corner can be seen. Meaning emerges through the relationships that give those places their memories, obligations, and hopes.

Eyes of Kinship grows from this recognition. It does not ask planners to abandon visibility, nor does it diminish the importance of safety within public life. It enlarges the horizon within which visibility acquires meaning. The planner's eye begins to resemble the movement of wind across a landscape, sensing patterns of relation that cannot be reduced to what is immediately observable. It lingers where care has become fragile, loiters in the spaces hospitality has become interrupted within, and remembers the everyday infrastructures of reproduction that have slowly disappeared. The central question therefore changes. Rather than asking how many eyes occupy the street, Eyes of Kinship asks: who remains outside the circle of care through which the street becomes a world?

This shift also transforms the ethical posture of planning. Gadamer's (2004) fusion of horizons encourages planners to approach communities through dialogue rather than mastery. Glissant's (1997) opacity reminds us that persons and places always exceed complete comprehension. Carolyn Whitzman's (2024) work on “solving complex problems” redirects planning toward the conditions that allow everyday life to flourish after disruption (p. 14). Read together, these

perspectives suggest that seeing is fulfilled through recognition and resonance rather than exposure. The planner's responsibility is therefore not exhausted by making the city visible. Such responsibility extends toward cultivating the relationships through which different worlds become mutually intelligible while remaining irreducibly distinct.

Eyes of Kinship: Composing Relation

Instrumentalized forms of urban planning have long assumed that clearer vision produces better cities. That greater precision promises better governance and comprehensive knowledge ensures successful urban futures. The preceding sections have suggested a different possibility. Vision alone cannot compose a world. It can illuminate infrastructures, reveal patterns of extraction, disclose ecological dependence, and expose the material conditions through which collective life is reproduced. Yet no accumulation of visibility, however sophisticated, can generate the relations through which neighborhoods become places of mutual obligation. Recognition belongs to another order of planning altogether.

Eyes of Kinship emerges within this distinction. It does not seek a city in which everything becomes transparent, nor does it retreat into an opacity that refuses public life. It inhabits the interval between them. Metabolic transparency in this novel framework reveals the disalienating infrastructures upon which collective existence depends: the watersheds that sustain drinking water, the fields that nourish neighborhood foodtables, the energy systems that animate everyday life, the often-invisible labour that repairs streets, recreational sites and the caretakers of children. Relational opacity preserves another dimension of urban life. It shelters memory until it becomes tradition, allows conversation to unfold without performance, protects friendship from constant media(ting) exposure, and creates the quiet thresholds where trust, play, hospitality, improvisation, and belonging slowly mature. Metabolic transparency allows cities to understand how life is sustained. Relational opacity allows life to become worth sustaining.

The planner's responsibility therefore changes. Planning no longer appears as the continual expansion of visibility, nor as the administration of what can already be measured. It becomes

the careful composition of conditions through which transparency and opacity remain in living conversation. Some relations ask to be disclosed because concealment has rendered them vulnerable to neglect, abstraction, or exploitation. Others ask to remain partially withdrawn because their vitality depends upon intimacy, mutual confidence, and the freedom to exceed every category through which they might otherwise be described. Healthy cities endure because they inhale and exhale between these two conditions. Like the changing seasons and the movement of tides urban life flourishes through rhythm, and impermanence rather than permanence.

Eyes of Kinship therefore shifts planning from the administration of abstract space with objects toward the cultivation of subjects with relations in spaces anchored in historical memory. The planner in this scene gradually learns to work with communities rather than merely planning for them, recognizing that understanding emerges through encounter rather than prescription. Neighborhoods cease to appear as completed landscapes awaiting technical optimization and begin to disclose themselves as unfinished worlds continually being composed and recomposed. Trails become more than circulation routes as they reconnect watersheds, historical and Indigenous memory, and everyday encounters. Markets renew reciprocal obligations alongside local economies. Community gardens cultivate nourishment while restoring ecological and intergenerational rhythms. Multigenerational dwellings enlarge the spaces through which care may circulate across time. Basketball courts, kitchens, benches, and ordinary gathering places acquire renewed significance because they host forms of collectivity that cannot be legislated into existence yet remain indispensable to the emergence and maintenance of democratic communal life. Planning in this ethical mode of operation discovers its vocation is not in arranging isolated subdivisions.

The distinction between *eyes on the street* and *Eyes of Kinship* therefore extends beyond questions of visibility. Eyes on the street protects space through attentive presence. Eyes of Kinship composes relation through attentive participation. The difference is subtle in appearance yet profound in consequence. One asks whether the street is being watched. The other wonders

how the street becomes a world of multigenerational encounters throughout the day in a lattice of multi-use sites — providing safety through being-with, not highly-securitized technological apparatuses. Each planning perspective responds to an important planning concern. Yet where Jacobs illuminates the relational life already present within the city, Eyes of Kinship turns towards the more originary question of how relation itself is composed, reproduced, and sustained as the world-disclosing condition of urban life.

This movement also reveals why transparency and opacity cannot remain opposing planning ideals. Each becomes incomplete when pursued in isolation. Transparency without opacity gradually reduces the city to administration, exhausting neighborhood life beneath the weight of continual representation. Opacity without transparency risks concealing the metabolic conditions upon which collective existence depends, leaving the ecological, material, and reproductive foundations of urban life vulnerable to further abstraction and exploitation. Planning discovers its deepest responsibility by composing their rhythm. It reveals what must become publicly intelligible while safeguarding the intervals through which trust, memory, imagination, and common life continue to unfold. The city lives precisely because it never resides entirely in either condition.

Section One therefore arrives at a different understanding of planning itself. Planning is not first the regulation of land, the optimization of systems, or the management of urban growth. It is a hermeneutical practice that learns to recognize worlds before it seeks to transform them — therefore becoming a choreographic routine that composes the rhythms through which metabolic life becomes visible and relational life remains free to flourish. This is a poetic practice because every enduring city is sustained by meanings that exceed representation alone. Planning has inherited the language of visibility. The city now calls for another grammar — not another regulatory instrument, nor another zoning category, but a language capable of composing relation through the rhythm of transparency and opacity. It is within that grammar that the poetics of planning begins.

2. The Poetics of Planning

"*Love is Written in the Stone*" (Earth, Wind, and Fire).

Beyond the Bounds of Reason

Every planning tradition inherits an image of the world before it inherits a method. Long before planners learn to prepare official plans, regulate land uses, or design transportation networks, they inherit assumptions about what the world is, how truth becomes recognizable, and which forms of life deserve durable spatial expression. Methods arrive later to refine an imagination already at work. Planning therefore never begins from neutrality. It begins from an inheritance.

The preceding section argued that planning learns to see before it learns to build. The Poetics of Planning asks a different question: what image of the world has planning already inherited before it ever learns to see? The question does not arise from dissatisfaction with planning itself. Planning remains one of the few disciplines willing to insist that collective life can be materially improved through thoughtful intervention. Such optimism deserves preservation. Yet planning also carries a shorter institutional history than many of the philosophical inheritances that continue to animate it. Much of that history unfolded alongside the consolidation of bureaucratic states, colonial administration, industrial capitalism, and the techno-rational organization of territory. Its techniques have often been enlisted in projects of enclosure as readily as projects of emancipation. To acknowledge this inheritance is neither an indictment nor a defence. It is the beginning of interpretation.

The present historical moment renders this interpretive task urgent. We possess unprecedented capacities to measure, predict, model, simulate, and optimize urban life. At the same time, public life appears more than ever haunted by exhaustion, cynicism, and a virulent nihilism that narrows the horizon of what communities believe remains possible. Across a wide swath of public and private institutions we have become remarkably skilled at diagnosing crises while steadily losing

faith that another world might be composed. Inverting Antonio Gramsci's (1994) famous formulation, ours more so than not appears to be an age marked by a pessimism of the will and an optimism of the intellect: a culture that continues to celebrate analytical sophistication while doubting the transformative capacities of humanistic endeavours. The consequence is not only political paralysis. It is an impoverishment of the urban imagination itself. Planning risks becoming extraordinarily competent at managing inherited realities while dismissing how new horizons first become imaginable.

It is precisely here that Sylvia Wynter (1995) offers one of the most profound invitations of contemporary thought. Reflecting upon the civilizational consequences of 1492, Wynter (1995) argues that our historical moment requires "another move beyond reason," one capable of making "our present mode of reason itself" the object of inquiry rather than its unquestioned foundation (p. 40, 50). Wynter's provocation has often been misunderstood as a rejection of reason. It is nothing of the sort. Her question is hermeneutical before it is philosophical. Which reason has modernity mistaken for reason itself? Once that distinction becomes visible, the limits of an inherited horizon no longer appear as the limits of the world.

Christopher Columbus (not discounting his genocidal atrocities in this account) becomes significant within Wynter's account for precisely this reason. The importance of his voyage lies less in geographical discovery than in the symbolic disruption it represents. A world once imagined complete suddenly proved otherwise. Horizons that had appeared fixed became provisional. Certainties yielded to possibilities that inherited maps could neither anticipate nor contain. Wynter (1995) asks whether our own historical moment now demands a comparable movement — not across oceans, but across the conceptual boundaries through which modernity has organized knowledge, humanity, and the very conditions of collective life. The question reaches planning with particular force. Every comprehensive plan, every master plan, and every urban vision presupposes a world before it proposes a future. If that world has been inherited rather than interpreted, then planning continually risks reproducing assumptions it has never consciously chosen.

The Poetics of Planning begins at this threshold. It does not seek refuge from reason, nor does it replace disciplined inquiry with aesthetic reverie. Its concern is more demanding. It asks whether planning can recover those symbolic, narrative, and imaginative capacities through which societies have always enlarged the contours of reality before they altered its material form. Cities are never built from regulations alone. They first become imaginable through languages capable of gathering hope, memory, obligation, and possibility into a shared horizon of meaning. Every enduring urban transformation has therefore been preceded by a transformation of imagination.

Tsenay Serequeberhan (2012) illuminates what is at stake in this recovery. Serequeberhan reminds us that philosophical hermeneutics ultimately returns us to a question that stretches beyond Plato's philosophical ordering of the polis toward the older mythic traditions from which philosophy itself first emerged. This return is not nostalgic. Neither is it anti-philosophical. It recalls that human beings have always interpreted the world through stories before they systematized it through concepts. Philosophy did not abolish this condition. It refined one expression of it. The Poetics of Planning retrieves another — not to abandon rigor, but to remember that every rational order first depends upon an act of world disclosure that cannot itself be derived from technique.

This section therefore proceeds from a simple conviction. Planning does not suffer because it possesses too much reason. It suffers whenever one historically situated rationality comes to appear exhaustive of reality itself. The Poetics of Planning widens that horizon. It asks planning to become conscious of its own inheritance so that inherited certainty may once again become an open question. Another city will never emerge through technical innovation alone. Before new spatial forms become possible, another world must first become speakable.

The World as Book

Every planner has unfolded a plan across a table. Streets appear before construction begins. Parcels settle into orderly geometries. Schools, parks, transit corridors, and neighborhoods gather into a coherent whole whose future already seems present. The plan reassures because it

promises orientation before encounter. It suggests that the city can first be represented and only afterwards inhabited. There is wisdom in this aspiration. Collective life requires anticipation. Yet the apparent simplicity of the planning document conceals a far older inheritance. Before planning learned to project cities, Western philosophy had already learned to imagine reality itself as something capable of being read.

This inheritance reaches back to Plato. In *The Republic*, truth appears not as something composed through human encounter but as something already existing beyond appearance, awaiting discovery by reason (Plato, 1992). The philosopher ascends from the cave toward the light of the Good and returns bearing knowledge unavailable to those who remain among the shadows (Plato, 1992). Poetry consequently becomes suspect, not because it lacks beauty, but because it multiplies meanings where philosophy seeks permanence. For Plato's Socrates (1992) the expulsion of the poet from the polis is therefore more than an aesthetic decision (Book 10, 607b.) It is an ontological one, privileging the philosopher's ascent toward immutable truth over the poet's composition of relational worlds. The city shall be ordered through the clarity of the Idea and not through the unfolding ambiguities of narration. Reality becomes that which can ultimately be rendered transparent to reason.

Augustine extends this philosophical inheritance into a theological horizon. As gestured towards in the introduction, creation itself becomes a text authored before humanity arrives to read it. History unfolds according to a providential script whose meaning precedes experience, while the faithful learn to interpret rather than compose the order of the world (Augustine, 1991). The metaphor of the Book therefore ceases to function merely as an image. It becomes an ontology. Existence itself appears as something already written, awaiting correct interpretation. The world comes to resemble a completed manuscript whose deepest coherence exists prior to encounter.

