Anti-urban Ideologies and Practices in the Evolution of the American City

Şerban Văetişi

AMERICA IS an urban nation. It may sound, thus, quite paradoxical to talk about anti-urbanism in a country where the massive part of its population live in an urban area; and where even the smallest localities dotted along highways, exhibit characteristics of urban settings, rather than rural/agricultural ones. Moreover, big cities such as New York, Chicago or Los Angeles have, since their foundation, thoroughly defined and epitomized the American ideals, society, economy and lifestyles, and have continued to attract newcomers putting hopes on the America cities, or visitors simply fascinated with them. Nevertheless anti-urbanism has been a persistent theme in the American thought and anti-urban ideas have continuously influenced and shaped the American cities and the way Americans perceived their lives in cities and society.[1]

I attempt to systematize in this essay some prominent anti-urban positions in America, from early republic to the beginning of the twenty-first century, in various disciplines (from literature to architecture) and contexts of urban imagery and living in order to explore the more or less evident effects of the pervading anti-urban ideologies on the American city. I analyze how various forms of anti-urbanism influenced not only the American thought, but also determined options, preferences, ideals, attitudes and reactions in people, that can be further recognized in the forms, images and social characteristics of the city till today.

The ultimate objective is to characterize the American city by commenting on the evolution of intellectual anti-urbanism and how it was gradually replaced by what I call practical anti-urbanism, with its negative impact on the contemporary lifestyles and livability in the city.

Anti-urbanism in America

IT HAS passed more than half a century since Lucia and Morton White wrote their book on *Intellectual versus the City* (1962).[2] This book not only typified the intellectual history of the American city[3] but also exposed the critical aspects of urban living as perceived by (mostly) the 19th century authors (philosophers, writers); that is,

before the 20th century urban sociologists and professional urbanists conceptualized and discussed these same aspects. This book, despite its limitations and sketchy demonstration[4] is a useful starting reference for both introducing anti-urbanism and further discussing about the roots and consequences of anti-urbanism in America.

The two authors introduce, chronologically, some key representatives of anti-urbanism, famous men of letters, philosophers, "ideologues," historians and architects, and propose a real *tour de force* of history of ideas, from the "irenic" positions of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson to the "organicist" approach on the city of Lewis Mumford and Frank Lloyd Wright. From early claims of agricultural virtues and values of rural existence proffered by Franklin and Jefferson and some Romantic writers, continuing with the more diffuse disgruntlement against the city, expressed by Henry Adams, Henry James or William Dean Howells, and culminating with such theorists in search of the traditional community as John Dewey or Robert Park, this is a compelling presentation of anti-urbanism as fundamental element of American way of thinking, at least as intellectual history.

Lucia and Morton White not only conceptualized anti-urbanism as a constant of the American thought but also attempted to typologize anti-urbanism in two varieties, one related to the romanticized naturalist/rural nostalgia, and the other one, more subtle, to the critical understanding of modern/contemporary urban life, both considered highly influential for the evolutions of urban America and the way American cities, inner-city and suburbs, look like today.[5]

The Whites' work proved to be seminal, since during the next decades many authors, historians, sociologists or urban theorists analyzed the anti-urbanist impact on the American society in evaluations initiated by *The Intellectual versus the City*. For example, Joseph Harry comments on the evolution of this anti-urban paradigm in his article written fifteen years later, "American Anti-urbanism and Its Evolution,"[6] by naming it "a cultural phenomenon in American history." Harry approves Lucia and Morton White's analysis when he points out that, historically speaking, there have been several criteria invoked by anti-urbanists in assessing the negative aspects of the cities: moral, aesthetic, and health criteria being most common. Harry evaluates two alternative hypotheses of: whether anti-urbanism was a passing phase of early industrialization; or has persisted and became institutionalized within American society. This approach enriches Whites' typology of two varieties of anti-urbanism and suggests an analytical scheme wherein both roots and consequences of anti-urbanism could be reasonably assessed.

If Lucia and Morton White's definition of anti-urbanism is implicit (what intellectuals *actually* wrote against the city), Joseph Harry provides an explicit definition (anti-urbanism as an *attitudinal* devaluation of cities). These insights inform about anti-urbanism as notion and ideology, while providing examples and illustrations in the case of how Americans ("intellectuals" or not) envisaged their cities, adjusted their ideas about urban place, and adopted actual strategies of urban living.

Anti-urbanism is definable as reaction to *urbanization* (as specific process of urban growth and urban industrial-economic development in a distinctive historical period) and to *urbanism* (as "a way of life"[7] and particular "human settlement guided by principles of diversity, connectivity, mix, equity, and the importance of public space.)"[8] It

is, thus, inherently anti-city and against urban development and urban lifestyle. This opposition is nevertheless more complicated than suggested here, and requires a more complex analysis.

