

Hundertwasser—Inspiration for Environmental Ethics: Reformulating the Ecological Self

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Abstract: This paper analyses and interprets the works of Friedensreich Hundertwasser (1928-2000) as a source of inspiration for environmental ethics and offers an extended model of the Ecological Self based on an interpretation of his works. Hundertwasser was a prominent Jewish-Austrian artist and environmental activist, yet despite his commitment to environmental issues, he has not received the attention he deserves from the environmental ethics community. His works and writings suggest a critique and reformulation of the well-known concept of the Ecological Self. This concept implies that humans are essentially embedded in the natural world; that the Self is porous and open rather than disengaged and atomistic. This paper suggests an alternative, holistic and extended version of this concept; it assesses and incorporates additional layers found between humans and nature –clothing, architecture, urban environments, social and political environments.

Keywords – Ecological Self, environmental ethics, environmental political theory, urbanism, communitarianism

Introduction

This article examines the relevance of the work and thought of Friedensreich Hundertwasser (1928-2000) to environmental ethics and philosophy. A prominent Jewish-Austrian artist and environmental activist, Hundertwasser attracted international acclaim during his lifetime. Yet, despite his commitment to environmental concerns, he is generally overlooked by environmental ethicists and philosophers. In his written and visual language, Hundertwasser is neither an academic philosopher nor an environmental theorist, but akin to Skolimowski's notion of a "living philosophy" or Hadot's "philosophy as a way of life".(Skolimowski 1992; Hadot 2004) As an artist-philosopher, Hundertwasser's thinking is not purely theoretical, but distinguished by a clarity and sensitivity to the complex relationship between the human and non-human worlds.

Although many people know Hundertwasser through his art, he is still unrecognised in the environmental ethics field. This article offers a brief biographical sketch and thematic summary and proceeds to an analysis of Hundertwasser's work, with reference to the concept of the "Ecological Self". The concept is then expanded to incorporate ideas pertaining to urban environmental ethics and philosophy.

Several points to note before starting out: the **corpus of Hundertwasser's writing** includes diaries, exhibition catalogues, manifestos, letters, and articles which he revised and translated. Hundertwasser's writing was published in several languages, mostly in the form of exhibition catalogues and art books (sometimes several versions were published under the same title, with slight changes).¹ For the sake of convenience and ease of access, the title of each work appears in curly brackets {} with links to relevant texts at the Hundertwasser Foundation website (see Appendix 1).

My second point concerns Hundertwasser's **style**. Sometimes prophetic, at other times cynical, his writing is invariably critical and provocative, as the following quote shows: "The architect acts like a criminal of war... He is building cancerous structures in concrete which are killing nature and man within." {Turn} The "criminal" referred to here is Austrian architect Adolph Loos (1870-1933), whose 1910 manifesto of modernist architecture, *Ornament and Crime*, advocated sterile facades and symmetrical shapes which Hundertwasser opposed. (Loos 1998) Had a philosopher expressed herself in this manner, we would balk at her generalised accusations and disregard of social and political realities. When an artist uses provocative language and performance art to draw attention to her ideas, we entertain the possibility that she may have something legitimate to say.

¹ The book *Schöne Wege* is an exception in that it combines all his important work in one volume. (Schurian 1983) An expanded edition by the same title was published by Langen-Müller Verlag (2004).

The third point concerns **methodology**. The paper is based on philosophical and interpretive analyses garnered during a three-month stint at the Hundertwasser Archive in Vienna researching primary sources.² The analysis is supported by semi-structured interviews conducted with residents of the Hundertwasserhaus in Vienna and workers of the KunstHausWien (Hundertwasser Museum). Lastly, interviews with Hundertwasser's friends and staff of the Hundertwasser Archive yielded additional invaluable information.

Biographical Sketch

Hundertwasser, whose birthname was Friedrich Stowasser, was born in Vienna in 1928 to a Catholic father and Jewish mother. After his father died in 1929, his mother raised him alone. Following the Anschluss in 1938, he and his mother were forced to leave their home and share an apartment with his aunt and grandmother. He was baptised a Catholic in 1935 and joined the Hitler Youth. These acts saved his and his mother's life; his grandmother, aunt and remaining Jewish relatives were deported to the death camps. Those childhood experiences deeply affected his ideas, writing and ecological consciousness.³

Hundertwasser's artistic journey began in 1948 at the Viennese Academy of Fine Arts which he left after three months to embark on extensive travels throughout Europe and Africa.(Rand 2007, 11) Thereafter Hundertwasser's art focused on quotidian life and propounded

² Hundertwasser wrote in German, French, and English. He personally translated or approved almost the English versions of his work, keeping "author intention" intact.

³ This biographical note is often overlooked when interpreting Hundertwasser's art though it is clearly a key to understanding his work. His first paintings of nature appeared during the war years and one may speculate that because he was living in fear, he felt more comfortable in the Wienerwald (Vienna Woods) than in the city. While these experience were only documented in a single archived interview (1.1.1995) they are implicitly present in his paintings and some written manifestos. C.f. (Hundertwasser 2008)

He also discussed these issues in his diary from 1943 to 1946 and in letters to his mother (Elsa Stowasser). Those letters were only recently discovered; they are still archived and unpublished. Preliminary references to these sources are documented in: Pamela Kort, "Friedensreich Hundertwasser. The Holistic Power of Art", forthcoming. In relation to questions of environmental ethics and the Holocaust see Katz (2015)

an alternative lifestyle and the place of nature in it.⁴ His style was colourful and spontaneous. The one consistent feature in his work was loathing for straight lines and right-angles, which he saw as inorganic and pathogenic⁵, associating them and geometric rationality with instrumental functionality in human and non-human life. His oeuvre gradually developed from painting to applied art, with accompanying manifestos and architectural conceptions bursting with ideas about nature and reflections on the interrelationship between humans and the natural world.⁶

