PLANNING AS HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: RESOURCES, CAPABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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Abstract

In recent years the debate on justice focused on the matter of (in)equality and on the challenge of advancing social justice (also) through the practice of urban planning (e.g. Fainstein 2010, Soja 2010). With this paper I wish to contribute to this debate by focusing on two central points, namely, (1) the interpretation of social justice, in planning, as a form of spatial equality , and (2) the matter of defining the equality of what consistent with the mandate and scope of public planning.

Drawing on Amartya Sen s The Idea of Justice *(2009) the paper retraces the origins of the debate on equality and summarizes the perspectives of two relevant philosophical lines of inquiry, namely, the resourcist and the capabilities inquiries. The former perspective approaches equality in terms of the resources at disposal of individuals and strives for defining the social minimum which should be equally allocated to all; approaches equality in terms of the possibilities of realizing the pric individual has in the concrete realm of her living environment. Whilst the former inquiry concentrates on the equality devised by essential goods and universal liberties, the latter concentrates on the pathway to equality achievable by acting on the s individuals with different often, limited - capabilities.*

By recalling these two perspectives on equality the paper intends to promote a discussion regarding how the two respective evaluative frameworks do and could further inform the scope of public planning interventions.

1. Introduction

In writing this paper I have made some choices about which I wish to inform the reader at the outset. The first is the narrative style which I have opted for, which consists of inviting the reader to reason on her personal experiences while I will elaborate on personal experiences of mine; the second is to limit literature to the essential literature needed to convey my position. My underlying intent is to limit the philosophical premises of my position to their essential tenets and introducing them in the succinct and essential form conveyable through simple personal examples. The empathic reasoning which I try to stimulate in the reader may be fertile of further debates at the yearly AESOP congress in which this paper will be presented.

First of all, I want to introduce the main theme of the paper with a question. Why do we think that human beings are all *equal*? To do so, we need a conception of *equality*, and some ideas regarding how to measure it. In some way, our conception of equality has to do with the observation that we belong to the same species; then, with the further observation that we all have the same basic vital *needs* (eating, drinking, resting). The following observation is that among these needs there are some which need to be secured through certain *means*; that is, food, water, shelter. Then, it takes little to realize that these needs are not comprehensive of other needs, which are relational and emotional: the need to be cared for (on which we depend for much of our life), the need to care for others (something we tend towards for all our life), the need to respond to the stimuli implicit in these relations (experiencing anger, compassion, love, humour). Then, it comes the spiritual which is not necessarily attached to the religious sphere: Marx s conception of human significance, for example, relates to our constant dialogue with ourselves and with nature (Marx, 1844); however, it is easy to observe how despite the (Western) post-modernist claim of the death of god as privileged reference of our spiritual dimension, such significance is found by many in the constant dialogue with *her* God.

None of these elements explains equality though they do participate in its definition; but they are not what we mean when we say we are all equal on earth . What we mean with that is that *each human life has equal worth*. And this is an intuition a *moral* intuition, to be more precise, to which the idea that all human beings are *entitled* to the same set of fundamental means and rights by virtue of birth follows. Now, the immeasurable part of our intuition of equality is our common worth; life insurance companies may well attach a figure to it, however we all know that worth and economic value are not the same. The measurable part consists of those means and rights; how much freedom we need, what type of freedom we need, what rights do we need to secure all of these measurables are the detectors of our condition of equality from one another.

And here is where it starts the problem. Philosophical inquiries rooting in the most diverse ideological backgrounds share this fundamental intuition of the equality of worth of human life, but have been debating for centuries on (i) how to define the liberties and means each and all are entitled to across different cultures and situated conditions, (ii) the indicators through which appreciating the concrete equality of people in relation to these liberties and means, and (iii) what role the state has in securing them and whether this role is desirable at all; if so, within which margins and limitations?