For example, the preference for parks in the city (see, the Park Movement[9]) or the tendency to find individual anonymity (one of the key characteristics of the *flâneur*[10]) in the city are not necessary anti-urban. However one may consider that they are underpinned by some ideas and aspects that fuel the ideology of anti-urbanism.

In her retrospective book, *New Urbanism and American Planning* (2005), Emily Talen attempted to reassess urbanism in America, including these anti-urban positions[11] from a necessary broader perspective, beyond the intellectual history, including urban planning and the so-called national program on "New Urbanism."[12] According to Talen, *anti-urbanism* is "a tendency toward separation, segregation ..., neglect of equity, place, the public realm, historical structure and the human scale of urban form."[13] In this definition we recognize less the theoretical positions favoring nature and morality expressed by the "intellectual versus the city," but, particularly, attitudes that define ways of life in the city, related to a purposely articulated *urban culture*, to be considered in the next sections.

One has to take, thus, anti-urbanism together with other ideas (in order to conceptualize it as an ideology and practice, as I suggested) as well as to explore their cultural connections beyond the intellectual tradition (and traditional way of understanding urban history) of anti-urbanism.

Significantly however, urban historians writing after the publication of the Whites' analysis, as different as Lewis Mumford with his *The City in History* (1961), Leo Marx with his *Machine in the Garden* (1964), Thomas Bender with *Toward an Urban Vision* (1975) or Anselm Strauss with *Images of the American Cities* (1976) constantly returned to or reformulated the "intellectual anti-urbanism" and, consequently, constructed it as an relevant interpretive paradigm.

The *Intellectual versus the City* paradigm

T HE WHITES argued in their book that "dismay and distrust have been predominant attitudes of the American intellectual toward the American city."[14] But what was the basic argument the American intellectuals had, and why was their position so dominant? "We have no tradition of romantic attachment to the city in our highbrow literature, nothing that remotely resembles the Greek philosopher's attachment to the polis or the French writer's affection for Paris" is the argument that the Whites insightfully provide.[15] The persisting tradition of anti-urbanism in America is thus related to the lack of a consistent tradition of urban living. This is, probably, only a partial explanation, since 19th and 20th centuries anti-urbanism is not only an American ideology, but can be found in Europe, as well.[16] A different explanation could be provided, from a more theoretical perspective, specifically by what Michael A. Weinstein named the dialectics of American life-philosophy: the opposition and reciprocity between "wilderness" and "city."[17]

In another essay, "The Philosopher and the Metropolis in America," written one year later (1963), Morton White attempts to sketch a typology of these philosophical anti-urban positions.[18] This typology suggests a scheme (that White, actually continues with other authors) of "types of anti-urbanism proffered by intellectuals" in which *empirical* (Th. Jefferson), *metaphysical* (R.W. Emerson), *pragmatic* (W. James), *idealist* (J. Royce), or *materialist* (G. Santayana) kinds of anti-urbanism would explain and describe the paradigm. The argument of this *"Intellectual versus the City* paradigm" is clearly deficient if we were to remain to this list of philosophers and philosophically minded authors, and not only because the sketchiness of White's analysis.

Firstly, because, besides philosophers or traditionalist/romanticist writers, many sociologists, urban planners or policymakers could be characterized, as well, anti-urbanists, with no lesser impact on cities than philosophers, for sure. But, since these disciplines and specializations were rare if no absent in the 19th century, we recognize the *tradition* of anti-urbanism mostly in writers and philosophers. Nevertheless, with these new disciplines, emerging in the 20th century (most noticeable the urban sociology of the so-called Chicago School of sociology, with its major scientific production spanning from 1910s to 1940s, but also the rising field of urban history, with its major works of the 1960s and 1970s), the anti-urban views enters in a new era, and the reasons of anti-urbanism appear more diverse and different. As Morton White concluded: "The urbanization of the nation after the Civil War brought about a decline of romantic ideology in the highest reaches of our intellectual life, and therefore the city was criticized for reasons that were very different from those advanced by metaphysical Transcendental romantics."[19] Moreover, in many cases this new criticism is addressed by *professionals* of the study of the city and urban growth.

For example, Robert E. Park, regarded as one of the major figures of the study of the city in the 20th century and founder of urban sociology as particular sub-discipline, can be considered "anti-urban" not only because, as the Whites argue, he had "deep reservations and feelings of uneasiness" about the 20th century city (i.e. like any other abovementioned intellectual), but also because of his ecological paradigm of understanding the city, for which *community* is in the center of an urban order, and for which urban characteristics like *anonymity* are signs of *urban pathology* and *disorganization* (i.e. adopting a terminology of a "science of cities").

