



URBAN ETHICS IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

The Moral Dimensions of Six Emerging
Conditions in Contemporary Urbanism

JEFFREY K.H. CHAN



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palgrave
macmillan

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ISBN 978-981-13-0307-4 ISBN 978-981-13-0308-1 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0308-1>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018940742

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Cover credit: Gallo Images-David Malan

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. part of Springer Nature
The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

Acknowledgements

This book came about in the strangest of ways and possibly also at the oddest point of my journey as a teacher, scholar, and writer. If there is a story behind every book, then there is certainly no lack of stories behind this one. The story that will, however, unfold here is one of sincere gratitude.

Here, first and foremost, I thank my most helpful and supportive editors from Palgrave: Josh Pitt; Stephanie Carey, Joanna O'Neill, and Sophie Li (Springer). As a testimony to all the patient readers of this book, you will be hard-pressed to find a kinder team of editors for academic publishing!

And even a small book such as this has to depend on the support and encouragement of many big-hearted colleagues and friends. I am truly grateful to the following individuals during the preparation and writing of this book (listed in alphabetical order of the last name): Chang Jiat Hwee; Cheah Kok Ming; Lilian Chee; Cho Im Sik; Heng Chye Kiang (Professor); Ho Puay Peng (Chair & Professor); Lai Chee Kien; Lam Khee Poh (Dean & Professor); Lee Kah Wee; Liao Kuei-Hsien (& Jiang Yensheng); Joseph Lim Ee Man; Tomohisa Miyauchi; Tsuto Sakamoto; Imran bin Tajudeen; William M. Taylor; Shirley Surya; Bobby Wong;

Wong Yunn Chii; Xiang Wei-Ning (Professor); Yeo Kang Shua (& Theng); Zhang Ye (& Dannie Zhuang).

I also want to acknowledge, and thank, the seventeen students in my inaugural class of AR5951B1 *The City in the Anthropocene* (Fall 2017 at the National University of Singapore), who not only have accompanied me during the iciest moments of writing, but have also kept this adventure of thought aflame with their fuel of questions and debates.

And during the writing of this book, I have been surprised—and delighted—by the supportive presence of my own teachers who have checked on me. Through their many encouragements, they have kept me buoyant and inspired. For this, and yet again, I am grateful for your presence during this time: thank you, Greig Crysler, Todd Laporte, Jean-Pierre Protzen (and Elsbeth Protzen).

I also reserve special thanks to my family, whose love and patience I could always count on during these challenging months. Thank you, Dad and Mom, Hwee-Hwa and Ji-Jon—for bearing with me despite all the skipped family dinners, and once a while (or so I recall), my insufferable tantrum.

Finally, I thank my God, who is near me wherever I mine and tinker, and always seemed nearer whenever my mind and heart grew faint. Without his rousing whisper in my ears—‘Get up; there is work to be done’—on too many unwilling mornings (and some nights), even this small book would have been an impossible quest.

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1

Introduction: Urban Ethics in the Anthropocene

The Urban World as Design

Increasingly, we live in an environment of our own making. This environment is what Aicher (1994, p. 179) calls the “world as design”—a ‘second world’ over the natural one—comprising of skyscrapers, bridges, power stations, landfills, and many other artificial systems that make up the built environment today. For at least more than half of the present global population, this ‘world as design’ is also thoroughly urban. According to one key estimate, the urban population is projected to increase to roughly six billion by 2050 (OECD, 2015, p. 11). This means that by 2050, nearly two-thirds of the global population, or at least 2.4 billion more people, will be living in cities (Goldhagen, 2017). In turn, existing cities are anticipated to rapidly densify or expand, and new cities will have to be built to accommodate this projected urban population. Urbanization, on a planetary scale, appears unrelenting for the immediate future. In turn, the human condition is set to become the urban condition (Amin, 2006, p. 1012).

While the environmental, social, and political challenges of urbanization are receiving due attention by different researchers from the various

disciplines, however, the ethical and moral implications of a rapidly urbanizing world have largely been neglected. How does urbanization or the urban process create new ethical categories, shape new moral identities and relations, and lead to consequences that are morally significant? Or in other words, how does the urban shape the ethical—and in what ways? On this, cities have been said to reflect and shape their inhabitants' values and outlooks in various ways (Bell & De-Shalit, 2011). This idea of moral identities as civic ethos—the spirit, sentiment, or norms of a people or community dwelling within certain geographical or spatial boundaries—was especially salient in Thucydides's 'Melian dialogue', which revealed what could happen in a conflict between two different cities (i.e., Melos and Athens) shaped by radically different moral identities (Glover, 2012).

But this perspective on civic ethos does not explain the many ethical quandaries that are drawn out by design in the city. For instance, Sorkin (1999, p. 3) describes how, even for a seemingly innocuous design decision to prioritize traffic flow over pedestrians for one part of the city, ethical relations have to be considered and weighed, for example, between the rights of ambulances and strollers, and the pedestrian's rights of way and place. Even in this ordinary decision to prioritize traffic flow at the expense of certain pedestrian rights, profound ethical questions are raised on whose good ought to be privileged, and for what reasons. Furthermore, many repercussions follow from this design decision. For example, by prioritizing traffic flow, the time allotted for crossing a traffic junction has to be decreased, which in turn alters the pace of the pedestrian's urban experience. And certain roads invariably have to become quasi-motorways within an interconnected roadway system to conserve optimal traffic flow. This is usually followed by a system-wide removal of more pedestrian crossings and street furniture catered to the pedestrian—setting into motion a gradual but complex spatial and material transformation of urban spaces. In this way, the original decision to prioritize traffic flow at one point in the city has now implicated a far larger transformation of the streetscape and the urban experience, which is likely to leave in its wake, worsening pollution and the increased risk of road traffic accidents. Taken altogether, an innocuous design decision has snowballed into a new moral reality,

which in turn is likely to beg further design interventions fraught with their own moral risks and dilemmas.

Compounding these moral realities brought about by design, the city is fast becoming a source, if not also the primary context of new ethical issues and problems. Consider a paradigmatic example from the Smart City discourse. ‘Smart chips’ are present in all kinds of access cards used in the city—for instance, the public transportation card, the customer loyalty card, or the credit card to name just three—to enhance convenience in everyday life. But when their respective data are integrated and sieved by robust algorithms, they also offer a detailed profile of behavioral patterns and personal movements of the card user (Graham, 2011). This prospect not only raises the new ethical question on how a data-driven urbanism can violate personal privacy through undue data surveillance and geo-surveillance (Kitchin, 2016), but it can also lead to the new moral perplexity of intelligent technologies, when sieving through these data, to ‘know enough’ of a user’s preferences to ‘nudge’ and change this individual’s behavior in ways that are not conscious to informed consent (Yates, 2017). And because Smart technologies harness only specific sources of data, important social groups in the city are often unintentionally excluded (Glasmeier & Christopherson, 2015)—if only because they are neither consumers nor producers affiliated to certain patterns of technological usage in their urban lives. In parallel, other groups are specifically targeted because they qualify for the formation of certain urban enclaves (Graham, 2011, p. 125). Smart technologies, which were introduced to streamline everyday life, are now not only burdened with many new moral perplexities, but appear to have also hardened differences and worsened inequality in the city.

And in the Anthropocene increasingly characterized by an uneven form of planetary urbanization (Brenner, 2013a), the world is also being inequitably shaped from the perspective of the city. A vast and interconnected network of urban mobilities and activities skews the extraction and consumption of resources toward the city, which irreversibly impoverishes many other geographies and the biosphere in this process. Bonneuil and Fressoz (2016, p. 7) suggest that the sum of these anthropogenic impacts has greatly reduced the eco-services provided to humanity by the biosphere: services such as pollination, carbon capture,

erosion protection, and the regulation of water quality and quantity among many others. For this reason, design is expected to play an increasingly larger role—for instance, in fortifying the coastline with landscape architecture that double-functions as climate change adaptation, and all the way to drastic geo-engineering ventures of some form—in order to compensate for these weakening eco-services. But because of a rapidly urbanizing world, these design interventions are unlikely to be distant from cities. To tackle any one of these issues then at any scale in the urban context, layered with many overlapping and contesting complex systems, is a “wicked problem” (Rittel & Webber, 1973)—one that is equally fraught with many moral pitfalls and risks.

For example, green spaces are often created in cities as a direct way to simultaneously improve urban sustainability and environmental justice. But even here, Checker (2011, p. 211) notices a “pernicious paradox” in the making. New green spaces offer an indisputable public good to everyone in the city—especially salient as a form of environmental justice to residents in low-income neighborhoods whose access to these spaces has historically been limited. However, arriving in the wake of these green spaces is a form of environmental gentrification (Checker, 2011), which tends to favor redevelopments that would cater to a more affluent demographic in the city that subsequently result in the eviction and displacement of the original residents in these neighborhoods. How then should one contend with the paradoxical realities of these green spaces, when they tend to bring about benefits and losses at the same time—and unevenly to different residents in the city?

It is in this way where environmental justice (i.e., offering green amenities to the residents who need them most) is simultaneously accompanied by the risks of gentrification and the threats of eviction that this dilemma shifts from urban studies into the domain of ethics. However, there is a gap. Even when the moral significance of this dilemma has long been known, there is neither a specific ethics tailored to understand the peculiar dilemmas of the city, nor are any further ethical issues and problems accompanying such dilemmas well charted or well understood. And because of the historical neglect of the city’s ethical dimensions, these ethical issues and problems

remain unrecognized. In view of the rapid pace of urbanization today, the moral stakes—which are always better clarified and defined through the ethical lens, but which are also always accompanied by significant practical stakes—have become too high and precarious to stay ignored any longer.

In view of this knowledge gap, this book is then a projective foray into reinvigorating thinking on the ethical dimensions of the city, which is here referred to as *urban ethics*. Specifically, through the lens of six emerging urban conditions—namely, precarity, propinquity, conflict, serendipity, fear, and the urban commons—this book attempts to answer the following key questions: How does the city, manifested differently through each of these conditions, shape the ethical? And conversely, how can the examination of these urban conditions, through ethics, reveal relations and realities of the city that often go unnoticed? How does ethics then constitute another way of studying the city—a perspective that has become increasingly critical to the humane future of cities? In sum, the goal of this book is twofold. Firstly, the book aims to surface and to describe issues and questions of moral significance that urbanization and the urban process can bring about for ethics. And secondly, this book represents a modest attempt to initiate a new conversation on the growing body of ethical issues and problems associated with the urban condition today.

The Intellectual Foundations and Contours of Urban Ethics

The thesis of urban ethics rests on two historical foundations. The first is the classical canon of understanding ethics from the perspective of the city, or the *polis*, and the second is a more recent idea of the city as a moral order. Each foundation will be briefly explicated in turn.

Firstly, in Antiquity, ethics was seen as an integral part of political philosophy, which defined the conduct of a person as a citizen (Arendt, 2003). In turn, the ‘good life’—the *summum bonum*—of this citizen was perceived as the *raison d’être* of the *polis* (Arendt, 2003, p. 65).

More recently, however, this relation between ethics, citizenry, and the city has been re-engaged in the discourse of philosophy and the city (see Meagher, 2008). And this recent discourse has been instrumental in drawing a closer connection between philosophy and the city. On the one hand, many key concepts—for example, citizenship, justice, and the good life—are argued to be incomplete if they were defined independently from the constitution of the *polis*. And on the other hand, many important questions of the *polis*—for example, what is a good city, or how do we best achieve justice in our cities? (Meagher, 2008, p. 2)—are philosophical in nature. Only by converging the different frames of philosophy and the city can one begin to tackle important issues and questions critical to the urban civilization today.

At least for the ancient Greeks, the pursuit of philosophy as truth and wisdom was perceived to be inextricably tied to the *polis* as political and communal life (Cunningham, 2005). In this way, the ethical life was inseparable from the political life of the *polis*. While this relation between the *polis* and ethics may be instructive in showing how the ethics of the city might have also shaped an individual's ethical beliefs—and vice versa—this relation as a whole has neither anticipated how the city, as both complex design and creative oeuvre, can engender new ethical issues and problems, nor how megacities today can come to pose moral challenges that far exceed the ethical consensus of a largely homogeneous and relatively minute Greek *polis*.

Secondly, and at least since the early twentieth century, the city, as well as urban life, has been perceived as a form of moral order (Park, 1952). By this moral order, Park (1952, p. 177) suggests that urban life plays a formative role on the subjectivity of the urban dweller—where an individual's personhood is shaped by the others who are always in one's close proximity in the city. And it is also through this moral order that diverse people can live together, but at the same time, also live apart from each other (Park, 1952, p. 166). This moral order is seen as the precondition for other ideal civic qualities such as the toleration of differences, and cosmopolitanism.

Park's thesis on the moralizing roles of city and urban life has been most acutely inherited and subsequently developed by Richard Sennett.

Continuing with Park's idea of the moral order, Sennett (2005, p. 109) specifies the two key 'urban virtues' required in the city. The first is sociability, which is how people can learn to live with strangers and to deal with people who are unlike oneself. On this, Sennett (2005, p. 120) thinks that this form of sociability defines and enables the civic realm, where despite sharing little in common, mutual accommodations between strangers could be achieved. The second urban virtue is subjectivity, which is how urban life can shape or civilize an individual's personality through the associations that he or she maintains with others. After all, it is in cities that strangers, who confront each other as inimical nation-states or unfriendly adversaries at the global level, come to associate with each other as persons in close interactions (Bauman, 2003).

But Sennett's views have been challenged as an uncritical acceptance of default sociability in urban life. As a counterpoise, Tonkiss (2005, p. 22) argues that the "ethics of indifference" is also plausible, and is just as often, a desirable ethic for the urban dweller. In this view, urban sociability across the gulf of differences between strangers in the city has been taken too far by both Park and Sennett. Instead, in preserving anonymity through indifference, this ethics of indifference reserves the necessary room for close observation and engagement of the stranger without the need for an impulsion of immediate sociability (Tonkiss, 2005, p. 28). If Sennett's urban virtue of sociability is projected to catalyze the possibility for strangers to live together, then Tonkiss's ethics of indifference is a virtue that may enable strangers to live peacefully apart.

More recently, Ignatieff (2014, 2017) has also contributed to this idea of the moral order in cities. His contributions could be seen as a balancing act between Sennett and Tonkiss's position. On the one hand for Ignatieff (2014), the contemporary city is a crucible of multicultural, multilingual, and multiracial differences. And so in this context, the central ethical problem in cities is how to generate collaboration among strangers. To do this, Ignatieff (2014) suggests a "moral operating system", tantamount to a shared moral code, that can enable different people to live together and cooperate with each other. Here, Ignatieff must have shared Bauman's (2003) notion that the profusion of different and permanent strangers in the city constitutes the fountainhead

of invention and innovation, and also Park's (and also Sennett's) ideas on the civilizing power of strangers for convivial urbanity. In this way, collaboration, rather than indifference or estrangement, ought to be the way that can make cities great.

But on the other hand, the very differences that empower cities can also lead to conflicts and bitter alienation. For this reason, Ignatieff's (2017) recent work has specified this moral code as "ordinary virtues"—for example, basic decency, forgiveness, compassion, and trust—that have enabled diverse people, in spite of their different affiliations, to live together yet apart. According to Ignatieff (2017, p. 14), ordinary virtues constitute the beginning of a solution to the new moral problem on how to create a shared moral code in spite of the extreme diversities and radical differences found in the multicultural city today. In light of this possibility, creating the urban conditions that can foster such ordinary virtues may be an important subsequent step.

In sum, if the former foundation of philosophy and the city demonstrates one possible genealogical connection between ethics and the *polis*, then the latter foundation of moral order suggests how the city could come to shape ethical dispositions, and correspondingly, also to demand a set of urban virtues that can commensurate with the challenges of contemporary urban life. Even so, these foundations, while instructive, are insufficient. Here, it is important to acknowledge five other associated discourses that can better buttress urban ethics in this book. However, it is important to concede that each of these discourses represents a vast terrain comprising of a multitude of concepts and issues, and just to adequately comment on any one of them has to be the work of a separate book-length project. Therefore, only the most salient contours of each discourse as they relate to the content area of urban ethics will be summarized. The lack of details for each is hopefully compensated by a new perspective on urban ethics gained through the assemblage of these five discourses within a single view. These five discourses are namely: (i) the just city movement; (ii) the urban turn in ethics; (iii) the ethics of the built environment; (iv) environmental design and behavior; and (v) finally, the emerging discourse of the Anthropocene. Each will be briefly explicated in turn, and together, they form the fuller intellectual buttress of urban ethics in this book.

The Just City Movement

The just city movement has been instrumental in drawing a vivid connection between the city, space, and social justice. Observing how growth-centered, neoliberal urban policies in major cities have hardly advanced social equity, Fainstein (2010) argues for the need to refocus equity as an outcome of urban planning. In parallel and drawing from the writings of Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991), Soja (2010) argues that there is a need for those most disadvantaged by the neoliberal urban condition to take greater control over the urbanization process. This ‘right to the city’ then implies the redevelopment of the city in a manner responsive to the needs and desires of its inhabitants—especially the most oppressed or excluded ones in the context of the neoliberal city (Mitchell, 2003). After all, a city that prioritizes exchange values more than use values is likely to consider it advantageous to keep certain groups invisible (Schmelzkopf, 2002, p. 325)—if only because this ‘invisibility’ automatically obviates their public claim on the urban process.

While the proponents of the just city movement have mostly couched their arguments in the language of ‘rights’ rather than ‘ethics’, the normative slant of this discourse is nonetheless obvious. This normative slant is also clearest in the strongest voices on ‘the right to the city’. For instance, Harvey (2010) suggests that urbanization today has become an important tool for stabilizing capitalism and to further capital accumulation. This form of urbanization has unequivocally positioned the interests of investors and developers at the center of public policy rather than the needs of the most vulnerable urban residents (Mayer, 2010). To persist on this course of urbanization is to suppress the possibility for a more democratic, socially just, and sustainable form of urbanization (Brenner, 2012).

For this reason, to establish the just city, the neoliberal city and its corollary urbanization process have to give way. But if this drastic stance is ultimately found to be neither feasible nor desirable, Fainstein (2010, p. 170) remains adamant that incremental changes in urban policies can still effectively transform urban spaces toward greater equity.

Whether one adopts the more drastic stance embodied by the strongest voices on ‘the right to the city’, or Fainstein’s incremental approach, a more equitable distribution of spatial and economic resources has become even more urgent in the wake of rapid neoliberal urbanization today.

The Urban Turn in Ethics: ‘Urban Ethic’, ‘Urban Ethics’, ‘the Ethical City’, and ‘the Ethics of the Urban’

In amplifying this need for the just city, proponents of this discourse have unwittingly anticipated the urban turn in ethics. This urban turn in ethics is significant not only because of the primacy of the city today in defining the human condition for the majority of humanity (Amin, 2006), but also because that this same city could be re-envisioned through design to advance social justice (Mostafavi, 2017). Through this urban turn, ethics has been mobilized from a canonically non-spatial form of study to an action sphere that is profoundly intertwined with activism, design, and the city.

The earliest reference to the phrase, ‘urban ethic’, can be traced back to the work of Eamonn Canniffe (2006). For Canniffe, contemporary urban design has been bifurcated by Neo-Modernist commercialism on the one hand, and on the other hand, by the New Urbanism that imposes restrictions on how people live. Both options are unappealing. While the former has a tendency to commodify urban spaces that is likely to result in urban enclosures, the latter tends to limit freedom through a tight regulation on the design of physical urban form. For these reasons, Canniffe (2006, p. 80) proposes the necessity of an ‘urban ethic’ predicated on four interdependent elements of physical urban design, which are namely, patterns, narratives, monuments, and spaces. On this, urban ethic is defined as, “the common ethos that furnishes the moral grounds for civic values to be embodied in urban form” (Canniffe, 2006, p. 81). He further suggests that this urban form can come to represent the ethics of a society (Canniffe, 2006, p. 4).

But even if urban forms can come to represent the ethics of a society, it does not follow from this argument that these same urban forms, or their designs, can determine ethical behaviors or outcomes in the city. To establish a causation between urban form and urban ethic presupposes strong environmental determinism, which has long been discredited (Lang, 1987). In this way, even if Canniffe's arguments are able to draw that aspirational link between what he argues as good urban forms, and good urban ethic, his arguments are, however, unequal to the task of predicting how good urban forms can determine good urban ethics.

For this reason, more recent approaches have deviated from establishing a causation between physical urban design and urban ethics. Instead, they have focused on the different social, cultural, and political factors that may lead to the formation of urban ethics—a shift that recalls Park's (1952) notion of the moral order. The subsequent three recent approaches could be seen to have built on the momentum of the just city movement to formulate this urban ethics. These approaches are namely: (i) the idea of urban ethics championed by a multidisciplinary research group from the Ludwig-Maximilians University (LMU), Munich; (ii) the idea of the ethical city; and (iii) finally, the notion of the ethics of the urban. Here, each of these approaches will be briefly delineated in turn.

Firstly, a collaborative research group from the LMU initiated a multidisciplinary research project titled, 'Urban Ethics' in 2015 (LMU, n.d.). Observing the global pattern of unprecedented urbanization, and noting how urbanization could lead to the simultaneous erosion of existing moral authority and the heightened probability of conflict, this research project aims to address the primary research question of "what is the good and proper way of living in the 21st century city?". On this, the research project aims to articulate not only models of good and proper conduct of life in various cities and institutions around the world, but importantly, to also understand different notions of 'lived' (or situationally specific) urban ethics, and to define the nature of urban conflicts and their corollary negotiation process. In addressing these aims, the research project is further subdivided into four clusters,

namely: (i) urban ethics and social creativity; (ii) urban ethics and moral economies; (iii) urban ethics and techniques of governing; and finally, (iv) urban ethics and their subjects.

This is a large-scale, international and longitudinal research project still in progress involving at least eight teams, each comprising of a number of researchers focusing on a different city in the world. For this reason, neither the exact definition of urban ethics nor its scope and its research conclusions (or findings) can be determined with any certainty at this point in time. But it is safe to suggest that this research project is building on prior knowledge on the moral order of cities and has clearly inferred the relevance of connecting urban studies and ethics. Furthermore, this project also acknowledges the central role of ethics in the resolution of urban conflicts in contemporary urban governance. If anything else, this global research project has also cemented the legitimacy, relevance, and significance of understanding the ethical dimensions of urbanization today.

Secondly, and citing both the spatial justice movement and the idea of urban ethics from the LMU research project, the idea of “the ethical city” has been advanced to frame a way of urban development that is about doing the right thing for and by urban citizens in the context of urban sustainability (Barrett, Horne, & Fien, 2016). In contrast to the narrower emphasis on justice by the just city movement, the ethical city instead entails a broader concern on a slew of urban challenges such as urgent decarbonization, inequality, and accountability in urban governance. But symmetrical to the just city movement, the ethical city framework also opposes the neoliberal city, and sharing the same premises as the LMU research project, this framework anticipates that urbanization will become a vital force in shaping human well-being in the immediate future. Stated succinctly, the ethical city is an aspirational framework comprising of key indices and standards for cities today to develop into more ‘ethical cities’, and for this reason, it could be seen as an extension of the good city form discourse (e.g., see Talen & Ellis, 2002).

Importantly, the ethical city makes a set of strong claims for ethics as the key formative component of future successful cities. According

to this framework, not only are inequitable, fossil-intensive, and undemocratic cities morally wrong, but cities that fail to build ethical futures, social inclusion, and citizen engagement will become less attractive, less sustainable, and more vulnerable to the negative impacts of shocks and megatrends over time (Barrett et al. 2016). While the clarity of such strong claims in the framework of the ethical city is instructive for steering cities today toward a more ethical path of development, however as a whole, this framework omits the real possibility that urban conflicts often ensue from different versions of the ethical city rather than the vision of a more, or less, ethical city. And that when these different versions of the ethical city inexorably conflict in plural cities today, an ethical compromise has to be forged.