While initially involved in artistic projects, Hundertwasser exploited international recognition to raise ecological awareness through his art. From the mid-1970s, Hundertwasser was involved in various environmental campaigns, spanning local (Viennese) initiatives such as {Grün}, to European and international preservation projects and anti-nuclear campaigns. The posters and paintings that he contributed were admired for their vitality and resonant catchphrases (such as – “You are a guest of Nature – Behave!”) and their sales profited the various organisations.⁷

Hundertwasser sought to raise ecological awareness through his architectural projects which embodied his vision of an alternative urban environment. Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky (1970-1983) and Vienna mayor, Leopold Gratz (1973-1984), supported his vision and granted him the opportunity to realise his architectural-ecological ideas for residential construction in Vienna.⁸ The ensuing Hundertwasserhaus was far friendlier to its residents and more responsive to nature than other building styles.⁹ Helmut Zilk (Vienna mayor 1984-1994)

⁴ E.g. Hundertwasser's 2007 text on the social role of art.

⁵ E.g. Hundertwasser's texts on the {straight line} and {spiral}

⁶ For examples of his work, see: <http://hundertwasser.com/oeuvre>

⁷ For detailed examples, see {activism}.

⁸ Kreisky supported Hundertwasser consistently. For example, Hundertwasser's "world traveling exhibition" (1975-1987) toured the world under the official sponsorship of Federal Chancellor Kreisky. Its title, “Austria Presents Hundertwasser to the Continents” formally designated him Austria's cultural representative.

Additionally, in 1978 Hundertwasser designed an alternative flag for the state of Israel which was accompanied by a ‘peace manifesto’ {peace}. Despite the fact that it may read as politically naïve, Kreisky sent the manifesto to heads of states in the Middle-East.

⁹ For a critical evaluation of this project, see Kraftl (2009; 2010)

commissioned Hundertwasser to redesign the Spittelau waste incinerator, which he transformed from a functional industrial building into a monumental work of art.¹⁰

Hundertwasser died at sea in 2000 and, following his specific instructions, was given an *ecological burial* under a tulip tree in the *Garden of the Happy Dead* on land that he owned in New Zealand.

The present study seeks to incorporate some of Hundertwasser's ideas into contemporary environmental ethics thinking. As an environmentalist, Hundertwasser can be linked with Deep Ecology: his art and writing honour the intrinsic value of nature, human interconnectedness and interdependence with nature, holism and human embedment in nature. But this does not mean we should read him as an environmental philosopher. Philosophers and artists have different sensitivities and although they both interpret reality, the former are committed to coherent and explicit arguments while the latter are committed to creative, often implicit expressions of their reflections. What follows here is a philosophical interpretation focusing mainly on the "Ecological Self" as it appears in Hundertwasser's work, rather than an examination of Hundertwasser's thinking as an environmental philosopher. In other words, the following is not an attempt to establish a "*Hundertwasserian*" environmental philosophy, but rather to analyse in what ways Hundertwasser's work inspires further philosophical reflection.

Five-Skinned Socio-Ecological Self

The Ecological Self is one of the main concepts in environmental ethics. It is an abstract idea describing an awareness of what is normally termed the (narrow) ego. The idea of the Ecological Self expands the boundaries of the egoistic self to include nature as an integral part of

¹⁰ Some interviewees suggested that Zilk introduced waste separation in Vienna as this was Hundertwasser's condition for accepting the Spittelau project.

the human self. It criticises individualistic or atomistic conceptions of the self and conceptualises an alternative view which embeds humans intrinsically in nature. The idea was pioneered by Arne Næss (1995), who argued that awareness of our Ecological Self is achieved in a process of Self-realisation (the capital 'S' implying organic wholeness). His idea was taken further by Mathews, Skolimowski, Devall, Fox, and others. For these thinkers, any ontological or epistemic segregation between humans and nature is a misconception. (Mathews 1991; Skolimowski 1992; Fox 1995; Devall 1995)

The critique generally goes like this:

“Ecological thinking...requires a kind of vision across boundaries. The epidermis of the skin is ecologically like a pond surface or a forest soil, not a shell so much as a delicate interpenetration. It reveals the self ennobled and extended rather than threatened as part of the landscape and the ecosystem...” (Devall 1995, 102)

This critique is fairly close to the communitarian critique of the "liberal self" which argues that humans are defined by their communal bonds and are not self-sufficient.(Sandel 1984; Taylor 1985; 1992) The alternative communitarian conception of the self argues that individuals are embodied agents in a community (or different communities), which greatly influences their identity, culture, values, and conceptions of the good.¹¹ The thread this view shares with the deep-ecological critique is that atomistic conceptions of the self are limited, and the self should be seen from another perspective. For a Deep Ecologist the self is essentially embedded in the natural world; for a communitarian it is embedded in the social world. I argue that a careful interpretation of Hundertwasser offers a third perspective which includes and extends these views.