Modern philosophy inherits this imagination even as it gradually relinquishes its explicitly theological foundations. Descartes (2017) relocates certainty from divine revelation to the transparent consciousness of the thinking subject, while Hegel (2018) gathers history into the

progressive realization of Spirit through reason. The location of certainty changes; its structure remains remarkably stable. Truth continues to appear as something whose completion precedes the act of knowing. The task of thought is increasingly understood as the adequate representation of an already intelligible reality.

It is here that Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007) performs a decisive philosophical excavation. Rather than contributing another chapter to this inheritance, da Silva reveals the architecture that holds it together. Her account of the Transparent I demonstrates that modern reason universalizes a historically situated perspective, presenting one mode of apprehending the world as though it were reason itself. Representation no longer functions simply as a way of describing reality; it authorizes reality's very intelligibility. The world appears transparent because the conditions through which it is encountered have already been organized in advance. Da Silva therefore allows us to perceive that the genealogy stretching from Plato through modernity is not simply a history of ideas. It is the gradual consolidation of a metaphysics in which representation comes to stand in for reality itself (da Silva, 2007).

This is precisely the inheritance that Arturo Escobar (2022) identifies when he observes that the concepts of representation, object, and project belong to the same ontological formation. Once reality is encountered primarily through representation, the world gradually appears as an object available for projection, design, and management. Planning does not invent this disposition. Modern planning emerges within it. The master plan, the official plan, the subdivision, the cadastral survey, and the geometric ordering of property become spatial expressions of a world already imagined as legible before it is lived. Henri Lefebvre (1991) captures this transformation with remarkable clarity. Maps, plans, and representations do not merely describe urban space; they participate in producing an abstract space whose apparent coherence conceals the dense, rhythmic practices through which everyday life continually composes itself. Representation slowly congeals into projection. Projection acquires the certainty of geometry. Geometry is naturalized as property, until planning itself comes to inherit these accumulated certainties as though they had always belonged to the world.

The consequences extend beyond technique. Every master plan unconsciously aspires toward a final edition. Revisions work towards greater precision. New datasets promise fuller representation. And comprehensive plans seek complete accounts of urban life. Such aspirations emerge from admirable intentions, yet they also disclose a deeper philosophical confidence: that the city can eventually become commensurate with its description. Completion becomes the hidden horizon of planning because completion has long been the hidden horizon of the Book.

Édouard Glissant interrupts this confidence with extraordinary restraint. The world, Glissant (1997) reminds us, is not a Book (p. 25). A book seeks closure. It fixes legitimacy, stabilizes meaning, and presumes that order precedes encounter. Relation moves otherwise. It remains unfinished because every encounter transforms both those who meet and the world they momentarily compose together. Meaning therefore does not await discovery within a completed script. It continually emerges through relation itself. The interruption is profound. If the world cannot be reduced to a Book, neither can the city. Urban life exceeds every representation because it is continually rewritten through memory, improvisation, conflict, care, hospitality, and the unpredictable labour of dwelling together (Glissant, 1997).

The Poetics of Planning begins within this opening. It does not abandon plans, nor does it reject the indispensable work of representation. It asks a quieter, more demanding question: what becomes possible once planners cease approaching the city as a completed manuscript awaiting revision and begin encountering it as an unfinished composition whose meaning continually exceeds the plan itself? The question does not abolish planning. It enlarges its imagination. Representation remains necessary, but it can no longer claim the final word. From this point forward, transparency appears not simply as a technical virtue but as the spatial expression of an older metaphysics whose influence continues to shape the modern city. The next section follows that inheritance into the built environment itself, where the world as Book gradually becomes the transparent city.

The Glass City

Every civilization first dreams before it builds. The dream precedes the drawing, the drawing anticipates the foundation, and the foundation gradually becomes the city. Urban form is therefore never merely technical. It is the material memory of an imagination that has already learned to recognize certain horizons as desirable and others as impossible. Long before the condominium tower, the mirrored office façade, the planning dashboard, or the luminous screen held nonchalantly in the palm of the hand, another image shimmered across the Western imagination. The (shining) city upon a hill gathered together light, truth, moral order, and collective destiny into a single symbolic horizon. It was not simply a place. It was a way of seeing.

The image first appears in the Gospel of Matthew, where the city upon a hill becomes a visible witness to divine truth (Matthew 5:14–16). Centuries later, Puritan colonist John Winthrop carried that image across the Atlantic, urging the Massachusetts Bay Colony to become "a city upon a hill" whose visibility would stand before the nations as both promise and judgement (2009). The image would continue its long journey through Puritan covenant theology, American exceptionalism, Manifest Destiny, Enlightenment rationality, and the modern belief that progress unfolds through ever-greater illumination. By the twentieth century, that inheritance had acquired an unexpectedly material form. Architect Philip Johnson's Glass House, built in New Canaan in 1949, seems almost hermeneutically overdetermined. The New Jerusalem becomes New Canaan (McEwan, 2026). The City of God gradually assumes walls of glass. Theology crystallizes into architecture. Architecture, in turn, prepares another imagination of the city itself.

This genealogy matters because materials do more than shelter human life. They educate perception. Stone, timber, earth, water, and glass each disclose different relationships between human beings, memory, and the world they inhabit. Modern planning has often treated materials as technical decisions governed by efficiency, durability, and cost. Yet materials also carry philosophies. They invite particular rhythms of attention while discouraging others. Every civilization, one might say, learns to dream through the materials from which it builds its cities.

Glass occupies a singular place within this history because it gradually became the material imagination through which modernity learned to recognize truth. Yet glass is also made of sand (an unvalued material) whilst also holding the threat and morality of shattering proto-omniscient synoptical gazes.

Walter Benjamin (1999) discerned both the brilliance and the danger contained within this dream of permanent illumination. Reflecting on Paul Scheerbart's celebration of glass architecture, Benjamin observed that glass promised an unprecedented openness, dissolving inherited interiors and inviting light to circulate freely through everyday life (Benjamin, 1999). Byung-Chul Han (2024) extends Benjamin's insight, noting that glass announced a civilization captivated by transparency, one that regarded hiddenness, distance, and mystery with growing suspicion. The dream itself was genuine. Glass appeared to herald a future in which architecture might embody honesty, rationality, and collective renewal. Yet Benjamin also perceived that this promise exacted a quieter cost. Glass possesses no aura. It leaves no trace upon itself. It refuses secrecy, reverberation, and the slow accumulation of memory that once gathered within older material worlds (Benjamin, 1999; Han, 2024).

The significance of glass therefore exceeds architecture. It gradually reorganizes an entire epistemology. As glass becomes modernity's privileged material, vision acquires an unprecedented authority. To see is to know. “Seeing is reading” (Kornbluh, 2024, p. 45). Knowledge promises administration. Administration extends into governance. Governance eventually settles within the ordinary practices of planning. Glass does not simply enclose buildings. It teaches a civilization how truth ought to appear. Henri Lefebvre (1991) describes the modern illusion of transparency as a spatial condition in which representation appears capable of exhausting reality itself. What the previous section identified as the world conceived as Book now acquires its material body. Representation crystallizes into architecture. The page turns into façade. And the plan becomes the city.

Glass continues this education well beyond the building envelope. It glows from the surfaces through which contemporary urban life unfolds: the smartphone, the planning dashboard, the GIS interface, the smart-city display, the mirrored condominium, the security monitor, the touch screen, and the algorithmic map. Each promises immediate access to reality while cultivating habits of legibility, optimization, and continuous observation. Anna Kornbluh (2024) identifies this condition as one of immediacy, where mediation itself begins to disappear beneath the desire for frictionless access. Guy Debord (2021) anticipated a similar movement when he argued that lived relations gradually yield to representations of life. Transparency thus becomes less an architectural style than a civilizational pedagogy. The world comes to appear as something available for instantaneous reading because glass has deceptively instructed us to believe that visibility and truth naturally converge.

The consequences become most visible where another material memory once stood. Mitch McEwan's (2026) reflections on Washington, D.C. do not simply mourn the arrival of glass towers. They grieve the disappearance of worlds those towers menacingly displaced (McEwan, 2026). Glass rarely arrives alone. It often follows demolition, clearance, abstraction, and redevelopment, leaving behind a silence that planning documents seldom record. The disappearance of one world is thus reinterpreted as the dysfunction of another, authorizing what Wacqaunt (2009) identifies as the punitive logic of Broken Windows, wherein poverty itself becomes the object of governance rather than the histories of dispossession that produced it. In this spiritually desolate scene, queer nightclubs and whole Black social worlds disappear (McEwan, 2026). What remains is a city whose surfaces shimmer with unprecedented clarity even as its histories become more and more difficult to hear. Transparency, in this register, is no longer merely a visual condition. It becomes an historical one. The more perfectly the surface reflects, the more easily the traces of earlier worlds recede from view. I wonder what import the myth of Narcissus has for us in this city of endless mirrors?

Yet memory rarely disappears all at once. It lingers in gestures, in familiar routes walked almost unconsciously, in stories exchanged between neighbors, and in those faint atmospheres that continue to gather around places long after official histories have declared them complete. Anita Baker's (1986) *Mystery* captures something of this fragile persistence through the image of "holding on to misty memories" while "turning back the hands of time" (0:46 – 0:57). The phrase does not merely evoke nostalgia. It describes a form of historical perception that refuses complete transparency. Some dimensions of urban life survive precisely because they remain partially veiled, returning as echoes and reverberations rather than as inventories and records. What McEwan (2026) mourns, and what the Glass City struggles to perceive, is this lingering atmosphere through which neighborhood character seemingly imperceptively endures. Before aura becomes a philosophical concept, it is first experienced as the feeling that something meaningful remains present even when it can no longer be fully seen.

Aura, Opacity, and the Rhythm of Living Cities

> "*When the mode of music changes, the walls of the city will shake*" (Allen Ginsburg).

The Glass City left us standing before an absence. Its surfaces remained luminous, its façades fascistically legible, while histories once carried through dance floors, street corners, familiar routes, and nocturnal gathering places became difficult to hear. What disappeared from McEwan's (2026) Washington, D.C., was therefore more than an inventory of demolished buildings. An atmosphere had receded: the elusive quality through which a neighborhood continues to exceed its architecture, carrying the reverberations of lives that once gathered there into the present. Walter Benjamin (1999) gives this lingering presence a name. 'Aura' is the appearance of distance within what has drawn near, the strange encounter through which a person, place, or object remains irreducible even while standing before us. The trace promises possession; aura reverses the direction of encounter, taking hold of the observer and placing certainty momentarily out of reach (Benjamin, 1999).

Byung-Chul Han (2024) extends Benjamin's insight by locating aura within the narrative interplay between nearness and distance. Contemporary information systems promise immediacy, dissolving the intervals through which stories once travelled and acquired meaning. Yet gaplessness produces neither genuine intimacy nor understanding. Nearness requires distance in order to become perceptible as nearness; each condition calls the other into existence. Aura emerges within their continual animation, preserving enough distance for allusion, memory, and narration to gather around what appears before us. Information seeks availability. A story arrives carrying something from afar. Its meaning cannot be exhausted by immediate access because distance has already become part of what the story means (Han, 2024).

The lost neighborhood atmosphere encountered at the end of the previous section is not merely a vanished feeling. It is the lingering trace of a world whose relational rhythms have been interrupted, leaving only faint echoes of the aura that once gathered people, place, and memory into a shared life. Its memory lingers without submitting to complete retrieval. Familiar streets retain gestures their new façades cannot explain. A nightclub survives in the body of someone who once learned to dance there as an unexorcised Kierkegaardian trembling. A route taken home at daybreak continues shaping one's sense of the city long after the destination has disappeared. Such memories remain misted because their distance cannot be removed without changing what they are. Aura is therefore more than the aesthetic residue of a vanished world. It is the relational atmosphere produced when the past remains near enough to move us and distant enough to escape possession.

Opacity enters through this interval. Édouard Glissant's (1997) claim to a right to opacity does not refuse encounter. It refuses the expectation that encounter should culminate in total comprehension. The other may remain present without becoming transparent to the categories through which the observing subject has learned to recognize reality. Opacity shelters difference from assimilation while permitting relation to continue. It keeps the encounter open because neither person, community, nor place is required to fatigue itself in order to participate in a common world. Glissant's concern is especially urgent where one community's transparency to

itself becomes the measure imposed upon everyone else. Under that demand, difference is either translated into sameness or treated as a threat requiring removal (Glissant, 1997).

The Poetics of Planning proceeds more carefully. It understands that knowing always approaches a world already alive with meanings that exceed the knower. Opacity consequently becomes a civic ethic of unfinished interpretation. A neighborhood may be engaged without being reduced to a demographic profile. While a community can participate in planning and not render every intimate practice administratively visible. The planner may deepen understanding while accepting that comprehension will remain partial, relational, and revisable. Resultingly, opacity preserves the excess through which a place may continue surprising those who inhabit it.