These three points cover centuries of political philosophy and economic inquiry which will be unduly difficult to cover in the limited space of this paper. Therefore, I will only touch upon some of the moments of the relevant debates conducive to formulate my position in relation to equality, justice and urban planning. I will start with clarifying how the notion of equality philosophical accounts of the term, namely, Rawls s *Theory of Justice* (1971) and Se *Justice* (2009). Based on the writings of these philosophers I will outline the broader inquiries gravitating around their ideas, namely, the resourcist and capabilities inquiries. In the following section I will discuss the evaluative frameworks engendered by the respective notions of equality and I will discuss their relevance to the contemporary challenges of urban planning in relation to themes such as the growing cultural diversity of European citizens, the increasing distance not only physical, but also perceptive and experiential - between the poor and the wealthy areas of our cities and between the corresponding life conditions of their inhabitants.

I will conclude by proposing to re-centre the mandate of urban planning on a renewed humanism and to put at the centre of the evaluative practice of urban planning the human fundamental capabilities (Basta 2015; Nussbaum 2003; Sen 2009). My proposal is to endorse a planning approach orientated towards creating fertile relational conditions between urban resources whose fair provision shall

remain the guiding principle of state intervention and the transformative capacity of citizens in relation to their capabilities whose consideration and enhancement should be the evaluative focus of the practice of planning day to day.

2. What is equality, and why it matters to urban planning?

Few concepts attracted comparable scholarly interest as the concept of *equality*. The concept entails a descriptive component the intrinsic equality between you and me and a prescriptive component the extrinsic equality that you and me consider just to share with others. The first component relates to the equality of worth of our lives; the second to the equality of the human rights that need to be secured to affirm and protect that worth. From Marx and Engels s conceptio significance of human life which in their *Political and Philosophical Manuscript* they identify in man s necessity to cultivate a continue dialogue with nature and with the self, die (Marx, 1844) to the liberal thinkers who reflected on the role of the state as provider of the basic means and opportunities enabling to pursue that significance (Rawls 1951, 1971; Sen 1979, 1989, 2009) innumerable pages debating the most diverse aspects and implications of these ideas have been written.

Such enormous scholarly interest in the notion of equality has reached its momentum since equality started to be recognized as the *pre*-condition of justice[i]. This occurred also albeit not exclusively - thanks to the systematic economic analysis of Marx and Engels, which positioned equality as a primarily material rather than spiritual condition; however, what equality is and how to measure it remains an open question ever since. For Marx, as well-known equality related to the material condition of sharing the ownership of the means of production enabling the transformation of matter into goods without the parallel production of capital surplus (the capital, that is, the means of production, being commonly owned together with the transformed matter). For Marx the Marxists, and the so-called Neomarxists we are equal insofar you do not own the means upon which my capacity to transform matter depends, and do not own the outcomes of that transformative capacity. For utilitarian thinkers like Stuart and Mills an implicit idea of equality related to the equal worth of each and all citizens in counting for the social pursuit of happiness; this is what we all experience when, as children, we have to decide what game playing and we opt for the game that satisfies the majority. The cumulative happiness of our group of buddies is the maximum happiness achievable; the *distribution* of that happiness though implies that the majority of us enjoys whilst a minority doesn t. So, we all counted equally for determining the happiest choice but in our final condition of happiness we are, in fact, not equal.

It is with the contractarian tradition inaugurated by Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau that the discourse on equality started to be centred on the liberties and resources each citizens shall have but it is only with Rawls, in the second half of the past century, that the distributive outcomes of those resources started to be the fulcrum of inquiry on equality. To go back to my example, Rawls was among the first to reflect with philosophical rigour on the fact that as children we could all equally contribute to determine the cumulative happiness of our group of buddies but that somehow, for some reasons, some of us were unhappy in the end.