Thirdly, a contemporary discourse centered on the “ethics of the urban” (Mostafavi, 2017) has emerged. This contemporary discourse is anchored by two central insights: firstly, that the political is inseparable from the ethical in the context of the city (Mostafavi, 2017, p. 12), and secondly, that ethics could be mobilized through spatial design to envision urban realities in terms other than its current conditions (Mostafavi, 2017, p. 14). This discourse on ‘the ethics of the urban’ is similar to the LMU research project to the extent that cities are recognized as key sites where new norms and identities are made (see Sassen, 2017, p. 37), which in turn presupposes constant conflict and negotiation. But this discourse is dissimilar to ‘the ethical city’ to the extent that it does not offer any systematic definition of ethics or for that matter, any normative tenets or indices that can be used to evaluate if ethical standards have been attained in the city.

The significance of this contemporary discourse on ‘the ethics of the urban’ is twofold. Firstly, modern political theory has distinguished politics from ethics (Hösle, 2004, p. xv), and following this, thinkers have subsequently defined the political city independently from its ethical underpinnings. But this is exactly what ‘the ethics of the urban’ discourse refutes. Instead, politics and ethics are perceived as inseparable spheres in the context of (urban) design. In doing this, ‘the ethics of the urban’ discourse appears to have revitalized the classical conviction that political philosophy must be based on ethics, and at the same

time, it has also activated the more modern notion that ethical arguments themselves play a political function (see Hösle, 2004, p. xvi). And secondly, ‘the ethics of the urban’ recalls the need to position the agency of design and designers as vital conduits for shaping the urbanization processes, through which a more ethical urban future could be forged (Brenner, 2013b). In sum, ‘the ethics of the urban’ discourse has sparked an unprecedented connection between politics, ethics, and urban planning and design.

The Ethics of the Built Environment

In the background of this urban turn in ethics, a patchy discourse on the ethics of the built environment has been developing from the margins of environmental ethics over the last two decades. Observing that the dominant focus on the natural environment in environmental ethics had largely ignored the urbanized environment where most people now live, an emphasis on the built environment was proposed to correct this bias (Fox, 2000; King, 2000). In making this observation, proponents of this view not only draw attention to the “urban blind spot in environmental ethics” (Light, 2001), but also how, in the context of the environment, the city has merely functioned as the backdrop for moral inquiry rather than as the proper subject of the inquiry itself (Light & Wellman, 2003). While this recognition originally framed the built environment as a neglected sub-domain important for a fuller and more systemic understanding of the natural environment in environmental ethics (see Gunn, 1998), however subsequently, a wholly new field, “the ethics of the built environment” (Fox, 2000, p. 3) emerged. This new field aimed to review and understand ethical issues that are specifically associated with the built environment. Unfortunately, the intellectual momentum for ‘the ethics of the built environment’ did not persist after its debut.

But two recent publications, working in close intellectual proximity to ‘the ethics of the built environment’, are notable for their efforts to outline the ethical issues associated with the built environment. Firstly,

the work of Kirkman (2010) attempts to understand and then specify the ethical dimensions of suburbanization and urban sprawl as metropolitan growth. Kirkman postulates four evaluative categories to understand the ethical dimensions of metropolitan growth, which are namely: (i) well-being; (ii) justice; (iii) sustainability; and (iv) legitimacy. In this way, these evaluative categories form the primary thrust of framing ethics as a form of inquiry into the urban phenomenon rather than as a set of rules for the urban phenomenon (Kirkman, 2010, p. 31). This has the effect of centering the city, or the urban built environment, as the proper subject of moral inquiry itself.

Importantly for urban ethics, Kirkman (2010, p. 25) highlights the category of the “self-defeating” urban projects—projects that create the very conditions or consequences that undermine themselves in the long run. For instance, this is seen in the pursuit of the perfect lawn in an arid climate, or in the speculative building of posh housing blocks that are likely to remain unoccupied. Even so, many of these self-defeating projects are the outcomes of a long and highly constrained line of socio-technological or urban developmental path-dependency. This means that even with a willingness to recognize these self-defeating projects, there will be inertia to change and self-defeating projects are likely to continue to exist. At least in the short term, where would the gardener (or for that matter, manufacturers of all things for the lawn) go when that perfect lawn has been eliminated from suburbia? Or what would the workers and the professionals in the construction industry do when wasteful construction projects cease altogether? In highlighting this notion of the self-defeating project especially in urbanization, Kirkman reveals yet another source of moral perplexities is rooted in the urban condition, where short term interests tend to trump longer term gains.

Secondly, the work of Mugerauer and Manzo (2008, p. 60) has reformulated the ethics of the built environment as a form of “emplaced ethics”. Emplaced ethics suggests a specific type of ethical decision-making by place-based professional practices—such as architecture, landscape architecture, planning, engineering, and construction management—all engaged in the activity of creating and changing places (Mugerauer & Manzo, 2008, pp. xvi–xvii). For this reason, emplaced ethics also

anticipates a unique class of ethical issues and problems that are space or place-centered.

Following this, emplaced ethics recognizes the primacy of place in the ethical decision-making process on the built environment. On this, Mugerauer and Manzo (2008, p. 22) argue that there is a strong connection between physical space and one's identity, and this connection can bias ethical decision-making on place. Because one's identity is tied to some specific place, changes that are perceived as threatening can engender strong sentiments and create complications in negotiating decisions—even ethical ones—on place-making. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, debates raged on whether New Orleans ought to be rebuilt. Against the twin realities of a sinking city and rising sea levels, different arguments invoking the utilitarian ethics of displacing a few for the greater good of many were raised—but these arguments were fiercely opposed by residents who returned, and those who wanted to return but could not do so (Owen, 2012, p. 27). Owen (2012, pp. 28–29) discovered that the allegiance of these residents was hardly to the city (or for that matter, the greater good) but rather, it was to their neighborhood. Consistent to the claims of emplaced ethics, 'place', when conjoined with 'identity', could moderate ethical reasoning on conflicts in the built environment—thereby rendering them quite distinct from other types of non-spatial conflicts encountered in the city.

In sum, if Kirkman's work has introduced the idea that the urban condition can engender specific ethical issues and problems, and where ethical knowledge can be deemed helpful for clarifying and understanding these issues and problems, then Mugerauer and Manzo's work has revealed that ethical decision-making on place-based issues is somewhat unique and may not necessarily conform to the general and abstracted form of moral reasoning offered by moral philosophy (e.g., see Frankena, 1973, pp. 2–3). Taken together, the ethics of the built environment discourse demonstrates that not only are ethical issues and problems engendered by the city unique and worthy of study, but also that they are likely to be characterized by place-based sentiments and interests that are neither well understood nor well charted by current (applied) moral philosophy.

Environmental Design and Human Behavior

In tandem, there has been a tradition of thinking about how physical spaces could be configured to shape human behavior in architecture and urban design. Stated in its strongest form, this is the view of environmental determinism, which has been described as an overestimation of the power of the built environment to shape behavior, otherwise also referred to as the “fallacy of physical determinism” (Gans, 1968). This view has also been long discredited (Lang, 1987). But diametrically stated in its weakest form, this is often expressed as a null hypothesis where the physical environment imposes no impact at all on human behavior—which is anecdotally false, or at least, is empirically questionable when one considers how deliberate and practical gestures of urban design have markedly improved lives—or conversely just as often, inconvenienced everyday life in cities. Unless one is willing to relinquish all meaningful connections between the physical design of the built environment and its possible impacts on human behavior (Taylor & Levine, 2011, pp. 172–173), and unless one is also eager to concede that economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health can be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework (Gillette, 2010, p. 114), then one has to adopt some kind of middle-range positions—or “soft physical determinism” (Taylor & Levine, 2011, p. 172)—between full environmental determinism and the null hypothesis. In adopting any one of these ‘soft physical determinism’ positions, one accepts that the physical environment can *affect* behavior, but it does not *determine* it (Schrijver, 2015, p. 602). Nonetheless, opinions vary on the exact role physical environments play in influencing behavior, especially as they influence behavior toward desirable social ends (Gillette, 2010, p. 160), such as in the case of ‘the ethical city’.

Within this broad range of ‘soft physical determinism’ positions, two specific positions are notable for their contemporary relevance to ethics and urbanism. The first is the New Urbanism movement, and the second can be best described as an emerging recognition on the different connections between human cognition and the physical environment

(see Goldhagen, 2017). While the former is vested to establish a direct and prescriptive relationship between the design of the physical environment and desirable social behavior (Kelbaugh, 2001), the latter is, however, concerned with describing the set of possible relationships between environmental design and human behavior. Each of these positions will be briefly explicated in turn.

Firstly, positions on the New Urbanism started to consolidate in the 1970s and 1980s, but, however, the New Urbanism is not a monolithic movement (Ellis, 2002). Despite different proponents and their variegated positions within this movement, the New Urbanism movement can be underscored by an overall and consistent attempt to improve the physical environment for the purpose of civic and social regeneration through design (Gillette, 2010). Specifically, design principles inspired by the Charter of the New Urbanism are applied to devise better communities and neighborhoods that will improve human—neighborly—relations, which are then anticipated to reinvigorate democracy and to advance social justice (Taylor & Levine, 2011, p. 161). But the New Urbanism movement has also been criticized for facilitating gentrification, displacement, and segregation (see Gillette, 2010, p. 132). For this reason, it is important to distinguish the aspirations of the New Urbanism from its actual consequences (or disappointments). Nonetheless, it is still crucial to register the ambition of the New Urbanism as a framework that tries to rely on physical urban design to attain certain behavioral and social goals.

Secondly, the built environment has been recognized as unique to the extent that it can also shape our choice settings in ways different than all other art forms (Goldhagen, 2017, p. xiv). This perspective is supported by what Thaler and Sunstein (2008) refer to as “choice architecture”—where specific arrangements and affordances of choices, inscribed for instance through urban design, can “nudge” decision-making in certain directions over others. The science behind ‘nudge’ is grounded in the subfield of biases and heuristics in cognitive psychology, and is far too distant for the discussion here. Nevertheless, the research on ‘nudge’ claims that the human brains (or decision-making faculties) are hard-wired to process information in certain ways over others, and people respond to choices not only based on *what* these choices represent, but also on *how* they are presented.

The Emerging Discourse of Design in the Anthropocene

But even the most enthusiastic proponents of shaping civic life through environmental design have discovered that their best intentions often had unintended and undesirable effects (Gillette, 2010, p. 161). For instance, in his account of Salton City in California, land-artist Robert Smithson (1938–1973) considered how the Salton Sea was created from an engineering mistake to reroute the Colorado River. Subsequently, Salton City (i.e., the settlement that formed around the engineering mistake of Salton Sea) was later envisioned as a boom town, which, however, did not happen. Smithson (1973) referred to this as “a kind of domino effect where one mistake begets another mistake”. Today, however, the Salton Sea has become a biodiversity hotspot for many aquatic species and migratory birds, but it is also receding and turning briny—threatened by a combination of long-term drought and water channeled from the Colorado River to the coastal cities (Barringer, 2014). Responding to this threat, different ventures have been initiated to conserve what is left of the Salton Sea.

How these ventures will turn out is anyone’s guess. But in perceiving human design within a domino effect of mistakes begetting mistakes—or more optimistically, as successive design efforts that respond to the unintended and undesirable effects of prior designs—Smithson could be credited with an original insight into the Anthropocene long before this idea became current. Today, design is increasingly harnessed in the creation of *new environments* within already existing artificial environments and systems. In doing this, humanity has evolved from being merely a biological actor to a geological agent—one that is equipped with an agency for creating successive layers of new design, which are rapidly accreting on prior layers of already existing artificial systems. Consequentially in the Anthropocene, the focus has also shifted from the protection of the environment to the *production* of environments (Dalby, 2017, p. 233). And it is through this power of design that the Anthropocene can be properly understood.

Despite that the city is the most complex artificial systems that humanity has designed, and despite that the agglomeration of cities

as urban environments through planetary urbanization has emerged as one incontrovertible source of planetary challenges (for instance, human-induced climate change) (Dalby, 2017, p. 242; West, 2017, p. 214), urban studies, environmental design, and the Anthropocene have largely remained as three disconnected discourses. But at least for now, the Anthropocene can be immediately linked to the urban built environment in two opposing directions. In the first direction, the city is perceived as a plausible source of mitigation—or potentially even the solution by conscious urban design—to counter the worst impacts of climate change (Tonkiss, 2013; West, 2017). In the second direction, the urban built environment is seen as the source of many forms of precarity associated with the Anthropocene—ranging from the Pacific trash vortex comprising of swirling plastic debris that do not go away, which Parikka (2005) refers to as a part of “the Anthrobscene”, to the toxic stew of greenhouse gases and hazardous wastes produced by cities as “toxic urbanism” (Tonkiss, 2013, p. 119).

Both directions call for some kind of urban ethics—although in different ways. The first direction is likely to call for substantive changes in human relations and behavior, where an aspirational way of sustainable life is matched, and catalyzed, by an equally aspiring built environment. Although the obvious temptation is to begin and end with the technological fix in cities, solutions predicated solely on technological systems are precisely what is to be avoided. Instead, the primary focus ought to be on changing human relations and behavior (Purdy, 2015, p. 248), and in the creation of “new standards for shaping, managing and living well in a transformed world” (Purdy, 2015, p. 249). This calls for ethics, and of an urban kind, rather than technologies as a stopgap distraction.

On the other hand, the second direction is likely to require a careful understanding of the unintended and undesirable consequences—tantamount to harm—necessitated by life within the urban built environment. For example, plastics of every kind, (nuclear) power stations, incinerators, landfills, or even the necessary ‘self-defeating projects’ of every kind that support urban life but which also necessitate some form of toxic remainders. Clearly, if difficult and complex ethical quandaries have become an inescapable reality of living in the Anthropocene, then at least this is what ought to be dealt with; the Anthropocene must

never be allowed to degenerate into the worst of ‘the Anthrobscene’, for which mankind has little moral imagination to reckon with in any meaningful way.

Even so, there are genuine doubts on the efficacy of ethics on the ethical quandaries of the Anthropocene. For a start, the “Anthropocene reality” (Purdy, 2015, p. 265) has effectively suspended many implied presuppositions of moral reasoning such as limited time frames, circumscribed spatial boundaries, and linear causality (Schmidt, Brown, & Orr, 2016). Many significant anthropogenic impacts today exceed the timeframe of human mortality and geographical boundaries, and implicate other systems in complex ways. And instability and insecurity have also become the new normal (Evans & Reid, 2014, p. 3). For instance, how should one consider the full range of environmental harms using consequentialist ethics in the Anthropocene, when impacts in one spatial location are likely to concatenate on another location, or even that such harms are likely to be unevenly or unstably revealed across time and space? And even if one is to sidestep this perplexity by turning to deontological ethics, the Anthropocene reality suggests that universal maxims are merely the product of inductive reasoning over a relatively long period of stability, which makes them neither necessarily reliable, nor good, or even morally relevant for the radical uncertainties of the Anthropocene. The “formidable burden” on humanity in the Anthropocene, when mankind has become the principal constitutive force of the planet (Evans & Reid, 2014, p. 4), is only equaled by the unreadiness of ethics for the Anthropocene.

In view of this, does it mean that ethics ought to be relinquished? Or that given the limitation of ethics in the Anthropocene, that moral haphazardness, or even fatalism, ought to be the *modus operandi* in the city? If the preceding discussion on the intellectual contours of urban ethics is any indication, then at least two further points are clear. Firstly, the city is likely to become the crucible of human condition in the Anthropocene—not only in organizing the very (artificial) environment that humanity lives in, but also in structuring intersubjective relations between people in morally significant ways. Secondly, much remains hazy on the novel categories of ethical issues and problems that the city can pose to humanity in the Anthropocene. Until the city is recognized

as a pivotal variable for ethics—urban ethics—in the Anthropocene, and until a number of these ethical issues and problems arising from the urban condition have been systematically clarified, it is unclear to what extent ethical knowledge may be limited, or if ethics is ultimately fruitless and futile before these perplexities of the Anthropocene.

The Terms of Reference in This Book

In this book, the following terms will be used repeatedly, and for this reason, it is important to define them, even if limitedly here.

1. Design: Whenever design is used independently on its own, it follows Simon's (1996, p. 111) general definition of design: Design is devising "courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones". In this way, urban design, architectural design, landscape design, engineering and systems design are merely different fields in the same domain of design, which involves the similar activity of changing the existing into the preferred.
2. Ethics and morality: Ethics is usually defined as the branch of philosophy that studies morals and morality. In this way, urban ethics is the study of issues and problems that have moral significance in the city today. But ethics can be contrasted against morality in the following way: Ethics is concerned with the larger philosophical question concerning how one ought to live, and what a good human life consists in, while morality is about adhering to a set of rules or social norms (Chan, 2018). In this way, ethics is concerned with the larger issues of the ideal human life, for instance, in what constitutes ideal human rights, social justice, or the ideal balance between altruism and self-interest (Bauman, 1993). On the other hand, morality denotes "how human relations should be in virtue of our being human" (Margalit, 2010, p. 2).
3. The city and the urban condition: The city has traditionally been seen as a specific geographical entity (Kip, Bieniok, Dellenbaugh, Muller, & Schwegmann, 2015, p. 16). In urban studies, the city has also been referred to as an emblem of the urban condition,

for example, as seen in how ‘the city’ has been used in either Sandercock’s (2003) or in Tonkiss’s (2013) work. Whenever the term ‘city’ is mentioned, unless it is conjugated in the form of a specific concept (e.g., ‘the global city’), it merely refers to a more specific depiction of the urban condition.

A Summary of the Chapters in This Book

Following this, Chapter 2 describes the emerging condition of precarity in cities. To sustain itself, the contemporary city has to rely on a range of precarious spaces such as industrial plants, (nuclear) power stations, and the sanitized landfills; yet, these spaces also manufacture hazards and risks that can undermine and destabilize the city in significant ways. These hazards and risks are also imposed on certain populations, making their existence now precarious. This chapter illustrates how precarity, and its inherent tension, can lead to intractable moral dilemmas.

Chapter 3 examines the moral implications of propinquity in cities. Propinquity is also an attribute that can be designed. Through environmental design, individuals who are brought close together by propinquity can be regarded as neighbors, while those outside this circle are often marked as strangers. In turn, how neighbors and strangers are often treated differently then suggests the need to further study the ethics of proximity as a key moral impact of propinquity.

Following this, Chapter 4 highlights the ubiquity of conflicts in cities today. The productive meaning of conflicts resides in their resolution, and no city can afford to let conflicts fester without end. Yet, how conflicts are resolved, and by which method or approach, is itself an ethical choice with its corresponding moral consequences. In this chapter, two salient conflict resolution approaches, namely consensus building and the ethical compromise, are discussed.

Chapter 5 is a reflective study on serendipity, and its moral impacts, in cities. Despite the stultifying legacies of modernist planning, cities today nevertheless strive to cultivate the serendipitous in different ways. However, the attempts to engender the serendipitous tend not to deviate far from the instrumental ends of innovation. To

further expand on the basis of serendipity in the city, this chapter discusses serendipity through the following four new perspectives: (i) as an emergent effect of large cities; (ii) as a threatened experience in the Smart City; (iii) as an encounter with ‘more-than-human’ agencies and other living systems in the city; and (iv) as a moral encounter with others.

Chapter 6 revisits a familiar theme in urban studies, which is the condition of fear in cities. Beyond the usual apparatuses of securitization and fear—walls, bollards, interdictory spaces, and the surveillance urbanism—that are making a comeback today, fear now also comprises of a rising fear of the strangers, the fear of radical terrorism, and the fear of the sudden and catastrophic destruction. In turn, these fears tend to lead to new design interventions that then precipitate new ethical issues and other morally significant consequences.

Finally, in Chapter 7, the urban commons is examined as a socio-spatial alternative for organizing production and consumption in cities today. Between the twin lapses characterized by the massive rollback of public and state provisions in neoliberal cities on the one hand, and on the other hand, the rise of their market substitutes reserved only for those who can afford them, the urban commons then offers an appealing alternative. This chapter focuses on understanding the urban commons through the ethical framework that sustains it: How is sharing in the urban commons motivated? And what kind of ethics can motivate the persistence of the urban commons?

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2

Precarity

The Conditions of Precariousness and Precarity in the City

Precariousness, as philosopher Judith Butler (2009) suggests, is a condition shared by all human lives. By definition, life is precarious; life can be extinguished at will or by accident, and its persistence is hardly guaranteed. In contrast, precarity has been understood as a political condition (Butler, 2009, p. 3) and is associated with the shift from the labor rigidities of Fordism to the deregulated and flexible labor of neoliberal capitalism (Hardt & Negri, 2009). Neoliberal economies intensify competition between firms resulting in not only the need for constant labor cost containment, but also in the necessity of a flexible labor force that can swiftly respond to changing market needs. For this reason, precarity is often referred to as the condition of precarious labor: a direct outcome of flexible labor practices common in many neoliberal economies. Specifically, precarity is characterized by unpredictable short-term work, often changing from day to day, where work is both unstable and insecure, and where the worker is deprived of any work-related

benefits and insurance further resulting in conditions of estrangement and vulnerability (Allison, 2013). Standing (2011) refers to individuals engaging in such work as the ‘precariats’, and that the precariats are also rapidly constituting into a distinctive socioeconomic and political class.

While precariousness and precarity are defined differently, they are, however, also intersecting concepts (Butler, 2009, p. 25). How then are precariousness and precarity related to the city? And how might the urban condition engender new precariousness through precarity, or vice versa? The city has long been associated with the precarity of the urban working poor, seen for instance, in Charles Baudelaire’s (1821–1867) work, ‘The Eyes of the Poor’. In this work, Baudelaire describes an alienating encounter between a poor family and a gleaming new café in mid-nineteenth century Paris—a social space that was not only inaccessible to this family, but also was representative of the larger Haussmannization program engineered to drive the working poor away from the city for fear of their revolutionary potential (Hall, 1999). And in another example, Hall (2002, p. 16) describes the precarious living conditions of the working class in late Victorian London rife with destitution and diseases. In these earlier accounts of modern urbanity, the precarious plight of these urban poor is rendered more palpable by their physical environment: always living amid dingy, unsanitary and often criminal conditions, and cast against the backdrop of a growing city that consumed their labor power, but offering little in return.

But contemporary urban precarity is unique in at least three different ways. Firstly, global cities today demand ever more labor in the making and sustaining of urban life—precarious labor that is at once insecure, often part-time and lowly paid (Harvey, 2012, p. xiv). And because of the simultaneous deregulation and the flexible organization of labor in neoliberal economies today, people who could only qualify for precarious work are emerging in ever greater numbers in cities around the world. In one drastic estimate, there are a little over two billion adults who are “counted for nothing” by the capitalist system (Badiou, 2016, p. 36); they are neither workers nor consumers, which consequentially means that they have little access to either the market of products or job opportunities. They are, from the perspective of the market economy and neoliberal cities, literally “non-existent” (Badiou, 2016, p. 37).

Needless to say, the rising ranks of precarious workers are often found among this rapidly growing but ‘expelled’ population in the world.

It is for this same reason that many urban precariats are cut off from accessing many services and amenities in the neoliberal city, where access is primarily predicated on economic means. Ineluctably, this alienation between the precarious workers and their city then translates into a spatial tension, where the city divides more than it is able to unify, and where this division always threatens to erupt violently. This contemporary urban precariousness between the allegorical center and the periphery—the former where the precariats are needed but the latter where they are banished after work (see, e.g., in the *banlieues* of Paris, or beyond the Sixth Ring Road in Daxing, Beijing)—cannot be starker today. In this way, the spatial stratifications in many contemporary cities merely reflect their stark underlying economic inequalities.