Plato (1993) offers an unexpected image for this relational incompletion in the *Symposium*. The wise woman Diotima recounts that Love was conceived through the encounter of Penia and Poros — Poverty and Plenty — and therefore inherits the unsettled fortunes of both. Love possesses neither permanent abundance nor absolute deprivation. Whatever flows in also flows out. Love flourishes, recedes, searches, improvises, and begins again, dwelling "between ignorance and knowledge" as a philosopher precisely because wisdom has never become complete possession (Plato, 1993, p. 27).

Eros (Love) is born in an interval, and the interval is alive. Poverty brings longing; Plenty offers resourcefulness. Their meeting produces a movement that cannot be secured within either condition alone. Love remains unfinished because its vitality arises from relation rather than self-sufficiency. The lover is drawn toward what exceeds the boundaries of the self, discovering that incompletion is not merely a wound awaiting closure but a capacity for entering worlds larger than oneself. The subject who emerges from this encounter resembles a shoreline more than a sovereign territory: shaped by every arrival, altered by each withdrawal, provisionally composed through tides that can never be commanded into stillness.

This porous subject stands at a considerable distance from the Transparent I. Transparency imagines consciousness as a self-contained source of apprehension capable of rendering the

world intelligible from a privileged centre. Eros discloses another geometry. The self acquires form through what it lacks, what it receives, what it loses, and what returns in altered form. Relation is not added to an already completed subject. It participates in the subject's composition. Love thus gives philosophical form to what neighborhood life repeatedly demonstrates: people become who they are through encounters whose consequences cannot be fully predicted or diagrammed in advance.

Nora Bateson (2016) gives this relational learning a name: symmathesy. Living systems learn mutually through interaction across contexts, scales, spatialities, and temporalities. Their intelligence cannot be located within an isolated part because every part is already changing in response to relations that extend beyond it. A forest learns through soil, fungi, rainfall, fire, insects, animals, and human intervention. A neighborhood comes to know through migration, memory, housing, infrastructure, conflict, ritual, ecology, and care. The relations alter the participants even as the participants reshape the relations. Knowledge occurs within the meeting.

Symmathesy therefore challenges planning diagrams that place discrete objects inside boxes and connect them through arrows whose direction is already known. Such representations remain useful, but they cannot contain the mutual learning of living worlds. The map changes as the mappers enter the landscape and entangle. The planner interprets a community and is simultaneously transformed by what the encounter reveals. Meaning arises through participation, where the intelligence resides neither wholly within the planner nor entirely within the community, but within the changing relation between them. The process resembles a jam session more closely than a blueprint: patterned enough to sustain collective movement, open enough for each contribution to alter what the composition can become.

Gregory Bateson's (1972) ecological thinking prepares this shift by insisting that mind and environment cannot be understood as sealed entities. Difference acquires meaning as it travels through relationships, and pattern becomes perceptible only when isolated facts are placed within the circuits that give them consequence. Nora Bateson (2016) deepens this insight by asking us

to abandon even the comforting language of parts and wholes when it prevents us from perceiving the multiple contexts through which systems learn. Many contemporary interventions remain trapped within this grammar even while speaking the language of systems: they isolate a problem, identify its component parts, and search for the mechanism through which the whole may be managed. Symmathesy approaches the world with greater humility. It asks how the relationships themselves are learning and what forms of participation might allow that learning to continue without being captured by a single model (Bateson, 2016).

Rhythm is the form through which this mutual learning becomes perceptible. It allows relations to acquire duration without becoming fixed. Every rhythm depends upon interval, variation, return, and response. The heartbeat repeats, yet no beat occurs under precisely the same conditions as the one before it. Seasons return carrying the consequences of earlier seasons. A market convenes weekly while its conversations, goods, obligations, and participants continually change. Ritual revisits inherited forms while allowing another generation to inhabit them differently. Rhythm therefore carries memory forward without sealing the future inside an identical recurrence.

Henri Lefebvre's (1991) Nietzschean distinction between rhythm/circularity and repetition becomes decisive here. Administrative space often seeks stability by reducing difference to predictable sequences, equilibria, and feedback mechanisms. The state treats repetition as evidence of order because recurring patterns appear more governable when their variations are neutralized. Time is flattened into measurable units; living distinctions are translated into schedules, standards, and comparable outputs. Lefebvre (1991) warns that this rationalization crushes time by turning differences into repetitions that masquerade as balance.

Living rhythm moves otherwise. It holds repetition open to difference. A recurring meal becomes more than nutritional provision because those gathered around the table may have changed since the previous meeting. Seasonal planting remembers earlier harvests while responding to altered soil and weather conditions. Hospitality returns through familiar gestures

— the suitcase filled for relatives, the contest over who will pay, the invitation repeatedly extended — yet each recurrence thickens a relation whose meaning cannot be reduced to transaction (Khalilil, 2025). The geometry of belonging is therefore neither linear nor circular. It does not return as a helix, faithfully revolving around an unchanged centre. It unfolds as a hermeneutic spiral, where each return gathers the sediment of previous encounters and discloses the familiar anew. The spiral does not repeat the world; it composes another horizon from within it. Return gathers memory and carries it into another elevation of understanding.

Kamau Brathwaite's tidalectics proposes an especially powerful figure for this movement (DeLoughrey, 2018). The wave advances and withdraws, appearing to return while continually transporting sediment, memory, and force. Its recurrence creates neither static repetition nor straightforward progress. Jamaican Soundsystem culture has a name for this sonic & material practice: Versioning. Nevertheless, each motion remembers the shore it has touched. The triskelion similarly curls through return without closing itself into a perfect circle. It rises by revisiting, allowing the hermeneutic movement to encounter what appears familiar from a transformed elevated horizon. The answer to Lefebvre's (1991) flattening of space by the state is therefore not another (linear) line. It is a spiral: recursion gaining depth through memory, carrying what has been learned into the next return.

Nietzsche's (1974) account of poetry in Aphorism 84 of *The Gay Science* unexpectedly clarifies the social force of rhythm. He observes that rhythm reorganizes language, recolours thought, aids memory, carries voices across distance, coordinates labour, purifies emotion, and moves bodies toward participation. It produces, he writes, an almost unconquerable desire "to yield, to join in," drawing the step, and even the soul, into measure (Nietzsche, 1974, aph. 84).

Nietzsche interprets this power through ancient beliefs that rhythm could compel gods, determine the future, and bind supernatural forces to human intention. Yet the social anthropology contained within his account exceeds his conclusion. Rhythm synchronizes bodies drawing water or rowing. It carries prayer beyond the ordinary reach of speech. Allows for

labour to acquire a shared tempo. And gathers emotional excess into collective form. Rhythm possesses civic force because it creates a temporality that people can enter together.

The Poetics of Planning receives this insight while altering its direction. Rhythm need not compel participation through constraint. It can invite participation by disclosing relations that were already present but remained difficult to perceive. The ceremony does not manufacture a community from nothing. It gives perceptible form to obligations, memories, and dependencies through which the community has long been sustained. The market does more than coordinate exchange; its recurrence allows residents, growers, cooks, elders, and children to recognize themselves within a shared rhythm. Trails gather ecological knowledge through the movement of bodies across a watershed. Basketball courts create a temporal-spatial commons in which play, spectatorship, conversation, and neighborhood memory become mutually composed. And a community kitchen places the reproduction of life within a rhythm of collective participation. Nietzsche's constraint becomes, within this planning theory, an invitation: rhythm produces an unconquerable desire to participate in worlds larger than oneself.

Participation is the hinge because relation is never passive. It must continually be enacted. The spatial forms that contain modes of participation matter because they permit inhabitants to enter the processes through which their worlds are continually made and remade. Rhythm is therefore not decoration layered onto planning after the essential work has been completed. It is the means through which collective life becomes inhabitable as collective life.

Jacques Attali's (1985) political economy of music enlarges this proposition. Music does more than reflect society; it anticipates emerging forms of social organization by arranging noise into intelligible relations (Attali, 1985). Every order therefore possesses a rhythm through which bodies, labour, desire, and attention are coordinated. Financialized urbanism has its rhythms: mortgage payments, quarterly returns, construction cycles, algorithmic trades, rent deadlines, property assessments, and the constant acceleration of circulation. These repetitions organize life

while appearing external to it. Their tempo reaches deeply into dwelling, compressing social reproduction into schedules oriented toward the realization of financial value.

The Poetics of Planning asks whether other rhythms might become materially durable. Frank Lloyd Wright's (1963) organic architecture approached a related question by seeking continuity among building, site, material, climate, and inhabitation. Organic form does not emerge through the imposition of a universal type upon an indifferent landscape. It acquires coherence through relationships among elements whose distinctions remain perceptible. In this sense architecture becomes compositional because no element can be understood apart from the pattern through which it participates in the whole. Yet the whole itself remains alive only insofar as these relations continue adapting through use, weather, growth, maintenance, and time.

Planning similarly composes through choreography. Architecture arranges space; music composes time; dance gives movement perceptible form. Planning draws these dimensions together, shaping the intervals through which bodies, infrastructures, ecologies, memories, and institutions encounter one another. Choreography does not require that every movement be predetermined. It establishes orientation, timing, threshold, and relation while leaving room for improvisation. The planner's task becomes less analogous to writing a final score than to cultivating the conditions under which a city may continue to learn how to move.

In another not unrelated register the critique of the Glass City revealed the violence of a transparency that exposes persons and places to an observing gaze while concealing the material relations that sustain everyday life. Yet visibility need not serve possession. Maria Kaika's (2005) urban political ecology reveals another possibility by tracing the networks that cut through and beneath cities, carrying water, energy, sewage, labour, technology, capital, and transformed nature into the ordinary spaces of dwelling. These infrastructures materialize the processes through which nature becomes commodity and urban life becomes possible (Kaika, 2005).

Modern planning fragmented these relations by separating extraction, production, reproduction, residence, work, recreation, and circulation into apparently autonomous zones. Water arrived at the tap without watershed. Electricity appeared within the home without generation. Food entered the grocery store without traces of soil, labour, or season attached to it. Waste disappeared beneath streets or beyond municipal boundaries. The dwelling acquired the appearance of autonomy because its dependencies had been spatially and conceptually removed from view. This separation fractured everyday consciousness alongside urban space, concealing how deeply the domestic, the urban, and the ecological remained entangled. Before displacement occurs within the soon-to-be gentrified complete community the homo urbanus has already interiorized the alienations from without, within.

Kaika's (2005) excavation of these opaque flows permits the city to be encountered as a unified socio-natural process rather than a collection of separate domains. Labour, capital, water, technology, social relations, and ecological transformation continuously pass through one another. Their disclosure does more than provide information. It reorients inhabitants toward the conditions of collective existence and disalienation. This paper names that disclosure metabolic transparency.

Administrative transparency makes persons exceedingly available to observation. Metabolic transparency sets up relations to be available to participation. It reveals where water originates, how food reaches the table, whose labour maintains buildings, where waste travels, which communities live alongside extraction, and how energy systems connect domestic comfort to distant landscapes. Its ethical purpose is not exposure. It is the recovery of relational intelligibility.

An oil pipeline beneath a hydro corridor should become knowable because communities deserve to understand the extractive infrastructures shaping their landscapes. A community garden should reveal the seasonality and labour through which nourishment is produced. Stormwater systems may become visible through landscape design that allows residents to perceive how rain

moves across soil, pavement, wetlands, and watersheds. Repair spaces can disclose the material histories of objects that consumer culture treats as disposable. And community kitchens can bring the labour of social reproduction into shared civic life. Such visibility invites residents to participate in metabolism rather than remain passive consumers of concealed systems.

As discussed above opacity protects a different dimension of the city. Friendships, rituals, intimate memories, informal care networks, play, Federici's (2004) notion of gossip, and improvisation require spaces where they may unfold without constant exposure or administrative capture. Their value cannot be established through universal legibility because it arises within the particular relations that carry them. A courtyard conversation may never enter a municipal dataset and a market stall may host forms of recognition that exceed the economic transaction recorded there. These relations flourish through a degree of reserve, and by the freedom to remain partially veiled while continuing to participate in public life.

Transparency and opacity therefore cannot be arranged as competing planning ideals. The deeper danger is to imagine either as a final refuge, for the illusions of transparency and opacity nourish one another, that they produce a flickering movement through which idealism and naturalism repeatedly exchange places. The Poetics of Planning enters that oscillation without seeking refuge in either pole. Its concern is the rhythm that enables metabolic life to become publicly intelligible while allowing relational life to retain the freedom through which meaning gathers.

