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For the present we can say that the fundamental project which I am is a project concerning not my relations with this or that particular object in the world, but my total being-in-the-world; since the world itself is revealed only in the light of an end, this project posits for its end a certain type of relation to being which the for-itself wills to adopt.[1]

"... man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being. ... In this sense the responsibility of the for-itself is overwhelming since he is the one by whom it happens that *there is* a world; since he is also the one who makes himself be."[2]

"To will that there be being is also to will that there be men by and for whom the world is endowed with human significations. One can reveal the world only on a basis revealed by other men. No project can be defined except by its interference with other projects. To make being "be" is to communicate with others by means of being."[3]

From a theoretical perspective the concept of project in design disciplines like architecture and planning can be defined according to two dimensions: the artefactual project (building/town) and the existential project (being).[4] The notion of project has mostly been developed by existentialist philosophy and especially by Jean-Paul Sartre (1943, 1948).[5] From an existentialist perspective, project is both that toward which the individual is driven and that which constitutes his being. The individual becomes what he is and is what he becomes. In that sense, we can talk of human as being project or *project-being*. This means that the individual – in the case here designers, users, clients, etc. – is always a transcendent open-ended being who cannot be defined as entity or object in nature or in history.

Sartre offers an interesting view that can enlighten our enquiry into the notion of project related to design, architecture or planning. On the one hand, project refers to a goal, which is freely chosen, that a conscious person establishes, as in the instance of designing and building a house or a city. Boutinet (1993) refers to that aspect of project as technical project. This dimension of project is the one that most teachers and professionals in the disciplines of design, such as architecture and planning, refer to in their pedagogy and practice. On the other hand, project refers to the moving-forwardness aspect of consciousness that makes the individual try endlessly to reach his being. In Sartrean terms, it concerns the For-itself's (consciousness) choice of its way of being and it is expressed by action in the light of a future end.

For Sartre, consciousness is nothingness that tries to actualise itself by looking ahead toward some object in the world. In that regard, each human is not only an individual that *has* projects, as conscious representations of goals to achieve, but also an individual that *is* project himself (sic). This means that the individual is not what he is, like a thing, but that he has to be his being through situated choices and actions. For instance, the architect is not an architect like a chair *is* a chair, but he has to make himself architect in each of his actions. Thus any particular project has to be understood in relation to a more fundamental project, which is the project of being. An individual must indeed choose himself, i.e. choose the way he relates to both the world and his own facticity. The individual creates himself through each of his actions as these take place within the facticity of a given situation where the individual is free not to change the given but to choose the way he engages with it. The situation is the product of both facticity and the individual's way of accepting and acting upon his facticity. For Sartre, the individual is absolutely free and absolutely responsible for his situation; but he is never free except in a situation. In the case of design disciplines, it is through the choice of projects and the action of design that this happens. It is through the dialectical situation between the artefactual project (building/town) and the

existential project (designer, user, community, humanity) that design may be apprehended in relation to a broader project that derives from both artefactual and existential dimensions of project: the ethical project.

The designer thus projects his existential project when he chooses and designs the artefactual project. The design project is embodied in his existential project and allows him to define his being. But by choosing a project and designing it, the designer chooses a way of being for others; the artefactual project turns out to become the others' existential project since they will be "designed" by it if realised concretely (Willis, 2006). In that regard, the designer should be aware of that relationship between the project of the self and the project of the others – at the existential level, through the project of the artefactual. Therefore the relationship becomes one of encounter with the self and the other.

How does that translate into reality? New Urbanism offers an insightful opportunity to speculate from the theoretical frame outlined above. Indeed, New Urbanism strives for a diverse ethical and functional agenda. It aims to provide suburbanites with a healthier sense of wellbeing and community through the built environment at both architectural and neighbourhood scales. It implies, without specificity and with the "proof" of the small town legend, that the existential project can be achieved through the artefactual project. This essay examines this implication by considering several completed New Urbanist/Traditional Town Planning communities in the State of Florida in the southeast United States of America.[6]