Secondly, even if precarity may be initially rooted in insecure labor conditions as this concept appears to imply, it can nonetheless spread swiftly to other areas of life and accentuate general precariousness. For instance, precarity as insecure work spreads to insecurity when paying bills, keeping food on the table, and maintaining one’s dignity (Allison, 2013). There is also evidence that an overriding focus on costs, profits, returns to shareholders, and market share in the workplace, especially acute in the neoliberal economy, can lead to anomie on the part of the workers (Tsahuridu, 2006). In other words, labor, psychological, social, and even moral precarity are hardly distinct spheres. Instead, labor precarity can permeate into everyday life, resulting in other forms of precariousness. In light of this, and despite well-founded questions raised on the widening meanings of precarity beyond the context of the precariats (Millar, 2017), there are still good reasons not to conceive precarity independently of precariousness.

Thirdly, urban precarity today also takes the form of *precarious spaces*. Contemporary urbanism depends on an entire range of hazardous infrastructures that takes up spatial footprint—for instance, airports, petrol kiosks, industrial plants, incinerators, power stations, and many more. Through the operation of these infrastructures, hazardous side effects and noxious by-products are also manufactured. Following this, how these hazardous side effects and noxious by-products are

distributed—or what Tonkiss (2013, p. 114) refers to as the uneven distribution problem of artificial hazards and vulnerability in the city—often pose as an acute source of precarity. On this point, urban planning is unable to obviate this precarity entirely. Instead, it is only able to shift this precarity, and its implied risks, in the city such that certain areas are made more precarious relative to others by planning. This means that certain urban populations relative to others are also subjected to a greater precariousness of these risks. Because there is always this possibility, precarious spaces have a tendency to produce *precarious subjects*—people who live or work in proximity to these precarious spaces, and who are also subjected and susceptible to the risks and hazards imposed by these spaces.

In anticipating these attributes of urban precarity, it is important here to restate the relations between precarious spaces and precarious subjects. On the one hand, precarious spaces are places characterized by an uneasy sense of precariousness. In maintaining the urban built environment today, a range of critical infrastructures such as (nuclear) power stations, industrial plants, incinerator plants, and hazardous waste storage are required. These critical infrastructures, and the spaces around them, are neither immediately hazardous, nor are they categorically, always safe. Their reliable performance depends not only on a constant and relentless process of reviews and checks, but also on some elements of luck. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power disaster stands as a stark reminder of what could happen in an unimaginable convergence of risky technologies and extreme natural disasters. Because of this disaster, the unimaginable, as Ignatieff (2017, p. 148) suggests, now remains permanently on the human horizon. For these reasons, these critical infrastructures maintain a status that is best described as precarious (see also Graham & Marvin, 2001, p. 182). On the other hand, precarious subjects represent the far larger group, beyond the precarious workers, living uncertain lives in proximity to these precarious spaces; where furthermore, their uncertain lives are under constant threat and exposure to vulnerability because of these precarious spaces. In turn, precarious subjects may respond to these precarious spaces with unpredictable agencies, which can lead to new risks and hazards. In sum, it is possible to consider how the city in the Anthropocene, by sustaining itself,

has unwittingly manufactured both precarious spaces and precarious subjects—as well as the uncertainty of their interactions.

Further Relations Between Precarious Spaces and Precarious Subjects

The hypothetical relations between precarious spaces and precarious subjects are further established through the following three known realities. Firstly, there is a strong correlation between where precarious subjects live, and their proximity to precarious spaces such as the hazardous industrial plants (Morehouse, 1993), flood-prone land (Owen, 2012), or fire-prone slums (Murray, 2009). For example, the Bhopal pesticide plant gas leak in India was one of the gravest industrial disasters ever recorded, and this accident killed thousands who had little choice but to live near to this industrial plant because of their socioeconomic status (Morehouse, 1993, p. 483). Similarly, the calamitous flooding in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina impacted the poor and the marginalized most, who were living in high risk, flood-prone zones (Owen, 2012, p. 32). On this, there is a correlation between depressed land values and their proximity to hazardous facility siting (Taylor, 2014), and that precarious workers tend to live in cheap areas that still maintain some accessibility to job opportunities (Jordan, DeVerteuil, Kandt, Manley, & Wu, 2016). And even if these precarious workers did not choose to live near industrial plants, hazardous landfills, or power stations, these precarious spaces have a known record of being sited near to—foisted on—poorer communities (Taylor, 2014). While the causal direction is not always clear if precarious subjects are formed because of these precarious spaces, or if precarious spaces came to be because of a large population of precarious workers nearby, it is nonetheless clear that there is often a close affinity between precarious spaces and the precarious subjects.

Secondly, but at another scale, existing spaces or places can be made precarious through the process of “expulsion”, which in turn creates new precarious subjects (Sassen, 2014). For instance, the massive land grabs by global corporations from small farmland holders to grow

biofuel monocultures have been observed to push farmers out of the countryside into the urban slums. In tandem, the degeneration of the biosphere by irreversible mining activities has polluted and destroyed the environment causing the expulsion of vital fauna and flora. Together, these expulsions forced once independent people into penury, increased rural poverty and hunger, which subsequently pushed them into cities to find work, and where they tend to end up as precarious subjects living in slums (Sassen, 2014, p. 81). While these expulsions are one among many hypotheses to explain the general trend of rural to urban migration, they are nonetheless revealing of a significant connection between the creation of precarious spaces and the production of precarious subjects.

Thirdly, in Murray's (2009) study on the informal settlements on the peri-urban fringe of Johannesburg, he details how precarious spaces and precarious subjects could further collide to create new artificial hazards. At one level, these informal settlements tend to grow at a speed that outpaces the capacities of municipal authorities to provide even the most rudimentary services such as electricity, sewerage, waste collection, and paved roads (Murray, 2009, p. 175). To address the basic needs of shelter and sustenance, precarious subjects have to build their haphazardly constructed dwellings with scavenged materials and also rely on the surrounding environment to provide them with fuel, water, and waste disposal needs. In any steadily expanding informal settlement, these activities rapidly degrade the surrounding environment. And when taken as a whole, this informal settlement and its surrounding environment can be considered as a form of precarious spaces. At another level, everyday practices amid a makeshift environment made of flammable materials—such as cooking, lighting a kerosene lamp, or using a fire pit for warmth in colder months—can easily turn into raging firestorms and other fire-related catastrophes in a built environment that makes proper evacuation and fire-fighting challenging, if not impossible (Murray, 2009). The precarity observed at these two different levels, amid a systemic inadequacy of basic municipal services, then converges into the possibility of a new artificial hazard: the catastrophic firestorm. Unlike the first two realities, this reality suggests that

precarious spaces and precarious subjects can interact to produce wholly new artificial hazards.

In their different renditions, all three realities point toward an unsettling relationship between precarious spaces and precarious subjects that characterizes the *urban precarious system* found in many cities today—especially in what Saunders (2010) refers to as ‘arrival cities’: cities that are growing rapidly from an unprecedented rural to urban migration, and are characterized by uncontrolled growth that frequently exceeds the grasp of systemic planning. Because this unsettling relationship tends to imply harm, which further suggests prevention and responsibility, the further specification of this relationship ought to form one key area of urban ethics. Before specifying these unsettling relationships between precarious spaces and precarious subjects, it is important to first define the idea of the precarious subjects.

The Precariat, or the Precarious Subject?

In the preceding discussion, the precarious subject has been mostly defined in relation to precarious spaces. Here, it is important to delineate a more independent definition of the precarious subject. Who then, or what, constitutes the precarious subject? Going by the existing literature, the spotlight tends to focus on the precariat. Originally used by French sociologists in the 1980s to describe temporary or seasonal workers (Standing, 2011, p. 9), the precariat today is, however, defined as a worker who engages in insecure and temporal work, which is unpredictable, unstable, and furthermore has little or no future prospect for career development and advancement. For the precariat, engaging in this form of work tends to result in income insecurity and the deprivation of a work-based identity (Standing, 2011), and this has been documented to lead to stress-related ailments and psychosis (Allison, 2013).

But the concept of ‘the precariat’ also omits as much as it reveals. For example, consider the migrant workers toiling in the many construction sites of Qatar under often extremely harsh conditions for long hours with little pay—where it is also not uncommon for such toil to lead

to death (Renkiewicz, 2016, p. 724). In this case, these migrant workers can be considered as precarious subjects even though these migrant workers are rarely, if ever, referred to as the precariats. Or consider from the other end of the scale: architects. Architects engage in professional work characterized more by the immaterial production of creative design rather than manual labor. Yet according to Deamer (2016, p. 37), she argues that this kind of immaterial work is characterized by “precarity, long working hours, causality, tolerance of inequality” and furthermore has “no bargaining power, no unions, no control of schedule, no recourse upon being fired, no paid overtime”. In describing architectural production this way, architects have come to resemble the precariats in many ways but again, an architect is rarely referred to as a precariat.

Nevertheless, in this emerging topic of precarity, it is still necessary to rely on the existing literature on the precariat to sketch out the general psychological profile of the precarious subject. Standing (2011, p. 19) suggests that beyond experiencing the commonality of insecure work, the process of precariatization also impacts the psychology of the precariat resulting in anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation. To cope with these emotions, the precariat is often mentally stressed, and may fall into “a corrosive zone of deception and illusion” (Standing, 2011, p. 21). This is corroborated by the chilling account of how a young, single mother, who apparently could no longer deal with the stress of her precarious existence, left her two young children to die a slow death home alone from hunger and thirst (Allison, 2013, p. 41). While it is important not to take this extreme case as the general profile of the precarious subject, it is, however, critical to reflect on how quickly labor precarity can lead to risk-taking behavior and corrode responsibility in other areas of life.

Furthermore, the psychological loneliness, tantamount to forlornness, experienced by the precariats, has also been documented in the “gig economy” (Heller, 2017). In the gig economy, ‘giggers’—independent workers—earn a living based on their own schedules through highly autonomous, flexible, on-demand but insecure work, and who rarely interact with anyone but their paying customers. Unlike the corporatized system of discipline and control used to regulate an employee’s behavior and performance, ‘giggers’ in this gig economy—for example,

running errands and doing chores for paying ‘customers’, or chauffeur-ing them around—are instead monitored by a rigorous but often capricious system of social feedback scores available on digital platforms and visible to anyone seeking their services.

And to draw a sharper contrast between an employee with secure employment and this ‘gigger’, an honest mistake made by the former with little negative impact is unlikely to result in being fired; there are, after all, human resource protocols and transaction costs involved in replacing any employee. But a similar mistake made by the latter in the less regulated work-sphere comprising of a ‘gigger’ and his paying customers will result in a more ambiguous outcome. This mistake will likely result in a permanently listed negative feedback even if the ‘gigger’ is to be retained for the consideration of future service. But against a constantly growing pool of other independent workers pleading for the same kind of work, which paying customer is likely to select a ‘gigger’ with a negative feedback score? This ‘gigger’ might be retained on the gig economy’s digital platform, but he is likely also to experience a permanent ‘expulsion’ from serious consideration by any prospective customer. This ambiguity begins to describe the existential precariousness of these independent workers in the gig economy. In waiting for work that may never materialize, this ‘gigger’ approaches the status of the precariat.

This constant stream of threatening forlornness, stigmatization, and uncertainty found in the gig economy recalls Gorz’s (2012) anticipation of “the new servants” class in advanced capitalism. According to Gorz, increasing productivity as a result of technological innovation is likely to result in a decreasing amount of labor, which in turn would translate into fewer job openings, all things equal. In tandem, the convergence of automation, economic restructuring, and skill obsolescence in the rapidly changing and incessantly competitive neoliberal economy has made a large number of workers redundant. Because unemployment has many negative social and political ramifications, it is necessary to create a large number of jobs that could absorb this redundant surplus workforce.

To fulfill the need for this large number of jobs, Gorz thinks that these jobs could only take the form of rendering personal services—or

turning what was once done by the individual into paid errands or chores now performed by someone else, which then constitutes this new servants class. For example, assembling new shelves, painting the wall or cleaning the apartment (Heller, 2017), or any of the mind-numbing tasks performed for pittance on Internet platforms such as Amazon's Mechanical Turks (Semuels, 2018)—chores that hardly require specialized skills and were once done by any physically robust individual—are now turned into paid tasks in the gig economy. As a result, the one who pays is also claiming the privilege of unloading one's chores on to someone else, whose vocation is now to serve (Gorz, 2012, p. 49). In turn, this reality cements a dual-track society, tantamount to a return of feudalism, which on the one hand, comprises of the elites who are able to pay for the services of those who render them, and on the other hand, is made up of a multitude of 'servants' whose outlook has become ominously precarious and whose first available work-option is to serve.

These changes to contemporary work in the neoliberal economy, and their discontent, suggest not only fluidity in the bounding conditions of the precariats, but also that the range of plausible precarious subjects far exceeds any singular definition of the precariats. In other words, the exact label—whether it is the precariat, the 'gigging' independent worker, or the new servant—matters far less than the reality that all belong to an emerging category of the precarious subjects in many contemporary developed economies. For instance, many workers who participate in the gig economy are indeed 'gigging' by choice; in contrast, the precariat status is usually involuntary and is often characterized by the poignance of once having enjoyed a stable and secure employment especially in the context of developed economies. Yet it would be a stretch to suggest that those 'gigging' do not share overlapping conditions of vulnerability and insecurity that are experienced by the precariats. Similarly, a precariat does not, categorically, always 'serve'; instead, the precariat usually accepts whatever temporary job that comes along. Yet Gorz's 'new servants' share greater conditional similarities than categorical differences with the precariats.

This brief delineation on the precarious subjects establishes two important perspectives. Firstly, while all precariats are persons living in precarity, not all persons living in precarity—precarious

subjects—belong to the socioeconomic class of the precariats. In other words, and as aforementioned, the category of precarious subjects may be broader than the precariats, and ought to also include persons experiencing different forms of precariousness beyond insecure labor conditions. One of these forms of precariousness, for example, and as discussed, is experienced by people living in proximity to precarious spaces.

Secondly, none of the representative precarious subjects described—whether it is the precariat, the ‘gigging’ independent worker, or the new servant—has yet to be examined in relation to space. This is a significant omission. After all, to sustain a livelihood, many of these precarious subjects have to assemble a varying work-scope comprising of different ‘work-projects’ found in different workplaces on a daily basis. The spatial proximity between all these different workplaces, or their close geographical distances, ought to be a key factor influencing the economic preference and feasibility of such work. Future work on the precarious subjects, especially from the perspective of urban ‘gigging’ work, may find integration with spatial studies relevant.

The General Attributes of Precarious Spaces

Here, it is important to acknowledge that precarity is often a subjective concept. Consider the precariats first. Businesses and corporations that deliberately go out of their way to hire the precariats are not likely to consider them as precarious subjects. Instead and quite demeaningly, the precariats are precisely targeted by corporations because not only are they flexible, but also that they are cheap to hire and fire as corporate directives dictate. Conversely, the family members of these precariats, or the various state and social entities created to support them, are very likely to perceive the gravity of their precarious status. Similarly, now consider precarious spaces. Power stations, industrial plants, and hazardous waste storage are for many municipal agencies, merely infrastructures used to sustain the manifold needs of any contemporary city. And for many other organizations, these are just facilities: physical assets that are developed and built by international contractors, and that can also

be bought and sold with little consideration to place and environmental concerns. But residents staying near to these facilities are not likely to share either perspective. In contradistinction, these nearby residents are likely to think of them imbued with some attributes of precarious spaces.

While it is true that the status of precarious spaces is often controversial because of these subjective judgments, not every attribute of such precarious spaces are open to either debate or controversy. In other words, there are certain unequivocal attributes of precarious spaces that can be ignored or even willfully suppressed, but they cannot be rendered more equivocal by either subjective judgments or arguments. There are at least three such attributes that define precarious spaces.

Firstly, precarious spaces are often associated with industrial facilities, or else critical infrastructures such as power plants, incineration plants, or hazardous waste storage facilities. While these precarious spaces are mostly safe and highly reliable facilities, they can nonetheless contaminate soil, waterways, and air in the event of an accident or negligence. And peripheral processes of such precarious spaces—for instance, the transportation of materials, chemicals and by-products to and from these facilities—can also taint the fauna and flora that nearby people depend on for their livelihoods. In this sense, many of such precarious spaces ought to be considered as tightly coupled complex systems that are never free from the chance of a serious accident (Perrow, 1984). And in the event of an accident, even a small runaway effect can quickly concatenate or escalate into more severe impacts on the surrounding environment and communities.

Because these facilities are also vital to the functioning of contemporary cities in important ways, implementing the deontic logic of ‘prevention by avoidance’ (i.e., preventing every possible accident by completely avoiding the prospect of bringing these facilities into existence) on all these facilities is impossible. Instead, municipal authorities tend to rely on a probabilistic approach (Basta, 2014), that first concedes to the necessity for these industrial facilities and subsequently, to distinguish between risks that are probable but not acceptable, and risks that are probable but acceptable. In doing this, these industrial facilities

as precarious spaces have also surfaced the ethical issue of condoning unintentional, but foreseeable and probabilistic harm.

Secondly, precarious spaces always leave a taint, or “relict waste” (Taylor, 2014, p. 93), that can go undetected for a long time even after such facilities have been either removed from the site or formally decommissioned. This toxic burden of relict waste is hardly confined to only afflicting the physical environment or the physiology of nearby residents, but also continue to impinge on the less tangible dimensions such as the psychology of residents, and also the perceptual or reputational image of the place. And even if some kind of environmental ‘clean-up’ and rehabilitation would to occur, this further raises the environmental justice issue that a not insignificant amount of contaminated matter (e.g., contaminated soil) has to be removed from the original sites of these precarious spaces, and then transported and imposed on other communities elsewhere.

In light of this, relict waste can be further considered matter that is nearly irreducible (i.e., no foreseeable technology exists to decontaminate this waste without creating even more contaminated residue in the process) and also irreparable (i.e., the problem can never be fully resolved by either further treatment or re-situating this waste). After all, where can one move a part of the Earth that has been turned into materials characterized by the condition of *irreducible irreparability* without burdening someone else? Truly, the creation and the subsequent disposal of these irreducible and irreparable wastes such as toxic chemical by-products, dioxins, and various radioactive wastes from the totality of industrial processes is a novel problem for urban ethics. And even if this unwanted waste is to languish on a field somewhere or sealed in a cavern in the hope that this would unencumber communities elsewhere—consider the contaminated materials from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power disaster in Japan, or the many Superfund sites and the standing nuclear waste in the USA—it still does not do away with the ethical problem of intergenerational justice. By bringing this permanently unwanted waste into existence in this generation, future generations have now been unfairly burdened with this waste. This issue of intergenerational justice becomes even more perplexing when

the problem of informing distant future generations on the location of hazardous nuclear wastes has yet to be adequately solved (Nolin, 1993).

Thirdly, while large-scale industrial plants or critical infrastructures tend to dominate the most representative mental models of precarious spaces, hazardous substances also emanate from many small neighborhood operations such as dry cleaners, gas stations, automobile repair shops, metal plating businesses, and small manufacturers among many others (Taylor, 2014, p. 93). The toxicity of imperceptible noxious gases and micro-plastics in water have been rendered ubiquitous in this 'world as design' by the proliferation of artificial and durable chemicals in nearly all aspects of modern urban life—a phenomenon that rightly recalls what Parikka (2015) refers to as “the Anthroscene”: a toxic materiality that pervades the present and persists into the far future. While the ubiquity of such precarious spaces is not meant to be alarmist in nature, and while there are different degrees of severity in precarious spaces, this is, however, a reminder that precarious spaces as a category is rarely distant from any one person in the city.

The Spatio-Ethical Dimensions of Precarity Observed in Siting Controversies

What then are the ethical issues that can emerge from urban precarious systems? One salient area of ongoing ethical concern, found within the triangulation of precarious spaces, precarious subjects, and the city, is the siting of hazardous or noxious facilities in close proximity to communities. If the preceding discussion is any indication, these are also communities with residents who are likely to be already stressed by some form of economic or labor precarity. In highlighting this dimension of precarity in the siting of hazardous facilities as precarious spaces, what are the new ethical issues that siting decisions can bring about?

While the most salient cases of siting hazardous facilities are generally associated with industrial siting—for instance, siting industrial and chemical plants, power stations, incinerator plants, and hazardous waste storage facilities—however, prisons, homes for special needs,

and various types of treatment and rehabilitation centers have also been considered as facilities unwanted by communities (Easterling & Kunreuther, 1995). Because these facilities are perceived to be undesirable or risky, communities would often mobilize to resist them. This is one reason why siting controversies have come to be closely associated with NIMBY (Not-in-my-Backyard) issues and the ethics of resolving these issues. But here, in recognizing the realities of urban precarity, another wholly different set of ethical issues beyond the NIMBY phenomenon may be present.

Consider this: many of these ‘unwanted’ facilities nonetheless provide critical services to the metropolitan area, which in turn make them necessary, rather than provisional, for the city as a whole. However, while the public good and benefits offered by these facilities are distributed across a larger area and population, their perceived hazards and risks are spatially concentrated on a much smaller population living in the vicinity of these facilities (Hermansson, 2007, p. 25)—or what Pucci (2015, p. 238) refers to as “distributive asymmetry”. This tension between the ‘unwanted’ hazardous facilities that nobody wants, but offer products or services that everybody needs—yet have hazards and risks that are concentrated on populations living close to them—then begins to describe the complex ethical conflict raised by these precarious spaces.

Furthermore, this ethical conflict is also situated within a context constituted by a strong correlation between precarious spaces and precarious subjects. While the existing literature on siting controversies appears to acknowledge the vulnerabilities of people living near to newly developed hazardous facilities (e.g., residents who have little choice but to live and work near to a hazardous facility), and furthermore suggests a set of different obligations such as communicating information on risks, or compensating them for accepting new risks as residual duties (Peterson & Hansson, 2004), this literature as a whole has yet to acknowledge the possible and unique status of these nearby residents as precarious subjects. As discussed earlier, there is a correlation between the already precarious (i.e., the precarious subjects) and their proximity to precarious spaces. And unlike other urban residents, precarious subjects are likely to maintain a different moral status by virtue of their precarity: because they are either more vulnerable to the

negative impacts of various harms, or else have little option to move away from these impacts.

For this reason, these precarious subjects may be due additional moral obligations that have yet to be specified by the different ethical commentaries on NIMBYism of controversial siting as a whole. For instance, their capabilities for work and livelihood could be permanently compromised in the unlikely event of an accident occurring in these precarious spaces—a permanent disability on top of their distressed state that no compensation could hope to amend. In light of their more vulnerable status, these risks and threats imposed by precarious spaces on precarious subjects may be doubly, and hence even more inequitably, amplified.

The Novel Moral Dimensions of Precarity in Siting Controversies

Despite these novel ethical dimensions of precarity, the existing literature remains fixated on the NIMBY issues of hazardous facilities siting. Attention has mostly been focused on figuring out a legitimate, fair or just process for siting a hazardous facility (Basta, 2014, p. 45). But just as important, siting a hazardous facility in close spatial proximity to precarious subjects raises the ethical dimensions of precarity that have so far been underdeveloped by the existing literature, and deserve to be delineated in greater details here. There are at least three key moral dimensions of precarity.