¹¹ For an overview of the debate between liberals and communitarians (or more precisely individualism and communitarianism), see: Avineri and de Shalit (1992) and Bell (1993)

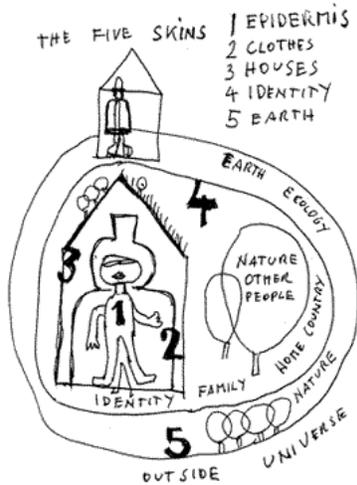


Image 1: Hundertwasser's *Five Skins*¹²

Image 1 presents Hundertwasser's view of the human being as an essentially embedded self with five "skins". The model describes a scheme of creative engagement and interaction between the self and the natural and social worlds. Accordingly, the "skins" of the self extend through the individual's epidermis (first skin); clothes (second skin), house and architecture (third skin), social environment / identity of family, groups, communities, cities, nations, traditions, heritage, etc. (fourth skin), and the Earth (fifth skin), which includes all non-human beings and ecosystems. Like Næss's concept of Self-realisation, the five skins involve interplay in the extension of the self to produce a comprehensive model comprised of a five-skinned Socio-Ecological Self. The next sections analyse each skin, the breadth of the model and its critique of the Ecological Self, as well as its potentialities.

First Skin–Creative Self

This is how Hundertwasser describes the first skin:

“When everyone is quite naturally and simply creative, a paradise, a kingdom is right there where he is.” {King}

¹² Image copyrights: © 2016 NAMIDA AG, Glarus, Schweiz
For elaboration, see (Restany N.D.; Restany and Hundertwasser 2001)

“Freedom without happiness is no freedom. Man can’t be happy without independent, creative activity. ...Individual happiness is based on individual differences, on distinctive traits in people...Only he who is conscious of himself, only he who takes the time to get [to] know himself, only he can free himself.” {Freedom}

To paraphrase: humans are creative, authentic, unique, and free; realising our creative abilities is paradise on Earth. We all have these capabilities, which are born from our interactions with the world. Damping creative capacities leads to the "new illiteracy," expressed as social uniformity. {Exhibition; Transautomatism}

“The lines I trace with my feet on the pavement walking to the museum are more important than the lines I will find there hanging on the walls inside. And it pleases me enormously to see that the line I trace is never straight, never confused, but has a reason to be like this in every tiny part. Beware of the straight line and the drunken line. But above all beware of the T-squared straight line.” {Straight line}¹³

Straight lines and right-angles involve standardisation and uniformity; their lack of creativity epitomises a new illiteracy. Total realisation of the first skin is achieved by fighting such incompetence through creativity. On the one hand, realising these creative abilities implies exceptionalness and uniqueness; on the other hand, since it is only one of the five skins, it also implies modesty and smallness. Modesty and smallness support the legacy of Leopold Kohr (1978; 1986) and E.F. Schumacher (1973), i.e., opposition to the *cult of bigness* while embracing scale and *smallness*. This view does not require self-effacement but a sense of scale and proportion, mostly in our self-conceptions and the human being's place in the social and natural world. This view also applies to lifestyle, values, aspirations and goals, and urges humans not to be arrogant in their hopes but to think first and then (hopefully) limit themselves.

¹³ The "drunk line" refers to surrealism, one of the most powerful avant-garde aesthetic movements of the 1920s to 1960s. Surrealism enthusiastically embraced Freud's theory of dreams and the *unconscious*. They mixed their aesthetic agenda with a radical political agenda in which the realm of dreams and the unconscious coincides with beauty (aesthetics) and freedom (political). Hundertwasser rejected these ideas because his commitment was to quotidian life and "paradise on Earth."

This skin is associated with the liberal-individualistic self: it is free (positively and negatively), autonomous and infinitely creative.¹⁴ But, the individualistic conception of the self also implies a fully enclosed self, wholly distinct from the outer natural and social worlds, and applying instrumental reason to those worlds in an atomistic construal of society as constituted by individual purpose.(Taylor 1992; 1995) The communitarian and Deep Ecology critique and this interpretive analysis raise the atomistic barrier by proposing that other components are essential extensions of the self while retaining a commitment to personal autonomy.

Second Skin – Clothes, Authenticity, Sociopolitical Critique

“I am against conformism, against fashion, which changes every year. That was not so in former times. Fashion has only existed for about a hundred years; until then there was just clothing...That clothing is supposed to be symmetrical is one of those misconceptions of our typified society....The fashion mafia is actually just as bad, if not worse, than the mafia of modern art... Clothing must become art again and stop being just fashion.”
{Second skin}¹⁵

There are two ideas here: first, clothes are not only functional, but symbolic extensions of the first skin— an expressive and essential part of the self. The idea that fashion is inauthentic is linked to the creative and free existence associated with the first skin. The second idea is a socio-economic-ecological critique of the social role of fashion that can also be ascribed to the second skin. In this role, fashion dictates the latest trends not only in clothes but in all personal consumer goods. This motivates consumption and causes psychological discomfort, say, over not owning the latest iphone. A critique of constantly changing fashion thus challenges consumerism and the social construction of needs, echoing the political ideologies of radical ecology. Dobson argued that ecologism as a political ideology calls for a critical assessment of current values,

¹⁴ For a comprehensive analysis of the significance of creativity for liberalism and the liberal conception of the *self*, see Avnon and de Shalit (1999)

¹⁵ The "mafia of modern art" is not modern art *per se*, but the art industry that develops around it, where some styles are "à la mode".

radical changes in our political and social lives, and above all changes in contemporary consumption and production patterns.(Dobson 2007, 1–9) Thus, the second skin's authenticity and Hundertwasser's critique of the transience of fashion share the same starting point as the sociopolitical critique of ecogism. These ideas also endorse the idea of "simple living," which is prevalent in Deep Ecology.