The Project of New Urbanism

Some solid ground for an epistemological paradigm of architecture and any other design oriented discipline, like urban planning and design, can be found in, and represented by, the notion of *project*.[7] This means that the designers are faced with foreseeing what does not exist yet; the project responds to the lack of something that we humans disclose due to consciousness. Once involved in a project in architecture and planning, the designers are led into possible worlds that they carry out through design. Design here can be defined as the act of choosing and of making a project happen. This epistemological stance brings into the scope of consideration the existential and ethical issue of any project in architecture and planning. Indeed, a project in such disciplines is generally seen from a materialistic stance; for instance the designer envisions a "building" or a "city". A deeper look at the project makes us perceive a more metaphysical concern about it. The material dimension of a project in a design discipline is somehow an embodiment of its existential reality, namely the existential project of both the designer and the user, and more comprehensively, the existential project of all actors of a community related to a given architecture/planning

project. At that point we face the existential consequence of that intrinsic reality of the project, which is the ethical imperative.

Florida has the longest history in the United States of constructing New Urbanism, as actually New Suburbanism, since only recently have urban patterns in Miami started to be restructured. Typical of American planning, the prominent Florida advocates have stressed a functional rationale that implies an ethical position without clearly stating it. The Charter of New Urbanism, produced by the Congress of New Urbanism' in 1996, and taken up widely by many organisations, utilises only a few phases suggesting common goals, such as "community identity", "culture of democracy" and "making of community". There are no phrases regarding individual support or transformation. The barely ethical phrases of the Charter continue the post-1945 American aspiration of community participation and identity, but imply that the aspiration requires a renovation of the physical neighbourhood plan and architecture of the suburb.

From hundreds of conversations the authors have had with members of the Florida planning profession, the common assumption is that these new spatial patterns are one physical means to a positive human life. New Urbanism is assumed, on the one hand, *to build communities* based on economical, ethnic, racial, and age diversity, and, on the other hand, to promote simultaneous multiplicity of land uses and architectural typologies (Kelbaugh, 2000). In recent years, some of the Charter's gestures towards sustainability have been amplified into advocations and strategies for green building and green neighbourhoods by a variety of New Urbanist portals on the internet.

In the United States, New Urbanism was invented as a necessary alternative after the demise of the American planned suburban development of the 1950 and 60s. The gated suburban developments of the 1980 and 90s packed oversized homes together and eliminated the graceful landscape that had mitigated the loss of urban vitality. The next logical step for the real estate developer was a suburban formula with some attributes of urbanity starting with greater density on less land. But for the designer seeking an ethnical position regarding the human condition, what attributes of suburban and urban should come together?

Innocently in 1982 at Seaside, Florida, Andreas Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) combined urban site planning with suburban housing. They succeeded in synthesising the untested principles of Christopher Alexander and Leon Krier with 19th Century American planning of college campuses and protestant retreats/communities. With buildings designed by several talented architects (such as Steven Holl, Deborah Berke and Jersey Devil) an intimate, awkward, quirky personality emerged where a lightly applied set of rules provided the capacity for each owner to contribute uniquely to the streetscape while maintaining a consistency. A thoughtful

democratic balance of individual and society was enacted through the dialogue of the artefactual.

The role of the architecture as dialogue was soon to be eliminated in favor of the human verbal dialogue. At Seaside, DZP carefully planned for multiple ways of informally meeting as pedestrians. The sequence of gathering spaces and streets in Euclidean arrangement, the diversity of morphologies, the miniature urban place and the famous backyard paths and front porches facing the street became parts of the set of formal principles that sought to facilitate human engagement. Soon DPZ and the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) codified these principles without the flexibility for transformation that gave Seaside its persuasive power in the planning community of the USA.

The dramatic verification of this codification occurs in the formal graveyard beauty of Windsor (DPZ, 1989) in Vero Beach, Florida. Artistically, the DPZ's idealised village, with Leon Krier's first American building and Scott Merrill's perfection of Florida resort architecture, is a pleasure for the eye while walking the empty streets in the manner of a tourist in a museum or historic town. After about 60 minutes, the visitor recognises the tyranny of the communal rules that results in a place without artefactual dialogue between buildings. Unique public expression by the architect is limited to window patterns and roof lines. Intimate, personal post-occupancy alterations by the owners, such as window boxes, do not exist. Here as in other Florida New Urbanist developments, idiosyncratic personalisation is eliminated in favour of communal uniformity.