Firstly, and as discussed, existing studies on siting controversies tend to focus on NIMBY issues, which presuppose a political capacity to mobilize. And barring any failure to address this NIMBY mobilization against hazardous facilities, it is possible, through the various institutions of reparation or restitution commonly found in the so-called global north, to placate precarious subjects who have little choice but to remain where they are. But there is another form of manufactured precarity that is beyond the reach of placation, or even generous compensation. This is where precarity is ontological: where precarity becomes

an integral aspect of an individual's identity in some permanent form, and stays with this individual wherever he or she goes. In the case of the Bhopal accident, victims had to carry the stigmas of their precarity visibly in the form of a physiologically unfit body for labor, or else in other forms of medical complications (Morehouse, 1993), even after the clean-up of the precarious spaces. Where there can neither be sufficient compensation, nor adequate communication to be issued as due obligation, then what kind of ethics can address this new moral dimension of manufactured precarity?

Secondly, various studies have converged on the issue of spatial justice: just how fair, or just, is the hazardous facility siting when its public good and benefits are spread over a larger population at the metropolitan scale, while its costs and risks are concentrated on the much smaller population living in the vicinity of the sited facility (Hermansson, 2007, p. 25)? If this spatial justice is measured using a utilitarian calculus, then the public good and benefits generated by the hazardous facility are likely to outweigh its costs and risks. This is because the aggregated utilities from the far larger population enjoying these benefits are likely to outweigh the smaller aggregated utilities experienced by a far smaller population saddled with its costs. Furthermore, any consistent utilitarian approach that maximizes benefits over costs is likely to seek out an area where land valuation is much lower and where compensation to the local community, if any, is also correspondingly lower. In turn, and as explained, this area is likely to be already occupied by the economically disadvantaged who may be willing to accept larger risks for lesser compensation (see Hermansson, 2007, p. 32). The presuppositions of this utilitarian approach to justice already hint at exploitation in practice.

But even if spatial justice is evaluated based on various deontological principles, the prospects are rarely more encouraging. Indeed, an individual has a moral (and legal) right not to be unfairly exposed to risks (Basta, 2014, p. 53; Hermansson, 2007, p. 31), and this can be stipulated as one key deontological principle for spatial justice in siting controversies. In other words, if there is any chance that the hazardous facility could unfairly impose risks on anyone in the area, it should

simply not be built in that area. But as Basta (2014, p. 53) correctly suggests, this deontological approach may be morally lofty, but it can impose many other practical costs. For instance, moving this hazardous facility elsewhere may entail abandoning many fundamental societal benefits such as jobs, and goods and services that accompany the facility to this vicinity (Basta, 2014, p. 54). But if one is to assume that these precarious subjects are already lacking many basic amenities and services, and would benefit from any provision that they can get, then depriving them of the practical benefits that such a facility might bring is likely to further exacerbate their precarity. For this reason, while this deontological approach may be right, it does have a markedly unequal impact on a group that is already distressed and struggling with precarity.

Thirdly, and following from the previous point, it appears that there is no single ‘best’ solution to solving the ethical problem of hazardous facility siting. If one elects to favor the utilitarian approach, one has to presuppose some level of economic exploitation and probabilistic risk on the loss of lives; one may even have to accept some degree of unfairly exposing others to new risks and vulnerabilities. But if one elects to favor the deontological approach, then one also has to accept the many practical costs of such an approach, and furthermore, there is always the likelihood that different principles of justice, maintained by different individuals within the community, will conflict—and some degree of “essential injustice” (Davy, 1996) will have to be expected as well. In projecting these possibilities, siting a hazardous facility in close proximity to precarious subjects in space comes close to a genuine moral dilemma, where there is a set of conflicting moral demands, but where fulfilling either one of these moral demands does not eliminate the moral requirement of that demand that has been overridden (Tessman, 2017). In other words, the siting of hazardous facilities as precarious spaces is likely to leave a “moral residue” (Railton, 1996, p. 153), or “regret” (Williams, 1999, p. 74), because whichever ethical choice one favors—and for sound reasons—one is unlikely to do all that is morally required.

In understanding the siting problem of hazardous facilities in the context of urban precarity this way, the problem then comes close to

presenting a ‘tragic’ reality in the city of the Anthropocene. As Frost (2003, p. 482) suggests, at the heart of all tragedy is an ethical struggle. In this case, the ethical struggle is between the practical benefits that would accompany many of these hazardous facilities, and the moral recognition that these facilities are precarious spaces that can pose new hazards and vulnerabilities to residents already living precarious lives. And because many of these residents *need* the employment and other beneficial opportunities that accompany these precarious spaces, this reality has compounded the perplexities underlying the ethical struggle. If the precarious subjects eschew these facilities, then they also abandon the practical benefits that may alleviate their precarious status; but if they embrace these facilities and their practical benefits, then they also have to abandon the assurance of safety in the event of a hazardous accident—and perhaps, an assurance of safety that they absolutely need. In any case, something morally important is inevitably lost in either choice. The eventual choice is tragic to the extent that it involves two moral obligations (i.e., betterment by alleviation, and the assurance of safety, respectively) that are impossible to meet simultaneously.

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3

Propinquity

Propinquity in the City: Relational, Spatial, and Situational Urban Propinquity

Over the course of the last century, cities were mostly planned around the separation and formalization of different aspects of life, for instance, by deliberately creating distances between work, home, leisure, shopping, and recreation (Ellin, 1997, p. 21). But today, urban planning is instead committed to the opposite tack of trying to unify these separated spheres by bringing people together in meaningful ways (Gillette, 2010). Despite a general trend of decreasing built-up densities in the world today (UN-Habitat, 2016, p. 129), a relentless drive toward compaction and densification is creating new spatial proximities between people pursuing different lives, vocations, and activities in cities.

In tandem, ubiquitous communication technologies and social media platforms, which connect many different facets of urban life, are creating new forms of proximities. It has become possible for people who are further apart to be more closely connected via Twitter and WhatsApp than people who are nearer to each other. Together, this phenomenon of the city as a dense agglomeration of diverse people, ideas, and

opportunities—a closely packed “mongrel” crossroad characterized by the attributes of heterogeneity, multiplicity, and otherness (Sandercock, 2003, p. 1)—attracts a large number of people moving from city to city, and from countryside into cities: setting into perpetual motion an unprecedented flow of people constantly in search of better working conditions and life. In this, the contemporary city has also become the *de facto* site of many new propinquities.

Clearly, propinquity matters: not only does propinquity present new pressures and opportunities for encounters and interactions between strangers, but it can also establish the ethical prospect of neighborliness (Painter, 2012). If the central ethical problem of any global city today is how to generate collaboration among strangers who share little in common (Ignatieff, 2014), but if these strangers at least share propinquity, then this begs the questions if propinquity forms the starting point of an urban ethic that can lead to collaboration? If so, how then does one begin to frame propinquity through ethics? In a milieu where urban insecurity is rife—and not least because of an unprecedented influx of new strangers into cities—the moral appeal, if there is one, between a state of propinquity with neighborliness and one without neighborliness, appears clear.

According to Reis (2007), propinquity first refers to the proximity of *physical distance*, or physical closeness, between people; this is also the typical meaning of propinquity. But propinquity can also be defined in terms of *functional distance*, which is the likelihood of coming into contact with another person (Reis, 2007). Cities excel in simultaneously reducing both physical and functional distances. In terms of the former, compaction, densification, and mixed-use urban design, all facilitated by the different modes of urban mobility available today (e.g., bike-sharing), have greatly reduced physical distances between people in the city. And in terms of the latter, people are already meeting in urban places—for instance, the marketplace (or the commercial belt), the coffee shop, or the recreation park and playground—in the course of their everyday life, where functional distances are naturally diminished.

But because neither physical nor functional distance can specify the different types of propinquity that can occur in the city, it is important to further distinguish between relational, spatial, and

temporal (or situational) propinquity (see Nortvedt & Nordhaug, 2008, p. 157). First and foremost, relational propinquity suggests close relations—family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues, who may claim a special priority in our relationships. Clearly, relational propinquity is neither dependent on spatial propinquity, nor on situational propinquity, even though certain classes of relational propinquity—especially between nearby neighbors, or colleagues who are collaborating on a shared idea—may emerge after a while because of persistent spatial propinquity. In the context of the city, the relational propinquity of closely knitted neighbors deserves special attention, only if because the formation of these neighborly relations is likely facilitated at least in part by the design of the built environment, which can moderate spatial propinquity. Change this design slightly, and these neighbors might either encounter each other differently, or may never get to meet at all.

On the other hand, spatial propinquity suggests close physical distance. While close physical distance describes the state of spatial proximity, it can also be an outcome of relational propinquity. This possible correlation between spatial and relational propinquity however does not yield to any predetermined order of priority: that is, does spatial propinquity lead to relational propinquity, or is it the other way? In all likelihood, the relationship between spatial propinquity and relational propinquity is likely to be bidirectional in cities. Nevertheless, and independently on its own, spatial propinquity says nothing substantive of any form of relational propinquity. For example, the person who lives in the adjacent apartment is typically called a neighbor. But neighborliness, which is a robust sign of relational propinquity, does not necessarily follow from being just neighbors—even though spatial propinquity, as discussed earlier, is surely an important factor for establishing relational propinquity in this example.

The city also renders spatial propinquity salient in another way. The design of the built environment has been observed to play a pivotal role in modifying the *quality* of functional distance between neighbors, which in turn could impact the formation of social groups and their social capital (Halpern, 2005, pp. 264–265). In an early comparative study between two student accommodations—one characterized by a double-loaded corridor-type with bedrooms on either side, while the

other was a suite-style design with bedrooms organized into a cluster of three sharing a common lounge and bathroom—students from the corridor-type of accommodation were found to be exposed to many social encounters that were unpredictable, uncontrollable, and unwanted (Baum & Valins, 1977, p. 28). In contrast, students from the suite-style accommodation experienced interactions that were controlled, which facilitated the development of more comfortable and effective encounters that in turn built social capital.

In light of these findings, the design of the urban built environment is expected to not only moderate, but also mediate, spatial propinquity in important ways. At times, this spatial propinquity is unstructured—for instance, when one is amidst the closeness of packed bodies on an extremely crowded commuter train during peak hours. But when structured, such spatial propinquity regularizes encounters that also engender certain people as neighbors while marking others out as strangers, and where the preconditions of a better or worse neighborly relation are established. This is not to overstate the role of the physical environment in determining behavior. Instead, this is about how the physical environment can come to play a fairly significant role in affecting behavior (Schrijver, 2015), and specifically in this case, how it is also able to demarcate a neighbor from strangers through spatial propinquity. Returning to the study by Baum and Valins (1977) again, it is likely that in the corridor-type student accommodation, neighbors were not so easily distinguishable from strangers. But in contrast, the suite-style type of student accommodation ensured that only a close group of roommates would get to encounter each other in the common areas, and this arrangement made neighbors more distinguishable from strangers. The differences then impacted how neighborly relations were formed—or not—in these two different spatial environments.

Finally, and in contrast to the preceding two types of propinquity, situational propinquity suggests the state of closeness between people either through chanced encounters, or events in the city. In this sense, situational propinquity is simultaneously the manifestation, and also the outcome of reduced functional distances within the city. Especially effective as a way of explaining the *unexpected propinquity that occurs during urban events* against a presumably more *predictable form*

of propinquity structured by urban space configurations, the situational dimension of propinquity comes close to the serendipitous, which will be further elucidated in Chapter 5.

Why Is Propinquity Morally Significant? Propinquity and Its Effects on Human Relations

In understanding urban propinquity in this threefold way, it is possible to further derive how these different forms of urban propinquity can interact to produce new propinquities. For example, Reis (2007) suggests that physical proximity tends to increase the frequency of encounters, which can create further opportunities for the likelihood of interaction. In other words, spatial propinquity can further foster possibilities for relational propinquity—for instance, when neighbors interact regularly, which can lead to neighborly relations between them. Conversely, situational propinquity—for instance, in the chanced meeting of a prospective roommate during a social event—can also lead to spatial or relational propinquity. These possibilities demonstrate that not only does propinquity matter, but that it also presents special opportunities and pressures for new encounters and interactions (Painter, 2012). In turn, these form the openings to new ethical relationships in the city. After all, philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) suggests that it is the encounter with the Other as neighbor that gives rise to the possibility of ethics (Painter, 2012, p. 528).

Furthermore, spatial propinquity in the form of close physical distances can lead to the formation of the “proximity effect” (see Goodfriend, 2009), which suggests a positive correlation between physical proximity and attraction. In other words, the closer an individual is to another person in space, the more likely this individual will be attracted to that person. But this proximity effect applies in the reverse as well: The closer an individual is to another person, it is just as likely for dislike to intensify with proximity (Reis, 2007). Beyond the proximity effect and according to Glaeser (2011, pp. 34–35), spatial propinquity in the form of face-to-face encounter and interaction

can also lead to more trust, generosity, and cooperation on one hand, but on the other hand, they can also spur competition. While Glaeser (2011, p. 35) prefers to focus on the productivity gains from the competition that arises because of propinquity, however the agglomeration of heterogeneous people can also lead to what Foster and Iaione (2016, p. 312) call, “the strain of proximity”—when propinquity results in rivalry and conflict. Indeed, the sentiments of fear and antagonism, which are also surfaced by the encounter of difference and otherness in spatial propinquity, ought to be anticipated as well (see Sandercock, 2003, p. 109).

Along this same vein of thought, spatial propinquity in cities—especially in the state of being constantly near to people—may also trigger the need for solitude, privacy, and peace (Tonkiss, 2003, 2005), which is a desire to be away from the overwhelming nearness to many others all the time. Tonkiss (2003, p. 298) rightly thinks that in the contemporary drive to emphasize the city as a space of differences characterized by constant propinquity of plural people and activities, this other perspective of the city marked by isolation, anonymity, dissociation, and loneliness has been suppressed. After all, one of the perennial things people desire from cities is “to get away from the crowd” (Tonkiss, 2005, p. 29).

On this point, one is reminded of the poignant story of the late George Bell in New York City, who lived, and died alone, in his apartment unnoticed, “under the pale light of obscurity” (see Kleinfeld, 2015). Despite having lived in one of the most cosmopolitan and energetic cities in the world today, Bell’s passing went unnoticed and was furthermore dissociated from the social gaze of the city. What could have led the late Mr. Bell to live and then die alone like this—bereft of the very social and emotional resources that are associated with the city? Tonkiss’s (2003) account, together with the poignant realities of loneliness in the city, reveal that while urban propinquity can invite new possibilities for human association, it can also drive an individual away toward anonymity and dissociation. Was the late Mr. Bell driven into isolation because of the overwhelming and constant nature of propinquity in the city? As much as urban propinquity has been associated with the conviviality of human closeness, this same urban propinquity

can also pave the way toward desperate isolation and silent suffering in the city.

But the harder question—and one pertaining to the moral dimensions of propinquity—that surfaces from Bell’s demise is this: how ought one balance between a respect for privacy and the need for civic empathy—so that the likelihood of such silent and lonely deaths is also minimized? In other words, what ought to be the urban ethics regulating respectful intrusiveness, if any? One possible response may align with what Tonkiss (2003) has referred to as the “ethics of indifference,” which suggests a toleration of an indifference to matters of identity and human relatability, and also normalizes a civilized dissociation from other people in the city. While this ethics offers “the margin” (Tonkiss, 2005, p. 28), where people can find the room to wait, observe, and then decide on how to respond to strangers and their predicaments in the city, however this ethics may be insufficient if people want to anticipate the needs of the unfamiliar others. If the ethics of indifference excels in defining the right to be left alone in a city of other nearby strangers, then at the same time, this ethics has to deny that immediate empathy that can detect and address the acute needs of these unfamiliar others. This room, or the “margin” of waiting, observing, and exhibiting “wariness” (Painter, 2012, p. 524) toward the stranger may just be the very lapse that could precipitate an irreversible alienation or introversion on the part of this stranger.

Beyond these possibilities, spatial propinquity, in the context of dense cities, has also been recognized as a catalytic factor in the transmission of highly infectious diseases. The case of Amoy Gardens in Hong Kong SAR, which is an apartment complex with 17,000 inhabitants, documented how Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) was transmitted within a dense built environment via air shafts, plumbing systems, floor drains, and the multi-zone airflow between apartments in the complex (Wolf, 2016, p. 964). According to Wolf (2016, p. 964), the “building itself” appears to have facilitated the spread of the virus, which caused forty-two deaths and infected 321 people. Disease transmission during epidemics usually occurs across very short distances of about three feet or less (McKinney, Gong, & Lewis, 2006, p. 28). But in this case, a confluence of physical environmental factors—toilet

flushing in closely packed apartment blocks, exhaust fans, and ventilation shafts—all propelled aerosolized viral-laden droplets several hundreds of feet through air to cause human infection (McKinney et al., 2006). Inexorably, the case of the Amoy Gardens has not only prompted new considerations in the design of dense built environment in view of highly contagious diseases, but has also irreversibly transformed the etiquettes and lives in spatial propinquity especially in dense cities.

In all, propinquity suggests more than just physical proximity; instead, propinquity can first prime, and then change, human relations in significant ways. Despite this recognition, urban propinquity has however been evaluated—and valued—mostly for its contribution to economic benefits, especially in the form of positive externalities that can result from urban proximity and density (Foster & Iaione, 2016, p. 297). Such benefits are often thought to be attained through some kind of agglomeration effects that produce economic gains when many people and businesses operate in close proximity (OECD, 2015, p. 26), or else are indirectly accrued through some form of the “Medici Effect” (Johansson, 2006) that permits diverse people to learn from each other, build social and intellectual capital, and then produce wholly new ideas and innovations. This framing of what propinquity could do has led to the creation of innovation spaces in many cities around the world, where different global talents mingle and work in close proximity designed to spur new ideas (see Wagner & Watch, 2017).

But in narrowly framing propinquity this way, other morally significant implications of propinquity in the city have been missed. One of these implications is how spatial propinquity, especially through the design of the built environment, can engender certain people as neighbors, while marking others out as strangers. In turn, this distinction—at least by “the ethics of proximity” (Nortvedt & Nordhaug, 2008)—can lead to the preferential or partial treatment of neighbors at the expense of strangers, which may be less than morally justifiable. These moral pitfalls of propinquity are especially critical in what Berry (2014, p. 14) refers to as the “moral basis of urbanity,” which is concerned with forging a sense of shared purposes and common identity, beyond shared

interests, that can permit diverse people to flourish together in a city. In a milieu marked by an unprecedented urban fragmentation and the corresponding need to generate collaboration among strangers in the city (Ignatieff, 2017, p. 51), the moral pitfalls, as well as the ethical prospect of propinquity, can no longer be ignored. Because propinquity can change human relationships by designating certain people as neighbors while marking others as strangers, and because there is a tendency to treat neighbors differently relative to the strangers, the ethical implications of propinquity are anticipated to be relevant in every culturally diverse city today.

The Ethics of Proximity and Moral Distance

To better specify both the moral pitfalls and the ethical promise of propinquity, it is important here to discuss what has been referred to as “the ethics of proximity.” This ethics revolves around different perspectives that take proximity as an integral factor in normative ethical considerations (Nortvedt & Nordhaug, 2008, p. 156). One version of this ethics, which also has been reformulated as a debate here, revolves around an “impartialist” argument on why we *ought not* to treat neighbors and strangers differently, and conversely, a “partialist” argument on articulating why we *might tend to* treat either the neighbor or the stranger differently (see Reader, 2003). Each side of this debate has important implications for the city and will be examined in greater detail later. And integral to this debate are the following three assumptions. Firstly, that physical distance has an effect on moral distance, defined as, “the emotional closeness...between agent and beneficiary” (Abelson, 2005, p. 35). Secondly, neighbors are defined as people who live nearby, and strangers are defined as people relatively farther away in terms of both spatial and relational propinquity. And finally, the respective status of neighbors and strangers is assumed to be stable and invariant. These are important starting points for the ethics of proximity. But as later arguments suggest, the urban condition confounds these assumptions. In turn, this demands a modified ethics of proximity that subsequent discussions will attempt to describe.

In moral philosophy, proximity as propinquity has been argued to have some form of normative significance (Nortvedt & Nordhaug, 2008, p. 159). Along this line of thinking, propinquity has been taken as the basis for preferential treatment of certain others close to us, against an oppositional line of thinking that suggests we ought to treat everyone fairly and impartially. This polarizing debate on the ethics of proximity has profound implications for the city. For example, cosmopolitan cities today have a special onus to attract, and then bring together, strangers (Yeo, Ho, & Heng, 2016). But despite aspirations for cosmopolitanism, people have been observed to live with strangers only by living apart from them (Ignatieff, 2017, p. 43). Instead, people who share common origins or cultures tend to cluster together with the implication that only people who belong in our in-group deserve the preferential treatment reserved for neighbors. On this, evidence suggests that not only are we morally motivated to help those who are nearby because of the way evolutionary forces have shaped our moral psychology (Greene, 2014), but also that this moral motivation can be diluted, if not utterly “deadened,” by geographical distances (Glover, 2012, p. 254).

If so, then these findings from moral psychology compound the urban reality of clustered fragmentation: clustering reinforces the partiality suggested by the ethics of proximity, and strangers who then live apart worsens any moral prospect for impartiality deemed critical to cosmopolitan aspirations. In other words, neighbors have a tendency to remain neighbors, and strangers are likely to remain strangers—the chance for interaction, which is also an opportunity for strangers to enjoy the treatment that neighbors receive, is small. The moral forces of propinquity then appear to pull in the opposite direction from the ethics of cosmopolitanism even when the former ought to reinforce the latter.

Nevertheless, the modern debate on the ethics of proximity was initiated by philosopher Peter Singer’s (1972) influential paper, titled, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” where he argues that “the interests of strangers, near and far, should count as much as those of friends and neighbors” (Chatterjee, 2003, p. 327). Singer (1972, p. 231) argues that the same principle that obliges us to save a drowning child nearby is

the same as saving a starving stranger far away; proximity, or distance, should have no compelling moral force on our actions. While Singer concedes that physical proximity does make it more likely for us to assist someone who needs help, this proximity is irrelevant, morally speaking, for motivating us to help a nearby person over another who is further away. In other words, the moral force of addressing an obligating need is independent of physical distance (Reader, 2003, p. 367).

This argument was later galvanized by the view that everyone lives in a globalized, “one world” (Singer, 2004), where someone, who might need help far away, has become nearer because of globalization. After all, in an interconnected global village, someone else’s cry for help far away may soon become one’s own problem (Singer, 2004, p. 7). In describing the globalized village this way, Singer (2004) comes close to describing the “Anthropocene reality” (Purdy, 2015, p. 265)—for instance, how one common biosphere is being damaged from disparate locations; or conversely, how the global economy could be devastated by the shockwaves from the singular event of the subprime mortgage crisis; or even how civil unrests in Africa and in the Middle East could lead to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis of refugees and immigrants flooding into Europe. These realities support Singer’s (1972) original argument that physical distance is irrelevant when considering on how we ought to respond to those who need help—only if because there is no longer such a thing as a far away problem in an interconnected globalized world.

While Singer’s argument is certainly compelling, the opposing argument is no less convincing. This opposing argument claims that those who are more proximate can expect partial treatment relative to more distant strangers. Especially parents, children, siblings, friends, and colleagues—all who maintain some form of “relational properties” (Reader, 2003, p. 370) with us on top of spatial propinquity—ought to expect a claim of a special moral status for “differential treatment” (Scheffler, 2002, p. 122). This argument suggests that not only is physical distance significant for moral reasoning, but also that vital relationships (e.g., a parent–child relationship, or the working relationship between close colleagues) have to presume special attention that in turn is likely to lead to a closer physical distance between people.