Secondly, we have to recognize that these positions are not simply theoretical; they are imbedded in historical, cultural and political contexts. Thus, besides, these philosophies and theories that grounded anti-urban sentiments, we have to consider specific projections and attitudes Americans developed in relation with their cities.

For example, *utopianism*, an overarching characteristic of the American dream, already established from the age of exploration and colonization, in connection with pastoral ideals and visions of the new life in a promise land, frequently generated visions of American settings as new Edens. Surely, these projections, depictions and expectations were denied by the realities of the American city, particularly in the era of industrialism, with its rapid urban growth and increased worker immigration. Industrialism and urban growth rapidly generated, besides mechanization of work and social relations and the decreasing importance of the close-knit *Gemeinschaft*-type of community, such urban prob-

lems as overcrowding, pollution, unemployment, crime and harsh social disparities, visible on the streets. Consequently, one of the most plausible roots of anti-urbanism, especially among the emergent American middle-class of the early 20th century was less the theoretical assumptions circulating among writers and philosophers, but rather the actual images and situations they were experiencing in the real American cities. Robert Park, as journalist and ethnographer, was surely influenced by these contradictory images, as well, when he turned his sociological interest on social disorganization in the city and the lives of immigrants, marginal people and the urban slum.[20]

Thirdly, a series of other defining characteristics or attitudes developed by Americans in the context of formation of the new nation and its rapid urbanization, such as *individualism* (of religious tradition as in the case of Puritanism or of utilitarian strand as in the case of capitalism) or *racism* (as imposed by the segregational laws, applied by urban policies and experimented in the regular urban interactions of the crowded industrial cities, with their ethnic ghettos and gangs) to name only two, fueled, as well, the anti-urban sentiment. These connections (between Puritanism, capitalism or racism and anti-urbanism) are not only historically recorded but also experienced by people in the cities, respectively illustrated by urban development strategies. For example, from the very beginning, the Puritans who settled the first localities weren't fond of big cities but rather willing in exercising a form of growth management designed to keep their villages small; but, as many of the "intellectuals versus the city" put clear, the presence "of a considerable number of not yet assimilated newcomers"[21] created tensions and race conflicts in the cities, that incited an already existing interracial tension and racism. The inner-cities were perceived as unnaturally diverse and impure, and scene of too many contrasts and conflicts. As a consequence, developers, building companies and real estate agencies started to built and promote new residential areas placed at the margin of cities (i.e. in "nature") as rural-like (i.e. anti-urban) communities.

Nevertheless, as Lewis Mumford has conceptualized through its *social organicism*, the life in the city is subject to a far more subtle interpretation than rejection or acceptance of images, ideas, policies and lifestyles. The immigrants will continue to arrive, despite the difficulties they encounter in the city; suburban dwellers will periodically return to the city center for entertainment and leisure time… Then, how to explain social behavior and cultural preferences through the notion of anti-urbanism?; and how to judge anti-urbanism, based solely on this supposedly "unexpected" behaviors?

The answer is that in early anti-urbanists, who founded the concept, lacked a *theory of society*, which in Mumford (and others, in the 20th century) is manifest. This aspect adds further subtle nuances. Thus, despite Mumford is regarded, as well, anti-urban by the Whites, he is, in fact "only" anti-megalopolitan.[22] Mumford did not envision a pastoral community to replace the industrial city, but "dreamed of creating a new 'post-industrial' community and a democratic culture grounded on an 'organic ethos of mutuality'."[23] Considering that the organic society requires cultural unity, he was more interested in closing the division between high and low culture, "between high-toned moral theory and daily practice"[24], which is probably the first acceptance, clearly expressed, that the intellectual perspective on the city was to be complicated by the "practical" one.