Third Skin—Built Environments, Holism, Interconnectedness, Interdependence

It could be argued that the built urban environment is not a *natural* locus for realising our ecological selves. Yet, as urban populations grow (half the world currently lives in cities), urban growth needs more scholarly focus. Some authors see this as a blind spot in environmental ethics and argue that it is correlated to a strong anti-urban bias in environmental philosophy.¹⁶ In short, this bias conceives urban life as morally inferior to life lived closer to nature.

It may be argued that this bias is not as dominant as before and no longer constitutes a 'blind spot.' Its significance should not, however, be understated by proponents of Deep Ecology. The tendency to focus on 'classical' environmental concerns, such as wilderness preservation, yields impressive metaphysical or ontological arguments regarding the value of nature or the essential relationship between humans and nature. However, it leaves us without an ethical/philosophical/political framework by which to reflect on the interaction with the artificial world. Moreover, it relinquishes 'brown' areas of the world – including their inhabitants. This is an unsolicited stance, especially since the people who suffer the most from the abuse of nature that non-anthropocentrism opposes – are frequently disadvantaged populations living in urban areas. Moreover, failing to bring forward an urban environmental ethic implies renouncing urban

¹⁶ For some major examples see: Jamieson (1984) ; Gunn (1998); de Shalit (1996; 2003); Light (2001); King (2000); Kirkman (2004); Booth (2013). For an extensive symposium on urban environmental ethics, see the *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 2003, V.34, Issue 1.

spaces and their relationship with the natural world as purely instrumental valuations. So, in order to assess how the language and moral sentiments of Deep Ecology may be applied we should ask: how can the built environment mediate the expansion of the Ecological Self?

This question has received limited attention. Booth (2008) discussed the need to *fill the urban hole* of holistic approaches (Deep Ecology) and overcome the "pain and grief" of urban life. This idea is extended when she suggests that the built environment "offers fertile ground for the ongoing process of Self-realization" (p.84), but she offers no clear idea what this implies or how it may be achieved. In addition to suggesting that we should ditch the wilderness concept because it conveys a nature-culture dualism, Callicott (1991) argues, "Chicago is no less a phenomenon of nature than is the Great Barrier Reef".(1992, 18) More recently he wrote that cities gain value by "the way they integrate or incorporate nature into themselves" (2004, 117) and that a city is *valuable* for its "towering oaks... sweet fragrance of nearby gardenia and ... the air-filling chorus of cicadas..." not for their culture, education, welfare, human rights, etc.¹⁷ This is questionable as it ignores the fact that nature is *natural* and cities are *artificial*. Cities also involve planning, deliberation, premeditation, and politics, none of which are natural. Weak efforts to make cities more natural ignore the more fundamental aspects of this problem and demand a more complex theory of the Ecological Self in urban areas.

Warwick Fox's edited volume introduces ethical considerations of the built environment and "responsive cohesion" criterion as the central or *foundational value* in numerous ethical issues.(Fox 2002; 2006) This is realistic for acknowledging the essential **experiential** differences between wilderness and cities, but it fails to explain how the urban experience mediates the expansion of the Ecological Self. I argue that a careful interpretation of Hundertwasser's

¹⁷ For similar lines of argumentation, see Stefanovic and Scharper (2011).

architectural ideas shows the relationship between architecture (part of the third skin) and Self-realisation.



“The time has come for people to rebel against their confinement in cubical constructions like chickens or rabbits in cages, a confinement which is alien to human nature... The architect has no relationship to the building...The bricklayer has no relationship to the building...The tenant has no relationship to the structure...Only when architect, bricklayer and tenant are a unity, or one and the same person, can we speak of architecture....” {Mouldiness}

Image 2: Hundertwasserhaus, Vienna, 1977-1986¹⁸

Hundertwasserhaus in Vienna and other urban Hundertwasser dwellings represent *three dimensional manifestos* of Self-realisation in urban areas that elicit ongoing interaction between the resident, the building, and the surrounding urban environment. According to Hundertwasser, a person's house should be a unique creation, like the second skin (functional, but expressive, and relating to its (inner) habitants and (outer urban) surroundings). With Hundertwasserhaus, the building's aesthetic qualities project these values alongside symbols of holism, interconnectedness and interdependence with nature in an urban setting.¹⁹

First then, let's consider how the third skin behaves holistically. Regarding houses and buildings, Hundertwasser wrote, “Some people say houses consist of walls. I say houses consist of windows.” {Window Dictatorship} This sentence is revealing. Walls segregate and windows break down that segregation; walls impose opposition, windows break opposition. But, alongside his view of windows, Hundertwasser criticises what he terms "window dictatorship"—the uniformity and physical symmetry in popular window construction. “Window rights” grants

¹⁸ This public housing project was Hundertwasser's first significant architectural project. It is located in an *ordinary* residential neighbourhood in Vienna. Photographer: Kurt Pultar. Copyrights: © 2016 Hundertwasser Archive, Vienna.