This argument for partiality because of proximity could be defended based on the following three reasons. Firstly, traditional wisdom practices and literature appear to reinforce this argument. Consider, for instance, “Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother’s house in the day of they calamity: for better is a neighbor that is near than a brother far off” (Proverbs 27:10, King James Version), or a similar traditional Chinese proverb, “a far-off relative is not to be preferred to a nearby neighbor.” In this way, these wisdom traditions suggest that the proximate neighbor, rather than a faraway kin, has been perceived as the better bet in times of trouble. To cultivate a sufficiently strong neighborly relation that one can call on during a time of need, one also has “to store meat in the belly of one’s neighbor,” which is a way of investing in the future (Bresnihan, 2016, p. 102). Investing in the future this way then means cultivating a sufficiently robust neighborly relation with the more proximate neighbor, who gets to claim a partial treatment if only because he is also that nearby source of help during a time of need. Spatial proximity, it appears, has its practical advantages. These advantages, in turn, translate into the likelihood of partial treatment.

Secondly, evidence from moral psychology suggests that emotional affect is central to moral concern and responsibility (Nortvedt & Nordhaug, 2008). This emotional affect is also strongly moderated by empathy, and distance appears to weaken empathy (Greene, 2014). And in parallel from moral philosophy, the intersubjective relation, or the “I-You” relation according to Scruton (2017, p. 51), has been deemed as the essential kernel in every aspect of the moral life. This “I-You” relation is strengthened and made more vivid through the exercise of empathy based on what Løgstrup (2007, p. 145) refers to as the imaginative “changing of roles,” which is surely facilitated by a closer—rather than a farther—distance between people. In other words, spatial propinquity in the form of a direct face-to-face encounter activates empathy and also our moral faculties in ways that farther distance can only undermine. In converging these two parallel insights from moral psychology and moral philosophy, they constitute a strong reason for why people tend to tune into the needs of those nearer rather than those farther away.

Thirdly, common sense suggests that we have special responsibilities to our families, friends, and communities, where their unequal

treatment, relative to others, forms the basis of these relationships (Scheffler, 2002). In other words, these individuals have a claim on us that others do not have, and that this claim is already a reason to help them in their hour of need (Scruton, 2017). Furthermore, privileging differential treatment to those on the basis of these special relationships does not need to compete with one's egalitarian outlook; or conversely, to concede to certain obligations toward the stranger is not to demand that they share the "same grip" as the obligations toward our nearest and dearest (Appiah, 2006, p. 158). Loving one's child, for example, does not necessarily entail a neglect to donate to Oxfam or to displace one's duty to volunteer at the refugees' help center. On this, there is no need to assume that partial obligations would come to threaten impartial ones (Reader, 2003, p. 370). Based on these reasons, there is support to slant the ethics of proximity toward favoring more proximate people rather than more distant ones—if only because the differential treatment of those nearest (and dear) to us does not compete in any real sense with many cosmopolitan notions of obligation toward the needy stranger.

While the moral tension between these two arguments on the ethics of proximity is clear, this debate however is inconclusive (Nortvedt & Nordhaug, 2008). Inconclusiveness aside, evidence from moral psychology nonetheless suggests that physical distance can impact moral distance, which in turn affects empathy. This reality is grounded in the way our moral psychology has been evolved to grant differential treatment to those nearby—and those nearby in evolutionary history have tended to comprise of people who were kin, or who were the most likely sources of help during a time of need. Even so, this reality neither explains why people are sometimes motivated to help nearby strangers (Greene, 2014), nor why certain individuals are motivated to help complete strangers beyond the point of either undermining or obliterating themselves (MacFarquhar, 2016). These counter-realities then suggest that Singer's argument has traction and remains current—and has yet to be overwhelmed by the sheer force of evidence from moral psychology. And because of this, there is a reason to think that some overlapping common ground can exist between the two sides of the debate on the ethics of proximity.

How Does the City Confound the Ethics of Proximity?

The ethics of proximity then offers a preliminary starting point to understand the moral implications of propinquity today. Especially in cities wrestling with the open question of equitable distribution of urban resources—and not least because of the massive influx of strangers today—the ethics of proximity then informs questions of resource allocation: how should resources be allocated? Should resources be disproportionately distributed among those who are considered neighbors? Or should resources be shared equally among all? And what is the ethical justification in each option?

In the absence of this ethics, one can only expect the distribution of any scarce urban resource to conform to the dictates of a belligerent politics of difference. This politics could be summed up as, “the desire for the logic of order and identity... ‘We’ must secure our centrality, and ‘they’ who upset our homely space must be pushed out from the centre” (Sandercock, 2000, p. 205). Against this intransigent politics of “us versus them” that has threatened much of cosmopolitanism in cities today, the ethics of proximity then challenges the hegemonic politics of difference: if propinquity can oblige a difference in ethical treatment, and if these strangers are now considered as proximate individuals (see Bauman, 2016), then they ought to deserve an allocation of resources just like our neighbors even as they remain strangers near us in the city.

But while philosophy may enlighten and inspire the city, the city has however time and again, interdicted philosophy. If the ethics of proximity then prescribes an obligation to the stranger in the abovementioned way, then to what extent is this obligation bounded, or even “infinite,” as Levinas (2006) might suggest? The ethics of proximity, *prima facie*, does not indicate any limit, while limits not only define the city administratively, but also materially. If so, then to what extent is one obligated to help a nearby stranger? And because utilitarianism does not presuppose any indication of self-limitation, but because urban resources are usually limited or even scarce, relying on Singer’s frame in the city then is likely to mean an eventual confrontation with these different questions of limit: where should a limit be imposed on helping as many as

possible in as many significant ways as possible? Should the limit be imposed on the ultimate number of strangers or newcomers that any one city ought to help? Or should this limit be imposed by the range or quality of help that people would receive? And how should this limit even be defined—is it by the priority of assuaging the most basic needs or is it by the more brutal logic of triage?

In light of these limits, the ethics of proximity is also confounded by the city in another way. Contemporary urban realities can often destabilize the definitions of the nearby neighbor and the distant stranger, which are usually taken to be either stable or invariant categories within the framework of the ethics of proximity. There are at least three different ways that the city could destabilize the notions of neighbors and strangers, and in these ways, also come to confound the ethics of proximity.

Firstly, and as discussed, the spatial design of the built environment is in part responsible for demarcating the neighbor from the stranger on the one hand, and on the other hand, for shaping the relations within any space that neighbors or strangers encounter each other. In other words, depending on how the built environment is shaped or configured, the status of neighbors and strangers could change, or if not, also rendered ambiguous. For example, for cities in China today, a contentious policy has been enforced to remove the walls now separating wealthy gated enclaves from the rest of the community, which resulted in the sharing of once “private” facilities with strangers (see Zheng, 2017). But more to the point here, these strangers are now perceived, though not always accepted, as new neighbors. The physical configuration and structuration of the city can easily render the statuses of neighbor and stranger fluid. In this way, the fluidity of proximate neighbors and more distant strangers then weakens their representational polemics integral in the ethics of proximity.

Secondly, the new strangers today occupy an ambiguous territory between the strict polemics of neighbor and stranger. As Bauman (2016) notes, these new strangers are hardly distant but “at our door.” Whether these strangers are characterized by the dispossessed rural worker, or by the vast number of refugees and migrants fleeing from conflict, violence and poverty, these strangers are among us. This reality ought to behoove Kant’s (2006, p. 82) notion of a cosmopolitan right to universal hospitality, which states that because all human beings have the right of

common possession of the surface of the Earth, but because they cannot scatter themselves on the surface of this sphere without limit, they must “ultimately tolerate one another as neighbors.” While this notion has lost none of its moral grip, it has long been disabused by the border fences of nation-states and the different brands of anti-immigration politics. And even if certain barriers have been lowered, and early institutions for some inclusion and integration attempted, these strangers nonetheless occupy an ambiguous territory—quite often and literally, in some form of *terrain vague*—between the status of the distant stranger and the next-door neighbor whenever they settle in cities. The torturous realities of African migrants stuck in the state of limbo along the various edges of the European Union, or the Chinese migrant workers who live amidst an existential precarity where their life-worlds could be all too swiftly bulldozed, all point to how urban complexities can come to unsettle the established distinction between neighbors and strangers.

And thirdly, technology—and especially communicative technologies ubiquitous in the city—has significantly contributed to an “infinite increase in our neighbors” (Imamichi, 2009, p. 12). Specifically, Imamichi asks us to consider an intriguing prospect: a neighbor is a relation that can be established, or revoked, by our technological actions. In other words, it is through the impacts of our actions that we make neighbors out of strangers. According to Imamichi (2009), human actions, when amplified by technology, can now impact or even harm people, who are remote from us. Consider, for instance, the alarming damage incurred through the circulation of fake news—and how these fake news could be generated in one location, but swiftly transmitted by concatenation through any social media platform. Or conversely, where empathy and solidarity with the downtrodden could be shared across national and cultural boundaries through the social media. For these reasons, there is also a need to rethink the question of who is our neighbor today.

A Modified Ethics of Proximity

These complications do not nullify the relevance of the ethics of proximity. But they do point to a need to modify this ethics if it is to find greater relevance in the city. What form can this modified ethics of

proximity take? Whichever form this modified ethics of proximity takes, it has to conserve the critical role of propinquity in the ethical encounter, and furthermore, to take into account a more unsettled definition of the neighbor and the stranger in the city. To abolish the dyad of the neighbor and the stranger entirely by converging on the Archimedean point of a shared humanity is neither proper nor applicable for the city; this dyad always exists in some form. Instead, it is more probable that a modified ethics of proximity could be found by abandoning certain entrenched notion of the neighbor made obsolete by the city, and simultaneously, in finding a way to address a notion of the stranger that is more aligned to reality in cities today.

The story of the Good Samaritan is an appropriate intuition pump to begin thinking about how to modify the ethics of proximity in response to the confounding realities of the city (see Luke 10:29–37, King James Version). This story appears to respond, though unevenly, to at least three realities in the city that could confound the ethics of the proximity. Firstly, this story does not presume a stable, or invariant, configuration of the neighbor and the stranger. As a matter of fact, certain interpretations of this story have argued that unsettling the conventional notion of the neighbor was part of the objective of this story (Painter, 2012). Secondly, this presumably hypothetical story, nevertheless unfolds in the depiction of an actual place and event, with their clear and concrete moral demands. Unlike the more abstract philosophy that entails an unbounded obligation to help, the Good Samaritan could only do as much as it was within the practical means of his resources. And finally, the open-endedness of the story does resemble the open-endedness of many ethical encounters between strangers in the city. While the Good Samaritan did hint at the possibility that he would return to check on his charge, no one really knows what happened after he left. On this, the story suggests the counter-intuitive possibility of non-reciprocation when rendering significant help, which is important for any ethics of proximity in the city that takes its beneficiaries as those whom one may most likely not meet again.

This story begins when an expert of the law, upon hearing Jesus of Nazareth preached a commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself, wondered aloud—who then is my neighbor? The exact intention behind asking this question is unclear. Perhaps this expert was hoping

to contradict Jesus: that if everyone could qualify as his neighbor, then no one truly is, and it would become impossible to know any one properly, and much less to love any one of them as himself. Or perhaps this expert was honestly curious on who might this neighbor be, only if because it is often easier to indulge, rather than to love, oneself. Who then, he might have wondered, is deserving of such a morally lofty treatment that would exceed how he is likely to treat himself?

Nevertheless, to answer the expert's question, Jesus then accounted a story of a hapless traveler, who was first robbed, then gravely beaten, and subsequently left to die on the side of the road. Perhaps in anticipating but also abolishing the expert's moral assumptions, Jesus accounted how a priest, whom one might expect to render help, passed by without offering any. Then next came a Levite, who was an esteemed person by Jewish tradition consecrated for religious service, also passed by without offering any help. Finally, a Samaritan came along—a person who was dually unlikely to help. Not only was the Samaritan a member of a social caste that this expert could count on least to offer any help, but the Samaritan was also an individual who had most likely suffered contempt from the social caste of this wounded traveler. Despite these social and anthropological expectations, the Samaritan had compassion on the wounded traveler and he helped. The Samaritan rendered first-aid to the wounded traveler immediately, and then he brought this individual on his transport to an inn, where he further took care of him overnight and on the next day, paid the inn-keeper in advance for more needed care. After accounting this story, Jesus then rebounded the original question to the expert: who then, was the neighbor, to that hapless traveler? The expert of the law then answered: the one who had compassion on him.

In this way, the story of the Good Samaritan questions the commonsensical notion of the neighbor; the neighbor is neither one who is affiliated to us by relational propinquity, nor one who is situated nearby in spatial propinquity. Instead, and based on the story, this person could even be the furthest individual one could expect as a neighbor. Radically, this neighbor can be *anyone* who needs our help, or who heeds our call for help. The neighbor is defined more by moral propinquity rather than by spatial propinquity. But more to the point and in

relation to the city, this story illustrates how an encounter between two strangers could be transformed into a meeting of new neighbors. The pivot of this transformation is compassion, or neighborliness, which defined the Good Samaritan as the neighbor to the hapless traveler. If neighborliness is that transformative moral quality that can bring strangers together in cities today, then what may be the wellspring of this neighborliness?

According to Løgstrup (2007, p. 142), the neighborliness demonstrated by the Good Samaritan was made possible by practicing the “Golden Rule,” which states that one should do what one would have others do himself or herself. While this “Golden Rule” appears to operate on the principle of reciprocity, but in reality, it is in fact predicated on a more imaginative and radical ethic: that one would still help the other person even when this person has done nothing for oneself. In the words of Løgstrup (2007, p. 143), this ethic appeals to our moral imagination: “The charitable acts I might have wished another would do for me, had I been in his position, those acts should I do for him.”

Løgstrup’s exposition of the “Golden Rule” is nothing short of a complete reversal of the principle of reciprocity. According to Løgstrup (2007, p. 143), not only does the “Golden Rule” recognize those who need our help are quite often the people who are not able to give anything back in return, they are also likely people who may never be able to do so. In contrast, the principle of reciprocity is based on the idea that since one has been helped, one must then return the favor; it is an obligation, not an act of imaginative compassion. The principle of reciprocity demonstrates how honoring fairness can often overshadow compassion, or neighborliness. Furthermore, how could one know where, or to whom, to return this favor, unless one is also already in spatial or relational propinquity with the person who first offered help? In this way, the principle of reciprocity has to assume a likely neighborly status that already exists in some form, while the “Golden Rule” does not. Unwittingly, Løgstrup’s version of the “Golden Rule” then may at least stand as a partial answer to a more robust ethic of proximity that can correspond to the complex realities of neighbors and strangers in the city.

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4

Conflict

The Ubiquity of Urban Conflicts and the Imperative for Resolution

Conflicts are rife in cities today. Most commonly, these conflicts revolve around the struggle for scarce urban resources. Who, or what, is entitled to these urban resources? How might one distribute these resources and who bears their costs? And is this distribution equitable? These questions and more have become conflagration points of much contemporary urban discontent. In other places, conflicts have arisen from a clash of identity, environmental, or urban politics. And in a few emerging instances, the city has also become the most visible crucible of confrontational politics amid secessionist strife. All these urban conflicts, in one way or another, hint that cities today—especially global cities—not only command a disproportionate share of global capital that attracts contestation, but are also centers of influence in shaping how these contestations are played out. In this way, urban conflicts possess a vast power to influence global economics, the environment, politics, and ethics. To win the battle of an urban conflict in any major (or global) city is to

attain preeminence, if not perhaps also a preemptive victory, on similar conflicts emerging elsewhere in the world.

Despite the ubiquity of conflicts today, responses to conflict are however polarized. On the one hand, conflicts have to be tamed. This is an old idea with deep roots; at least in modernity, this idea goes as far back to Saint-Simon's (1760–1825) technocratic 'Administrative State' (see Berlin, 2003, p. 107) and subsequently was manifested in the modern aspiration for planning "conflict-free" cities (Sennett, 1973, p. 82). But more recently, this idea of taming conflict has taken a different turn. On this, Sassen (2017, p. 35) suggests that "cities have distinctive capacities to transform conflict into the civic", if only because historically, militarized conflicts in the city and their devastating outcomes have never been a particularly appealing option. In this view, conflict can at least be triaged through commerce and civic activities, which the city excels in hosting. The goal of planning then is to seek out, and then define, other "urban capabilities" (Sassen, 2017, p. 35) beyond commerce and civic activities that have a civilizing influence. The competitive drive to create even more livable cities replete with a variety of one-of-a-kind urban amenities and infrastructures for attracting global talents, and simultaneously to capture a larger share of global capital, is perhaps then not a coincidence in view of the need to triage conflict. However, efforts to triage conflict are at best only a temporary distraction—because even the least contested form of urban amenities is likely to encounter significant dissent in pluralistic cities today.

On the other hand, conflicts have to be spurred. Conflict is an ineradicable feature of political antagonism in human society, and political questions always involve making decisions between conflicting alternatives (Mouffe, 2013). And because rational solutions that take the form of a universal consensus based on reason do not exist for many of such conflicts, Mouffe (2013) also argues that rather than trying to force a consensus, democratic politics should instead operate on the basis of a sustained conflict, which is agonism. In agonism, conflicting parties are not so much enemies as they are adversaries engaged in an adversarial struggle that can lead to mutual improvement. In turn, this agonistic conflict between adversaries then "impedes the full totalization of society and forecloses the possibility of a society beyond division and

power” (Mouffe, 2013, p. 1). In other words, conflicts can defer the post-political reality and, through this deferment, reveal other possibilities that hegemonic totality would try to exclude. In alluding to this constructive and emancipatory potential of conflict, Mouffe has unwittingly reflected the Kantian proposition that conflict should be seen as the source of progress toward a better society (see Dahrendorf, 2008, p. 183).

Nevertheless, the essence of all conflicts has to lie in their resolution (Boulding, 1963, p. 307). This, according to Boulding, is what gives conflict its central meaning. A conflict that goes on and on indefinitely loses this central meaning and threatens any possibility of a resolution. And a protracted conflict can take on a life of its own, which then can distort the process of giving and testing reasons vital to conflict resolution (Aragaki, 2009). Today, too many conflicts take the form of “intractable conflicts” (Lewicki & Gray, 2003, p. 1): conflicts that are characterized by considerable intensity persist indefinitely and cannot be resolved either through consensus building efforts or by other forms of administrative, legal, or political solutions. In view of this reality, to recognize the vitalities of ineradicable conflict in the political society is not the same as preferring the persistence of intractable conflict in civic society. For this reason, even Mouffe (2013, pp. 14–15) acknowledges the limits of agonism in the form of some kind of closure in conflict.

If there are limits to triaging conflicts in cities today and if such conflicts can swiftly turn intractable, then conflict resolution is key—especially when many urban amenities and infrastructures as concrete outcomes of spatial planning depend on the cessation of protracted conflict. Yet because the strategies of conflict resolution are different, how a conflict is resolved, and what are the specific consequences of its resolution, can impact the relations of conflicting stakeholders and implicate any further possibility of cooperation between them. Framed this way, while the moral objective of conflict resolution may be clear (e.g., to prevent a rancorous conflict from taking a turn for the worse), the ethics of conflict resolution strategies may prove to be more controversial. After all, as Menkel-Meadow (2006, p. 157) suggests, how one elects to resolve a conflict is itself an ethical choice. And every ethical choice is always imbued with some moral uncertainty.

Because not only conflict, but also conflict resolution, can impact the relations of different stakeholders and their prospects for future cooperation in the city, the aim of this chapter is to broadly describe, and then evaluate, two key approaches for managing and resolving urban conflicts. These approaches are conceptualized as the consensus building approach and the compromise approach, respectively. Specifically, what are the ethical issues and impacts of relying on the consensus building approach for conflict resolution? And similarly, what are the moral dimensions of the compromise when it is used to resolve a conflict?

Although these two approaches are conceptually distinct, they can however in practice overlap in many ways. For instance, both approaches have to rely on, and engage in, different techniques of conflict resolution such as negotiation, bargaining, dialogue, debate, and mediation—though differentially emphasized with varying intensity and aim. And it is also possible that conflicting parties, which may have started out by trying to forge a compromise, to end up with an outcome closer to a consensus because of the mutual understanding, trust and rapport gained during the negotiation process (Chan & Protzen, 2018). Similarly, conflicting parties may aspire to a consensus through a series of dialogues, only to discover subsequently that certain compromises have to be made as the preconditions for further dialogues.

Nonetheless, each approach is sufficiently distinct to warrant an independent articulation here. Importantly, each approach has a different philosophy that not only emphasizes a different strategy for conflict resolution, but also maintains a different ethical stance toward conflict and conflict resolution. If the philosophy behind consensus building suggests building knowledge, empathy, and mutual accommodation between conflicting stakeholders, then the philosophy of a compromise suggests a more practical and sometimes, inventive resolution. And if the former then revolves around a form of intersubjective ethics that regulate or limit what ought and ought not to be done, then the latter tends to adhere to some form of consequentialist ethics, where the quality of the outcome is held to be more important than the resolution process itself. This is merely a general characterization that prefaces a closer examination on the ethical dimensions of conflict resolution. These ethical dimensions are important because conflict resolution

as a form of decision theory was a domain initially developed without any relation to ethics (Hösle, 2004, p. 134). Yet ethics and the ethical behaviors of conflicting stakeholders are anticipated to have a practical impact on the overall quality and outcome of any conflict resolution process—rendering any omission of ethics from conflict resolution inadmissible. After all, in the city, conflicting parties are expected to cooperate repeatedly, though differentially, on many issues into the future. In this way, the ethics of conflict and conflict resolution then constitutes one important dimension of urban ethics.

Why Are Conflicts Common in Spatial Planning?

Urban conflicts are often triggered by spatial planning. According to Pascchi and Pasqui (2015, pp. 82–83), there are three major reasons on why conflicts are common in spatial planning. Firstly, fundamental decisions on land-use are often competitive, if not also mutually exclusive. And each type of land-use is likely to have its own lobby and interest groups. For instance, an adult re-skilling center and a kindergarten cannot both occupy the same vacant site at the same time; or an elementary school with that of a public park—even when all these land-uses offer social benefits and are considered different forms of public goods. Following this, the competitive nature of land-use therefore implies that either the elementary school project will be built to the woes of joggers and picnickers, or conversely, the public park will be built against the interests that have rallied behind the elementary school project. This competitive and often exclusionary logic of spatial planning then triggers a conflict between different interest groups.

Secondly, spatial planning is also a redistributive activity imbued with many uncertain political consequences. Through the distributive institution of spatial planning, economic and symbolic values, as well as citizenship rights, are defined, acknowledged, and amplified (Pascchi & Pasqui, 2015). Reusing the same hypothetical example of the public park again, to design and build the public park nearer to certain communities will most likely increase the real estate values in these communities. But why should these selected communities benefit from this

new park? And why not other communities which may need the real estate value enhancement brought about by this new public park even more? While this has been framed as a protest on the selective enhancement of real estate values, the deeper contestation however may be one that revolves around the political issues of fair rights and accessibility. After all, why should certain communities, and not others, benefit from a proximity to the new park? Because it is highly unlikely for any urban planning projects to confer equal benefits or to impose equal costs on everyone, spatial planning has been noted for its “distributive asymmetry” (Pucci, 2015, p. 238). In turn, this distributive asymmetry indirectly shapes answers to the political questions of ‘who benefits?’ and ‘who loses?’ by conferring accessibility or other privileges to one political group at the expense of another, which then becomes the source of many conflicts.

Thirdly, while spatial planning tends to be a localized activity, spatial planning can also produce externalities that impact other people and communities at a non-local, and occasionally, even on a trans-boundary scale. For instance, urban noise and pollution is a common arena of conflict: How should one resolve the conflict between the need for a major roadway and the complaint of excessive noise and pollution from nearby residents? Or at a different scale, what happens when urban development requires sand that comes from sand mining elsewhere, which has been observed to impose irreversible harms on the livelihood, biodiversity, and the environment where sand is being mined?