The Ethical Potential of New Urbanism

Nonetheless, what designers face in architecture goes beyond the built environment or the artefactual. They face the ethical imperative of the existential project. Indeed, any project designs people's lives, including the designer himself in the choice of the project and in the design of it. Therefore it becomes necessary that at all levels of design, the designer develops the ethical sense as an integrative dimension of designing. The human person is the end, the one that gives meaning to architecture, to design, to the project, and to the designer himself.

Stepping away from DPZ's built work and the firm's more recent 'form-based' zoning regulation project based on the application of the environmentalist 'transect', what are the qualities of the standard built villages of New Urbanism in Florida? A visit to New Urbanism mini-towns, such as Celebration and Baldwin Park in the Orlando metropolitan area, reveals a neighbourhood that is neither urban nor suburban nor small town. It is now a new suburban form in the southeast USA. Following the CNU principles, a priority exists for meeting each other outside the house, away from the computer terminal and with the mobile phone on vibrant. The

infrastructure is clearly established for pleasant walks on the public streets between the front door of the house and chair at the coffee shop in the mini-downtown.

Expensive land for the ample public streets is achieved by removing the last bit of private ownership of exterior space. The remnants of suburban green space left between the large detached houses on the tiny lots of land became functionally valueless in the late twentieth century gated suburban community. With the increased density of New Urbanism communities, the 100-year American suburban history of the semi-private front yard and back yard is terminated. The resident has only two types of space: a hidden private interior and manicured public sidewalk; you are either in, or you are out.

A detailed examination conducted by the authors of several New Urbanism developments in Florida verifies the demise of the semi-public space (see Figure 1) The traditional American backyard is a parking lot or an alley. The front yard is a very narrow, decorative space that is maintained by professional gardeners. The celebrated front porch either does not exist or is too small for a group conversation. Because of legally binding rules of the development, residents are permitted only very minor personalisation of any attribute of the exterior building or space.[8]

As clarified by many writers, the semi-private was essential for the health of the resident and neighbourhood. At the height of the first wave of modern suburbia, Serge Chermayeff and Christopher Alexander (1963) argued that the transition from public street to the private bedroom should be lengthened. The multiple transitions protect the intimacy of the family and provide a variety of spaces to engage the neighbour at different levels of public exposure. The front yard was the active zone of public – private dialogue.
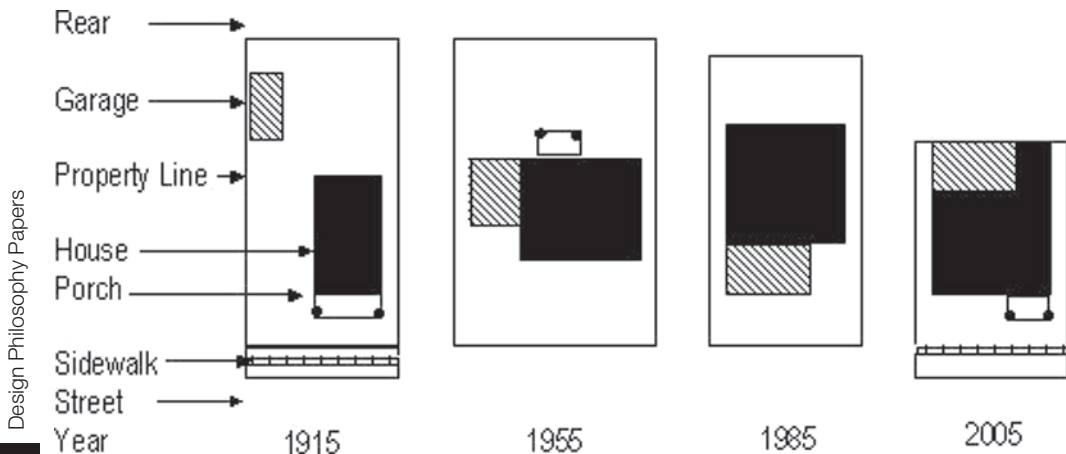
Figure 1
Demise of semi-public space in time.