Symmathesy reveals how these domains continue learning from one another. Metabolic transparency may show a neighborhood that its food system depends upon distant regions, racialized labour, fossil-fueled transportation, and vulnerable supply chains, thus creating a new ethical horizon for the so-called global city to participate within — challenging sections of it to move towards an urban-political-economic governing orientation not unsimilar to Transition Towns. Participation may then reorganize local practices through gardens, markets, cooperative purchasing, maker and small business cultivation hubs, composting, or new forms of public procurement. Those interventions alter social relations, ecological knowledge, and neighborhood

rhythms. Opacity ensures that the resulting worlds are not immediately enclosed within a universal model imposed elsewhere (i.e., turning small business cultivation hubs into atomized corporate WeWork spaces). Each place retains the right to learn through its own histories, relations, and environmental conditions.

Planning thus becomes the choreography of metabolic and relational worlds. Transparency reveals the systems through which life is reproduced, whilst opacity preserves the intervals through which life acquires memory, intimacy, and meaning. Rhythm brings these conditions into composition. Participation allows the composition to become lived, while relation emerges through that continual enactment, and worldmaking becomes less a singular act of design/plan/development than the repeated, revisable practice of inhabiting interdependence.

The City Continually Composes Itself

If the previous section recovered rhythm as the condition through which transparency and opacity become mutually sustaining, a final question silently remains. What, precisely, is it that rhythm composes? The answer cannot simply be space. Space may be surveyed, measured, subdivided, or administered without ever becoming a city. Nor can the answer be infrastructure alone, indispensable though it remains. Water systems, streets, buildings, parks, markets, and dwellings prepare the conditions of urban life, yet none of them, taken in isolation, explains why one neighborhood becomes memorable while another remains anonymous. Something else continually gathers these material forms into a living world. This chapter names that gathering poiesis.

Poiesis is older than planning and broader than poetry. It names the continual bringing-forth of worlds through acts of relation that exceed administration and representation. The Greek philosophers understood poiesis as a movement of emergence, a process through which something previously concealed entered presence. Yet within the Platonic tradition this creative capacity gradually retreated from the governing life of the polis, yielding precedence to philosophical contemplation and rational administration (Plato, 1992). The poet was not simply

displaced from the city; an entire way of knowing the city and world was displaced alongside them. What remained was a political imagination increasingly persuaded that order could be secured through reason alone, while creation and its unpredictable proclivities belonged elsewhere.

The Poetics of Planning proposes another inheritance. Rather than treating poiesis as the aesthetic ornament of urban life, it understands creation as one of the city's primary political capacities. Cities are never assembled exclusively through legislation, engineering, or design. They emerge through innumerable acts of narration that continually bind strangers into neighbors, memory into place, and everyday encounter into collective life. Planning enters this process late. Before a policy is written, someone has already named a street or traced a shortcut through the grass.

This possibility requires reopening one of Western philosophy's oldest images. Plato's (1992) analogy of the divided line organizes reality according to a hierarchy that separates the visible from the intelligible, appearance from enduring truth, opinion from knowledge. That image has accompanied much of modern planning, encouraging the belief that the highest task of thought is to ascend beyond the contingent life of the street toward more perfect forms of order. Yet cities have never lived comfortably within those divisions. Their vitality arises precisely through the crossings that exceed them. Street festivals become meaningful because memory gathers within them. Plazas become institutions because trust accumulates through repeated encounters and neighborhood character (aura) endures because of the stories that circulate between generations of its residents. The city unfolds, not by crossing a line from appearance into truth, but by continually entangling together what philosophy once sought to separate.

Saidiya Hartman's (2008) practice of critical fabulation offers an unexpected planning lesson. Faced with archives structured by Black historical absence, Hartman refuses both invention unconstrained by evidence and fidelity to documents that have already erased the lives they claim to record. She composes within the interval between history and imagination, allowing

relation to emerge where official narratives have left only silence. Planning confronts a comparable condition. Maps, zoning schedules, demographic profiles, and census tables remain indispensable, yet they seldom preserve the ordinary conversations, neighborhood nicknames, improvised celebrations, kitchen economies, or informal pathways through which urban worlds become habitable. The archive is necessary but the city has always exceeded it.

For this reason, the everyday stories of a neighborhood cannot be dismissed as sentimental residue lying outside serious planning knowledge. They constitute another register of urban intelligence. Gossip preserves reputations long after buildings have changed hands. Oral histories retain ecological memory after streams have been buried beneath pavement. Local mom and pop shops, community festivals, playground games, and the names residents give to neighborhood hangouts transmit forms of belonging that no master plan could legislate. As Glissant (1997) reminds us, relation remains irreducible because it continually exceeds every attempt at final description. Every story told about a city therefore becomes less a report upon an already completed world than another act in its ongoing composition.

It is here that Deborah Solomon's reflection acquires an importance extending well beyond the experience of one artist. Recounting negotiations with planners and public officials, Solomon describes how conversations often ended the moment participants discovered she was "an artist." Her proposals for ecological infrastructures, biodiversity, and new forms of public space were no longer evaluated on their merits because artistic practice itself was presumed to stand outside legitimate planning knowledge (Sretenović & Mežnarić Osole, 2024, 8:19–11:53). Her experience reveals that Plato's exile of the poet has never entirely ended. It survives wherever imagination is welcomed as ornament yet denied the authority to govern; where creation is celebrated in galleries but regarded with suspicion in council chambers; where the work of composing possible futures is mistaken for something less rigorous than administration.

Aimé Césaire understood this differently. Reflecting upon the relationship between artistic creation and political life, he observed that "creating a poem and creating a city are to some

extent the same thing" because both arise from a shared commitment to building a future in the present (cited in Hale & Véron, 2010, p. 67). The significance of this statement lies not in its metaphorical beauty but in its planning implications. A city is never created once and for all. It is continually renewed through the narratives, gestures, rhythms, and relations that sustain collective life long after construction crews have departed. Planning therefore succeeds whenever it learns to compose alongside those living processes rather than imagining itself their sole author.

Cities, then, are never finished because relation is never finished. A meal prepared for someone not yet arrived, stories exchanged inside an amber lit building lobby, footpaths gently worn into the earth through repeated journeys across a school's playground, and memories carried home after a neighborhood cricket match — all subtly participate in the composition of another city. None of these acts appears within the final draft of a master plan, yet without them no city could endure. Planning does not stand outside this composition directing it toward completion. It enters a world already making itself. The city is therefore neither a Book awaiting its final edition nor a project awaiting implementation. It continually composes itself through the rhythms of metabolism and relation, transparency and opacity, memory and invention. The Poetics of Planning returns, at last, to the governing life of the polis — not to replace planning with poetry, but to remind planning that its highest vocation can be poiesis: the careful cultivation of conditions through which another world may continue to emerge.

3. Subprime Kinship

"Even rest takes work"

(Akberet Fesehaye).

The Capture of Everyday Life

Every political economy composes everyday life before it composes the city. Long before a skyline appears upon the horizon, a society has already determined how mornings begin, when evenings conclude, the ways children encounter adulthood, which elders remain within the community, the manner in which neighbors come to know one another, and what rhythms distinguish labour from leisure. The built environment merely renders these prior compositions material. Streets, dwellings, plazas, markets, trails, parks, and institutions do not simply organize movement through space; they give cadence to the practices through which life continually reproduces itself.

This paper has argued that planning is fundamentally a compositional practice. In *Eyes of Kinship*, planning first became a question of perception. The *Poetics of Planning* extended that insight by suggesting that planning is less the administration of completed objects than the composition of living worlds. Yet every act of composition unfolds within another composition already underway. Before planners draw neighborhoods, political economy has already arranged the temporal architecture of everyday life. The enduring question is therefore not whether everyday life is composed, but who composes it, whose interests that composition ultimately serves, and which rhythms it permits to endure.

Music has long understood what planning is only beginning to hear. Hip-Hop, as I have argued elsewhere, has never been merely a musical genre but an instrument through which transformations in political economy become audible before they fully materialize in policy, planning, or public consciousness (Joseph, 2026). Verse, chorus, break, and cypher have never

functioned as neutral musical containers; they have constituted social architectures through which time, collectivity, space, mediation, and difference could be organized. When financialization gradually displaced mediation with repetition, the foreclosure was never exclusively musical. It announced a broader reorganization of everyday life itself. This chapter follows that announcement into the household.

Yet before finance enters the mortgage, it first enters the working day. Financialized urbanization does not sustain itself autonomously. Every office tower wrapped in reflective glass, every luxury condominium, data centre, logistics hub, university campus, airport, park, waterfront, hospital, and corporate headquarters depends upon an immense infrastructure of ordinary labour that rarely appears within the celebrated imagery of the global city. The globalization of finance unfolded alongside the globalization of the labour required to maintain its strategic infrastructures. Structural adjustment programs, export-processing zones, and uneven patterns of development accelerated the movement of workers into metropolitan regions such as Toronto, New York, London, Los Angeles, Dubai and Copenhagen — not principally so they might share equally in the prosperity these cities appeared to promise, but so they might quietly sustain it through cleaning offices, securing buildings, caring for children and elders, preparing meals, driving passengers, maintaining hotels, and performing the innumerable forms of labour through which advanced financialized urban economies reproduce themselves (Sassen, 1991). Migrant workers built this city in the quiet of the night and in the hushed murmurs of the early morning.

The abstraction of finance therefore acquires a remarkably ordinary appearance. Before sunrise, metropolitan transit systems slowly fill with workers making their way into financial districts while much of the city still sleeps. Glass towers await their caretakers. Investment condominiums stand as monuments to circulating capital long before they become homes. High-income Households pressed for time purchase forms of care they can no longer provide themselves. The celebrated skyline, viewed from a distance, appears effortless. Seen from the platform of an early morning subway train, this skyline reveals another architecture altogether:

an infrastructure assembled from tired bodies, interrupted sleep, deferred family time, and the somber discipline of returning again tomorrow.

Henri Lefebvre (2003) anticipated this historical transformation decades ago. As industrial production gradually ceased to function as capital's principal outlet, investment steadily flowed into urbanization and real estate, allowing the production of space itself to become a primary circuit of accumulation (Lefebvre, 2003). Urbanism, Lefebvre argued, conceals this transformation beneath the reassuring language of planning, development, community, and progress. The unfinished city — a place once capable of interruption, encounter, improvisation, and social reproduction — slowly hardens into an infrastructure organized around uninterrupted productivity.

Its consequences emerge most clearly within the textures of everyday life. Spaces once capable of lingering, porosity, and unprogrammed encounter steadily recede beneath the demands of optimization. Benjamin's (1973) Naples, where domestic and public life continually flowed into one another, gives way to what Byung-Chul Han (2024) describes as a world of gaplessness, where every interval becomes available for circulation, calculation, and extraction. As discussed earlier, distance, which once nourished narrative, memory, and aura, gradually disappears. Along with it vanish those pauses through which communities recover, relationships deepen, and life acquires meanings irreducible to efficiency (Benjamin, 1973; Han, 2024; Lefebvre, 1991).

The foreclosure of everyday life extends well beyond the metropolitan core. As so-called global cities organize themselves around uninterrupted accumulation, many of the practices necessary for social reproduction are displaced into carefully orchestrated landscapes elsewhere. Recuperation, celebration, intimacy, convalescence, and leisure migrate into resort economies scattered across Jamaica, Mexico, Cuba, Ghana, the Dominican Republic, and the Mediterranean — places that appear detached from metropolitan life while functioning as its indispensable counterparts. Lefebvre (1991) reminds us that these landscapes of apparent escape are themselves meticulously planned, programmed, and integrated into the spatial practice of

neocapitalism/neocolonialism. These planned landscapes of leisure do not stand outside financial accumulation. They prolong it. The overdeveloped imperial-metropolis exports exhaustion while importing recovery, transforming distant places into satellite landscapes through which advanced financialized urban economies uninterruptedly reproduce themselves at the speed of light (Brand & Wissen, 2021).

It is within this broader political economy that Akberet Fesehaye's matter-of-fact observation acquires its full philosophical force: *even rest takes work*. Her words are not simply an aphorism. They describe the lived condition of those whose labour maintains the strategic infrastructures of financialized urbanization while often finding their own capacities for rest, care, and dwelling deferred. Madden and Marcuse (2016) remind us that home is not merely a commodity but an expression of humanity's creative capacity; residential alienation begins when that capacity is captured and redirected toward the accumulation of capital rather than the reproduction of life. The consequence is measured not only through wages or mortgages, but through lost mornings, interrupted conversations, deferred parenthood, fragmented neighborhoods, exhausted bodies, shortened sleep, and the gradual disappearance of vitality.