What Are the Different Categories of Spatial Conflicts?

All these conflicts then can be framed as different forms of *spatial conflict*. While spatial conflicts can take many forms, they can also be categorized into three broad categories. Drawing from the work of Italian sociologist Alessandro Pizzorno, Gualini (2015) suggests that there are at least three categories of spatial conflicts in urban planning. They are namely, interest conflict, recognition conflict, and ideological (or value) conflict.

Firstly, interest conflicts tend to revolve around the distribution of scarce resources (Gualini, 2015). Here, conflicting parties typically view each other as legitimate claimants, share the same value system, and compete for the same kind of resources. But they disagree on what would constitute a 'fair' share, or whose interest ought to deserve a greater priority. In this way, a conflict emerges when one party tries to maximize its own share at the expense of the other parties, or when one party prioritizes its own interest ahead of the interests of other parties. The struggle to secure scarce public resources is one salient arena of such interest conflicts. Especially when triggered by issues pertaining to project costs escalation, the legitimacy of any favored, but expensive, public project would be questioned. For instance, in the S21 railway station megaproject in Stuttgart, critics charged that this project had monopolized public resources that could have been better invested elsewhere on improving existing train routes and services (Novy & Peters, 2012). Increasingly, such interest conflicts also occur on the projected environmental costs of development, which are less quantifiable but no less important. Returning to the case of the S21 railway project again, environmental groups railed against the need to cut down nearly 300 old trees, and the risk of polluting the city's groundwater and its mineral water springs, which are the second largest in Europe for the sake of this megaproject (Novy & Peters, 2012, p. 134).

Secondly, recognition conflicts revolve around the conflicting party's struggle for identity, respect, and legitimate representation. Drawing from the work of Iris Marion Young (1949–2006), Schlosberg (2004, p. 519) suggests a connection between the lack of recognition and distributive injustice. According to Schlosberg (2004), the lack of recognition is the result of being excluded from a political community. And inevitably, this status of being excluded also denies any further possibility for participation. For this reason, a recognition conflict is usually far more fundamental than an interest conflict. After all, a stakeholder who is excluded from a certain political community is also likely to be prevented from participating in it and therefore will not stand any chance to contest for his or her share in any resource distribution conflict. This reality is especially salient in Owen's (2012) study on the dilemma between rebuilding and

relocation in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. While the utilitarian logic appears to support the wholesale resettlement of the poor residents elsewhere, and the deconstruction of their ruined neighborhoods into flood-retention parkland for the betterment of the entire city, this logic however fails to recognize that these poor residents also possess a place-based identity and a right to return home. Without due recognition of this identity and also their rights to return home, these residents would have little claim on their share of distributed resources toward rebuilding.

Thirdly, value conflicts are conflicts between worldviews, foundational philosophies, or ideologies. Frequently, these conflicts revolve around entrenched and deep-seated belief systems about how the world is, or how the world ought to be. However, these conflicts do not necessarily need to revolve around incompatible value systems; they can also take the form of an incommensurable conflict between two ideal goods (Berlin, 2002)—for example, between equality and freedom. Consider the case of the community gardens in New York City (Schmelzkopf, 2002). This conflict has often been framed as a struggle between two incommensurable goods: how should one decide between building more affordable housing and keeping more green spaces in the form of community gardens in the city (see also Baird-Remba, 2017)? And even if conflicting parties can agree that both affordable housing and green spaces constitute greater social and environmental justice, respectively, they can still disagree about the weight to give to each value (Appiah, 2006, p. 63). For this reason of incommensurability, value conflicts, even when they are clearly defined, are often intractable and embittered with few happy recourses.

Unlike the previous case, values in many conflicts are often not well-defined ahead of time. Instead, these values are only shaped through successive new understanding, appreciation, and insights gained during the conflict (see Schön, 1983). For this reason, another class of value conflict can originate from under-defined or even undefinable problems. Rittel and Webber (1973) refer to these problems as “wicked problems”. Wicked problems have neither definitive formulation nor clear goals: no consensus exists on how to define them, or to solve them. Furthermore, it is often unclear if one is solving the

problem or the symptom of another problem—the boundary of wicked problems is ambiguous and porous. And every attempt to ‘solve’ a wicked problem can bring about new consequences that would compound, and even complicate, the original problem itself. Innes and Booher (2010) argue that most planning problems are wicked problems, where simple solutions or clear answers do not exist, where goals are uncertain or conflicting, and where there is little consensus on the problem and its diagnosis among the public or even the experts. Inexorably, any concerted attempt to define a wicked problem often ends up obfuscating it. The likelihood of epistemic misunderstandings on this wicked problem then exacerbates the sense of uncertainty and misgivings, which can aggravate the existing conflict when stakeholders cling to their favored but biased frames. In turn, these frames tend to further entrench these stakeholders in their respective representation of the wicked problem that then distorts communication and renders any conflict that ensues intractable.

Empirically, however, these three types of conflict are often overlapping and also interconnected. For instance, a recognition conflict can often develop into an interest conflict. This is because the absence of political recognition for any legitimate stakeholder often sets the tenor for distributive injustice (Schlosberg, 2007). Returning to the case of community gardens again, the legitimate public will for the community gardens was not recognized by the planners (Schmelzkopf, 2002). Instead, planners perceived these community gardens as a missed opportunity for more entrepreneurial ventures: had these gardens been cleared and the land they occupied primed for development, more people, as well as the city administration, would benefit. Subsequently, this led to an interest conflict between competing claims on the right to the city. Conversely, many deep-seated value conflicts initially take the form of interest conflicts. This is because certain value claims can be mapped directly into interest claims, which are the more visible catalysts for rallying political support. For instance, a resident who regularly participates in a community garden is likely to value this garden intrinsically (that is, for its use value). But a developer is likely to value the land for its potential exchange value. Even so, this fundamental value conflict is usually more expressible as an interest conflict between opposing

and incompatible land-uses. In sum, all three types of conflict are often intertwined and embroiled in intricate ways in many spatial conflicts in the city.

The First Conflict Resolution Approach: Collaborative Dialogues for Consensus Building

Because many problems in urban planning are wicked problems and because wicked problems have all the bearings for aggravating conflicts, Innes and Booher (2010, p. 9) suggest that it is vital for different stakeholders in a conflict over a wicked problem to come together and to jointly improve on their situation. In other words, building social capital may count as much, if not more than the corralled technical expertise in taming a wicked problem. As a key approach for conflict resolution here, consensus building is proposed. Specifically, consensus building entails a form of collaboration where diverse stakeholders hold structured dialogues together, regulated by their joint agreement to certain ground rules and often involving a facilitator, in a collective search for a consensus on how to move forward in the conflict (Innes & Booher, 2015, p. 198). And while such collaborative activities can produce agreements, agreements are not the most significant outcomes. Instead, collaboration can build that important sense of mutual understanding, trust, and goodwill among the stakeholders—tantamount to social and political capital—that is critical for conflict resolution and for going beyond the immediate conflict to something more.

Integral to the consensus building approach is the dialogue. Dialogues form the core of collaborative rationality (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 119). And dialogues play several roles simultaneously. Dialogues permit conflicting parties to learn from each other; they also permit the construction of a communicative space where reciprocity could be discovered. And when dialogues are genuine, they allow conflicting parties to question the biases and frames that prevent conflict resolution on the one hand, and on the other hand, they are also able to transform beliefs and values (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 122). Through dialogues, imagination is often triggered, which expands the horizon of

options that are useful for surmounting a paralyzing dispute. Dialogues are deemed especially efficacious for wicked problems at the center of many intractable conflicts.

While these are some of the key benefits of the dialogic process, collaborative dialogues are not always feasible and are conditional on certain propitious conditions. Because effective dialogues that can build trust and social capital take a long time to unfold, Innes and Booher (2010, p. 7) suggest that dialogues are not feasible when an immediate decision has to be made to protect life and property. Similarly, collaborative dialogues are less likely when disputing parties want to have nothing to do with each other and see no reason to talk among themselves. Furthermore, Innes (2004, p. 7) highlights eight key conditions that can improve the odds of successful consensus building. They are namely, (i) the inclusion of a full range of stakeholders; (ii) including tasks that are meaningful to the participants and that have promise of having a timely impact; (iii) allowing participants to set their own ground rules for behavior, agenda setting, making decisions, and many other topics; (iv) allowing for a process that begins with mutual understanding of interests and that avoids positional bargaining; (v) initiating a dialogue where all are heard and respected and equally able to participate; (vi) initiating a self-organizing process unconstrained by conveners in its time or content and which permits the status quo and all assumptions to be questioned; (vii) presenting information that is accessible and fully shared among participants; and (viii) promoting an understanding that a consensus is only reached when all interests have been explored and every effort has been made to satisfy these concerns. And especially for complex and controversial conflicts, a skilled and trained facilitator is needed to achieve these stated conditions (Innes, 2004, p. 8). For this reason, a plausible ninth condition ought to be the inclusion of a trained facilitator or mediator.

Described in these ways, the ethical basis of consensus building appears sound. Consensus building as an approach for conflict resolution not only aims to include as many stakeholders as it is practically feasible, but also encourages maximal autonomy on the part of these stakeholders to establish their regulative rules, to design their own agenda, and to set a civil tenor for conflict resolution. Furthermore,

values such as mutual respect, equality of participation, and voice are integral to the constitution of this approach. And practically, consensus building expects stakeholders to give reasons and to listen to the reasons of others and in this process comes close to an ideal form of discourse ethics, which offers a procedural framework for defining a consensus that everyone can accept (see Habermas, 1991). What could possibly then emerge as an area of ethical concern on consensus building as an approach for conflict resolution?

The Ethics of Consensus Building: Negotiation Tactics and *Phronesis* Amid Conflicts

Because consensus building has to rely on collaborative dialogues, and because success in collaborative dialogues at least hinges on the cooperation and other interactions of stakeholders, ethical issues tend to arise from the realities of non-cooperation and other non-ideal interactions between stakeholders during the dialogic process for consensus building. As much as collaboration is about cooperative behaviors, collaboration is also about conflict (Innes & Booher, 2015, p. 203). How stakeholders respond to *internal conflicts* that are triggered within the dialogic process is anticipated to form one major area of ethical concern.

Conventionally, dialogues are characterized as constructive activities that generate mutual understanding, trust, and goodwill. But genuine dialogues take time to develop, and the beginning of any dialogic process can be expected to comprise of some negotiation activities between conflicting stakeholders. On this, one would expect stakeholders to be guided by rational calculation and the pursuit of value-maximizing strategies during a negotiation (see Schelling, 1971). But to negotiate to win is not wrong and “no apologies are necessary for pursuing selfish rather than altruistic goals” (Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987, p. 238). To win, however, is never to be conflated with ‘to win at all costs’. Advocates of collaborative dialogues are rightly apprehensive of this sentiment to win at all costs, where there is little ethical limit, if any, at the beginning of the dialogue itself, and where the aggression to

win can irreversibly alter the formative atmosphere for constructive dialogic deemed critical for consensus building.

Importantly, any stakeholder participating in the negotiation is always subjected to an ethical tension where the other party is always at once means to this stakeholder's ends but also a human being who demands dignified treatment (Cohen, 2004). And so to drive a hard bargain early on usually means not only faking strengths or concealing vulnerabilities in order to secure a more favorable outcome (Margalit, 2010), but also relying on various deceptive or coercive tactics to bring the other parties to do what the more persuasive party wants. This instinct to gain an early edge by relying on these questionable tactics can unwittingly frustrate further attempts to conduct collaborative dialogues. And because collaborative dialogues require repeated cooperation between stakeholders, it is necessary to curb this instinct for gaining an early edge over others. Where interdependence between parties is perceived to be required repeatedly, there is an incentive to cooperate rather than to compete (Axelrod, 1984). Indeed, a wise outcome may be much more urgent in many public conflicts than just winning the negotiation (Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987, p. 243).

But what is wisdom in a conflict? For acting wisely under complex and contradictory goals, the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* may be relevant. *Phronesis*, otherwise also translated as 'prudence' or 'practical wisdom', is an Aristotelian concept used to describe the competency of managing practical affairs successfully (Aristotle, 2005). Implied in *phronesis* is a kind of virtue ethics—human excellence for understanding the moral demands of the situation and acting well within it. What then, does *phronesis* entail in a collaborative dialogue, when stakeholders on the one hand are ideally imagined to desire a collective consensus, but on the other hand, they are more likely to be drawn to the lures of advancing their self-interest by using questionable and unwise negotiation tactics?

Here, it is possible to conceive of *phronesis* in the simplest way possible: *phronesis* is to know first what one will not do for the sake of defining a consensus together. This may mean refusing to distort information or to use threatening tactics (see Howe & Kaufman, 1979), and to adhere to the code of professional ethics and to keep in mind

a few maxims important for the public good, for example, to protect the vulnerable, to avoid harm, and to maximize the minimum payoff (see Goodin, 1982). Importantly, *phronesis* has to consist of a wise acknowledgment, and also an ethical response, to power. For instance, such power is often embodied in the form of a ‘bully-stakeholder’, who eschews principled negotiation, and shows contempt to other stakeholders by employing ‘dirty tricks’ and other tactics to sway the direction of the dialogue to his or her favor. Innes (2004, p. 12) recognizes that for any one stakeholder to come to the table, this implies they are usually “not powerful enough to achieve their interests alone”. Even so, this recognition does not preclude the possibility that once at the table, this stakeholder could still rely on various bullying tactics or threatening tricks to gain a winning edge at the expense of other stakeholders. If conflict is ever present through a consensus building process (Innes, 2004, p. 14), then power ought to be expected at every juncture as well.

On this, there is consensus in negotiation literature to suggest that it is not strategic for other stakeholders to respond in kind to this ‘bully’ (Cohen, 2004; Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991; Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987). To respond in kind is to escalate the conflict; and this escalation tends to bring about a corrosive, downward spiral of tit-for-tat that would further diminish any possibility for constructive dialogue. Instead, stakeholders should focus on drawing this adversary back to a principled negotiation about the negotiation process itself (Fisher et al., 1991). Negotiation theories emphasize various cognitive strategies, for instance, to focus on interests and not on positions, or to expose tricky tactics for what they are (Fisher et al., 1991, pp. 130–134), which are all prudent strategies for responding to this ‘bullying’ adversary.

But negotiation theories cannot predict if these prudent strategies would be reciprocated. For this reason, there is a need for all parties engaged in this dialogue to consider prescribing to a form of discourse ethics as part of the dialogic process, which sets the tenor, rules, and protocols for subsequent dialogues. This can mean agreeing to standards and rules governing the processes of “listening, consideration, reminder, articulation of memory, exploration of options, delay of premature agreements, involvement of third-party intermediaries, testing of evidence, probing of mutual contingent promises and offers, and

so on” (Forester, 1999, p. 148). Granted, framing the conditions prior to the dialogue is an opportunity that is not always available, and the circumstances of certain conflicts also do not permit this (Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987). Granted too, that discourse ethics as a procedural ethics has been criticized for its naiveté to power (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002), or for its fragility (Benhabib, 1991). But to the extent that this ‘bully’ is likely to have more power—which in part explains why resorting to various power-related (threatening) tactics has been favored—than other stakeholders have principles, the larger a role that these principles can play, the better off the odds will be for these principles to guide the negotiation (Fisher et al., 1991, p. 106), and ultimately, also the dialogic process.

The Second Conflict Resolution Approach: Forging a Compromise

In contradistinction, there are certain conflicts where dialogue for consensus building is not immediately feasible. For instance, certain groups and individuals may not be interested in beginning a dialogue because they prefer the absence of public attention, transparency, or the accountability that the dialogic process entails (Flyvbjerg, 2002, p. 362). In such cases where dialogues for consensus building are not immediately feasible, but where further antagonism can lead to worse outcomes, a compromise is often necessary (Chan & Protzen, 2018). And against the most pressing issues facing cities today—climate change adaptations, affordable housing, and mass migration just to name three—urban conflicts revolving around these issues are rarely about seeking an ideal resolution, but rather, it is more about searching for an acceptable compromise to pre-empt exacerbation.

In framing a compromise this way, a compromise can be defined as a settlement of conflict (Goodin, 2012), where conflicting parties make mutual concessions in order to terminate a conflict. In this way, a compromise is a form of cooperative behavior between conflicting parties—however, a cooperation necessitated only to forestall an escalation of the conflict. While a compromise requires cooperation, not every form of

cooperation requires a compromise (Golding, 1979). For this reason, and unlike the cooperation found in consensus building, the willingness to cooperate in a compromise is usually not built on substantive trust or mutual understanding. Instead, this willingness to cooperate is mostly predicated on the mutual desire to avoid a far worse outcome even when each party remains committed to their original demands. Inexorably, a compromise as settlement is usually unsatisfactory for all parties and is often perceived as a precarious settlement vulnerable to further unsettledness. These general characteristics then distinguish a compromise from a consensus, which is characterized by a relatively more secure foundation built on trust and rapport building dialogues.

The Distributive and the Integrative Compromise

And following Follett (1973) and Carens (1979), there are at least two major types of compromise as settlement. The first is the distributive compromise, and the second is the integrative compromise. While the former aims to define the settlement by ‘splitting the difference’ (Benjamin, 1990; Besson, 2005), the latter aims to find a settlement by ‘narrowing the difference’ (Chan & Protzen, 2018). Here, each type of compromise will be briefly explicated in turn.

Firstly, the distributive compromise is the most commonly encountered type of compromise. In this type of compromise, conflicting parties share in some gains and losses. In other words, they ‘split the difference’ (Benjamin, 1990). And implied in ‘splitting the difference’ is an agreement on the distributive rules on how to split these differences. While these rules need not always be ‘fifty-fifty’, these rules often come close to the rule of equal distribution (Menkel-Meadow, 2006). Importantly, distributive compromises are more likely in a conflict of interest rather than a conflict of values or principles (Benjamin, 1990).

To ‘split the difference’ then presumes that irreducible differences remain in the conflict. Finding no way to resolve these differences, and rather than risking failure to reach an agreement, conflicting parties each takes a share in some gains and losses by ‘splitting’ the remaining

differences. As anticipated, this outcome is hardly ideal and is only slight more satisfactory than a failure to reach an agreement (Besson, 2005). Nonetheless, this type of compromise is commonly encountered in the conflict between environmental conservation and development (Boyle, 1992), where certain trade-offs have to be made.

For example, a peculiar form of distributive compromise has been documented in road building projects across natural reserves in the tropics (Caro, Dobson, Marshall, & Peres, 2014). Road building is integral to infrastructural development. This, in turn, is critical for regional economic development and poverty alleviation. But the activities of road building, and new roads, disrupt seasonal movement patterns of fauna and also introduce pollution. To resolve this conflict between environmental conservation and development, a middle-ground solution that specifies roads with slower speeds and gentler gradients and utilizes natural cover was proposed (Caro et al., 2014). However, this kind of road is neither efficient for the transportation of goods and people, nor does it leave the natural environment undisturbed. While this kind of road appears to have resolved the original conflict, in reality, it neither promises zero-impact on the environment nor confers optimal efficiency on the transportation network. In other words, to ‘split the difference’ here resolves the original conflict. But it also results in a ‘lose-lose’ outcome. Here, one is reminded by Susskind and Cruikshank’s (1987) example that one cannot ‘split the difference’ between a hydroelectric plant and a nuclear power plant—to do so is to lose a quintessential outcome just to make a perfunctory gain (Chan & Protzen, 2018).

Secondly, and in contradistinction to the distributive compromise, is the integrative compromise. An integrative compromise is usually deemed as an advancement of a distributive compromise. Instead of ‘splitting the difference’, an integrative compromise attempts to ‘narrow the difference’. In an integrative compromise, conflicting parties aim to reduce competition by increasing cooperation. In this way, an integrative compromise is closer to the idea of ‘meeting halfway’, where conflicting parties realize that each of them cannot increase their individual share without helping the other to increase theirs (Margalit, 2010). Instead of singularly focused on their differences, conflicting parties also search for their reciprocal and common interests.

Follett (1973) describes a hypothetical example that illustrates an integrative compromise well. Imagine two individuals studying in a reading room of a library. One is worried of the cold draft and so the only window in the room stayed shut. But the other wants fresh air and so prefers the window opened. If these two individuals remain in this same room, then the conflict is irresolvable unless one of them leaves. One could of course suggest a distributive compromise: open the window halfway. But depending on how cold it is outside, this option while feasible would likely leave both individuals dissatisfied (that is, they may just leave the room altogether). Instead, a more satisfactory solution is to open the window in the adjacent room, which is empty. In this way, the major differences between these individuals are integrated: the one who prefers to shut out the cold draft is happy, and so is the other person who wants some fresh air. While this happy outcome remains distant from each individual's ideal outcome, it is nonetheless good enough.

But in reality, an integrative compromise is likely to have a more ambiguous outcome. Consider the case of the storm surge barriers in the Eastern Scheldt in the Netherlands (van de Poel, 1998, 2015; see also Chan & Protzen, 2018). After the calamitous flood of 1953, which claimed the lives of more than 1800 people, planners had to contend with the dilemma between closing off the main tidal inlets by using coastal barriers, or to reinforce and to raise the dikes. While the former option was the safest, it would however lead to an irreversible process of desalination, resulting in losses to the fishing and marine produce industries and, more importantly, also destroying the ecology of the estuary. In other words, this engendered a conflict between the engineers and planners who preferred closing off the tidal inlets, and the fishermen and environmentalists who needed the tidal inlets to remain open. In contrast, the latter option of raising the dikes was the more feasible option. However, dikes could not be raised indefinitely and they were also not the safest option. And recalling the painful loss of many lives in the calamitous flood of 1953, safety was considered paramount and therefore raising the dikes as an option did not appear to please anyone.

The public debate behind this conflict went on for nearly twenty years before an innovative solution in the form of the storm surge

barriers was proposed and then implemented. The storm surge barrier is essentially a semipermeable barrier that is normally opened to permit water flow (van de Poel, 1998), but it can also be closed when flooding threatens the hinterland (van de Poel, 2015). The technological innovation of the storm surge barriers then integrated the differences between stakeholders that advocated for the complete closure of the tidal inlets, and stakeholders that wanted them open. In spite of this innovation, the storm surge barriers had unintentionally transformed the original geography of a turbid estuary into a tidal bay (van de Poel, 1998). Because of this transformation, the intertidal flats in the Eastern Scheldt are estimated to decline by more than 45% in the next thirty years (van de Poel, 1998). This means an irreversible loss of estuarine food webs, habitats, and ecosystems. In other words, the original conflict was resolved but not without incurring an irreversible ecological cost on the Eastern Scheldt. The storm surge barriers could be considered an integrative solution to the extent that they had integrated the major differences in this conflict. But this integrative solution was also a compromise in light of the irreversible ecological losses in the Eastern Scheldt.

The Ethics of Compromise?

What then could be said on the ethics of compromise? Kuflik (1979, p. 39) suggests at least three different ways that morality and compromise could meet. Firstly, while moral principles limit what may be legitimately compromised, however certain compromises are non-negotiable. These are compromises that demean the dignities of human beings, which Margalit's (2010) calls, "rotten compromise". Secondly, while moral principles do limit the kind of compromises that could be made, but in certain situations, compromises may be morally and positively desirable. Finally, moral considerations can guide the process of forging a compromise by advising an appropriate procedure for conflict resolution and by offering counsel in working out the contents of a compromise as settlement.

These are general points raised to provoke a discussion between morality and compromise. However, they do not specify the different

aspects of morality in a compromise in any detail. To address this knowledge gap, the ethics of compromise is hypothesized as a body of knowledge concerned with at least the following three aspects of morality. They are namely, the personhood of the individual making the compromise, the process of compromise, and the outcomes or consequences of a compromise.