At the same time, Jane Jacobs (1961) wrote about the street itself as a semi-public space in urban cities. The residents, shop owners and regular visitors understood who belonged and who did not on the publicly owned asphalt road and concrete sidewalks. Daily conversations raged regarding the quality of life on the street and the recent physical changes no matter how minor. Participation was the heart.

But ten years later with the publication and eventual American acceptance of Oscar Newman's 'Defensible Space' (1972), the spirit of the neighbourhood declines from participation to protection. Newman analyses the semi-public space of the front lawn or local street based on the attributes that protect the resident from the visitor – not engage. The semi-public space begins to be understood as a liability: a place where strangers can enter. In 'Ecology of Fear' Mike Davis (1998) catalogues the depth of security measures by gated suburban communities in southern California. The semi-public space has no role. The residents are either very private or totally public. The suburban space of compromise, negotiation and dialogue is eliminated.

Of course, outside the suburban analysis are the true urban neighbourhoods with dense apartments. The owners have no semi-private space and semi-public space is temporarily appropriated on sidewalks and in cafes. Community and dialogue do exist by voluntary social gathering in which the physical neighbourhood is only one option and can be completely ignored. But the American suburban model that Florida's New Urbanism seeks to supplant was based on a morphology that encouraged individual control and manipulation of the house and yard. Conformity and individual expression within these semi-private spaces still dominates the discussion of suburban planning departments, city complaint lines and neighbourhood association meetings across Florida.

New Urbanism propaganda preaches a restoration of community, but then removes the primary space in the actual construction. Even worse, marketing materials for the home sales completely ignore community interaction. In development publications and websites, the sensuous, if slightly puritanical cool, private spaces are always photographed empty and ready to inhabit. The warm poster-scaled images mimic out-takes from some imaginary film about the satisfied and partnered lives of the lucky residents. These images are always placeless. To the marketing firm, the designed spatial relationships are an insignificant, or rather irrelevant, part of life in the community.

The Human Project in New Urbanism

What is at stake when engaging in a project in architecture is no less than the human condition, for the designer, the user, and the community as a whole. From that perspective, 'humanity' is the

primary concern of any design discipline like architecture because designing means to recreate the world at both the artefactual and the existential levels of reality and for both the designer and others. In that sense any project represents a threshold where the designer encounters others and the self; beyond the artefactual project exists the human project, the designer's and the others'. Being a place of human encounter, the project becomes therefore an opportunity for choosing humanity, self and others, in its fullest dimension as a community of beings ontologically free or as project-beings.

Let us be generous to Florida's New Urbanism. Even if the marketing propaganda devalues the civic interaction, people choose happily to live in the new New Urbanism towns, or the old towns renovated according to New Urbanism planning. The residents must search for these towns as the number of New Urbanism apartments and homes is tiny compared to the new gated communities or older suburbs in Florida. The residents of places such as Celebration or Delray Beach do hope for a place with better community relations. But do the site plans and regulations of these Florida communities maximise encounters that might lead to ontologically free people? Or can better models be imagined?

Imagine two neighbourhoods that strive to utilise the artefactual to influence the existential. In the first neighbourhood, the site planner seeks a built place that will maximise the attributes of non-private spaces to encourage neighbours to interact with neighbours. Doorways lead to common pathways. Streets gather pathways and encourage use through trees and open views. Streets lead to plazas where neighbours from longer distances gather for interaction under a blue canopy with a glass of wine.

The second planner seeks a place that will maximise conflict with eventual resolution between neighbours. In this place, very little is agreed. The pathway direction is debated and resolved until a new neighbour wishes to take up the argument again. Each segment of street is individually built and maintained with a generally understood minimum passage. Neighbours gather neighbours together and fight any delinquent street maker. On the edge of a wide place in the street, a controversial bar is opened where someone starts selling beer. Gossip makes the bar a success to many people from an ill-defined geography.