I will linger on this latter point which, in my opinion, is the underlying point of the contemporary discourse on equality. The assumption of thinkers like Rawls is that, by intuition, you and me would agree to be entitled, by virtue of birth, to a certain set of liberties and means without which we would be deprived of our mutual opportunities of self-realization. Self-realization in the Raw

conception does not relate to satisfaction or happiness , as the classic u
articulate it, but to be what one wants to be . Rawls conclude through the mechan
ignorance, which I have shortly summarized in a previous writing (Basta 2014) that you, me and all others, under condition of ignorance, would agree on assigning to all of us a set of liberties whose definition is pretty close to that of human rights and means whose identification is pretty close to that to which human rights conduce: basic education, shelter, medical treatment, and so on. This set of liberties and means would be the basis of our social contract and the aim of our coexistence would be that of expanding them from the perspective of the most disadvantaged. This means forcing a little the example of our group of buddies that our normative goal would be to ensure that each of us depart from the equal decisional condition; not determining the game that we will play in the end based on the criterion of cumulative satisfaction.

In reality, the accent on self-realization as what one wants to be which I mentioned above in exquisitely Rawlsian but rather conduces to his fellow Sen, who departing from the ideas of Rawls formulated the famous question Equality of What? (Sen, 1979). Sen challenged this idea of eq as the equal distribution of liberties and means and of social justice as the expansion of those who relate to the individuals departing from a disadvantaged condition; this, according to him, reduces equality to what people have disregarding what people *can concretely do and be* with what they have. Going back to our group of buddies, we may well agree that all of us must depart from the same decisional condition; none of us has to prevail on the other, each of us has the right to propose the game she desires, all of us have to possess the means through which the entire set of games proposed can be played. Does this make us *equal*? According to Sen, it depends on whether our fundamental capabilities are *equally enabled*.

I will give an example. When I was a child, I developed cross-dominance, that is the tendency to use the right or left hand (and eye and leg and hear) depending on the task and not depending on the dominant side of the body that, for 95% of the global population, is either right or left. Thus, I would write on the notebook with the left hand and throw the ball with the right on; I would write on the board with the right hand and hold the racket with the left one. At school, to help myself adjusting to circumstances I had to use some tricks; one typical trick was to incline the notebook towards the right side, when writing, so to compensate for the asymmetric use of my body. This would lead me to take some weird positions on my little school desk. The teacher would recall me all the times claiming that to learn to write well I had to do like others keeping the notebook straight and that if I would, I would overcome that confusion with my hands. In her good faith, she was making a statement of equality: I had to behave equally so to achieve equal results. What she couldn t see is that to achieve the same functioning of others writing orderly and straight I had to be provided other means the freedom to incline my notebook and possibly a wider school desk because *the means everybody had, could not have the same effect on me.*

This is the best summary I could give of Sen s theory of capabilities. It is starting from this observation that equality is not about what means one has, *but about what these means do to her,* that Sen proposed an idea of justice based on the idea of our fundamental capabilities. I will give another example. If you and I are assigned the same means for example, the same education but I have a cognitive impairment, I will not achieve the same functioning that you will achieve. Assuming that I could achieve that functioning by being provided another type of education for example, a teacher experienced in my impairment *then* the means that I shall be provided shall be adapted to my specific capability. Our equality, in other words, is not measured through the allocation of the same mean but through the level of functioning that we can achieve based on our respective capabilities.

This idea of Sen may attract criticism in fact, society, in its organized form known as the state, cannot tailor the means to assign to each specific capability without incurring in the contradiction of treating individuals differently. This was the concern of my teacher, in fact. It is my claim, however, that mature democracies have increasingly orientated their distributional effort in the direction of enhancing capabilities rather than allocating equal goods. Not only: they have also converted capabilities into *objects* of rights. I will give another example. Nowadays, nobody would question the right of a person with impaired mobility to commute on public means as any other non-impaired individual. The history of removal of what in my country of origin are called a long, painful and slow history of social struggle and campaign though. To convert the capability of circulating into a *right*, and to convert such right into design solutions transforming the city in both its public and private spaces, much political activism and social campaign had to be organized. Many more examples could be given from the establishment of social assistance services for elderly, to the educational support given to children with impaired learning abilities, to the mandatory allocation of work posts to people with disabilities the message being that society (or at least European society) has made quantum leaps forward in allocating public resources by bearing in mind the diverse level of capabilities of its citizens and by orientating the ultimate scope of public policy towards enabling equal functionings rather than towards the distribution of equal means.