¹⁹ The focus hereafter is mostly on interaction between the building and nature. For an extensive analysis of the social functioning of the building, see (Kraftl 2009; 2010)

individuals the ability to work with windows' capacity to break dualistic splits between inner and outer realities and to achieve aesthetic pluralism by resisting their uniformity. To elaborate:

Image 3: Example of window rights²⁰



Vienna, 1972



Bülach, Switzerland, 1972

“You must yourself become the author of your ([urban]) environment. You cannot wait for a permit or an authority. Not only your clothes and your rooms, but the face of the building in which you live belong to you.” {Window rights}

“The apartment-house tenant must have the freedom to lean out of his window and as far as his arms can reach transform the exterior of his dwelling space. And he must be allowed to take a long brush and - as far as his arms can reach - paint everything pink, so that from far away, from the street, everyone can see: there lives a man who distinguishes himself from his neighbours, the pent-up livestock!” {Mouldiness}

The practice of window rights is a symbolic act of engagement, representing people's embedment in society and nature. When someone leans out of the window and creatively expresses herself, she is interacting with her street, buildings, and neighbourhood residents; she also symbolically interacts with the city and surrounding nature. She shows herself as she is, thus inviting further interaction. In doing this, she "leaves" part of herself outside and simultaneously lets some of the outside in. This is a meaningful, **holistic**, interaction. Unlike the dualistic in-out schism, the practice of window rights changes the house-environment dyad leading to an ecological and holistic realisation that the house does not exist in isolation, but interacts with the world. Thus, the window is more than a hole in the wall: it is a gate through which messages can be sent and return inwards. It implies openness to the world and symbolises ongoing interaction and engagement with it. The very evident barriers which precede the exercise of window rights now disappear and relax. In this process the individual appropriates her third skin and moves forward and outward towards the fourth, social and political, skin.

²⁰ Copyrights: © 2016 Hundertwasser Archive, Vienna.

So far this recognises the tremendous creative power of the individual. Note though that this power is only motivated/constituted by constant engagement. With window rights, the result of this engagement is a colourful and pluralistic street.²¹ But it might not always be welcome. What if your neighbour's "creativity" looks dreadful? Since window rights are defined in terms of positive liberty, their "complementary limitations" are in the spirit of negative liberty: "man has a particular claim to his architectural outer skin. With one condition: neither the neighbours of those implementing modifications nor the stability of the house may suffer as a result." {Loos}²²

Thus, exercising window rights grants neighbours control and the right to demand the undoing of alterations they dislike. And exercising these rights can also be a catalyst for social interaction and shared goals or even a common theme / *spirit* in a building or neighbourhood. For the moment, though, these social ideas remain theoretical and people cannot actualise Hundertwasser's concept of window rights.

Let us now examine the interconnectedness, modesty and interdependence of the third skin and how it redefines urban space–nature relations.

In recent years we have seen a growing trend towards green roofs, roof gardening and urban agriculture, practices dating back to the hanging gardens of Babylon, traditional European farmhouses, and vernacular architecture. However, the size and scale of the phenomenon, sponsored and promoted by municipalities such as Chicago, Toronto, Copenhagen, Munich, Portland and Singapore, far exceeds that of the past. To encourage this trend, cities emphasise its

²¹ See Image 2 – Hundertwasserhaus.

²² In this manifesto, Hundertwasser advocated a law that will give people building alteration rights (practice of window rights). In most cities, one cannot change the façade of a building, and municipalities control what people can and cannot change. Hundertwasser sought a legal solution to this problem. For those interested in the subject, correspondence on can be found at: (Hundertwasser 1985, 104–8) Note that in Hundertwasser buildings, tenants have the contractual right to alter the building's interior and exterior design.

utilitarian value: effective storm-water management,²³ reduced urban "heat island effect", better insulation (far lower air-conditioning costs) and air quality, and roofs which last two to three times longer and beautify the cityscape.²⁴ These rationales for encouraging green roofs are without exception utilitarian and instrumental. Highlighting this line of reasoning is not a critique since there is nothing glamorous about a policy that is ineffective or a practice that leads to undesired results. However, in order to argue that the language of Deep Ecology can reverberate in urban spaces and that Self-realisation is achievable via the third skin, we also have to justify such projects on non-instrumental grounds. The quotation below offers a more fundamental basis for urban-nature considerations:

THE HORIZONTAL BELONGS TO NATURE, THE VERTICAL TO MAN. So, everything that is horizontal under the sky belongs to vegetation, and man can only claim for himself what is vertical. In other words, this means: FREE NATURE MUST GROW WHEREVER SNOW FALLS IN WINTER. {Forestation, (emphasis in original)}
All that is white in winter must be green in summer...Woods shall grow on streets and roofs. One must again be able to breathe woodland air in the cities. {Window rights}

Besides the utilitarian and instrumental benefits of green roofs, they can be justified on the basis of the normative-distributive principle of sharing "(urban) land". The idea of "belonging" to nature or human beings does not mean ownership. Rather it conceptualises the reciprocal and interdependent link between the human-non-human worlds by interpreting them from an urban perspective that redefines our conception of urban space. Problems such as population density, high-rises, urban infrastructure can all respect nature if they restore it horizontally.²⁵ Acknowledging vertical building as mans' place in the world (which not everyone believes needs justification) is a counterargument to misanthropic self-effacing trends, mistaken

²³ Storm water runoff is a major cause of overflowing sewers, flooding, pollution, and land erosion.

²⁴ These benefits appear on the 'Chicago Green Roof Initiative' website and in most municipal project descriptions. http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/water/supp_info/conservation/green_design/green_roofs_bestmanagementpractices.html

²⁵ This assertion must not be taken at face value as it does not refer to physical-environmental aspects of cities, although studies show that vegetation in cities yields encouraging results. It is a philosophical and ethical notion.

at times for non-anthropocentrism. Restoring nature to cities horizontally, across rooftops, leaves the vast vertical realm for human creativity and self-expression (facades and window rights).