The first planner might be a member of the Congress for New Urbanism in the USA. The second lives in any poor neighbourhood where the government and land use attorneys have never been seen. These planners are at the extremes in Table 1 that diagrams the freedom of personal action of owners of small, independent dwellings to affect change over attributes of a neighbourhood and private property. The dialogue generated through significant encounters shape the existential. Without personal action to transform the space that leads to conflict and to resolution,

Table 1
Freedom of personal action to affect change.

	21st C New Urbanism	Gated Community	Old Suburb/ Small Town	Pre-Industrial Revolution Vernacular	21st C Shantytown
Street Layout	None	None	Difficult	Difficult	Yes
Streetscape	None	None	Restricted	Difficult	Yes
Front Yard/Stoop	None	None	Restricted	Limited	Yes
Exterior Architecture	None	None	Yes	Limited	Yes
Interior	Yes	Yes	Yes	Limited	Yes
Private Yard	Restricted or None	Restricted or None	Yes	Limited	Yes

None: No Freedom.
Difficult: With Powerful Alliances.
Restricted: Freedom with an Expanding Set of Choices.
Limited: Freedom of Choices within a Very Limited Set of Options. No Expansion.
Yes: Freedom to Break the Standard Methods of Construction.

the neighbourhood can never serve this function of dialogue no matter how many times people may meet each other on the pathways. The artefactual ceases to be valuable to the existential project.

Ironically and sadly, New Urbanism in Florida has accepted a declining importance for the designed neighbourhood related to human project. Its advocates have fallen back intellectually on beauty and, recently, on the rational development strategies of Smart Growth or Green Neighbourhoods. But this twentieth century Florida demand for beauty and rationality provides merely comfort, not dialogue. The engagement of humans through place is lost.

The Project of the Project

The project is where the making of the self-other relation occurs. This implies an ethical stance in which project in architecture has to be contemplated in regard to its intrinsic oughtness. And with the comprehension of the individual as project-being as a paradigm for design architecture comes the unavoidable issue of care;[9] caring within the scope of the responsibility for the others and for the self as being of the others and for the others, i.e., the solicitation that is implicit in the relationship self-others. The existential project thus leads to the ethical project. That level of project may be considered as the human project per se that transcends the artefactual project (buildings) but needs the artefactual project in order to disclose itself. Therefore the artefactual project embodies the human project, which is at the end, the Project of the project. Does New Urbanism contribute to the Project of the project?

During the same period that DPZ was formulating its principles for Seaside, other architects of the 1970s felt the same loss of the relationship between the individual, his/her community and the neighbourhood structure. While New Urbanism finally prioritised the structure as the solution, others focused on individual and community dialogue with the planner or architect as a teacher and facilitator. In Christopher Alexander's 'Pattern Language'

(1977), both the theory and the resulting construction of towns, neighbourhoods and buildings were based on conversation and self-made construction. In Belgium, Lucien Kroll formalised a method of community dialogue about the village and reserved multiple locations for individual expression in the public spaces. In the Netherlands, Herman Hertzberger designed the public sidewalk to be removed and transformed into a garden or other semi-private use. Charles Jencks (1972) characterised these and other experiments as 'Adhocism' where the city and building had a structure for messy intervention and creative expression. All these methods are actually outlawed in the New Urbanism developments of Florida.

Our reaction was a feeling of sadness after spending a few hours in an isolated New Urbanism development. Architects blame the historic styles that do not match contemporary reality and declare them a false Disneyland. But Disneyland is fun, not sad. The sadness of the New Urbanism village (and the contemporary gated community) comes from the lack of intimate human touches and expressions created by residents for the pleasure or condemnation of neighbours and visitors. Not a single building or street has a sense of unique personality that is the result of people transforming their physical world through acts or neglect.

To be accurate and against much of assumed propaganda of Florida's New Urbanism, the Charter for New Urbanism makes only one statement barely addressing the relationship of the project of the project:

> We recognise that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

Together with the actual built towns, one must conclude that the value of architecture and planning to the human project is not an objective of New Urbanism.