Echoes of this socially-conscious theory are evident in other urban historians and even urban designers or architects in the 1960s and 1970s. Leo Marx's proposal for the "middle landscape"[25] is, as well, a reinterpretation of the rural ideal in the 20th century, in the sense of "a new, distinctively American, post-romantic, industrial version of the pastoral design."[26] This is obviously mirrored in Anselm Strauss' conceptualization of the city as fragmented and symbolic representation,[27] especially in his demonstration of the possibility for the city to be an *urban village*. At the practical level, this influence is evident in urban planning, particularly the massive suburbanization, starting with the 1960s, including the construction of planned and "thematic" communities starting with 1970s, as well as in the new conceptions of urbanism and urban design, that culminated with the *New Urbanism* movement in the 1980s, that sought to integrate natural elements, mixed functionalities, convenient social/public spaces and to express a form of ecologically-friendly "smart growth."[28]

In reality, suburban development partially emerged from attempts to counteract the urban problems, from which many were criticized by the early anti-urbanists, such as overcrowding, pollution, crime or the loss of a sense of community in the city. Consequently, the utopian proposal for American dwelling, *Broadacre City*, by the "anti-urbanist" Frank Lloyd Wright could be characterized "a twentieth-century iteration of romantic, Jeffersonian agrarianism."[29] On the other hand, suburbanization is in itself an expression of anti-urbanism, and not only because of the natural/rural elements it managed to incorporate or express, but principally because its (and their residents) refusal to be part of the urban core, i.e. to be involved in its culture and to confront the urban problems in the city. Suburbanization is a form of isolation from the city, and signals lack of adaptation to and rejection of urban life.

As regards the new tendencies in urban design of creating compact, enjoyable and participatory communities *in* the city, illustrated by the "new urbanists," since they are programmatically *urban* and pro-city they can hardly be considered anti-urban. Nevertheless many elements of rural and community nostalgia as well as the re-appropriation of nature are elements reconsidered from the anti-urban critique.

As a conclusion, it can be said that the challenges of the "intellectual versus the city" paradigm resulted into a critique of the anti-urbanist paradigm in itself. However some critical aspects, revealed especially when the discourse against/about the city started to be expressed by professionals, are important in understanding the evolution of both this discourse and the American city in itself.

Moreover, I would remark that, throughout the 20th century, more and more Americans increasingly developed and adopted a form of "practical" (i.e. not intellectual, and grounded on action) anti-urbanism, with probably more negative effects than that proffered by Thomas Jefferson or Frank Lloyd Wright, as I suggest in the next section.

Consequences: the American urban problems through the lens of anti-urbanism

W E CAN ask ourselves, before attempting to involve the anti-urbanist perspective (be it taken as a paradigm or not) in analyzing the consequences of the (intellectual and practical) anti-urbanism in America: *what is, in fact, the urban problem in America?*

I already suggested some problems in relations with distinctive periods of urban America, such as industrialism (overcrowding, pollution, racial violence) and suburbanization (isolation, rejection of typical urban experiences, refusal of involving in urban issues). I interpreted them as the *causes* of some anti-urban positions (especially starting with the 20th century, when the discourse and research of the city became more professional), but in the same time as *elements* reintegrated in attitudes and practical responses to the new living conditions and lifestyles in the city. This is a complex process and effort of *reconsidering*, not simply disapproving (as Morton and Lucia White did in their *Intellectual versus de City*) anti-urbanism. Probably more negative influences on the American city have been the dis-considering attitudes of urban problems at all, than any position (be it positive or negative) on an aspect or another of the city.

If in the early period of urban growth, people (old urbanites, newly arrived rural folk or foreign immigrants) were both excited and interested in city life, this interest somehow diminished throughout the 20th century, with moments marked by suburban seclusion, the "white flight," transit and car-oriented life (passing life) in the city, deindustrialization, "mallification," formation of exclusivist closed groups in the city and the commodification of urban images. Critically enough, enthusiasm for the city was attempted to be revivified by consumerist practices and tourist-oriented activities, which produced an artificial sense of urbanity (see, for example, the *urban renewal projects* or such invented events as *city parades* which intended to recreate a sense of history or community)[30] and "virtual" (i.e. not actual) images of the city.

The American cityscape was forcefully distorted in the process, with plenty of fancy images spread over the Internet and the new social media, of high-rise buildings shining on the background of the sky or the sea, superficially showing an American distant urban materiality filled with lights and glamour, with colorful cars and streets, but lacking people.

Moreover, if we consider some major urban problems of the American city in the 20th and early 21st century we will be able to understand how these same images reinforced some anti-urbanist sentiments (as dominant, influential characteristic of the "American thought") that further aggravated the urban problems Americans face, when this sentiment was expressed at the level of urban life, in attitude and action.

My argument here is, thus, based on the suggestion that the anti-urbanist intellectualism did not have significant impact on the "real society" while remaining in the realm of ideas, as philosophical standpoint and theoretical justification, but it negatively influenced the American cities and citizens when people actually started to manifest anti-urban and enjoyed virtual images of artificial cities. Urban projects, from suburban plan-

ning to uninviting public spaces and to improbable urban apocalypses continuously confirmed and met this sentiment.