Not that buildings and cities can be placed anywhere. Frank Lloyd Wright's *Fallingwater* was built in a forest over a waterfall and exemplifies an aggressive break from this principle.²⁶ Though romantically cherished and praised for capturing the essence of its surroundings, building this house, which belongs in an urban landscape, caused unjustified destruction to nature. The same applies to "ruralism" and sprawl: saturated infrastructure for small populations, despite a romantic attachment to "the land," does more harm than good. As Glaeser argues, albeit from another perspective, "if you love nature, stay away from it".(2011, 199–201) The internal logic of urbanism is thus more ecological and respectful of nature and the wilderness. The horizontal-vertical principle offers people a modest framework to cultivate the vital sense of interconnectedness with nature in the city.

Cultivating "vertical green" is another global tendency. Boston ivy and other climbing plants are often used to cover buildings and, like green roofs, "green walls" are getting attention in contemporary urban practices, mostly for decoration, but also to insulate and combat pollution. Like green roofs, a solely instrumental view of vertical green diverges from the reasoning presented in this paper. Take Hundertwasserhaus' "tree tenants" for example.²⁷ They are not just trees planted in urban areas but trees that actually *live* in an apartment building and are integral to its facade. Planting flowers the traditional way at the base of the vertical facade is one thing, planting trees around the building is somewhat different, mostly because of the space required. The horizontal-vertical principle sees the vertical as the human domain,²⁸ so that

²⁶ <http://www.fallingwater.org/>

²⁷ Please see Image 6 below.

²⁸ It is important to stress that "belonging" does not necessarily imply ownership or the world as anyone's property. Unlike the self's mental life/body/clothing/commodities/house, the social environment (fourth skin) and the Earth (fifth skin) are no-one's property. Moreover, the extent to which dwellings should be privately owned is also debatable.

making space for tree tenants who occupy part of the vertical domain becomes a practical, symbolic act implying care and concern for nature. Normally, people plant flowers for aesthetic reasons; climbing plants have aesthetic and instrumental purposes. However, planting trees as part of the facade of a building says something different. Hundertwasser wrote, “A tree tenant is an ambassador of the forest.” {tenant} Ambassadors are representatives either sent or invited to represent a particular party's interests. Viewed thus, tree tenants represent both the interests of non-humans while silently reminding us of the reciprocity between man and nature.

The above examples demonstrate how it is possible to express the essential human embedment in nature symbolically in urban spaces. In these examples, the relationship between nature and society are conceptualised in terms of holism, interconnectedness and interdependence. This is not an obvious locus for this type of Self-realisation. Discussions about integrating nature into urban areas are generally about open spaces, parks and recreational facilities; this analysis was deliberately focused on dwellings since dense building is the most obvious marker of urban areas and the most quotidian aspect of city life.

In terms of the five-skinned Socio-Ecological Self, our analysis here has focused primarily on the third skin. I propose that the process of extension and Self-realisation of the five-skinned self calls for an openness to and engagement with the world. However, this process of extension does not end with the third, architectural, skin; it continues to the fourth, social and political, skin.

Fourth Skin – Social and Political Identity

This skin contains the family, social community, city, nation, culture, and heritage. It is a fundamental constituent of the self and corresponds to the communitarian self. A comparison of communitarian critiques of the individualistic conception of the self sheds light on an overlooked

aspect of the Ecological Self. Communitarians argue that humans are embodied agents embedded in a community (or various communities). This important critique ties in with the theoretical framework of the fourth skin as it describes a central aspect of social and political life whose significance is linked to the salience of the local community and cityscape in shaping identity, culture, values, and conceptions of the good.

Communities come in different sizes and different political units comprising family, villages, neighbourhood, city, state, bioregion and even virtual communities. The notion of *civicism* captures the essence of the urban communitarian critique, namely that sense of urban spirit, pride, and ethos that is found (and ought to be fostered) in cities. It is an important but often overlooked source of identity, form of political membership and a critical response to globalisation and nationalisation problems.(Bell and de Shalit 2011) Another interesting framework which ties in with this is Martina Löw's theoretical project: "the intrinsic logic of cities".(Berking and Löw 2008; Löw 2012) Löw's thinking is somewhat correlated with the urban ethos idea in arguing that besides being a completely distinct form of association (compared to the state, say), cities also "behave" differently because of their hidden structure, which she calls intrinsic logic. Different cities thus have similar problems; but how these problems are interpreted and the methods and legislation used to address them varies according to the intrinsic logic of each city. Löw identifies five structure-types that make up this that intrinsic logic, one of which is spatial structure.(2012, 311–12) She also stresses the experiential sides of producing shared meaning (or, to use Bell and de Shalit's terms, civicism), which collectively form the fourth skin of an urbanite.(Löw 2013)

In Hundertwasserhaus, civicism is expressed through different elements of the *spirit* of Vienna as Hundertwasser understood it:²⁹



Image 4: Tree tenant, windows, stones & old facade.³¹



Image 5: Gateway of the Heiligenkreuzerhof, (Vienna), 1943³²

- Hundertwasser used recycled bricks which carried the imperial coat-of-arms, salvaged from demolished buildings in Vienna.³⁰
- Every window has a decorative stone above it. Looking at Hundertwasser's drawings (Image 5), we find that these stones are part of Vienna's cultural heritage.
- Parts of the old facade of the building are reconstructed—so “the spirits of the old house could live in the new one.”(Hundertwasser 1997, 197)
- The onion domes on top of Hundertwasserhaus (Image 2) are part of Vienna's architectural history. (Cf. the onion dome in image 5).