This brings me to discuss the role of the state in relation to these means. I do so in the following section.

3. Resources and capabilities: ideas for political synergies

The debate on the role of the state here intended as the organized and regulated form of social coexistence in relation to resources and capabilities inspired, in my opinion, the most important political philosophy writings of the past two decades. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum is particularly inspirational for the rigour of her inquiry and for her tendency to ponder her ideas always by considering the cross-cultural interpretations they may be subject to. This immunizes her reflection on capabilities from the ideological tone that always in my opinion permeates the writings of prominent theorists in planning theory for example, Harvey, 2008 who have reflected on the city, as a micro-dimension of the state, in relation to (political, albeit they claim human) rights.

To avoid confusing the reader, I will proceed with some order. What is the role of the state towards the resources citizens shall have access to in order to pursue their self-realization? This question calls for a theory of *right* the rights you and me have and for a theory of *duty* the duties you and me and all others have towards each other. Lefebvre s writings constitute the main point-of- theory, for the former issue (e.g. Purcell 2002; Harvey 2008). Little has been written in relation to the latter issue, albeit one could conclude that prominent paradigms like participatory and collaborative planning imply a conception of duty for instance, the duty to provide opportunities of participation to citizens and of formulating goals and constructing decisions together with them and also that citizens participation implies some notion of obligations for example, of bein considering others interests next to the own interests, and so on.

Coming to the main question, one way to reflect on what resources the state shall secure and provide to all is to reason on the notion of *social minimum,* that is, the *bundle of resources that a person needs in order to lead a minimally decent life in their society* (White, 2004). I could engage with the debate on what this bundle consists of however, more fruitful is to construct a reply through observation. What do you, reader, have (had) access to through your life that related to some sort of

social minimum? I can help by replying to this question from the perspective of my experience: a public pre-schooling and schooling system, which enabled my parents to keep working while I was looked after by someone else who was teaching me important things; a public healthcare service, which enabled me to recover from injuries and illnesses; public means for commuting to and from schools and sport facilities, most of which were accessible through the payment of small fees, since they relied on public funds; a public university, that I could attend paying minimal yearly fees due to my scholarly merits, promptly assessed and rewarded by the academic administrative system; plenty of public space and green areas, easily accessible from my parents house and re

The following question is, what among these resources (I realize, privileges) constitute the social minimum one shall be provided in the society in which she lives (in my case, Northern Italy, specifically Venice). In a real setting, at this point of the conversation a fierce debate would probably erupt. Ultraliberals may well reply, none: their theory of right is positioned at the right extreme of *negative* rights, whose fundamental principle is that the state shall *not intervene* in any aspect of one s life. Communists may well reply, all of them and more: their theory of right is positioned at the left extreme of *positive* rights, whose fundamental principle is that the state shall provide all means one needs to live a decent life (and thus prevent their allocation through market mechanisms). Centrists may reply, some of them, for example schooling and education but not sport facilities, whose management should be left to private initiative: their theory of right is a combination of positive and negative rights, whose principle of reference is that the state shall secure the provision of non-exclusive (thus, public) goods, leaving to the market to provide exclusive (thus, private) goods.