By the 1950s about two million new *homes* were built each year for the 40 million Americans who fled the urban areas for the new suburbs. The extension of a highway system made it possible for some 90% of workers to drive to their places of employment. Yet the growth of the suburbs further segregated society as the white middle class left urban centers. The loss of this purchasing power and tax base caused a lessening of services and commerce. The overall urban decline in the United States of the late 1960s and 1970s continued to accentuate the *racial divide* and the difference between the *prosperous groups* and the *urban poor*. This is an especially complex urban problem, with many forces at play, in which anti-urban sentiments mingle with particular processes in the city. Again, this is an example of how "intellectual" anti-urban sentiments are superseded by practical anti-urban attitudes and actions. As suggested, ultimately, the city is negatively affected not only because people in the city tend to segregate themselves and, thus, to erode an established multiethnic urban culture, but also because the flight of the middle class to the suburbs and the continuous loss of industrial jobs (a process that continued throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s[31]) caused a drain on the economic base of many large cities and ushered in an era of deteriorated city centers, of increased crime and often downward social mobility. These are really alarming consequences and demonstrate how even the difficulty in focusing policy on urban problems is rooted in the long tradition of anti-urbanism in America.

I finally attempt to show in the last section that the effort to overcome these issues through a series of strategies, involving *new developments, new urban planning and design* and *new forms/products of consumption* were not necessarily successful and in some cases they failed particularly because the same anti-urbanist perspective.

This will be concluded, thus (as suggested in the title of the essay), with considering anti-urbanism not only an intellectual bias or attitude but—having taken them all together and having assessed its significant influence—an ideology and a practice that *generated the American cityscape*. This evolution is subject to a second-level critique.

A second-level critique: urban development, planning, consumption and control as anti-urban strategies

ONE OF the defining characteristics of the American city is that it continued to develop and expand.[32] Eighteenth-century colonial cities that dotted the shores of Atlantic expanded from nearly private community and "walking cities"[33] to dense industrial centers at the end of the 19th century. Then, the process of suburbanization that began in the first decades of the next century, acknowledging a peak by mid-20th century and the following decades, was continued by exurban development of "edge cities"[34] by the end of the same century and the beginning of the 21st century. Even the evolution of terminology testifies this expansionist development: from city, to metropolis and metropolitan region, to hypercity and megalopolis... Urban growth

constantly characterized modern America, and appeared not only as an expression of economic development and construction boom, but also as a cause of population movement and sprawl.[35] Urban planners had to respond primarily to economic demands and only secondly to seek to attain a balance between the economic, the environmental and the social aspects of development. In many cases the social interactions, the urban communities and the overall livability in the city were affected by developments.

In the same time, more and more developers oriented toward designing exclusivist *planned communities* (such as golf communities or lake communities), completely enclosed, with gates at the entrance (the so-called "gated communities," which became a sort of status marker starting with the 1980s), or toward reconstructing the city centers for the purpose of tourist consumption and gentrification (within the so-called "urban renewal" or "redevelopment" programs), in the same logic of market demand and status formation, that further segregated groups in the city. Since these recent processes and evolutions in the American city were accompanied by information campaigns and advertorials promoting village homes of rural nostalgia, plantation communities of colonial nostalgia, and refurbished facades covering the urban blight backdoor, we can only recognize that the anti-urban tradition survived even in the ultimate urban strategies.

The American cityscape was shaped by these processes, whereas both suburban development and downtown (re)development conducted to unanticipated urban forms and social issues. If anti-urban sentiments pervaded most evidently in the organization of suburban neighborhoods and lifestyles (with their emphasis on "isolated" communities and rural-pastoral elements incorporated within the planned developments), these also informed the central-city improvements in an increasingly market-oriented lifestyle in the city. Ultimately, as a number of urban theorists and critics over the last decades have shown, in both downtown and suburban areas, a significant range of social problems were generated by the combination of/between projects aimed at generating profit and the indifference toward the practices of seclusion and aggressiveness that people adopted. Alison Isenberg demonstrated in her *Downtown America* how the projects of downtown renewal, driven by market and tourism commitments, meant a rebirth of riots and racial clashes in the central city.[36] Talking about the recent evolutions of the "American suburban dream"[37] and its symbol, the big isolated single-family home, Brian J. Miller suggests how living in these *McMansions* (as they were labeled) means not only an expression of excessive consumption, but also a form of anti-urban move away from community life and sustainable living.[38] On the other hand, Edward Soja indicated how various opportunistic actions of "community builders" (private developers as well as public entrepreneurs), interested in attracting residents and infrastructural investment, neglected the actual needs of potential dwellers and users of urban spaces, while exaggerating the "marketing" features of the new developments.[39] Significantly, all these meant references to anti-urban characteristics of living in the city: rural nostalgia; separation from "folks" (such as minority or lower classes) unfitting a community described in nearly utopian, if not racist terms; rejection of public/political participation and refusal to involvement in community issues; superficial (i.e. tourist like) understanding of urban history and urban culture, expressed as consumerist carnivals and fairs, kid-exhibition museums and reduction to a souvenir-like symbolism of the city.