If *Poetics of Planning* argued that planning is the composition of worlds, then financialization reveals itself here as the capture of humanity's compositional capacities. It does not merely reorganize land, housing, or infrastructure. It reorganizes the rhythms through which people make homes, sustain families, recover from labour, and reproduce one another across time and space.

Financialization and the Household

The household has not always occupied the central position it now holds within the circuits of global finance. For much of industrial capitalism, the factory appeared as the principal site through which capital extracted surplus value from labour, even though its profitability always depended upon a much wider geography of unpaid and underpaid work extending through plantations, colonies, households, and other racialized sites of extraction. Industrial accumulation

did not arise from the factory alone. It was sustained by imperial frontiers supplying coerced labour, raw materials, and ecological wealth, while households silently reproduced the labouring body from one day to the next. During the closing decades of the twentieth century, however, another historical reorganization began to unfold. As profitability within industrial production declined and opportunities for productive investment narrowed, finance redirected its attention toward the ordinary infrastructures of everyday life (Lapavitsas, 2011). The household gradually ceased to function merely as one condition for the reproduction of labour. It became one of the principal sites through which financial institutions could extract value directly from wages, pensions, mortgages, insurance, education, and the very revenues through which everyday existence is sustained.

Costas Lapavitsas (2011) identifies this transformation as one of the defining characteristics of financialization. Banks come to derive profit "directly out of wages and salaries, rather than surplus value" (Lapavitsas, 2011, p. 612). The significance of this observation extends well beyond economics. Finance no longer waits until production has concluded before realizing profit. It subtly accompanies the wage home. Income once directed primarily toward sustaining food, shelter, transportation, education, caregiving, and the ordinary reproduction of life passes through financial institutions before it can sustain the household itself. The wage remains, yet it arrives already anticipated by creditors, insurers, lenders, utilities, landlords and mortgage providers. Everyday life does not disappear beneath financialization. It is reorganized through it.

This historical mutation alters more than the circulation of money. It transforms the temporal organization of dwelling itself. Household decisions unfold according to repayment schedules rather than seasonal rhythms, neighborhood obligations, or intergenerational forms of reciprocity. The work of remaining near those we love, raising children where friendships have already taken root, weathering illness without surrendering one's place, and sustaining the unsaid responsibilities that bind generations together is progressively reorganized through affordability calculations, creditworthiness, interest rates, and property valuations. Finance no longer confines

itself to markets. It enters the home, recalibrating the temporal rhythms through which ordinary life is lived.

Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika (2016) deepen this argument by refusing to treat the mortgage as a neutral financial instrument. Rather, they describe mortgage contracts as biopolitical technologies that forge together "not only personal income, but also the practices of everyday life as well as community and family relations as cogwheels into the global speculative financial strategies that drive capitalist urbanisation" (Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika, 2016, p. 2). Debt therefore exceeds the purchase of shelter. Future labour, family relations, everyday decision-making, bodily well-being, and neighborhood attachments are gradually synchronized with speculative circuits operating at scales far removed from the households whose lives they organize. The mortgage appears as a private agreement between borrower and lender, yet its consequences reverberate throughout the temporal and relational infrastructures of everyday life.

The political ambitions embedded within this transformation become especially visible in the Spanish experience. Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika (2016) recount that José Luis Arrese, Franco's Falangist Minister of Housing, declared in 1957, *"We want a country of homeowners, not proletarians"* (p. 5). Homeownership was never imagined merely as an economic policy. It formed part of a broader political project through which potentially insurgent workers might be transformed into orderly, indebted proprietors whose futures became tethered to mortgage repayment rather than collective political struggle. The aspiration was not simply to expand ownership. It was to cultivate a particular social subject whose responsibilities flowed toward financial institutions rather than reciprocal forms of collective life.

Seen from this perspective, financialization does not simply commodify housing. It reorganizes the household into one of capital's most effective institutions of everyday governance. The horizon slowly narrows. Kinship yields to the nuclear household. The citizen is recognized chiefly through productive capacity. Trust gives way to creditworthiness. Labour is valued for its discipline, and dwelling is absorbed into the administrative grammar of zoning. These figures do

not emerge naturally from the human condition. They are historically composed through financial, legal, and spatial arrangements that gradually teach indebtedness to appear as responsibility, ownership as freedom, and repayment as the ordinary rhythm of adult life. Before debt becomes an economic relation, it begins to reorganize the very forms through which households imagine security, obligation, responsibility and the future.

This is the historical terrain from which *Kinship* emerges. The household no longer functions solely as a place where life reproduces itself. It reproduces the financial logics through which global capital secures its own continuity. The following sections trace how this transformation extends beyond the mortgage contract itself, entering the moral life of debt, the production of residential alienation, and ultimately the formation of the modern financial subject.

Composing the Indebted Household

If the previous section demonstrated that the household has become one of finance's principal sites of accumulation, a deeper question immediately follows. By what means does finance secure such an intimate place within everyday life? The answer cannot be found in the mortgage understood merely as a financial contract. Mortgages do not simply transfer property. As discussed above, mortgages compose subjects and condition subjectivity.

Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika (2016) therefore propose a decisive conceptual shift. Rather than treating mortgage debt as an economic arrangement alone, they conceptualize it as a biotechnology — a "technology of power over life" that engineers an intimate relationship between the practices of everyday life and the speculative movements of global real estate and financial markets (p. 1). Debt, in this formulation, extends well beyond the purchase of shelter. Family relations, bodily well-being, future labour, community attachments, and the ordinary decisions through which everyday life unfolds gradually become synchronized with financial obligations whose temporal horizon stretches decades into the future. The household no longer merely inhabits financial space; it begins to inhabit financial time.

This transformation unfolds unsuspectingly because it first appears as security. A mortgage promises permanence and stability. It speaks the language of aspiration while simultaneously reorganizing the rhythms through which aspiration becomes possible. Futures that have not yet been lived arrive already pledged. Everyday decisions concerning employment, education, illness, mobility, caregiving, or the possibility of welcoming another generation of kin or friendships into the household unfold beneath commitments contracted years before those decisions must be made. What appears to secure the future gradually begins to precompose it.

Long before mortgage-backed securities emerged, Friedrich Nietzsche (2000) recognized that debt had already exceeded its economic origins. In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, indebtedness gradually becomes inseparable from guilt, tying the debtor not simply to repayment but to a moral relation through which obligation is internalized as conscience. The creditor no longer governs exclusively from outside. Authority is folded inward until discipline begins to speak in one's own voice. Mortgage debt inherits this genealogy without requiring its religious language. Default comes to signify more than financial interruption. It frequently appears as personal failure. Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika's (2016) research demonstrates precisely this idea, documenting how mortgage indebtedness manifests through anxiety, diminished belonging, deteriorating health, fractured family relations, stress, shame, and fear. The mortgage therefore governs not only through interest rates and repayment schedules, but through the emotional and ethical life of the household itself.

Kipfer and Sotomayor (2024) extend this analysis by showing that mortgage biopolitics cannot be separated from the spatial arrangements through which everyday life is organized. Revisiting Guy Debord's description of zoning as a "technique of separation" and Frantz Fanon's account of colonial "compartmentalization," Kipfer and Sotomayor argue that zoning does not simply produce segregation after the fact. Zoning codifies and entrenches existing forms of separation: the fragmentation of human activities, the gendered assumptions embedded within neighborhoods reserved for "single families," the automobile dependencies generated by spatial

dispersion, and the quotidian alienations that arise when work, care, leisure, and dwelling are systematically pulled apart (Kipfer & Sotomayor, 2024, p. 48).

Read alongside Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika, the significance of this argument becomes unmistakable. Mortgage debt governs the temporal life of the household while zoning governs its spatial composition. Finance disciplines time, while planning disciplines space. Together they reorganize the ordinary conditions through which kinship is lived. The detached house, the bounded lot, the isolated condominium, and the privatized nuclear household appear to promise autonomy while narrowing the wider relations of reciprocity upon which collective life has historically depended.

This is the deeper accomplishment of mortgage biopolitics. It reorganizes far more than property ownership. It composes a particular moral geography of adulthood, one populated by the responsible homeowner, the creditworthy borrower, the productive citizen, the disciplined worker, and the self-contained nuclear family. These figures appear natural only because financialization patiently, but laceratingly, teaches them to do so. Debt enters the moral vocabulary of obligation. Obligation is naturalized as virtue. Separation, in turn, no longer requires justification; it is received as common sense. The household, once imagined as a place from which life continually exceeded the demands of the market, learns to reproduce the rhythms of financial accumulation within its own walls.

Seen from this perspective, the mortgage is not simply an instrument of finance. It is a compositional technology. It organizes relationships before they unfold and cleverly scripts the temporal and spatial conditions through which kinship itself is imagined. Only then does the historical condition that this paper calls *Subprime Kinship* begin to emerge — not as the accidental by-product of financial capitalism, but as one of its most accomplished compositions.

Residential Alienation

If mortgage biopolitics composes the indebted household, residential alienation names what it feels like to inhabit the world that composition has produced. The previous sections have traced the movement of finance into the intimate rhythms of everyday life, demonstrating how debt reorganizes the temporal and spatial conditions of dwelling. Yet political economy alone cannot account for the human consequences of this transformation. The question now becomes existential. What becomes of dwelling when its primary task is no longer the reproduction of life but the reproduction of capital?

Madden and Marcuse (2016) argue that alienation belongs within housing theory far more centrally than it has generally been allowed to. The term itself carries a revealing genealogy. In property law, something that is *alienable* is something capable of being transferred, exchanged, bought, or sold. Alienation therefore precedes the market as one of its legal conditions. Housing enters capitalist exchange only because it has first become alienable. Residential alienation emerges when this legal condition expands beyond property and gradually reorganizes dwelling itself. The home ceases to be experienced primarily as a living relation and starts to appear more often than not as an object circulating within speculative markets (Madden & Marcuse, 2016).

Karl Marx (1977) understood alienation not as a psychological disposition but as a historical organization of life. Human beings realize themselves through the creative activity of transforming the world they inhabit. Labour, at its richest, is neither mere employment nor survival. It is the unfolding of human capacities through the continual making of shared worlds. Alienation begins when this universal capacity is appropriated by forces external to those who create, such that the products of human activity confront their makers as independent powers (Marx, 1977). As Madden and Marcuse (2016) observe, this insight extends naturally to housing. Dwelling is itself a profoundly creative practice. Whether one inhabits a cave, an apartment, a multigenerational compound, or a condominium, making a home remains one of humanity's oldest acts of worldmaking. Residential alienation occurs when that creative capacity is

subordinated to the imperatives of exchange rather than the reproduction of collective life (Madden & Marcuse, 2016).

Financialized urbanism deepens this estrangement in ways Marx could scarcely have anticipated. The worker is no longer alienated only within the workplace. Alienation accompanies the worker home. Mortgage metronomic-like scheduled obligations reorganize domestic rhythms. Property values mediate neighborhood belonging. The home survives as property while dwelling itself becomes precarious.

Fanon (2008) reminds us, however, that alienation is never merely economic. It is always sociogenic. Every historical order produces the particular forms through which human beings become estranged from themselves, from one another, and from the worlds they inhabit (Fanon, 2008; Wynter, 2001). Alienation therefore assumes different appearances without ceasing to belong to the same political economy. The indebted homeowner, the lifelong renter, the precariously housed family, the unhoused resident, the migrant shift worker rising before dawn to maintain the gleaming office towers of global cities — all inhabit distinct experiences of dispossession. Yet these experiences remain historically related because they emerge from the same financialized reorganization of urban life.

This recognition becomes especially important when considering the contemporary middle class. Residential alienation is not simply imposed upon those excluded from ownership. Madden and Marcuse (2016) insist that it "affects owner-occupiers as well as tenants, and middle-class households as well as working-class ones" (p. 45). Homeownership often secures only what they describe as "a more livable corner within an inhumane system" (Madden and Marcuse, 2016, p. 38). The apparent stability of ownership conceals a deeper fragility. Security becomes conditional upon uninterrupted repayment, rising property values, stable employment, and financial markets operating far beyond the reach of households. Ontological security tragically gives way to speculative existence.

Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika (2016) render this condition painfully visible through the testimony of one participant who reflects, "I consider myself from a class that no longer exists, that has been wiped off the map. Middle. There is no middle class anymore; now, we are nothing" (p. 10). The observation is striking not because it announces economic decline alone, but because it reveals the collapse of an entire social imagination. The guarantee that diligent work, disciplined saving, and responsible homeownership would secure a stable future no longer commands the same illusory force over the urban imaginary that it once did. The household remains intact, yet the horizon that once oriented it has quietly disappeared (Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika, 2016).