Conclusion
In the frame of the concept of project as posited in this paper and according to Sartre (1946) and de Beauvoir (1947), in order to be authentic in his choices and actions, the individual must will himself free and the other free, which means that he must will himself project while facilitating the other's project. In both cases the individual discloses being among beings in the world. This is when the conditional passage from freedom to moral freedom happens. This is when the ethical project comes into being in the dialectics of the artefactual and existential projects. In that perspective, any designer who alienates the other's project, i.e. the existential

project, through the artefactual project does not disclose the ethical project.

The human project has not survived the artefactual project of New Urbanism. The human project expands where physical attributes of a particular place facilitate verbal dialogue AND is dialogue itself. Individual action in the making and transformation of place must occur and that action must impinge on the neighbour. Valuable land must be set aside as semi-public and semi-private space where individual and community actions have the same freedom and spontaneity of conversation. The New Urbanism reality in Florida has removed these spaces and prohibited dialogue in artefactual form. The Project of the project does not proceed.

By the end of the twentieth century, many methods had emerged to create neighbourhoods in the suburban sprawl or at the perimeter of cities including, but not limited to, New Urbanism and the monumental City-Park. As the monumental City-Park has no roles for the individual except as a consumer and a worker and as the many New Urbanism models have prohibited potential dialogue through individual manipulation of private land, perhaps informal and unplanned settlements like slums, shantytowns, or favelas that are also designed – but in a different way – should be re-examined.[10] Indeed, we believe that New Urbanism abandons the existential project through the artefactual project while the informal settlements achieve the artefactual project through the existential project. Their open structure and dialogue of the artefactual provides the potential for the *Project* of the *project*.

Notes

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 617.
2. *Being and Nothingness*, p. 707.
3. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, p. 71.
4. Jean-Pierre Boutinet (1993) has explored the concept of project from a psychological and anthropological perspective. In his book *Psychologie des conduites à projets* he proposes four dimensions to the project: existential, technical, individual, and social.
5. Philosophically, the notion of project has mainly been developed by the philosophy of existence, in particular by Jean-Paul Sartre in his seminal works *Being and Nothingness* and *Existentialism is a Humanism*.
6. The paper is based on intensive site visits to New Urbanism projects in Florida in 2005–2006: Seaside in Florida Panhandle (also visited 1995); Celebration in Metro-Orlando; Windsor in Vero Beach; Baldwin Park in Metro-Orlando; Mizner Park in Boca Raton; Abacoa in Jupiter; City Place in West Palm Beach; and redeveloped downtowns of Delray Beach, Naples and Winter Park.

7. Jean-Louis LeMoigne (1986) suggests that the concept of project represents an epistemological paradigm for the disciplines of design like architecture. He argues that the object of architectural practice, education, and research is the project.

8. The gigantic discussion of changes over time requires examination but cannot be handled in the scope of the essay. Another essay could learn from the 1990s renovations of 1910's suburban neighbourhoods, 1960–70s renovations of 1945 neighbourhoods like Levittown and the stagnant situation of 1970s–80s developments.

9. Care here refers to its ethical dimension and more precisely to Emmanuel Levinas and his concept of Face and the soliciting encounter with the other. Also, a good phenomenological study of Caring can be found in the concept of One-Caring in the work of Nel Noddings (1984). *On Caring* by Milton Mayeroff (1971) is an interesting supplement although very prescriptive.

10. The mention of informal settlements, or slums, is just a suggestion for further thought. Indeed the issue of informal settlements, or slums, is too large an issue to include in this paper. Nonetheless the work by Mike Davis (2006), *The Planet of Slums*, is an explosive accusation that inflames only part of the reality of the slums. Davis focuses largely on political, economical, legal, sanitation, and social issues of slums. He argues that slums are fundamentally unpleasant, crowded, filthy and smelly places. He does not really address issues of sense of community, community action, and other aspects of "wellbeing" that slums can generate and that are related to ethical concerns. Both authors of this paper have visited slums in different countries and disagree with Mike Davis's emphasis. For an insightful study on slums in regard to the relationship between built environment, human project, and ethics in terms of space, trust, and communal action see Carpenter et al, 2006.

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