Architectural details thus have symbolic meaning. They capture the spirit of Vienna and its intrinsic logic. How far they successfully frame Vienna's spirit is debatable; important is that

²⁹ Hundertwasser was a proud citizen of Vienna, where he built his *three dimensional manifestos*. His most important works are still exhibited in the KunstHausWien. See also Kreisky's letter to mayor Gratz expressing Hundertwasser's civicism. In: (Hundertwasser 1997, 180)

³⁰ (Hundertwasser 1997, 190) The bricks are also unique for reasons that Hundertwasser was probably unaware of. The coat-of-arms implies that they were manufactured before 1918 (collapse of the Habsburg dynasty) and possibly in the late 19th century. Bricks were then produced locally, not imported, in factories between the Wienerberg and the Wienfluss. Brick manufacture in this area dates back to Roman times, and during the massive reconstruction during the reign of Franz Joseph bricks were made by Bohemian and Moravian workers. This fact and the factories' location mean that the bricks are the product of Vienna's soil. Since Hundertwasserhaus was built using these bricks, it symbolically and materially internalises Vienna.

³¹ Photographer: Hubert Kluger. Copyrights: © 2016 Hundertwasser Archive, Vienna.

³² Image copyrights: © 2016 NAMIDA AG, Glarus, Schweiz.

civicism is integral to the five-skinned urban Socio-Ecological Self. The examples here pertain mostly to symbolic interaction between the third and fourth skin. However, we should also consider that in addition to the architectural expression of civicism, the spirit of the city included in the fourth skin not only embraces the city's cultural symbols but, even more significantly, its ability to foster a sense of community, values, and conceptions of the good.

Fifth Skin – Nature and the Non-human World

The fifth skin is the Earth. Hundertwasser wrote, “We must make a peace treaty with nature...We are guests of nature and we must behave.” {Ecology}

Here we see man in the world, absorbed, and active, and the self as part of a cycle in the world. This understanding, Taylor argues, “[t]he notion that sharing a mutually sustaining life system with other creatures creates a bond: a kind of solidarity which is there in the process of life. To be in tune with life is to acknowledge this solidarity.”(Taylor 1992, 384)

The Earth skin is the final stage of Self-realisation and returns us to Deep Ecology and the Ecological Self discussed above. It parallels the Ecological Self of Næss, Mathews, Fox, Devall and others, and needs no further elaboration.

We now turn to a discussion of the comprehensive character of the five-skinned Socio-Ecological Self, comparing it to the original Deep Ecological Self.

Reformulating the Ecological Self

The five-skinned Socio-Ecological Self is a comprehensive concentric model where each skin's components extend to the whole. The first skin is the bare individual, whose main characteristic is creative ability. The second skin concerns the self's needs and wants and introduces the basis for socio-political critique of consumption, production and lifestyle. The

third skin is where dwelling on Earth begins. It incorporates the first two skins and adds spatial elements. Earlier, we analysed the spatial-symbolic expressions of holism, interconnectedness and interdependence within the urban environment. The first three skins extend to the fourth skin, the social and political embodiment of the self. This skin embraces identity, community, distribution, and conceptions of the good. The fifth skin is nature and (always) relates back to the social and political load of the first four skins. This, and the stress on urban environments as essential constituents of Self-realisation, is where Hundertwasser's model and the Ecological Self model most sharply diverge.

The place where Næss believed paradigmatic Self-realisation (and thus extension) could be achieved was Tvergastein, a mountain hut in Norway's Hallingskarvet massif. It was there that Næss took inspiration and developed his philosophy: Ecosophy T.³³

“Being ‘part of myself’, the idea of home delimited an ecological self, rich in internal relations to what is now called environment. But humanity today suffers from a place-corrosive process. Urbanization, centralization, increased mobility.... Weaken or disrupt the steady belongingness to a place...There seems to be no place for PLACE anymore.”(Næss 2008, 45; original emphasis)

A brief comparison of the five-skinned self with the Ecological Self of Næss and other theorists raises an interesting point. For Næss, the Ecological Self extends directly from the first to the fifth skin, and, in a sense, he "accuses" the other skins of "disrupting" the Self-realisation process.³⁴ The focus of the Ecological Self on the direct relationships between humans and nature is important for reassessing the values attributed to nature and for providing the moral grounds for environment-friendly attitudes. The five-skinned model emphasises all the mediated relationships between humans and nature as possible loci for Self-realisation and as crucial for environmental action. In other words, by accepting the suggested five-skinned model, our

³³ For an interesting analysis of the relationship between Næss the person, his philosophy and his dwelling, see Anker (2003).

³⁴ Cf. Dryzek's distinction between "green consciousness" and "green politics" in his analysis of green radicalism. (Dryzek 2005, 181–228)

present analysis accepts our embedment in the fifth skin although it does not arise automatically from the first skin. Urban architecture, social and political surroundings and commodities are dialectical: on the one hand they may lead to discomfort and alienation and be rejected as morally inferior to life closer to the wilderness. On the other hand, they have critical potentialities if we see them as integral components of the self that can mediate its extension.³⁵

Two brief examples convey this idea best.



Image 6: Paradise – Land of Man, Birds and Ships, 1950.