Firstly, the ethics of compromise comprises of an aspect that focuses on the personhood, or the virtue ethics of the persons, who make the compromise. Here, the conflict is not so much external as it is internal within each of these persons engaged in forging this compromise. A compromise often imposes a set of conflicting moral demands on the person. On the one hand, this individual has to suppress, and even betray, some aspects of his or her beliefs and principles in order to secure the compromise. But on the other hand, to secure the compromise may mean attaining a higher good for many more people that this individual has come to represent. In confronting this internal tension between betraying some important principles at stake and resolving the conflict for the betterment of all (Nachi, 2004), this individual also experiences the “paradox of compromise”—where moral turpitude and moral goodwill appear consonant in the same frame of the compromise (Kuflik, 1979, p. 38).

Secondly, there is an aspect of morality that is associated with the process of compromise. Here, scholarship has closely followed Golding’s (1979, pp. 5–6) early distinction between the notions of ‘morality in compromise’ and the ‘morality of compromise’ (see also Benjamin, 1990; Nachi, 2004). While the latter is concerned with the overall rightness in any decision to compromise, the former is concerned with the various moral constraints as conditions for reaching a compromise. The former is however a more likely area of concern of the two. This is because to have already made a compromise, conflicting parties are presumed to have resolved their own inner paradox of compromise. However, this says nothing of the means that each party may employ to secure a better compromise. In this way, ‘morality in compromise’ is an important dimension in the ethics of compromise.

On this, the general contours of the ‘morality in compromise’ do not deviate much from the ethical protocols of consensus building

mentioned earlier. They are, after all, more and less similar protocols of regarding an adversary as a human being entitled to his or her proper moral rights. These rights then suggest a set of positive responsibilities: an obligation for mutual respect, and to look out for the interests of the other party by way of seeking to define a common and reciprocal area of interests. In tandem, there is also a set of negative obligations: an obligation not to lie, and to desist from using ‘bullying’ tactics, distorting information or relying on other forms of manipulations only if because all these tactics tend to corrode trust and goodwill, and ultimately taint the moral quality in the process of forging a compromise. In these ways, ‘morality in compromise’ does not deviate far from the ethical constraints and protocols observed in any successful and sanguine cooperation.

Finally, there is an aspect that focuses on the outcomes or consequences of a compromise. As discussed earlier, distributive compromises may satisfy intuitive principles of fairness (that is, a fifty-fifty distributive rule or ‘splitting the difference’) but they can also produce a morally skewed, ‘lose-lose’ outcome. And even the better form of integrative compromise does no better: after all, unanticipated and undesirable consequences can be expected as well. Against these realities, a compromise is just what it is: a settlement with concessions that one would prefer not to make. These moral repercussions of a compromise, which are always accompanied by their practical counterparts, in turn become the touchpoints of subsequent conflicts. If conflicts are common in cities, then it may be because compromises, despite what they promise, are also rife.

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5

Serendipity

The Many Adventures of Serendipity

Serendipity, it seems, has a knack for finding new adventures in the most unexpected places. What began as a neologism to describe a collector's good fortune has, in recent years, found a new relevance in the post-industrial neoliberal city. In the neoliberal city, the emphasis on creative knowledge and entrepreneurial innovation, in tandem with the emergence of anticipatory governance, has steered serendipity in a completely unexpected direction: can serendipity be optimized for economic ends? What if the serendipitous encounter can be anticipated in advance for catalyzing creative ideas and marketable innovations—if robust anticipatory algorithms on Big Data, now made available by the Smart City, exist to do this? But what is serendipity then, if it is anticipated or even planned this way? And ought serendipity be planned, even when it is possible—and importantly, who or what is planning for serendipity? If engendering the serendipitous has been a key aspiration ever since urban designers and planners started to redress the stultifying conditions of the modernist city, then these emerging capacities have just recast the aspiration to design for serendipity in a less innocent light.

Originally, serendipity was coined by English nobleman Horace Walpole (1717–1797) in a letter to his friend Horace Mann, which describes the process where, “one finds something useful, valuable or just generally ‘good’ without actually looking for it” (Olma, 2016, p. 10). In this letter to Mann (who had just sent Walpole a portrait of the Grand Duchess Bianca Capello), Walpole happily reported recognizing a significant but accidental discovery that he had made on the Capello heraldry from an old book on Venetian arms (Olma, 2016, p. 12). To characterize this accidental discovery, Walpole coined the word ‘serendipity’—a word that means “accidental sagacity” (Olma, 2016, p. 19): where the experience of the unexpected is complemented by an ability to recognize the value of this unexpectedness.

This etymology of serendipity would have been all but forgotten if not for the subsequent work of Merton and Barber (2004), which resurfaced the word into contemporary awareness by way of describing the boon of unexpectedness in scientific discovery. Observing that scientists have been aware of the importance of unanticipated anomalies, and realizing that major breakthroughs were just as often the outcome of these anomalous leads, serendipity was hypothesized to explain the role of accidental discoveries in science. On this count, serendipity then became part of a larger and more ambitious project to understand science as a social institution. In this view, scientific discovery is reducible to neither its psychological nor its sociological components. Instead, it is an outcome of these components interacting within certain conducive “sociocognitive microenvironments” (Merton, 2004, p. 297). Merton cites the Harvard Society of Fellows, and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto, among other places, as examples of microenvironments where scientists and scholars are drawn from a vast array of different disciplines to explore areas of emerging interests through dialogue and mutual learning (Merton, 2004, p. 263). Through these interactions, researchers might discover new leads or insights that could inform their own scientific investigations, even when they were not specifically looking out for them. On this, Merton thinks that certain sociocognitive microenvironments can lead to a higher frequency of serendipitous scientific discoveries, and for this reason, he also refers to such environments as spaces of “institutionalized serendipity” (Merton,

2004, p. 265), where serendipity, even if it could not be deliberately created, can at least be institutionally rendered more probable.

In drawing out this possibility, Merton must have wondered how serendipity could be induced through institutional design. After all, if conducive ‘sociocognitive microenvironment’ such as the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences exists, and if this environment has prompted many serendipitous encounters, then what might have been the conditions that constituted ‘institutionalized serendipity’? In wondering about this, Merton’s rumination has the unintended effect of extending the original meaning of serendipity in the following two ways.

Firstly, serendipity as a neologism that once described the unexpectedness of a collector’s good fortune—and a witty wordplay no less—has now taken a sharply practical turn. Through this, serendipity has become a quality that could be either cultivated and encouraged, or else prompted and made more probable by planning and design. On this, Merton’s idea of ‘institutionalized serendipity’ suggests that given the right conditions, serendipity is more, rather than less, likely to occur. This idea then shifts the original weight of serendipity from *fortuna* (or fortune) to *virtu* (or power) and from chance to design. And by making references to specific ‘sociocognitive microenvironments’, Merton has also unintentionally introduced a spatial perspective to serendipity, which was otherwise a word indifferent to spatial connotations. All these appear to suggest that the environmental design of the right place may be just as important as the right institutional condition for serendipity.

Secondly, Merton and Barber (2004, p. 149) realized that unlike the serendipitous in heraldry studies, serendipity in science requires value judgment. After all, unlike a bibliophile or a collector, a scientist has to make value judgments not only on the anomaly that is presented by serendipity, but also on the broader moral implications that this anomaly bears on her entire scientific project. What if this anomaly, scientifically valuable as it may be, leads to wicked applications (see Murdoch, 2014, p. 87)? And just as Merton introduced a spatial perspective into serendipity, he also broached this ethical question on serendipity: how should one reckon with the moral dimension of unexpectedness, (happy)

accidents, and surprises? Is this then another intriguing example of what philosopher Bernard Williams (1999) refers to as “moral luck”, where in this instance, the scientist remains accountable for the implications of serendipity on her work even though she has done absolutely nothing to precipitate the serendipitous here?

Even so, it remains unclear if serendipity actually occurs because of design, or in spite of design. But at the very least, Merton’s contributions could still be credited with drawing out an unlikely link between design and serendipity. While Merton’s studies suggest that institutional and environmental design can play a role in cultivating ‘institutionalized serendipity’, this conjecture is nonetheless bounded by his inductive observations within the specific context of scientific institutions. To assume that the same relationship for serendipity would hold similarly in other contexts beyond science may be unwarranted. Yet if serendipity could be made more probable in certain scientific institutions, there is no immediate reason to discount this possibility in other places. Unfortunately, if Merton has left this glimmer of a clue, it is only detracted by the absence of further details: Merton neither disclosed the extent of the roles played by institutional and environmental design for serendipity, nor specified the performativity of this design in any detail.

If so, then how should the relationship between design and serendipity be understood in light of Merton’s contributions? Is there one kind of serendipity that is engendered by design—that is, where design configures “the set of precipitating conditions that, when present, increase the chances for serendipitous discovery” (Cunha, 2008, p. 1407)—and another kind where serendipity simply occurs by chance? And even if design may prove to increase the odds of serendipity—as Machiavelli memorably insisted that one could subdue *fortuna* by *virtu* (Machiavelli, 2005)—there is evidence to suggest that a certain degree of sloppiness, mess, disorderliness, and slack (see de Rond, 2014, p. 353), which are qualities that any commonsensical design presumably would aim to streamline or even eliminate rather than to foster and encourage, is important for serendipity. The disorderliness of a somewhat chaotic environment often compels negotiation and mutual

interaction between people (Sennett, 1973), which may increase the odds of serendipity. But how can one set out to design for deliberate disorderliness, mess, or sloppiness in any spatial environment, or in the city, even if it is possible to do so? And how is this design even ethical? And just as it seems that Merton's ruminations have extended the meaning of serendipity in new directions, this extension has opened up to even more questions.

The Low Road to Serendipity: An Alternative Contrast

If there are real limitations in designing conditions deemed propitious to serendipity, and if Merton's ruminations have only led to more puzzling questions, then what may be the immediate alternative? What options exist to elucidate the intriguing prospects between design and serendipity? Here, and yet again, serendipity takes an unexpectedly turn: in the form of what Brand (1994, p. 24) refers to as "Low Road buildings"—simple built environment that can foster creative ideas and encourage experimentations. Instead of the highly articulated architectural design, Low Road buildings epitomize the very opposite, which is a conscientious lack of architectural design. And instead of the specified amenities and constraints that accompany a well-planned architectural design, Low Road buildings offer freedom, flexibility, and, importantly, a state of under-specification and under-determination.

On this, Low Road buildings should not be misunderstood as contemporary exemplars of what Rudofsky (1994) calls, "architecture without architects", which refers to the untutored but intelligently built forms that are also unusually well adapted to human needs. Instead, Low Road buildings could be categorized as a form of what architect Christopher Alexander (1964, p. 46) refers to as, "unselfconscious" design. They are modest and unassuming buildings characterized by "low-visibility, low-rent, no-style, high-turnover"—ineluctably, buildings that offer "license to try things" (Brand, 1994, p. 24). In these ways, Low Road buildings then offer an alternative contrast to the Mertonian environment of

institutionalized serendipity, which is presumably more systematic and well-organized.

Brand (1994) suggests the iconic Building 20 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) as a case in point of a successful Low Road building. Leftover from its previous life as a temporary building erected during World War II, this building was a three-story timber structure of about 250,000 square foot in area. As an unusually flexible structure with strong structural floors, Building 20 had been used as a laboratory experimental space and offices by many students and faculty members in its fifty-five years of existence. As a matter of fact, MIT's first interdisciplinary laboratory, the Research Laboratory of Electronics, founded much of modern communications science in this building after the war (Brand, 1994, p. 27). This unassuming building, which was just as hastily conceived and built, has been nearly universally referred to, and extolled by, generations of researchers and students as a space where great ideas and innovations had surfaced. What could be the secrets, if any, to Building 20's reputation for innovation?

Here, Brand recounts four key characteristics of Building 20 as a prototypical Low Road building, which may be germane to this discussion on serendipity. Firstly, the horizontal layout of Building 20 encouraged interaction between researcher groups, where chance meetings in the corridor also "tended to lead to technical discussions" (Brand, 1994, p. 26). The physical structure of Building 20 also offers much versatility to the occupants' customization and improvisation of the internal spaces to suit their changing preferences. To recount one memorable sentiment, one occupant remarked that, "If you don't like a wall, just stick your elbow through it" (Brand, 1994, p. 27). Secondly, this building was not an expensively conceived and precious entity that came with its own legion of administrators and managers. In Building 20, these customizations and improvisations could be performed without first seeking formal permissions. In turn, this discretionary capacity empowered the occupants, which further led them to take ownership of their space. As a result, Building 20 was full of what Brand (1994, p. 28) discovered as "small microenvironments"—different creative spaces, each with its own personality that reflected their occupants' distinct research interests. Finally, Building 20 was a temporary building,

where internal spaces were perceived to be temporary and disposable. These characteristics encouraged experimentations, but they also led to a view that these spaces were turfs not worth fighting over (Brand, 1994). And despite sorely lacking in many amenities that one would find in more modern (or permanently constructed) buildings, occupants had been willing to trade off some of the comfort offered by these amenities notably because of “interesting neighbors”, and “freedom”, among other attributes (Brand, 1994, p. 28).

These four characteristics offer a valuable glimpse into a counter-scenario that contrasts with Merton’s stance on institutionalized serendipity. In contrast to the assumption that design intentionality is necessary to foster the right sociocognitive microenvironments for institutionalized serendipity, Brand appears to have discovered just the opposite: that even in the absence of such a design intention, serendipitous encounters and innovations were nonetheless also possible in Building 20. However, the confounding variable here is that Building 20 was embedded within the vibrant intellectual climate of the MIT; had it been located elsewhere, things might not have turned out this way. But to dismiss the Low Road building on this count alone is to miss Brand’s point entirely. After all, Brand also offers other examples of productive Low Road environments (including his own modified shipping container research library, where he spent much time working out his ideas) to demonstrate just how the environmental qualities germane to creative work have been regularly ignored by architects planning to design for these same qualities in new buildings. But the most important insight of all was Brand’s discovery that Building 20 was never designed for the purpose of spurring serendipitous encounters or innovation in the first place.

For Building 20, researchers and students did not flock there for the purpose of finding that serendipitous experience; instead, they went to Building 20 for the very Low Road conditions that were likely to have spurred the serendipitous encounter or discovery—conditions of versatility, freedom (from control), potential for ownership, and the ability to experiment and the possibility of being surprised by a plethora of microenvironments all characterized by creative and diverse personalities. In other words, these conditions could not be more different from

the Mertonian spaces of institutionalized serendipity because they were conditions that emerged from self-organization rather than from intentional design. In this way, Brand's narrative of the self-organized environment offers a counterpoise to the Mertonian framing of the designed environment for serendipity. This also reflects the dialectical, and central, tension between the necessity to control and specify (i.e., design) the conditions that encourage the serendipitous and the need to relax these same conditions through an under-specification of design. In many ways, this tension also defines the intellectual terrain where ideas on serendipity are being debated today.

What Is Urban Serendipity?

Despite standing on the shoulders of these giants, and despite the clarity of this dialectical tension, systematic research on serendipity is scarce. And research on serendipity in the context of the city is even scarcer. In this context, while the works of Brand (1994), Merton and Barber (2004), and also Merton (2004) have informed subsequent attempts to delineate and understand serendipity, their work—even in the combined state as presented—falls short when the serendipitous is elevated to the scale of the city. This said, these works have to be credited with their collective repositioning of serendipity in the practical sphere beyond the idiosyncratic confines of Walpole's universe. And at the same time, these researchers have also unexpectedly broached a most unlikely relationship between design (or the absence of design) and serendipity—a relation that is likely to find a broader relevance beyond scientific discovery and innovation, and one that begins to set the tenor for connecting serendipity to the city.

Incidentally, global cities today confront two simultaneous challenges that may be mitigated by the promise of serendipity. Firstly, global cities have been attracting an unprecedented influx of newcomers that do not integrate well; these are strangers who share little in common with one another and, furthermore, who tend to live apart from each other. On this, the challenge is how to bring them together in moments of convivial interaction, and the serendipitous encounter may just offer that moment

of interfacing alterity, which can lead to further interactions between strangers. According to Amin (2012, p. 62), the case for “enhanced social interaction” is wiser and more compelling especially when the conventional urban control techniques call for either the segregation of the stranger, or to ‘engineer’ contact between strangers. But what constitutes this enhanced social interaction? Can the serendipitous encounter be counted on as the catalyst for this level of social interaction?

Secondly, there is a tangible connection between urbanization and global capital, where urbanization is thought to absorb surplus global capital and, subsequently, to offer new channels for capital accumulation (Harvey, 2010). Through the globalization of capital flows, many cities today have become standardized; they compete to assemble a skyline comprising of similar buildings, amenities, and services. Sennett (2005) explicitly attributes this to the globalized real estate market, which has transformed urban real estate into a fungible global currency of investment units. As a common unit of transaction, a similar uniformity is to be expected in buildings whether they are in Hong Kong or London; form, it appears, does generally follow finance (see Willis, 1995). In tandem, the same international chain of shops and businesses offering the same commodities, but indifferent to their actual locations, dominate city centers all over the world (Sennett, 2005). Inadvertently, all these add up to what Lefebvre (2003, p. 128) once referred to as isotopic spaces: a vast ‘sameness’ that constitutes the contemporary urban fabric, with little variation and almost no surprise—the rationalized, homogeneous outcome of global capital on urban spaces. In this reality of urban isotopy, serendipity then offers an alluring spark in an ocean of blandness.

Even so, these promises of serendipity for the city far exceed the science on serendipity. Based on the prior discussion, how exactly does one design for serendipity—assuming that certain propitious conditions are even amenable to design? And what are the conditions that are actually amenable to design? Despite these open questions, there has been no lack of recommendations, or endorsements, for ‘coaxing’, ‘engineering’, or ‘designing for’ serendipity today (see Groves & Marlow, 2016, p. 166), even when the definition of serendipity in the city—*urban serendipity*—or its purpose, remains ambiguous. Today, urban

serendipity is celebrated not only as the incontrovertible evidence of a convivial city, but also as an urban ideal (see Florida, 2013; Lindsay 2013, 2014)—especially for the creative city comprised of knowledge workers and driven by innovation. And adding to the confusion, urban projects ranging from the coworking and innovation space (Wagner & Watch, 2017), and all the way to an entire ‘creative class’ urban block, for instance, the Downtown Project Las Vegas (Meisterlin, 2014), have been explicitly branded or designed with urban serendipity in mind. How could so many design projects have occurred when there are still so few epistemological footings on serendipity in place?

A plausible explanation for the popular rise of urban serendipity is the changing nature of (creative or knowledge) work in the city. Whether working independently, or within a larger corporation, an entrepreneurial talent for quickly transforming good ideas into marketable innovation has become the benchmark for (profitable) contemporary work in the post-industrial city. The nature of this work tends to be project-based, short-term, and flexible (Sennett, 2005), where the quick generation of ideas and the swift transformation of these ideas into innovative and marketable products have become the twin indicators of effective work performance. In this setting, cooperation means that workers try to bounce ideas off each other and, through this exchange, to chance upon an unexpected business opportunity. Similarly, constant networking offers a good chance for an unexpected encounter with a potential collaborator or a great idea, all which is boon for the worker. On this, Olma (2016, p. 54) suggests that serendipity has emerged as a compensatory institution for a work environment that lacks not only organizational support, but also a clear prospect for career advancement. Serendipity then is no longer just a remote possibility that one could dismiss out of hand. Instead, it has become synonymous with the worker’s first big break.

Nevertheless, contemporary endorsements for urban serendipity remain substantively hazy; they neither say much as a whole, nor specify urban serendipity in any great detail, although most, if not all, tend to affirm serendipity as a generally positive quality. As a result, there have been many more pundits than critical examiners of urban serendipity. And as a whole, these endorsements tend to conflate more than they

distinguish—for instance, the endorsement of serendipity in the creative workplace is often uncritically extrapolated to the serendipity found in the city. In framing urban serendipity this way, the city has merely become a larger-scale analogy of a Mertonian laboratory-like workplace. It is highly dubious that this analogy is even correct.

But more critically, these contemporary endorsements, which have also become very popular, have unintentionally narrowed what urban serendipity can mean for the city. In limiting urban serendipity only to the anticipated dividends of innovation or conviviality in the city, much of its ethical prospects, and moral implications, have also been missed. If so, then urban serendipity demands a clearer redefinition and expansion by taking into account the evolving realities of the contemporary city. In staking this claim, urban serendipity is distinguished from the Mertonian (laboratory or institutionalized) serendipity, as well as the popularized endorsements of serendipity, through the following four relations, namely (i) an emergent effect of large cities; (ii) as a threatened experience in the Smart City; (iii) as an encounter with ‘more-than-human’ agencies and other living systems in the city; and finally, (iv) as a moral encounter with others in the city. The aim of this discussion is to expand the field of urban serendipity beyond the limits of popularized endorsements of this subject today and, in tandem, to draw out the ethical dimensions of urban serendipity. Each notion of urban serendipity will be briefly explicated in turn.

Urban Serendipity: As an Emergent Effect of Large Cities

Firstly, in any sufficiently large and complex city, urban serendipity may appear as an emergent effect. Johansson (2006) coined the concept of “the Medici Effect” to describe this kind of urban serendipity, which refers to the uncoordinated but highly creative activities of different craftsmen, architects, painters, sculptors, and philosophers interacting with each other in fifteenth-century Florence—that in turn defined the Renaissance. Contemporary evidence also suggests that the larger the city is, the more innovative the social capital that can be created (West,

2017, p. 278). In larger cities, there is a higher probability for one social group to chance on the activities of another social group and to recognize the value of these activities in new ways that might exceed what the original group has conceived. All forms of cultural innovation, or political syncretism, rely to some extent on this aspect of urban serendipity. And where cities also maintain openness and a healthy toleration of conflict, a multitude of new ideas also can converge, clash, and recombine in unexpected ways.

As an emergent effect, urban serendipity is the outcome of different unplanned and uncoordinated interactions between social groups and agents in any sufficiently large and complex city. Urban serendipity, in this view, is a quality that is not directly induced by design. Instead, urban serendipity emerges from a multitude of urban variables interacting at multiple scales and levels in ways that cannot be predicted beforehand. On this, the presence of some sloppiness, mess, disorderliness, and slack can help to increase—though not necessarily improve—negotiations and interactions between people in the city, where people are “forced to confront each other” (Sennett, 1973, p. 115) in order to cooperate and solve certain common problems together. Through the negotiations and interactions during such nonviolent confrontations, people learn from each other; they are, in other words, mutually civilized by alterity. They may then learn to “mis-hear” the other to open new possibilities that can surmount the impasse that they face (Sennett, 2012, p. 229), which is, after all, one kernel of serendipity. In this way, the city that is sufficiently large and encompassing—comprising of the qualities of openness, incompleteness, and looseness (i.e., slack)—is well-positioned to foster the preconditions for urban serendipity as an emergent effect.

Ironically in this case, urban serendipity is not so much induced by planning than it is likely to be threatened by planning. It has been noted that the pursuit of formality, orderliness, and legibility in modern city planning has prioritized the systematization of urban spaces ahead of the actual spatial practices of people (Scott, 1998). Through the planning precepts of clear functional zoning and visual order, facilitated by

the optimization of vehicular mobility, the ambiguous conditions that tend to favor urban serendipities have been wholly eliminated. For instance, streets were once sites of “sport, theatre, carnival, music and other forms of commoning” until they were reduced to just conduits of traffic and commodity flow (Dawney, Kirwan, & Brigstocke, 2016, p. 8). On these streets, before they were transformed, different people and activities were constantly changing and interacting in myriad different ways that could not be anticipated ahead of time. These streets used to offer a “zone of ambiguity” (Sennett, 2017, p. 261), where a multitude of people and activities interacted in ambiguous but complex ways and where urban functions were constantly being negotiated between users. But this form of urban ambiguity was eliminated in cities that are organized by modernist planning precepts, which prefer the clear segregation of distinct activities and the imposition of an even clearer boundary between them. In compartmentalizing people and activities this way by modernist planning, the preconditions that favor urban serendipity were effectively precluded.