Fanon's (2008) reflections on the middle class acquire renewed significance here. He describes middle-class society not primarily as an income bracket but as a historical formation that rigidifies life into predetermined forms, forbidding discovery, constraining becoming, and deftly suffocating the possibility of another future (Fanon, 2008). Such a society produces subjects who often experience profound alienation while remaining unable to recognize the historical character of their own condition. Their suffering becomes individualized. Their sufferings appear private and their widely shared anxieties seem uniquely their own. Alienation thus accomplishes one of its deepest political tasks: it fragments what history has already joined. The relations that once made dwelling meaningful painfully recede. The triumph of ownership reveals itself as another form of estrangement (Wynter, 1971).

Residential alienation, then, cannot be reduced to homelessness, unaffordability, or indebtedness alone. It is the gradual normalization of separation itself. The homeowner mistakes indebtedness for security. The renter mistakes ownership for freedom, while the unhoused appears to inhabit an altogether different political world. Finance governs through these misrecognitions, whisperingly convincing each group that its struggle is singular when, in fact, each group inhabits a different expression of the same historical transformation. What has been fragmented is not merely housing tenure but political imagination itself.

Only when these estrangements become historically intelligible can another possibility begin to emerge. The task is not to dissolve the genuine differences separating owners, renters, and unhoused residents, nor to romanticize a unity that does not yet exist. It is to recognize that each group is confronting the same political economy through different doors. Coalition begins precisely here, in the difficult work of disalienation. Before *Eyes of Kinship* can become a practice of worldmaking, alienation must first cease to appear as a private failure and become recognizable as a shared historical condition. It is from this threshold that *Subprime Kinship* receives its name.

Naming Subprime Kinship

Subprime Kinship names the historical condition in which financialization captures the temporal, spatial, and affective infrastructures through which human beings compose one another as kin. It is neither synonymous with mortgage indebtedness nor reducible to a crisis of housing affordability. Conversely, Subprime Kinship describes the gradual subordination of relation itself to the reproduction of capital. The first enclosure was not spatial but temporal. Finance learned to inhabit the rhythms of dwelling before it consolidated its claim upon land itself. Housing could later appear as an asset class only because speculative time had already entered the ordinary cadence through which life was organized. Long before neighborhoods were transformed through rising property values, the ordinary practices through which people cared for children, elders, neighbors, friends, and strangers had begun to unfold within a political economy calibrated by debt, repayment, optimization, and accumulation (Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika, 2016; Lapavitsas, 2011; Lefebvre, 2003).

Seen from this perspective, the nuclear family, the productive citizen, the creditworthy borrower, the responsible homeowner, and the aspiring middle class no longer appear as timeless social forms. They emerge instead as historically specific compositions, assembled through the mutually reinforcing logics of financialization, planning, and liberal citizenship. Sylvia Wynter (2001) reminds us that every historical order reproduces particular genres of being human while rendering others unintelligible. The household organized around individualized ownership,

private accumulation, and bounded domesticity therefore appears less as a universal expression of human life than as one historically aligned with the requirements of financial capitalism. Its apparent normality conceals the immense labour required to sustain it and the wider relations of care it frequently displaces. Ultimately, financialization fragments everyday human experiences into separate political identities, making coalition appear less natural than competition, and private endurance more imaginable than collective transformation.

The deepest accomplishment of Subprime Kinship, then, is not simply the financialization of housing. It is the financialization of political imagination. Alienation no longer consists solely in the separation of labour from its product, or even of residents from meaningful dwelling. It appears as an inability to recognize one's own condition in the lives of others whose struggles have been differently organized by the same historical transformation. Finance reaches its greatest success not when it governs property, but when it governs the meanings attached to it. Debt comes to feel like security. Ownership is received as the measure of freedom. Those without housing are left beyond the terms of both, revealing that what has been reorganized is not merely tenure, but relation itself.

Yet no historical composition is final. Every political economy produces the conditions of its own reinterpretation. If this chapter has traced the gradual capture of everyday life by finance, it has done so not to foreclose the future but to clarify the historical task that now confronts planning. Diagnosis, by itself, cannot disalienate. Critique alone cannot compose another world. The remaining task is therefore no longer diagnostic but compositional.

If *Subprime Kinship* names the political economy through which finance reorganizes relation, the question that follows is how planning might participate in its recomposition. Such a project cannot be satisfied by marginal reforms to the existing urban order, nor by nostalgic returns to imagined pasts. It demands another conception of urban life altogether — one capable of restoring the metabolic relations between production and reproduction, household and

neighborhood, human and more-than-human worlds, care and ecology that financial urbanization has progressively rendered opaque and uneven (Kaika, 2005; Smith, 2008).

The following section begins from this threshold. It asks what planning might turn into once the city is no longer imagined as a machine for accumulation but as an ecology of relation (Maloche, 1976). There, the problem of residential alienation gives way to the possibility of disalienation; the indebted household yields to extended forms of kinship; opacity becomes metabolic transparency; and planning itself is reimagined as the syncopated composition of worlds in which human, ecological, and social reproduction learn to dwell together.

4. Non-Urban Urbanism: Recomposing the Metropolitan Metabolism

> "*to go beyond [the] bounded city and to go beyond this more theoretical idea about urban politics... is the understanding... that urban politics, even local politics, even sub-local politics is now defined by streams and metabolic relationships that go way beyond the boundaries of the city. And there I actually have not seen, despite me looking everywhere... a very good set of answers... that would allow me to have a politics of the urban that is metabolic in that sense, that is so connected in that sense, how do we define a politics of the urban in a completely connected world?*" (Roger Keil).

From Diagnosis to Composition

Every diagnosis carries within it an unfinished responsibility. To describe a condition is not yet to alter it. One may map the contours of alienation, trace the abstractions of financialization, expose the conceits of transparency, and recover the disappearance of relation with considerable precision, yet the city remains before us asking a deeper question: How, then, shall we compose ourselves otherwise?

I have previously argued that the contemporary metropolis is not simply organized by unequal distributions of wealth, nor merely by misguided planning decisions, but by a more pervasive fragmentation of urban life itself. Relations once held in living proximity (albeit precariously) have gradually been dispersed across administrative categories, market transactions, and infrastructural systems that rarely recognize one another. Extraction proceeds as though it bears no responsibility for production. Production advances as though it need not answer to reproduction. Reproduction unfolds while estranged from the ecological worlds upon which it depends. What emerges is not merely a divided city, but a divided imagination — a way of

inhabiting urban life in which the conditions that sustain one another have forgotten that they belong to the same world.

The crisis confronting planning therefore cannot be resolved through additional techniques alone. More sophisticated models, denser developments, improved transit networks, and sleekly refined metrics of sustainability remain incapable of addressing a problem whose deepest character is ethical before it is technical. A city may become more efficient as it is becoming less intelligible to itself. It shortens travel times while lengthening the distance between neighbors and the more-than-human lifeworlds that sustain them. At the same time, it multiplies opportunities for exchange even as it erodes the relations through which collective life is reproduced.

This section begins from a different proposition. If planning has historically excelled at organizing movement, perhaps its next task is to compose relation. Such a proposition requires more than the introduction of new policies or novel urban typologies. It asks planning to reconsider the image of the city that surreptitiously precedes every intervention. Every plan already carries an anthropology, an ecology, and an ethics within it. Before planners arrange streets, buildings, parks, or infrastructures, they have already decided — often without noticing — what kinds of relations matter, which forms of life deserve proximity, and which separations appear natural.

It is here that the argument turns from diagnosis toward composition. Composition, however, should not be mistaken for design in its narrow architectural sense. It names the ongoing work of bringing heterogeneous forms of life into meaningful relation without reducing their differences to uniformity. A composer does not erase distinction; obversely, they cultivate resonance. The task is not to produce harmony through sameness, but through reciprocal responsiveness. Cities, no less than symphonies or watersheds, endure because diverse elements gradually learn to answer one another in symmathesiac fashion.

The ethical horizon emerging from this paper may therefore be stated with unusual simplicity. The central problem of the contemporary metropolis is not density, growth, suburbanization, or

even financialization in isolation. It is the progressive separation of those domains which have the potential to sustain one another through everyday reciprocity. Zones of extraction, production, and reproduction have been isolated from one another to the extent that each proceeds as though the others no longer exist. The result is a metropolitan condition in which responsibility dissipates precisely because relation has disappeared from view.

The question that follows is no longer simply how cities should grow. It is how they might become metabolically intelligible to themselves.

The following section proposes one possible response. I call it Non-urban Urbanism. It is not an argument against cities, nor against density, transit, or metropolitan life. It begins instead from the observation that the contemporary metropolis has become extraordinarily productive while steadily exporting the very conditions through which urban life is reproduced. Rest, care, intimacy, ecological renewal, and everyday hospitality have increasingly been displaced beyond the city or marginalized within it for the jet-sitting and the monied few. Non-urban Urbanism asks how these worlds of reproduction might once again become constitutive of urban development itself rather than external to it.

Against Separation

Modern planning has frequently been narrated as a history of progress — storified as being a gradual refinement of technical expertise capable of organizing seemingly complex urban societies. Streets were separated from homes, industry from residence, production from recreation, and nature from the built environment in the name of efficiency, hygiene, safety, and economic growth. Yet beneath this administrative achievement lies another history, one less habitually told. The modern city was not simply organized through specialization; it was organized through separation. Over time, extraction, production, reproduction, transportation, housing, ecological systems, and public life became compartmentalized into distinct institutional, spatial, and bureaucratic domains. The consequence has not merely been functional

differentiation, but the gradual dissolution of the relationships that would render these domains mutually intelligible and accountable to each other.

This argument extends an important tradition within urban political ecology while departing from it in a significant way. Maria Kaika (2005), building upon Henri Lefebvre's (1991) critique of abstract space, demonstrates that modern urbanization rendered the infrastructures sustaining everyday life invisible. Water, electricity, sewage, fuel, labour, and countless other socio-natural processes are hidden beneath streets, inside walls, and behind technical systems that appear autonomous from the lives they sustain. These infrastructural networks did not simply disappear from public consciousness; their disappearance became a defining feature of modern urban life itself. As Kaika (2005) observes, the technological networks upon which cities depend became "largely hidden, opaque, invisible," despite remaining indispensable to the functioning of the metropolis (p. 28). Their concealment naturalized the illusion that the city was composed of discrete systems rather than continuous metabolic flows.

Yet the significance of Kaika's intervention extends beyond the visibility of infrastructure. Her deeper contribution is to reveal that the compartmentalization of urban systems is simultaneously a compartmentalization of social responsibility. Modern planning inherited an Enlightenment desire to classify, order, and distinguish functions with definite precision. Home, work, recreation, transportation, and nature were treated as separate categories requiring their own specialized spaces, regulatory frameworks, and professional expertise (Kaika, 2005). While these distinctions undoubtedly addressed pressing nineteenth and twentieth-century concerns surrounding sanitation, industrial pollution, and overcrowding, they also produced a city whose constituent systems operated as though they existed independently of one another. Planning became extraordinarily adept at organizing functions, yet progressively less capable of cultivating relationships between them. The consequence was not merely spatial fragmentation but ethical fragmentation.

Here the critique advanced by Lefebvre (1991) becomes decisive. For Lefebvre, the separation between spaces of extraction, production, and reproduction was never merely a technical arrangement of land uses. It represented a deeper abstraction through which the production of everyday life itself became fragmented. Labour gradually detached from the reproductive processes that made communities, while urban space became to be organized according to abstract economic logics instead of lived social relations. As Kaika (2005) explains in her reading of Lefebvre, the separation of extraction, production, and reproduction is inseparable from the broader dualism between nature and society and is accompanied by the fragmentation of everyday life. The problem, then, is not simply that cities contain different functions; rather, those functions cease to understand themselves as participants in a shared metabolism.

The Transparent City

As discussed above for much of the Western philosophical tradition, better politics has been imagined as a gradual triumph of visibility. From Plato's ascent from the cave, to Augustine's world as a divinely authored Book, to Bentham's panopticon, Haussmann's rational boulevards, the functional clarity of the *Charter of Athens*, and more recent smart-city imaginaries, political order has repeatedly been associated with making persons, behaviours, and spaces more transparent (Foucault, 1995; Le Corbusier, 1973; da Silva, 2007; Lefebvre, 1991; Plato, 1992). Modern planning inherits much of this aspiration. The more completely the city can be measured, visualized, modelled, and rendered legible, the more governable it appears to be.

The argument developed throughout this paper has not been an outright rejection of transparency. Rather, it has sought to ask a different question: what, precisely, ought to become transparent? The Introduction argued that the modern planning imagination frequently mistakes transparency for understanding, reproducing what Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007) calls the logic of the Transparent I. The problem, however, is not visibility itself. It is the object toward which visibility has been directed. Modern planning has too often sought to illuminate populations

while leaving the material relations that reproduce urban life hidden beneath the surface of everyday experience.