To continue reasoning concretely rather than theoretically, let s now observe European democracies position themselves on the spectrum of negative and pos imagine this spectrum as a line at whose left we position positive rights and at whose right we position negative rights. The transition from one to another extreme of the line is continuous not divided into discrete intervals. Where does, for example, my country of residence stands on the line? I would say central however, with a tendency (for many, disappointingly) to move gradually towards the right side of the spectrum. My country of origin is in some respect more on the left side for example in relation to healthcare and for others more on the right side for example in relation to social security. We could replicate this simple exercise for all European countries and then extending it to other countries in the world. Remaining in Europe, however, would lead us to position the majority of countries somewhere centrally; in fact, our constitutions are written based on the recognition of certain positive rights for example, the right to access education and negative ones for example, the right of not been prevented from exerting some fundamental liberties.

This does not reply to my original question; but it helps to introduce my reasoning on what further duties we could associate to the state in relation to the capabilities of its citizens. If we accept as you and me most likely do this idea of the state as provider of some sort of goods and means to which all of us are entitled, *then* the following question is whether the state has a duty also to ensure that you and me can derive the same functionings from them. In part, I have already replied to this question, and I did so again through observation: we already live in states securing effective relational conditions between (social and urban) resources and our capabilities in relation to big and small difference, insignificant and significant impairments. The public university in which I work, for example, has ensured that my desk and my screen are positioned compatibly with my height and with my slight visual impairment; while you read this paper, you might be in a similar *enhanced* condition.

And so with this, I introduced the concept of *enhancement* which is a concept central to my discourse on the political synergies to be activated between resources, capabilities, and cities. I develop it in the following section.

3.1 Enhancing capabilities: planning as human development

In this paper I have opted for writing in a narrative style and for avoiding the level of abstraction with which I have treated the theory of capabilities in other contributions (Basta 2014, 2015). I did so for encouraging the reader a peer academic, but ideally anybody else to reflect on her situated, daily, unique life conditions so to grasp the main message which I am trying to convey in an emphatic rather than analytical way: planning is an exercise of *enhancement* of *human development*.

The line of reasoning which I followed to arrive to this proposal by no means a conclusion is that the type of equality we value is the pre-condition of the justice we want; my assumption is that urban planning aims at advancing such justice, therefore, through observation, I proposed that maturely democratic states are called to allocate basic resources to all *and* creating relational conditions between such resources and our capabilities in such a way to enhance our equal functionings. Two theoretical questions remain: the first is that which urban resources shall be equally accessible (thus, being part of the social minimum), and the second is whether these are alway specific capabilities. This latter question is particularly important for urban planning.

To respond to these questions, I refer to Nussbaum s Central Human Capabilitie sake of completeness I report integrally as it appeared in 2003 (Nussbaum, 2003):

> 1. Life. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal le before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
> 2. Bodily Health. Being able to have good health, including reproductive nourished; to have adequate shelter.
> 3. Bodily Integrity. Being able to move freely from place to place; t assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunitie and for choice in matters of reproduction.
> 4. Senses, Imagination, and Thought. Being able to use the senses, to imag and to do these things in a "truly human" way, a way informed and c education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic ma training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with ex works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to ha and to avoid pain.
> 5. Emotions. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional develo

and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human a
shown to be crucial in their development.)
6. Practical Reason. Being able to form a conception of the good and to
about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liber
observance.)
7. Affiliation. A) Being able to live with and toward others, to recogni
human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be ab
of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that c
forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and po
the social bases of self respect and non humiliation; being able to be
whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non
race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.
8. Other Species. Being able to live with concern for and in relation
world of nature.
9. Play. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
10. Control over one's Environment. A) Political. Being able to particip
choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participatio
and association. B) Material. Being able to hold property (both land
having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right
equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and
able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and ente
relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.

In a forthcoming article, I indulge on the source of inspiration that Marx s
dignity constituted for Nussbaum s attentive definition of the fundamental huma
move directly to the extraction of the capabilities which, in my opinion, could be related to the urban realm of human life more explicitly than others. These are, evidently, the capabilities related to the exertion of control on the environment, which for Nussbaum are material and here, pace Marx, it compares private property and immaterial the most important one being the capability of participating in the decisions which affect one s living environment.