Image 7: Irinaland Over the Balkans, 1969.³⁶

In these pictures, man is embedded in the world of nature, which also contains humans, technology and cities. In *Paradise* man is within and not detached from nature. Nature is represented by trees and birds; technology is represented by ships. People learn to see the world with all its skins through Self-realisation. In *Irinaland*, the expansion of the self from the first to the fifth skin is **mediated by the city** and the city is a significant locus of that Self-realisation. This article sidebars reservations about urban space, arguing instead that humans are *extended* and realised in all their skins through creative engagement in and with the world. Of course this does not deny the discomforts of urbanism or argue that we should give up the urban. On the

³⁵ Eckersley developed the approach of *critical political ecology*, involving “critically questioning the values and norms that are internal rather than external to existing *understandings* and practices; exposing unfulfilled emancipatory promises and opportunities; unmasking tensions, contradictions, and hidden forms of coercion within and/or between ideas and practices; and exploring what historically possible changes in thought and practice might permit, facilitate, and/or enhance emancipation and enlightenment.” (Eckersley 2004, 8)

³⁶ Image copyrights: © 2016 NAMIDA AG, Glarus, Schweiz.

contrary,³⁷ acknowledging urban space as an intellectual and public arena which constantly reflects human values is an essential part of the Self-realisation process which upholds the urban environment as the most significant locus of (socio-political-environmental) action.

The direct experience of nature described by Deep Ecology is tremendously important and probably has no substitute in human experience. However, since most people live in cities or have only limited direct contact with wild nature, we must take the concept of Self-realisation and its underlying ideas seriously. This means recognising that Self-realisation is an ongoing process rather than instant enlightenment and is therefore inseparable from quotidian life and practices. In addition, it implies that our quotidian interaction with nature is constantly mediated by our commodities, architecture, urban realities and mostly – our social and political realities. The five-skinned Socio-Ecological Self model can help us reflect on and practice an alternative, more ecological lifestyle in all areas of life, and not just in our rare, direct experiences of wild nature.

These reflections on the Deep Ecological notion of the Ecological Self and Self-realisation should be read as a critical endorsement with reservations. On the one hand, the concept is criticised for suggesting a direct extension from the first to the fifth skin, while on the other, the pith of the concept that humans are essentially embedded in nature, and the moral sentiment it espouses, that nature ought to be valued in a non-instrumental manner, are upheld. The suggested alternative refines and exemplifies that even in our quotidian life we constantly interact with Nature, though this interaction is mediated by other layers or skins. This critique should be understood as a critical endorsement in that it seeks to defend Deep Ecology from possible critique, according to which it is irrelevant to the challenge of urban sustainability, which is probably one of the greatest contemporary challenges.

³⁷ Holmes Rolston III admits that “The city is in some sense our niche; we belong there, and no one can achieve full humanity without it.” (Rolston 1994, 12–13)

In summary, this article had two goals. First, to introduce Hundertwasser to the ‘environmental values’ community since most biographers examine him only from the aesthetic standpoint. Given this lacuna, further research on Hundertwasser’s vision of the ‘green city’ and environmental literacy through art and artists would be rewarding. The paper’s second goal was to reassess the Ecological Self by reinterpreting aspects of Hundertwasser’s work. This raises three suggestions for further research. The first is to widen the five-skinned Socio-Ecological Self model to include human needs, human rights and the complete range of ecologically relevant social and political considerations. The second concerns the urban blind spot. Much work has been done in this field and there are models of sustainable urbanism, green urbanism, ecological urbanism etc. Though important, these models are based on current trends of urbanism—those very trends that turn environmental ethicists’ off urbanism. In this sense, the five-skinned Socio-Ecological Self model may represent another alternative, so that instead of trying to "green" contemporary trends of urbanism, we can try to make environmental philosophy more relevant to the urban challenge. Lastly, since this model suggests that, especially in cities, the relationship between humans and nature is constantly mediated, further research in environmental politics in and of cities would be welcome. Such research could examine the relationship of this suggested framework with theories of urban political ecology (Heynen et. al 2006), hybrid geographies (Whatmore 2002) ecological architecture (Pickerill 2016) and environmental justice. For example, how can and how do cities promote socio-environmental values (and of what type) and in what ways does this model give rise to ideas of ecological citizenship in cities?

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Appendix 1- Links to the Hundertwasser Archive website

Abbreviation	Full name	Year written	URL
Activism	Various environmental campaigns	1974-1998	http://www.hundertwasser.com/apa/266_related-apa
Ecology	Hundertwasser on Ecology	1982	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.5.1.10?subtype=hw
Exhibition	Art-club exhibition text	1953	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.1.6.1?subtype=hw
Forestation	Forestation of the city	1971	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.5.1.2?subtype=hw
Freedom	Real freedom	1966	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.1.6.5?subtype=hw
Grün	Mehr Grün	1980	http://www.hundertwasser.com/apa/view-181/language/en
King	I am a king	1981	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.4.0.0.4?subtype=hw
Loos	Loose from Loos	1968	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.3.2.2?subtype=hw
Mouldiness	Mouldiness manifesto against rationalism in architecture	1958	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.3.2.1?subtype=hw
Peace	The Peace Manifesto	1978	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.4.3.1?subtype=hw
Second Skin	On the second skin (excerpt)	1982	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.2.1?subtype=hw
Spiral	The Spiral	1974	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.1.3.1?subtype=hw
Straight line	The straight line leads to the downfall of our civilisation	1953	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.1.6.2?subtype=hw
Tenant	Tree tenant letter	1973	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.3.3.4.1?subtype=hw
Transautomatism	On Transautomatism	1954	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.1.5.1?subtype=hw
Turn	The turn	1980	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.5.1.3?subtype=hw
Window dictatorship	The window dictatorship	1990	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.3.2.11?subtype=hw
Window rights	Your window right, your tree duty	1972	http://www.hundertwasser.com/text/view-1.3.2.7

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