Maria Kaika's (2005) work allows this inversion to become visible. The infrastructures that sustain the contemporary metropolis — water, electricity, sewage, fuel, labour, food distribution, and countless other socio-natural processes — have not disappeared because they are unimportant. They have disappeared precisely because their concealment allows the city to appear autonomous. Networks that once stood visibly within the urban landscape as monuments to collective labour now retreat beneath streets, behind walls, inside conduits, and beyond public consciousness (Kaika, 2005). The metropolis presents itself as though it simply exists, arrogantly obscuring the ecological transformations, human labour, and material flows that reproduce it each day. Financialized urbanism extends this concealment still further. As previously argued, finance renders the relations of reproduction to be exceedingly abstract. The city remains visible while the conditions of its existence recede into opacity.

The task proposed here is therefore not greater transparency in the familiar administrative sense. It is metabolic transparency. Its purpose is neither surveillance nor managerial oversight. It seeks instead to restore intelligibility to the relations through which urban life continually reproduces itself. For example, water should become visible, not as a spectacle laden fountain, but as an unchannelled water flow that the city plans around. In this sense, planning reveals not people, material or services, but relations.

Such transparency does not abolish opacity. Quite the contrary. Glissant's (1997) defence of opacity remains indispensable because persons, communities, memories, and cultural worlds always exceed complete knowledge. The city cannot become fully transparent without simultaneously becoming uninhabitable. Yet neither can it remain wholly opaque if democratic life is to cultivate responsibility for the worlds that nourish it. Transparency and opacity therefore need not be understood as philosophical adversaries. They may instead be conceived as complementary rhythms within the poetics of planning itself. Opacity preserves the irreducibility

of persons. Transparency discloses the ecological and material relations through which those persons dwell together. Opacity protects alterity; transparency cultivates responsibility. In my estimation planning requires both.

Seen in this light, the return of the poet announced earlier acquires a renewed significance. Plato's philosopher emerged from the cave believing that political order depended upon replacing shadow with light. The city proposed here follows another rhythm. The resident of the sun and the dweller of the cave are finally invited into conversation. Neither possesses the whole truth. Poiesis begins precisely within their encounter. Knowledge ceases to function as conquest and instead becomes relation, where revelation and mystery remain in creative tension rather than seeking one another's elimination.

The implications become surprisingly concrete. Michael Hough's (2004) account of the oil depot adjacent to York University offers an instructive example. Rather than treating the remaining agricultural lands leased to local farmers as an embarrassing residue awaiting redevelopment, Hough recognized their capacity to reconnect urban residents with the productive landscapes that make metropolitan life possible. Located amid industrial infrastructure, residential neighborhoods, and one of Canada's largest universities, the market gardens rendered production publicly visible within the heart of the metropolis itself (Hough, 2004, p. 178–179). The significance of this landscape lay not simply in food production but in the restoration of relation between producer and consumer, city and agriculture, infrastructure and everyday life. It became a modest lesson in metabolic intelligibility.

The same ethical orientation extends beyond market gardens. The hydro corridors crossing Finch West need not remain visual leftovers inherited from modern infrastructure. Borrowing from the Japanese principle of *shakkei*, or borrowed scenery, planning might learn to compose with these landscapes rather than merely build around them. Transmission towers, stormwater channels, restored wetlands, Black Creek, community gardens, and even energy infrastructure can become pedagogical landscapes that remind residents of the ecological systems through which urban life

is reproduced. Their purpose is not aesthetic romanticism, nor the naïve belief that design alone dissolves political conflict. They instead cultivate a public capable of recognizing the worlds that already allow it to take form.

Residential alienation, as Fanon (2008), Madden and Marcuse (2016), and Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika (2016) each suggest in different registers, is never overcome through ownership alone. It diminishes whenever persons recover meaningful relations to the social and ecological worlds that reproduce them. Multigenerational forms of dwelling become significant within this horizon not because they revive a nostalgic past, nor because they constitute a universally desirable household form, but because they multiply opportunities for knowledge, care, memory, and responsibility to circulate across time and space. In this ideal scene children inherit ecological memory from elders. Elders remain connected to the everyday rhythms of communal life and care ceases to be confined within isolated nuclear households or seniors homes and transforms into a shared temporal practice. In this way dwelling is given a chance to participate in the wider metabolism of the neighborhood.

None of these interventions guarantees a perfectly transparent city, nor should they. Every ethical horizon exceeds its realization. The value of metabolic transparency lies less in achieving complete visibility than in continually orienting planning toward relations that financialization has taught the metropolis to forget. Its aspiration is modest but demanding: not that every system becomes fully revealed, but that the zones of extraction, production, and reproduction might gradually learn to recognize one another as co-constitutive parts of a shared urban world.

Beyond Transit-Oriented Development: From Circulation to Encounter

Contemporary planning has placed extraordinary faith in movement. Transit-oriented development, mixed-use intensification (the gap filler & aura killer), complete communities, and the fifteen-minute city each proceed from an understandable proposition: reducing the distance between housing, employment, services, and public transportation can lessen the burdens of everyday life. This laudable goal should not be dismissed. Long commutes exhaust families,

automobile dependence deepens ecological harm, and spatially isolated communities frequently bear the consequences of inadequate public investment. Yet proximity alone cannot accomplish everything now promised in its name. Planning has too often confused circulation with encounter and adjacency with relation.

The distinction matters because transportation infrastructure has never functioned solely as a means of moving people. It also reorganizes land, directs investment, and alters the political economy of surrounding neighborhoods. Gray Brechin's (2006) history of San Francisco's cable cars makes this entanglement unmistakable. The technology that carried passengers up the city's formerly inaccessible hills had migrated from the mining industry, where wire ropes transported ore across difficult terrain. Once adapted to urban transit, the cable system opened new landscapes to real-estate speculation, allowing investors who had purchased inexpensive land to convert improved accessibility into rising property values. Buildings followed the tracks, while fortunes originally accumulated through mining were enlarged through metropolitan development (Brechin, 2006). The cable car connected the city, but it also carried the extractive frontier into the housing market.

This history does not establish an argument against transit. It reveals that infrastructure has never been politically innocent. A station may shorten a journey while simultaneously lengthening the distance between established residents and their capacity to remain in place. New mobility can enlarge access to the city even as the land surrounding that access is withdrawn from those who endured decades of disinvestment. Transit succeeds technically while the community it was meant to serve becomes vulnerable to displacement. The relevant planning question is therefore not simply whether movement has improved, but who captures the value that movement creates.

Kipfer and Sotomayor (2024) raise a parallel concern regarding mixed-use development. Emerging partly from social movements that challenged the violence of functionally segregated zoning, mixed-use pledged to restore the complexity that modernist planning had divided. Housing, commerce, work, leisure, and public life could occupy a shared urban landscape. Yet

this language of diversity and proximity was gradually absorbed into new strategies of land valorization. In Toronto and New York, mixed-use planning became compatible with both small-scale gentrification and corporate developments capable of speaking the reformist language associated with Jane Jacobs while preserving the underlying imperatives of the real-estate market (Kipfer & Sotomayor, 2024). Research in the Toronto region further indicates that transit-proximate and mixed-use housing may remain less affordable than other forms of housing and can accelerate gentrification rather than counteracting it (Kipfer & Sotomayor, 2024).

The limitation of contemporary development discourse therefore lies deeper than density or proximity alone. It concerns the horizon through which development has been imagined. Transit-oriented development, mixed-use planning, complete communities, and related approaches often evaluate success according to improvements in circulation: shorter commutes, greater accessibility, intensified land use, and increased connectivity. These achievements remain significant. Yet they leave one prior assumption largely undisturbed — that development is principally the optimization of movement across already differentiated urban systems. The city grows more efficient without necessarily growing more relational.

Another planning question follows. Rather than asking only how development can shorten the distance between housing, employment, commerce, and transportation, planning might ask what development itself ought to develop. If financialization has progressively separated production from reproduction, ecology from infrastructure, and dwelling from the wider conditions that sustain it, then development cannot be assessed solely by how efficiently it reconnects destinations. It must also be judged by the extent to which it enlarges the reproductive capacities of neighborhood life. Within this speculative horizon, development is measured less by the acceleration of circulation than by the deepening of relation.

The difficulty with many contemporary planning models is therefore not that they fail to mix uses. It is that co-location alone does not establish mutual responsibility. A condominium may rise above a grocery store while neither participates meaningfully in the food systems, labour

conditions, ecological processes, or neighborhood histories upon which the other depends. Residents can live within walking distance of transit, childcare, cafés, and parks while remaining largely disconnected from the social worlds that reproduce those places. Spatial complexity increases, yet the relations among its components continue to be organized principally through exchange. Planning, in this sense, risks mistaking adjacency for reciprocity.

A transit platform gathers bodies, but gathering is not yet encounter. Density brings strangers into physical closeness without guaranteeing that they will become answerable to one another and mixed-use places distinct activities upon the same parcel, though a shared address does not create a shared world. What remains absent is the connective tissue through which repeated presence gradually acquires memory, obligation, and meaning. Movement can deliver a person to a place. It cannot, on its own, teach them how to dwell there.

This problem becomes especially visible in metropolitan regions organized around continuous circulation. Keil and Young (2010) describe landscapes like Northwest Toronto that are shaped by just-in-time transportation, warehousing, commuter expansion, and an exchange-value orientation that treats global competitiveness rather than local social cohesion as the measure of infrastructural success. Such regions may remain highly connected in logistical terms while becoming socially disconnected in lived experience. The commuter passes through stations, roadways, commercial nodes, and residential enclaves whose relationship to one another remains primarily functional. Time is optimized, yet the journey offers few occasions to understand the landscapes being crossed or the communities whose histories make movement possible.

Non-urban Urbanism neither rejects transit nor abandons mixed-use development. Its intervention is conceptual rather than oppositional. Mobility is placed within a wider ecology of production, reproduction, care, dwelling, and more-than-human life. Transit ceases to serve as the organizing principle around which all other activities arrange themselves and enters instead as one participant within a broader metropolitan metabolism. Its value lies not only in carrying

people through space, but in whether the landscapes surrounding it enlarge their capacity to remain, reproduce life, and participate in shaping the places through which they move.

Such an orientation invites another reading of suburban landscapes lazily described as incomplete because they lack sufficient commercial intensity. The extensive open spaces surrounding Toronto's tower-in-the-park neighborhoods, for example, need not appear merely as underutilized land awaiting higher density. Their history is much more complicated. Functionalist planners such as Le Corbusier imagined these landscapes as places where high-density housing could coexist with generous green space, civic institutions, and pathways to collective life. Open land was intended not as empty residue but as an integral component of a broader social infrastructure, offering relief from industrial congestion while connecting everyday life to recreation, education, ecology, and public institutions. In this respect, the ambition shared certain affinities with projects such as London's Barbican Estate, whose architectural vision remained supported by substantial cultural and civic investment. Read through the lens of social reproduction, these landscapes begin to disclose another possibility. Rather than asking how every remaining parcel might be intensified through additional circulation, commerce, or residential yield, planning might instead ask how metropolitan life itself could recover the ordinary capacities for rest, encounter, celebration, intimacy, convalescence, play, and ecological renewal that tragically disappear within overdeveloped urban environments. The question is no longer simply how cities grow. It is whether they continue to possess the spatial and institutional conditions through which life can be reproduced within them, instead of continually seeking those capacities elsewhere.

Across many tower-in-the-park neighborhoods in Northwest Toronto — including the Jane-Finch and Keele–Finch corridor — that civic horizon was never fully realized. Instead, many landscapes became subject to what Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2023) describes as organized abandonment: the systematic withdrawal of public investment, institutional support, and social infrastructure from communities whose needs remained significant. The open spaces themselves did not produce isolation. Isolation emerged because the broader ecological, social, and

institutional relations that might have animated those landscapes were gradually weakened. Green spaces intended to provide respite from metropolitan intensity came to signify neglect, underuse, or episodic violence rather than collective eudaimonia. Yet this history also reveals an unrealized planning possibility. If the contemporary metropolis now more than ever depends upon distant landscapes to perform the work of recuperation that it can no longer support locally, then these neighborhoods invite another urban future altogether. Their open spaces need not become replicas of commercial mixed-use districts in order to succeed at providing access to the proverbial good life. They might instead become metropolitan commons: places where community gardens, neighborhood markets, outdoor kitchens, cultural institutions, ecological restoration sites like trails, maker workspaces, arts and crafts and small business cultivation hubs, intergenerational gathering nodes, and recreation sites converge. Development, in this sense, is measured not by the acceleration of circulation but by the turn of life to the ordinary rhythms of dwelling. The city no longer asks its residents to leave in order to recover from living within it. It becomes a place where living can be for the living.