In fact, as many new critics have shown, beginning with Jane Jacobs's seminal book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), in increasingly more cases, simulacra of "fresh" images of the city actually disguised anti-urban dreams to be sold.[40] This false (scenic, simulated) urbanism, pompously considered under the label of "new urbanism," generated by superficial and market-driven demands and mixed froms of vernacular traditions and media images, create a stylistic eclecticism that "lacks history and a sense of place, which leads conservative architects . . . to come up with nostalgic design approaches that attempt to reinsert history, even if invented, into urbanism. New anti-urban utopian visions ... encourage the creation of public spaces that resemble small town squares, but which are highly controlled and hence negate the possibility of public assembly. . . This is the reality of the simulated urbanism that accompanies the beginning of the twenty-first century."[41]

These evolutions of the American city are not only explainable through (intellectual) anti-urbanism but are already also "urban forms" and "images of the city" that further stimulate (practical) anti-urbanism, from both architectural and social points of views. Theoretical aspects, social values and convenient solutions of living in America have been fueled by anti-urbanism, and this established itself like an ideology or accepted position that eventually suggested social, political, cultural and individual approaches and agendas of many Americans, of various backgrounds, throughout the whole 20th century and beyond. As Mike Davis, one of the most prominent recent historians of the city and influential urban critics[42] cynically notes, American cities increasingly tend to manifest like business interactions and less like effective urban lives. In Davis's interpretation, the freeways (an expression of this relational manifestation) allow middle-class suburbanites to navigate the city as a whole without encountering the people living in the city and without getting any firsthand knowledge of inner-city life conditions.[43] The urban conditions are feared and avoided. A typical, yet exaggerated expression, of this attitude is the formation of sentiments of hostility toward otherness, which manifest themselves "in outward movement to the edges of the metropolis and inward movement to defensible enclaves."[44] This generates "fortress cities"[45] dominated by actual or invisible barriers, but especially by technical devices such as surveillance cameras controlling over who is accepted in a given area or business of the city. This establishes a permanent sentiment of fear, that justifies and reinforces a "neo-military syntax of contemporary architecture [that] insinuates violence and conjures imaginary dangers,"[46] expressed by such structures as "sumptuary malls, office centers, culture acropolises ... full of invisible signs warning off the underclass 'Other'."[47] Ultimately, the city appears not only like a segregated and fearful space,[48] but also as an *artificial construct* (confirming somehow those overstated preferences for images and virtualities of the city) and a *system of signs* (that people read and obey, or show fascination with them), metaphorically illustrated by the dozens of billboards anticipating the city and the high-rise towers of the central business district visible from the distance. This *image* (and sentiment of non-involvement and disinterest) is kept in people's minds, it is suggested, as panoramas and car routes that persist even after entering the city, according to the privileged type of experiencing the city (from the window of car) as commuter, consumer or tourist. In this sense, many of these recent critics, pessimistically talk not only about "the destruc-

tion of public space,"[49] but essentially suggest the destruction of any attachment to urban life, which would appear as a last consequence of a long tradition of anti-urbanism, in both intellectual and practical senses.

As suggested throughout the essay, traditions, positions, attitudes and policies that can be assessed as anti-urbanist, ultimately influenced social behavior, individual, economic and administrative strategies, and continuously shaped the American cities. These acknowledged forms that ranged from the conservatist or romanticist anti-urbanisms, manifest in the 19th century apprehensions regarding urbanization, to the most recent 21st century segregational and tactical anti-urbanisms, expressing indifference and fear to the actual living in/of a city which contradict the spectacular images and the vendible stories people are increasingly accustomed with.