Compared to the language of rights as used to promote the right to the city -a
if I had the space to discuss it at length here, I would explain my grounded scepticism the language of capabilities used by Nussbaum to articulate human functionings differs because it is (i) affirmative: capabilities are inherently positive their spectrum could be visualized as a compact circle with at its centre the notion of human dignity, and (ii) substantial: capabilities are *objects* of rights not rights *per se*; that is, they can be evaluated as ways in which people can function, not as entitlements that people have. I will clarify this latter point with an example. If I sit on a wheelchair, I am entitled to circulate on your same bus this, in fact, is meant to be equipped to allow me to travel as comfortably and safely. However, if one wants to investigate whether I can indeed circulate as comfortably and safely as you do, the question I would be posed is not whether I have that right but whether yesterday, the day before and the day before it I could take that bus or not. This example serves to

clarify what I mean when I say that capabilities are affirmative and substantial (I can or I can t do something) in contrast with the formal nature of rights (I have or I don t have that right).

Now, when thinking of what one can or cannot do in cities, some of the functionings related to Nussbaum s capabilities most of us would regard as fundamentals are, together with other functionings that I will elaborate on in more details in a forthcoming article,

1. The capability of living in a safe place commensurate and adequate to one
2. The capability of living healthily and receiving affordable medical treatment in the city,
3. The capability of travelling from one part of the other of the city safely and inexpensively,
4. The capability of meetings others, joining and creating groups, cultivating interests and sports,
5. The capability of accessing nature, of being surrounded by green and animals,
6. The capability of working and of constructing the own path of development freely,
7. The capability of learning, acquiring new competencies and forming new ideas, of relying on a pre-schooling and a schooling system which secures these functionings to children.

My idea is to use these functionings as reference for devising evaluative instruments capable of investigating what people can concretely do and be (Nussbaum, 2003; but also Robeyns, their living environment and for generating the actual knowledge on the city from which urban planning could tap its inspirational guidance. Nussbaum, however, offered me an opportunity to reflect not only on the front of inspiration but also on the front of the responsibility which the exertion of the right to participate in decision-making (one of the few rights she explicitly associates to capabilities) constitute for (we) citizens. I reflect on this, briefly, in the following section, which precedes my conclusions and ideas for further research.

3.2 Capabilities as responsibility

On why capabilities entail an individual responsibility I discussed in a previous contribution (Basta 2015). I would like to return on that point and to connect it with the line of reasoning which I followed in this short paper.

Having a right does not mean exerting it. Two conditions are necessary: (i) the concrete opportunity of exertion, and (ii) the will of exerting it. Positive rights of the kind parti can be discussed from both perspectives. Here, I will focus only on the second one.

Some months ago the municipality of The Hague invited all residents of my district to participate in a meeting in which the project of renewal of the system of collection of domestic waste would have been presented. This project included some changes of the routes of the cycling paths so to make space for the new underground containers. These changes demanded to eradicate some magnificent oaks whose blooming in the spring, I can tell, was an event we were all looking for every year. My partner attended that meeting, which I could not attend instead. When he reported the discussion he told me that our neighbours expressed firm opposition against the removal of the oaks something we could expect, considering and that the representatives of the municipality responded that their removal was inevitable; the roots of the oaks had caused several cracks on the paths, and it would have been unduly costly to first remove them, and then replanting them. The story continues with some rumours regarding a petition launched to save the oaks to which we two did not participate, simply for the fact that we were not informed about it. Another petition was launched to prevent one of the cycling paths facing our street to be re-routed. I thought this latter petition was unmotivated, as evidently the re-routing of the path was based on safety concerns related to its proximity to a traffic light at which cars, in the morning, used to line up in numbers. I didn t sign this latter pet

the former one. So the oaks were cut and the cycling path re-rerouted, with much discontent from the side of our neighbours.