The history of these forgotten landscapes need not foreclose a future where other eventualities are possible. The speculative question is not whether every open space should remain untouched, nor if all vacant parcels ought to yield to further real-estate intensification. It is if some of these inherited commons might instead be recomposed as reproductive infrastructures. Rewilded ecologies, side by side with basketball courts embedded within broader multigenerational landscapes, food forests, performance spaces, and places of ecological learning could support forms of everyday encounter extending beyond consumption alone. None of these interventions guarantees community, nor do they erase the histories of abandonment that produced present conditions. They may, however, widen the occasions through which what Paul Gilroy (2004) describes as conviviality — the ordinary practice of living together across difference — can slowly emerge. Development, viewed through this speculative horizon, is measured not simply by

the quantity of floor space added to the city, but by the extent to which urban landscapes enlarge their capacity to reproduce social, ecological, and cultural life.

Michael Hough's (2004) work on urban agriculture sharpens this possibility. Modern urbanization, he argues, has separated food production from everyday city life, crops from livestock, consumers from producers, and metropolitan residents from the biological processes upon which they depend. These divisions generate environmental inefficiencies — long-distance transportation, concentrated waste, soil depletion, and dependence upon distant food regions — but they also produce a less visible form of alienation. The city dweller encounters products with obscure points of origin (Hough, 2004).

Deborah Solomon's (2020) multispecies urbanism extends this critique beyond urban agriculture. Rather than treating urban nature as decorative infrastructure or a compensatory greening strategy, multispecies urbanism recognizes ecological systems and more-than-human life as participants in urban development whose well-being cannot remain subordinate to exchange value (Solomon, 2020). Development, read through this lens, should not merely introduce nature beside human settlement. It must consider whether the urban fabric supports the ecological relations through which human and more-than-human life reproduce one another.

This is not a claim that gardens, markets, basketball courts, pathways with bold signage, or intergenerational gathering spaces will automatically produce solidarity. Public spaces can reproduce hierarchy as readily as they challenge it. Neither gardens nor restored rivers possess an intrinsic politics. Once drawn into the circulation of land values, they may nourish neighborhood life or accompany its unraveling. Community markets can become thresholds of encounter, yet they may also trace new frontiers of exclusion. Even the language of ecological repair has, at times, softened the violence of displacement, while multigenerational living continues to bear the marks of gendered labor, intercommunal conflict, and uneven power relations. The task is therefore more modest and more difficult than designing community into existence. Planning can compose durable occasions through which relationships have time to form, knowledge can

circulate, and the meanings of place remain open to revision by those who inhabit it. Such spaces offer no guarantee of community. They make its practice less difficult.

Nora Bateson's (2016) relational thought helps clarify why these conditions cannot be evaluated through spatial efficiency alone. Relationships among people and within the biosphere are living processes that lose something essential when detached from their contexts (Bateson, 2016). A commodity appears self-contained only after labor, locally-specific expertise, and ecological histories have been erased from view. A similar reduction occurs when planning treats a journey solely as an origin and destination, a household as a unit, or a neighborhood as a market area. What appears measurable has already been extracted from the dense relations through which it acquires meaning.

Bateson's (2023) poem Mama Now carries this insight into the temporal life of the family. Addressing a child born into a world whose inherited social itinerary no longer holds, Bateson (2023) relinquishes the authority of a parent who already possesses the map. Earlier generations from seemingly privileged backgrounds could anticipate a relatively stable sequence of school, work, family, and retirement, yet the future now assumes "another shape entirely," emerging within the fractures of an already damaged and globally entangled world (Bateson, 2023, p. 42–43). The mother therefore offers neither certainty nor an obsolete measure of success. She humbly offers accompaniment: a willingness to learn alongside the child and, in the poem's closing image, to become "a cabin, boots, and rucksack" for whatever journey lies ahead (Bateson, 2023, p. 43).

This gesture also discloses another horizon for thinking about family time. If subprime kinship names the financialization of familial life through the expectation of eventual separation, then extended family time begins from another premise altogether. The question is no longer how parents prepare children to depart, but how families might inhabit time differently where departure is no longer treated as the measure of maturity. Bateson poses precisely this provocation: how would you raise your children differently if you knew they weren't leaving

home? She suggests that the ordinary rituals of domestic life — washing dishes, doing laundry, making beds, participating in shared work — would cease to function primarily as rehearsals for future independence. Instead, they would become practices through which relationships themselves are sustained (Essentia Foundation, 2025).

Viewed from this horizon, the family is no longer organized around an anticipated exit into individualized property ownership, but around the continuing reproduction of life in common. Chores cease to be lessons in self-sufficiency and become gestures of mutual care. Responsibility is no longer deferred toward a future household imagined elsewhere; it is exercised within the shared rhythms of the household already inhabited. What emerges is not dependence in opposition to independence, but another temporality of kinship — one in which maturity is measured less by departure than by an expanding capacity to maintain the relations through which life is continually reproduced. Extended family time thus offers a temporal response to subprime kinship, refusing the developmental chronology through which finance has come to organize both housing and family life.

Multigenerational space acquires significance here as a temporal commons rather than simply a larger housing type. Children, parents, grandparents, relatives, and chosen kin inhabit different rhythms of memory, labor, vulnerability, and possibility. Their co-presence may distribute care, preserve knowledge, and weaken the compulsory isolation through which each household is expected to reproduce life on its own. Yet such arrangements are neither universally desirable nor naturally harmonious. Extended families can carry unequal gender expectations, inherited authoritarian structures, intergenerational conflict, and coercion into the dwelling. A clear-eyed planning ethics cannot romanticize proximity. Its purpose is to widen the spatial conditions under which care may be negotiated across difference without requiring each generation to retreat into a separate, debt-financed enclosure.

Seen from this perspective, the question confronting transit-oriented development is no longer about how many residents can be placed within walking distance of a station. It is whether

development surrounding that station enlarges the neighborhood's capacity to reproduce life. Can people arrive without displacing those already there? Might the transit infrastructure strengthen the already existent ethnic small businesses that double ipso facto as community resource centres? Do generations encounter one another only in passing in these newly developed mixed-use spaces? Can their different temporalities overlap long enough to produce shared knowledge? And does development simply add to the value of land, or does it deepen the relations through which the land becomes a world?

Non-urban Urbanism does not oppose circulation. It refuses to mistake circulation for the city's final purpose. Transportation remains necessary because people must move across the metropolis, reach employment, visit relatives, access services, and participate in worlds beyond the neighborhood. Yet a city organized solely around the efficiency of those journeys risks producing travellers without places and proximity without responsibility — where a home might be situated a thoroughfare now exists. Planning must therefore ask more of infrastructure than motion. It must ask what kinds of life infrastructure develops, whose capacities it enlarges, and which relations it permits to endure.

The Metropolitan Waystation: Toward a Villagization of the Metropolis

We are now in a position to name the planning orientation toward which this paper has been moving. I call it Villagization.

The term does not describe the replacement of the city by the village. It is not Julius Nyerere's (1973) Villagization (although it finds inspiration in Nyerere's Ujamaa Socialism). It neither romanticizes rural life, nor imagines that contemporary metropolitan regions can simply recover an earlier social order. Nor does it prescribe density, decentralization, urban agriculture, or multigenerational housing as universally applicable solutions. Villagization names something more modest, though no less demanding: the unfinished work of bringing production, reproduction, ecology, care, and dwelling into relations of mutual responsibility.

This proposal is intentionally speculative. Speculation, as understood here, is not prediction, nor the presentation of an ideal settlement awaiting implementation. It is a method of opening the fractures of the present toward other possibilities. Villagization remains deliberately unfinished because relation itself cannot be finalized. Every realization would require interpretation, revision, disagreement, and renewal. One place where this orientation becomes visible is the dwelling.

As discussed previously, the multigenerational home imagined here is not simply a larger single-family house. Enlarging the existing domestic enclosure would reproduce the very isolation examined throughout this paper. Its significance lies instead in another organization of time.

Douglas Cardinal's (1989) earth-sheltered architecture, namely the Cardinal Residence (his family home), offers one suggestive precedent. Instead of imposing form upon the landscape, his work allows climate, ground, ceremony, sunlight, and intergenerational life to participate in the building's composition. Frank Lloyd Wright's (1963) organic architecture similarly reminds us that site, purpose, material, and inhabitant belong to one another rather than existing as independent variables assembled after the fact. Neither architect supplies a universal model. Together Cardinal and Wright illustrate a broader planning principle: dwelling emerges most fully when built form remains answerable to the world around it.

Even technologies developed under financialized urbanism need not remain permanently attached to the political economy that produced them. Matthew Soules' (2021) account of London's iceberg homes demonstrates how extraordinary architectural ingenuity has often been mobilized toward private forms of consumption. Yet earth-sheltered construction, geothermal systems, passive thermal design, and subterranean space might equally support shared kitchens, food storage, workshops, storm refuge, repair spaces, and intergenerational gathering. The inversion is ethical rather than formal. What once concentrated wealth may be reimagined, cautiously and contextually, as infrastructure through which care circulates — especially for cities bearing the brunt of colder climates. Such possibilities must remain attentive to hydrology,

accessibility, embodied carbon, cost, ecological impact, and public responsibility. Speculation is not exempt from material constraint.

No dwelling, however carefully designed, can reproduce social life alone. Villagization therefore cannot become austerity dressed in the language of community. Care requires institutions as much as architecture. Public investment, collective tenure, childcare, labor protections, accessible services, and the freedom to leave coercive relationships remain indispensable. Kinship is not automatically care, and proximity does not dissolve domination.

At the neighborhood scale, this orientation acquires another provisional form: the Metropolitan Waystation.

The Metropolitan Waystation is neither a transit hub nor a civic monument. It is a metabolic institution. Rather than organizing movement alone, it gathers some of the relations that movement ordinarily leaves behind. Food, repair, learning, childcare, ecological stewardship, cultural practice, livelihood, rest, and intergenerational encounters remain distinct while becoming more and more so answerable to one another. Its precise form would differ from place to place. Near Black Creek the Metropolitan Waystation might join public markets, watershed interpretation, gardens, hydro-corridor trails, small businesses, workshops, and spaces for shift workers. Elsewhere it might gather fisheries, flood adaptation, language preservation, fabrication, or migrant hospitality. The Metropolitan Waystation's constancy lies not in program but in purpose: making the systems that reproduce everyday life more mutually intelligible and responsible.

The Metropolitan Waystation should not be mistaken for a promise of harmony. Markets exclude. Families dominate. Commons reproduce hierarchy. Ecological restoration can accompany displacement. Participation itself may privilege those who possess time, confidence, language access, or recognized citizenship. The Waystation is therefore offered not as a perfected institution but as a political experiment whose governance, ownership, accessibility, and public accountability remain decisive.

Perhaps this is the deeper lesson that Frantz Fanon (2008) leaves for planning. A different future cannot emerge simply by placing new occupants within inherited forms. The work is harder than substitution. It requires the patient recomposition of the relations through which worlds become livable. Liberation is never delivered fully formed. It is composed through continual struggle, interpretation, and collective experiment. This is how we introduce "invention into existence" (Fanon, 2008, p. 179)

Planning with Eyes of Kinship belongs to that unfinished composition. This methodology and way of seeing the world begins from the recognition that every plan interprets before it intervenes. It has argued that planning composes worlds before it regulates them; that financialization captures the relations through which those worlds reproduce themselves; and that metropolitan life might gradually become more responsible to the ecological, social, and historical conditions sustaining it. The spiral therefore returns, though it does not close. Eyes of Kinship now encounters the built world it has learned to see. The planner stands neither above the city nor outside its consequences. Expertise enters relation with the watershed, the buried stream, the market vendor, the transmission tower, the shift worker returning before dawn, the child, the elder, and the histories no map can fully contain. Some relations must become publicly intelligible because their concealment permits exploitation. Others require opacity because life withers beneath total exposure. Planning finds its ethical rhythm between them.

Villagization offers no final image of the good city. The Metropolitan Waystation supplies no universal model ready for replication. They remain speculative contours — close enough to reality to orient practice, open enough to remain revisable through encounter. Their significance will not be measured by whether they eliminate contradiction, but by whether they enlarge our capacity to organize metropolitan life around responsibility rather than accumulation alone.

This paper therefore ends where planning must begin: not with the certainty of an answer, but with a question whose pursuit may itself help recompose the world. What might planning

become if its highest measure were not how efficiently the city moves, grows, or accumulates, but how faithfully it helps the worlds that sustain life become responsible to one another?

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