❑

Notes

1. Anti-urbanism in America is relatively well documented, including the intellectual anti-urbanism and the tradition and impact of anti-urbanism. See, for example, Charles N. Glaab, "The Historian and the American Urban Tradition," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 67 (1963): 12–25; Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); Dwight W. Hoover, "The Diverging Paths of American Urban History," *American Quarterly* 20, 2 (1968): 296–317; Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975); Joseph Harry, "American Antiurbanism and Its Evolution," *Journal of Voluntary Action Research* 7, 3 (1978): 36–43; James L. Machore, "Pastoralism and the American Urban Ideal: Hawthorne, Whitman, and the Literary Pattern," *American Literature* 54, 3, (1982): 329–353; Peter G. Rowe, *Making a Middle Landscape* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991); Howard P. Chudacoff and Peter C. Baldwin, *Major Problems in American Urban and Suburban History: Documents and Essays* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005); Emily Talen, *New Urbanism and American Planning: The Conflict of Cultures* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005); Jennifer S. Light, *The Nature of Cities: Ecological Visions and the American Urban Professions, 1920–1960* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Steven Conn, "Back to the Garden: Communes, the Environment, and Antiurban Pastoralism at the End of the Sixties," *Journal of Urban History* 36 (2010): 831–48.
2. Lucia White and Morton White, *Intellectual versus the City: From Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).
3. Hoover, "The Diverging Paths of American Urban History", 309 ff.
4. William H. Jordy, "Review of *The Intellectual Versus the City: From Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright* by Lucia and Morton White," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49 (1963), 684 ff.; Alexander B. Callow, *Urban History: An Interpretive Reader with Commentaries*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Hoover, 310.
5. For example, Jane Jacobs, in her *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961) criticized the modernist urban planning arguing that it rejects the city, while Amy Maria Kenyon explicitly stated in *Dreaming Suburbia. Detroit and the Production of Postwar Space and Culture* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 2004: 54 that: "[a]nti-urbanism is a crucial component of the suburban state of mind."
6. Harry, "American Antiurbanism and Its Evolution."

7. Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," in *On Cities and Social Life: Selected Papers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964): 60–83.

8. Talen, *New Urbanism and American Planning*, 37.

9. Daniel M. Bluestone, "From Promenade to Park: The Gregarious Origins of Brooklyn's Park Movement," *American Quarterly* 39, 4 (1987): 529–50.

10. Keith Tester, ed., *The Flâneur* (London, New York: 1994).

11. Emily Talen dedicated in *New Urbanism and American Planning* an entirely chapter, the third ("Principles: Urbanism vs. Anti-Urbanism", 37–68), to the discussion on urbanism vs. anti-urbanism; see also David Schuyler, "Review of *New Urbanism and American Planning: The Conflict of Cultures* by Emily Talen," *Journal of Regional Sciences* 46, no. 5 (2006): 1008–10.

12. Dwight Hoover considers the intellectual history (of the city) "the most traditional way to undertake urban history" (Hover, 308); The New Urbanism is an urban design and planning movement that began in the United States of America in the 1980s. It advocates the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support community-oriented principles favoring neighborhood diversity, accessible public spaces and community institutions, urban places framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice. Despite its commendable promises, New Urbanism was criticized for being a new form of centrally-planned, large-scale development, that proved to be little effective and, actually, contradictory (see for example, Peter Katz, *New Urbanism: Toward an Architecture of Community* (New York: McGraw-Hill Professional, 1994)).

13. Talen, 37–38.

14. See also Morton White, "The Philosopher and the Metropolis in America," in *From a Philosophical Point of View: Selected Studies*, 310–19 (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005, originally published in 1963): 310.

15. White and White, 299.

16. See, for example, Bernard Marchand and Joëlle Salomon Cavin, "Anti-Urban Ideologies and Planning in France and Switzerland: Jean-François Gravier and Armin Meili," *Planning Perspectives* 22 (2007): 29–53. In Europe, anti-urbanism is also associated with other ideological components, such as fascism, see Carlo Cresti, *Architettura e fascismo* (Firenze: Vallechi, 1986). Anyhow, anti-city sentiments can at least partially derive from difficulties of managing and adapting to processes of modernization and innovation, such as the rural-urban evolution or the changing urban and landscape design. These can be analyzed from both cultural-ideological and socio-economic practical perspectives. See for example, in the case of Romania, Lóránt Kovács, "The Effect of Designed Green Spaces on the Changing Transylvanian Landscape," *Transylvanian Review* 20, 2 (2011): 14–20 and Iosif Marin Balog, "Networks of Economic Relations between Rural and Urban Areas: The Economic Modernization of Transylvania in the Second Half of the 19th Century," *Transylvanian Review* 19, 1 (2010): 11–22.

17. Michael A. Weinstein, in *The Wilderness and the City: American Classical Philosophy As a Moral Quest* (Amherst, 1983) adopted this distinction from Josiah Royce's writings, who used the two terms to illustrate the philosopher's vocation. "For Royce, 'wilderness' was the mental space into which the philosopher withdrew in an act of separation from the moral conventions, the cognitive assumptions, and the practical certitudes of the 'city'" (Weinstein, 4–5).