Of this story I wish to highlight two things. The first, is the petition for saving the oaks which I could not sign; the second is the petition for not re-routing the cycling path which I haven t signed. I former case, was I prevented from exerting a right? Obviously not; simply, I concrete opportunity of exerting it. In the latter case, was the right of my neighbours of not seeing the path re-routed violated? Certainly not, as the reasons of the municipality for re-rerouting it were very well-considered. In this latter case, I had the opportunity of signing the petition, and *not* signing it consisted of the equal exertion of my right.

What bothers me still is the petition which I couldn t sign though. When I think for not having attended that meeting. There, I could have probably been informed of that initiative, and I would have most likely signed the petition; through it, I could have exerted my right to make a point regarding our much valued oaks. Not having attended that meeting means, for me, not having been *responsible* towards *my right* to try to save them.

This is what I mean when I say that capabilities call us to act responsibly: to take full ownership of our opportunities to participate in decision-making without expecting that others will knock at our doors and will create all the conditions for us to do so. Active citizenry, and here I conclude, means *responsible* citizenry: it entails some sort of obligations moral rather than legal; but not for this less important to exploit all the opportunities we have to participate in the transformation of the city that the language of rights (in Harvey s use of it) reduces to something we must *h* that there is something that we must *do* in return.

4. Conclusions

I have a few hundreds of words left to conclude my journey throughout personal experiences, the theories which may help framing them and orientating them towards a higher level of abstraction, and what I wish to propose as a way to regard urban planning - and ultimately to make urban planning happening in a certain way. If I had more words I would linger on why the language of rights, totally prominent in planning theory, is important to convey one s political position in relation to these issues but not conducive to engender viable evaluative instruments for detecting how people, concretely, live in their cities and how much they can and do contribute to its transformations.

The language of capabilities is a more robust point-of-reference for formulating these evaluative instruments, and many of the example which I gave support this proposal of mine. Urban planning has to re-conquer space for growing its evaluative practice, abandoning or at least limiting its tendency to occupy terrain for implanting a judgmental narrative on how cities are produced.

This space could be reconquered through a new humanism, capable of re-centring the discourse on planning on human development what people can concretely do and be and of steering its evaluative practice towards the formation of knowledge regarding how a more capable and responsible citizenry can be encouraged.

Philosophers have always given an hand to all others along this difficult journey. Let s not confine them in their world of ideas and neither in the most remote and unattractive rooms of our congresses.

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[i] I feel the duty to signal that several monotheistic religions have been founded upon this recognition in the order of thousands and not hundreds of years and that philosophers of the stature of Kant and Hegel thanks to whom we could read Marx at some point - were impregnated, if not of the respective ontology, most certainly of the respective transcendentalism. The secularization of the European philosophical inquiry across and beyond the era of Enlightenment is, in historical terms, the new born baby of human thought. The idea that religious beliefs do no longer play an ontological and epistemological role in today s Western society shall be therefore re-considered. When orientating our intellectual reflection from a position of *self-reflection* (we philosophers talking about and among ourselves) to a position of *observation* as philosophers like Sen and Nussbaum invite us to do the world would appear closer to what it is: a world where people construct their identity, perceptions, explanations, judgments and ultimately idea of self-realization upon the foundations of their religious belief. Whilst the reader may wonder why this should be of importance for European urban planners, I invite the reader to reflect on how much space is allocated to cultivate such credos in our cities; the role and significance that that space has had historically and has for many still; and how much disputed and contended that space can still be. A practice of planning insensitive to the symbolic and concrete importance of this space is a practice we should neither desire nor encourage. It is a practice of which we should, rather, discuss beyond the notion of diversity and the discourse on rights and frame within a broader humanistic discourse on the concrete space that what many regard as the source of their human significance reclaims in our cities. I will not do so here; my proposal ends with this note.