18. White, "The Philosopher and the Metropolis in America".

19. White, 319.

20. See Dixon Goist's article on the community approach of Robert Park, "City and 'Community': The Urban Theory of Robert Park", *American Quarterly* 23, 1(1971): 46–59.

21. Josiah Royce, *Philosophy of Loyalty* (New York, 1908) *apud* White 314.

22. This observation is argued, among others, by Robert Casillo, in "Lewis Mumford and the Organicist Concept in Social Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53, 1 (1992): 91–116, see especially p. 101 ff.
23. Casillo, 101.
24. Casillo, 101.
25. Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).
26. Marx, 5, 32.
27. Anselm L. Strauss, *Images of the American City* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1976).
28. See Katz, *New Urbanism*.
29. *Encyclopedia of American Studies*, ed. Miles Orvell (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), s.v. "Urban Planning and Design" (by Sally Harrison), http://eas-ref.press.jhu.edu/view?aid=17 (accessed September 26, 2008).
30. Cynthia Ghorra-Gobin, "La ville américaine de l'idéal pastoral à l'artificialisation de l'espace naturel", *Les Annales de la recherche urbaine*, 74 (1997): 69–74.
31. In 2000 the suburbs accomodated 140 million Americans, which meant 50 percent of the total population. See Michael Pacione, *Urban Geography: A Global Perspective*, Second edition (New York and London: Routledge 2005), 112.
32. Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West. Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America* (Albuquerque: University of Mexico Press, 2008).
33. Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Urban Wilderness. A History of the American City* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).
34. Joel Garreau, *Edge Cities: Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991).
35. Robert Bruegman, *Sprawl. A Compact History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).
36. Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America. A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).
37. Irving Lewis Allen, *New Towns and the Suburban Dream: Ideology and Utopia in Planning and Development* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1977).
38. Brian J. Miller, "Competing Visions of the American Single-Family Home: Defining McMansions in the New York Times and Dallas Morning News, 2000–2009," *Journal of Urban History* 38, 6 (2012): 1094–113, p. 1096.
39. Edward W. Soja, *Postmetropolis. Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 241.
40. Apart from Jane Jacobs, other important authors, such as Sharon Zukin in her *The Cultures of Cities* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing, 1995) also criticized the planning practices, including (some of) the New Urbanism principles. Critical, as well, Andrew Ross's 1999 book, *The Celebration Chronicles: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Property Values in Disney's New Town* (New York: Ballantine Books) explored the tension between real estate interests and the values (and idealism) of founding a community.
41. Nezar Al Sayyad and Ipek Türeli, "Simulacra," *Encyclopedia of Urban Studies*, ed. Ray Hutchison (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: Sage, 2010), 722–23.
42. Judith Garber, "Reporting from the Accident: Mike Davis on the American City", *Studies in Political Economy* 60 (1999): 99–120; Edward Rooksby, Review of *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* by Mike Davis, *Capital & Class* 94 (2008): 151–54.
43. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz. Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London, New York: Verso, 2006), 224.
44. Garber, 101.

45. Setha M. Low, "Urban Fear: Building the Fortress City," *City & Society* 9, no. 1 (1997): 53–71.
46. Davis, 226.
47. Davis, 226.
48. Violence, fear, insecurity and segregation are often invoked in recent urban criticism as typical consequences of a continuous anti–city perspective on urban space constructions and policies. See, for example, Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998); Setha M. Low, "The Edge and the Center: Gated Communities and the Discourse of Urban Fear," *American Anthropologist* 103, 1 (2001): 45–58 and Derek S. Hyra, "Conceptualizing the New Urban Renewal: Comparing the Past to the Present", *Urban Affairs Review* 48, 4 (2012): 498–527.
49. Davis, 226–28.

Abstract
Anti-urban Ideologies and Practices in the Evolution of the American City

The city, as a dominant form of American life, was subject to an anti-urban bias, especially by intellectuals and writers. This helped to shape the values and attitudes of Americans for generations. Moreover, I argue, this intellectual tradition was reinforced (and partially replaced) by a "practical" form of anti-urbanism, manifested in such evolutions as suburbanization, segregation, touristification or virtualization of cities. These ultimately explain how the difficulty in focusing policy on urban problems is rooted in an anti-urbanist vision, established by convergent traditions, practices, strategies and images. The purpose of the article is to explore the sources, forms and evolutions of anti-urbanism in America as particular intellectual tradition and impact on some specific processes of contemporary American city. The article mixes historical approach with critical analysis, by reviewing and interpreting some positions and practices regarding the city.

Keywords