As a redress to the stultifying effects of modernist planning on urban serendipity, Jacobs (1993, p. 238), for example, has argued for the benefits of urban cross-uses, where “different people, bent on different purposes, appearing at different times but using the same street”. Instead of longer blocks that isolated urban circulation, she proposed the merits of shorter blocks that encourage pedestrians to take shortcuts and make frequent turns when traveling to their destination on foot. In doing this, people from different parts of the same city could get to mingle, and this diverse footfall will also encourage a greater mix of shops and other businesses along these pedestrian pathways that in turn would make the city more convivial. To the extent that Jacobs’s recommendations have been heeded, cities today are challenging the stultifying legacy of modern urban design and planning at different levels, for example, by reclaiming valuable urban spaces from automobile traffic and parking (especially in city centers), encouraging walking and cycling in the city, and revitalizing city centers through mixed-use developments.

Urban Serendipity: A Possibility Threatened—Or Twisted—In the Smart City?

More recently however, urban serendipity has to contend with the ascendancy of the Smart City (or the Smart Urbanism) paradigm. But what is the Smart City paradigm? The Smart City is a colossal discourse that is still rapidly evolving. But there is scholarly consensus that a unitary definition of the Smart City (or Smart Urbanism) does not exist (Albino, Berardi, & Dangelico, 2015, p. 4; Glasmeier & Christopherson, 2015, p. 6; Grossi & Pianezzi, 2017, p. 79). Even so, the Smart City paradigm can be summed up to entail at least the following four characteristics: (i) the optimization of various urban functions through information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital tools (Picon, 2015); (ii) the deployment of sensors and the embedding of software-enabled technologies into the urban fabric to augment real-time urban management (Kitchin, 2015); (iii) the emergence of a form of data-driven urbanism where urban systems and their corresponding infrastructures are not only becoming even more tightly coupled through digital technologies (Kitchin, 2016), but also entail big data analytics and politics (Kitchin, Lauriault, & McArdle, 2016), which are central to the emergence of anticipatory governance (Leszczynski, 2016); and finally, (iv) that by one study, the global Smart City market is estimated to worth at least \$1.565 trillion dollars (USD) in 2020 (Glasmeier & Christopherson, 2015). This suggests that the Smart City paradigm is big business, and this prospect promises the further colonization of the city by technological companies and their corporate interests (Hollands, 2015).

Beyond socio-technological innovations, the Smart City paradigm is also shaping urban experience in a way that is likely to diminish the chance of urban serendipities. Yates (2017, p. 33) recounts that many Smart City initiatives are programmed to optimize the well-being of the urban resident—to make this individual's life more convenient, comfortable, and enjoyable by minimizing hassle, inefficiency, and criticism. In tandem, the tendencies of dematerialization and demobilization often accompany many Smart City initiatives (see Mitchell, 1999). Mitchell (1999, p. 148) suggests that through dematerialization

by digital technologies, for instance, the virtual facility of an electronic home banking system has effectively replaced the need to visit the bank as a place. Similarly, with the electronic portals for many urban service amenities now accessible everywhere through ubiquitous electronic devices, an individual does not need to travel to any venue that has made a successful transition into the virtual world.

While Mitchell (1999) extolled the environmental benefits of both dematerialization and demobilization—and surely he was correct—he missed the reality, on hindsight, of how these Smart City attributes have irreversibly impacted the urban experience. By diminishing the need for face-to-face contact, and other forms of social interactions that were once required for everyday life, urban lives that are made more convenient have, in that same measure, become more alienating. In diminishing the need for the urban resident to ‘show up in person’, the probability for any serendipity that could arise from such social encounters has also been greatly reduced. Clearly, this does not mean that people in smart cities have stopped interacting in person altogether; or that urban serendipities, in the form of uncoordinated but fruitful encounters, have all but become impossible. But it does mean that the serendipitous encounter, if it occurs, is likely to occur in the form of an unexpected prompting in the virtual world instead of a chance encounter in the physical city—only if because so many services and amenities, as well as new social networking platforms, have been shifted into the digital and virtual world.

Beyond changing the lived experience in the city through dematerialization and demobilization, the Smart City paradigm is more importantly also a political project designed to better control the urban organism through the use of digital technologies and tools (Picon, 2015). Through this instrumental and data-driven approach to urbanism, the Smart City paradigm aims to make cities more knowable and controllable (Kitchins, 2016). This said, not all instrumental aims for greater controllability are problematic. For example, constant feedback through the use of embedded sensors and other devices assist in the real-time management of the city, where a more efficient control of urban utilities and services, and a more effective response to economic and environmental shocks—among many other benefits of harnessing data in real time—have now become possible (Kitchins, 2015). These new capabilities for monitoring urban

processes, and then intervening in real time, have become especially crucial in an urban milieu characterized by the need to provide uninterrupted basic services to residents amid an explosive growth of the urban population and a nearly obsolete, “silo-based organization” of urban governance (Glasmeier & Christopherson, 2015, p. 4).

However, controllability in the context of the Smart City paradigm may mean implementing a form of anticipatory governance (Kitchins, 2015; Leszczynski, 2016). Anticipatory governance has been broadly defined as, “a broad-based capacity extended through society that can act on a variety of inputs to manage knowledge-based technologies while such management is still possible” (Guston, 2014, p. 219). Anticipatory governance is about “prevention rather than cure” (Guston, 2014, p. 224). Even when the meaning of anticipation overlaps with prediction in common use, the word is instead, and etymologically speaking—that is, ‘ante’, or ‘before’, coupled with ‘*capere*’, which refers to ‘capable’ or ‘capacity’—more “about practicing, rehearsing, or exercising a capacity in a logically, spatially, or temporally prior way than it is about divining a future” (Guston, 2014, p. 226). In this way, when extended into public administration and urban governance, it tends to refer to the use of Big Data analytics to derive foresight that can diminish or eliminate undesirable surprises before they occur.

In this form, anticipatory governance then involves technologies that aim to “identify, manage, minimize and insulate against exposure to adverse possibilities through shaping particular kinds of subjects” (Leszczynski, 2016, p. 1692), where people are preemptively profiled and sorted by algorithms operating on urban Big Data. Subsequently, these algorithms enable the translation of “probable associations between people or objects into actionable security decisions” (Amoore, 2009, p. 52)—a way of transferring a probable future into the certainties of the present. In a milieu of radical urban terrorism, these technologies may appear appealing because they seem to promise the elimination of undesirable surprises through preemptive policing and other actionable securitizations in the present. However, they can create a special paradox. Because surprises are impossible to eliminate entirely (Guston, 2014, p. 228), this form of anticipatory governance may be simply exchanging one set of foreseeable surprises for another still unknowable set. And by

rendering the unforeseen foreseeable, anticipatory governance presents a form of urban “futuring” (Leszczynski, 2016, p. 1692), which is ethically problematic because this ‘future’ and what is considered ‘best’ for this future are always determined and predefined by the algorithms and not the urban stakeholder (Thatcher, 2013, p. 972). Needless to say, these algorithms are in turn designed by corporations and businesses with interests that may differ vastly from the well-being and the projective interests of the urban residents for the future.

How then does anticipatory governance in this form threaten urban serendipity? A case in point here is Microsoft’s patented ‘Pedestrian Route Production’ (henceforth, PRP) application (see Thatcher, 2013), which has garnered widespread backlash on its allegedly discriminatory potentials. The PRP patent proposes a location-aware technology that would automatically route users around ‘dangerous’ neighborhoods by relying on unspecified demographic and crime statistics (Thatcher, 2013, p. 971) that are not only unclear in their origins, but when successively reinforced by the PRP can prejudice an entire subsection of the city as an avoided zone. Furthermore, this technology aims to route the user away from historically ‘unsafe’ neighborhoods. But what is considered ‘safe’? Apparently, the definition of safety is also predetermined by the PRP technology, which is opaque to the user.

In this way, the PRP patent has opened “a future wherein encounters on the street are sorted by race; an unseen algorithm enabling users to only ever encounter those already sorted as demographically similar” (Thatcher, 2013, p. 974). Moreover, beyond this speciously defined parameter of safety, the PRP also aims to recommend the user the best possible walk to the designated destination, where the ‘best’ means ‘the shortest and the most efficient’ (Thatcher, 2013, p. 972)—directly ensuring that the user is unlikely to encounter anything out of the ordinary. Thankfully, only the patent for PRP exists. But the very fact that this patent has been conceived is already an indicator that the central technology it anticipates is hardly a faraway reality. Beyond all the likely ethical issues with PRP, this form of anticipatory technologies is likely to threaten urban serendipity by preemptively circumscribing the plethora of urban experiences and confining encounters to the familiar and the expected.

Urban Serendipity: As an Encounter with ‘More-Than-Human’ Agencies and Other Living Systems in the City

In contradistinction, urban serendipity can emerge from a starkly different direction: in the entanglement of human agencies with other living systems in the city. Today, there is an emerging awareness that humans and non-human species are no longer distinctly separated, but rather entangled in the city (Houston, Hillier, MacCallum, Steele, & Byrne, 2017). This reality should not be surprising. After all, the relentless expansion of the urban fabric has destroyed much of the remaining natural habitats of many animal species. In turn, this has directly led to their extinction, or else, unintentionally, forced these species to adapt to the urban environment. Indeed, as Hinchliffe and Whatmore (2006, p. 128) suggest, “cities are the last places to find refuge, and the first places from which nature has fled”. According to this perspective, urban biodiversity has become a salient reality of any convivial city, where non-human species are seen to cohabit the same urban spaces as humans, but where their presence also makes for a more livable and distinctive city (Hinchliffe & Whatmore, 2006). The arrival of wildlife in the city, and the subsequent discovery that they are thriving—for example, whether it is the peregrines that have settled into the urban structures of Birmingham (UK) (Hinchliffe & Whatmore, 2006), or the growing family of otters that has moved into the river restoration project of Bishan Park in Singapore (Lim & Lu, 2016)—has been often greeted as an encouraging sign of coexistence between humans and non-human species in the urban environment.

But whether this arrival of wildlife should be unequivocally celebrated is another matter altogether. Their entry into the city is, after all, involuntary—a direct consequence of the anthropogenic impacts on their natural habitats. Had they been offered a choice, as Hinchliffe and Whatmore (2006) appear to suggest, the city would have been the least appealing option as a refuge. Even so, there is a growing recognition that urban wildlife has agencies and that they also claim a right to urban space (Metzger, 2016). This recognition then implies the need to give

room for the wildlife in the city to thrive, and to respect their agencies, which do not reside within the sphere of human intentionality (or planning). In acknowledging the “more-than-human” agencies of wildlife in the city (Hinchliffe & Whatmore, 2006, p. 125), which entail ecological dynamics that do not come directly under the control of human intentionality, there emerges a commensurate obligation to work *with* these ‘more-than-human’ living agencies and systems despite vast areas of ignorance. Naturally, this generates all kinds of surprises. But when these surprises are productively acknowledged by the planning process, old knowledge and goals are often revised—and they are usually substituted by more robust knowledge and new goals informed by these surprises. In this way, working with these ‘more-than-human’ agencies as living systems promises an outcome that may come to approach the serendipitous.

One salient venue where urban planners encounter the serendipities of living systems is in ecological restoration. In many cities today, previously derelict and industrial brownfield sites are being steadily reclaimed through ecological restoration, which is a form of renaturing of urban landscape by design (Gross, 2010). But unlike the design of artificial systems, ecological restoration requires working with living systems that maintain their own agencies and adaptabilities—ecological dynamics that are neither fully known beforehand, nor completely subjected to the human agency of premeditated design. In this way, ecological strategies always entail a “serious amount of ignorance” (Gross, 2010, p. 112). Surprises are therefore inevitable in ecological restoration. In this way, designing with living ecological systems requires a way of working with, and learning from, surprises. Here, the case of Montrose Point near Chicago is instructive.

Montrose Point, on Chicago’s north shore, is a public parkland today. As an area, Montrose Point comprises of a recreational beach and, importantly, a bird sanctuary for nature lovers and bird-watchers. In the early 1990s, plans were made to restore Montrose Point to the native ecologies of prairies and oak savannas. Historically, Montrose Point was formed by landfill and was later turned into a park in the 1930s—only to be converted into a military installation during World War II. It was subsequently discovered that a hedge of nonnative honeysuckle bush

was growing around the fence that surrounded the military installation, and this hedge started to attract many native birds, some unseen in the area since the 1940s (Gross, 2010).

This recognition that the hedge offers a resting place of migratory birds then questioned the original goal of replacing Montrose Point with the native prairies and savannas that existed before the first European settlers arrived. Eventually, the valuation of this nonnative hedge as a place where the migrating birds could rest diluted the original plan for wholesale restoration (Gross, 2010, p. 102). This decision to leave the hedge undisturbed, while introducing “hundreds of bird-friendly native shade trees, flowering trees, shrubs, and wildflowers” (Gross, 2010, p. 104) near the hedge was also supported by the ecologists’ belief that the hedge would eventually be supplanted by these native species in due course. However, this belief turned out to be false. The original hedge became stronger and healthier than before, which, according to Gross, was perhaps attributed to the shelter offered by the native trees. In turn, the hedge became even more attractive to the native birds.

In analyzing this case, Gross suggests that these living species—the migrating and native birds, the nonnative and invasive honeysuckle bush, and the native trees and shrubs planted by the planners—all maintain agencies and ecological interactions that reveal the limits of existing knowledge. These limits were often conveyed through the acknowledgment of surprises. For instance, the ecologists were surprised that the hedge grew stronger than before despite the competition posed by the native plants. And experts still do not fully understand why the migrating birds favor the hedge as their resting spot. Instead of ignoring these surprises, the planners, along with the different stakeholders, adopted an approach that allowed surprises, and also potential failures, to revise their original plans and goals (Gross, 2010, p. 118). In other words, they did not force their original plans in fear of these surprises; rather, they changed their original plans and goals because of these surprises. The fact that Montrose Point has become a popular bird sanctuary and park could be attributed to this stance of working with surprises. And rightly, the integration of surprises, as well as the

recognition of the value of surprises in Montrose Point, ought to be seen as one successful case of working with the serendipities of living systems in the city.

Urban Serendipity: As Moral Encounter with Others in the City

Amin (2012, p. 72) suggests that the possibility of newness always hovers in public spaces, and the surprise of multiplicity always exists in the city; but to perceive these novel urban experiences as a valuable chance discovery always requires a commensurate ability to respond to their unexpectedness. On this, there is a kind of urban serendipity that comes from responding to an unexpected encounter in the city and, subsequently, in recognizing the value of this encounter. In this way, many encounters between strangers in the city are either serendipitous in themselves, or contain the latent possibility for a serendipitous outcome.

A commonly encountered example is when strangers ask for directions. Spoken directions are rarely precise: ‘when you see this landmark, turn left, and then follow the street until you see an intersection, and then make a right there’ and so on may be the prototypical kind of directions that people offer strangers. Yet what may be lucid for the direction-giver is usually less apparent for strangers in a new city. In trying their best to follow these directions, common experience reveals that many unexpected sights and places have been discovered along the way. In recognizing this kind of serendipitous possibilities, Foth (2016) suggests that smart cities should be designed for getting lost. To arrive at one’s destination with the guidance of a smartphone application is all well and good. But this electronically guided path does not include the vagaries that accompany a more adventurous journey, which are often pregnant with serendipitous prospects. After all, as Campbell (2004) once suggests, getting lost has always been part of every adventurer’s journey; it is a pathway laden with many serendipitous encounters—through which this adventurer tends to emerge wiser and stronger.

But in a more complex form, unexpected encounters are not necessarily always banal. Unexpected encounters, for instance, can take the form of an urgent call for help, which demands an immediate response and quite so often, also at the helper's expense. In extending help, not only does the unexpected encounter then transform into a moral encounter, but through this moral encounter, the possibility for serendipity also comes into being. This urban serendipity that comes about from a moral encounter is often characterized by bidirectionality: in one direction, the one who renders help is likely to learn or receive something unexpectedly valuable through—or after—the process of helping; in the other direction, the individual who has benefitted from help rendered usually does not expect it and especially from people whom this individual would consider as strangers.

Traditional wisdom literature is replete with stories of unexpected encounters that have turned out to help not only the protagonists in these stories, but also offered new moral experiences to others and themselves in the most unexpected manner. In this way, whether these stories are apocryphal, fictional, or real is quite beside the point. Consider one such account by Reps (2009, p. 81):

Tanzan and Ekido were once traveling together down a muddy road. A heavy rain was still falling. Coming around a bend, they met a lovely girl in a silk kimono and sash, unable to cross the intersection. 'Come on, girl,' said Tanzan *at once* [emphasis added]. Lifting her in his arms, he carried her over the mud. Ekido did not speak again until that night when they reached a lodging temple. Then he no longer could restrain himself. 'We monks don't go near females,' he told Tanzan, 'especially not young and lovely ones. It is dangerous. Why did you do that?' 'I left the girl there,' said Tanzan. 'Are you still carrying her?'

In the same vein, philosopher D. T. Suzuki (2002, p. 71) rendered another account:

When a man heard noise coming from his yard, he looked out and saw neighborhood boys climbing up one of the fruit trees in the yard, trying

to steal some fruits. So he went out into the yard and placed a ladder underneath the boys in the tree. He then quietly returned to his house. Is this not a *stupid thing to do* [emphasis added]? The boys are stealing his fruits, but the owner does not stop them from committing an unlawful act. This man feared that when the children try to come down the tree, nervous about being caught, they might slip and fall, and hurt themselves. His impulse was to prevent them from being injured, not to save his property from thieves.

And now moving to an actual account. Driving on Interstate 95 toward Philadelphia in the fall of 2017, Kate McClure's car ran out of fuel. Stranded at the nearest exit ramp, McClure came out of her car to look for a petrol kiosk. A homeless man, Johnny Bobbitt Jr., was holding a panhandling sign at this exit ramp when he saw McClure, and knowing that something was wrong, he approached her. Upon meeting McClure, Bobbitt told her to return to her car and lock the doors. Then, with the only money he had—twenty dollars—he walked some distance away to a petrol kiosk and returned with a can of petrol so that McClure could resume her journey. In gratitude, McClure returned later with everyday supplies to thank Bobbitt. Subsequently, she also raised close to \$400,000 dollars (USD) through a crowdfunding site and gave this money to Bobbitt. With this money, Bobbitt bought a home and planned to use the rest of the money to help himself and others like him to regain their foothold in life. Needless to say, Bobbitt and McClure have become friends through this encounter.

Here, one ought to be duly suspicious if the helper is *always* rewarded with something unexpectedly valuable for the help rendered. Yet no person, as an aphorism that has been credited to Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) suggests, can sincerely try to help another without helping himself or herself in the process. Does this unexpected help, also rendered to the helper unknowingly, then amount to a kind of serendipity that she may come to recognize later but did not expect in advance? How does the transformation of an unexpected encounter into a moral encounter then create the preconditions of urban serendipity? It is important first to understand the moral nature in response to a call for help.

Firstly, all the responses are characterized by a form of immediacy. None of the protagonists in these three stories had a second thought on extending help, or upon perceiving the situation needed time away to deliberate about the impending decision. On this, Løgstrup (1997, p. 148) distinguishes between the decision and the resolution. A decision is needed in a situation that demands something concrete from the individual, for instance, as seen in these unexpected encounters. In contrast, a resolution is one that requires moral resolve—a conviction that needs a maturation period, which is often facilitated by careful moral deliberations that take time. However, unexpected encounters as these are always momentary and fleeting; they are never repeated in the same way again. The individual only has the choice of either responding to the call or not responding at all. There is, in Løgstrup's (1997, p. 150) words, "no third alternative". Even if the individual were to return to the same spot deciding to help after some deliberation, this moment of the unexpected encounter would have passed. In this way, the immediacy of response is key in transforming an unexpected encounter into a distinctively moral one.

Secondly, all the responses are also characterized by the denial of self-interest, if not also self-sacrifice as well. Suzuki's (2002, p. 70) emphasis on the qualities of "stupidity and absurdity" is germane to the constitution of the moral encounter. Whether it was a monk, who by social norm should never come close to a beautiful woman, or the man who offered a ladder to the young thieves stealing his fruits, or Bobbitt, who gave all the money he had so that McClure could drive away safely—all these then appear to exemplify a certain level of stupidity and absurdity when measured by the rational expectations and norms protecting self-interest. In exemplifying these contrarian dispositions instead of protecting their self-interest, these protagonists made themselves vulnerable. And in the vulnerability that followed and enabled only by a genuine willingness to help, they opened new possibilities that were otherwise foreclosed had they toed the line circumscribed by the rational norms of protecting self-interest.

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6

Fear

Fear in the City

The trend of fearless urbanization today is only matched by the rising tide of fearfulness in the city. As the city expands outwardly, it is also being fortified inwardly. Cities, which were once constructed to offer security for their inhabitants, are today often associated with danger more than security (Bauman, 2003). Walls, bollards, and other defensive infrastructures are now normalized as the guardhouses of contemporary metropolitan life. For instance, in many cities today, it is no longer possible to visit the Christmas market without also going through a ring of defensive bollards, metal detectors, and growling guard dogs. In tandem, privatized enclosures armed with their own advanced surveillance and biometric access systems increasingly lined the urban street, materializing what Minton (2009) calls, “ground control”, and turning once permeable streets and open plazas into a hardened labyrinth of impenetrable strongholds fitted with their own modern version of turrets and moats.

Even when these fortifications may seem less apparent in certain cities, their counterpart sentinels of anticipatory securitization and

surveillance technologies are usually no less obvious. Everywhere, public, semipublic, and private spaces are increasingly scanned, controlled, and subjected to many forms of surveillance (Schoonderbeek & Shoshan, 2016): constantly screening everyone as a plausible suspect of an anticipated act of crime or violence that has yet to manifest. In turn, algorithmic sieving attempts to identify potential suspects even before they act—rendering suspicion universal and turning people into the binary of either the soldier or the suspect (Sorkin, 2008). And biometric checkpoints with their armored sentinels, positioned in strategic places and vulnerable venues, quickly dispel any remaining belief that the city is an open, convivial place. Instead, their presence points to a darker undercurrent that threatens to erupt any time and a corresponding readiness to lockdown the city when the untoward occurs. Even ordinary-looking benches and flower beds lining public spaces, or the beautifully landscape berm and that eye-catching signage in front of prominent public buildings today (for instance, the geo-synthetic berm outside the Minneapolis Federal Building in Minneapolis and the Arsenal signage outside of the Emirates Stadium in London, respectively), are but the protective chicane and barrier, serving as ‘deputized’ ordinary urban objects against the careening truck bomb (Sorkin, 2008): means of ensuring safety without making people feel afraid (Fermanis & Creagh, 2017). The contemporary city, it seems, is choking under the stranglehold of an unnamed enemy implied in all these apparatuses of fear. Together, these apparatuses shape the beginning of what Wainwright (2016, p. 13) rightly calls, “anxious urbanism”.

It is common understanding that fear has accompanied cities throughout the history of mankind—not only the fear of external enemies, but also the fear of internal unrests, epidemics, and crimes (Souza, 2010). As a matter of fact, the entire history of urban planning could be written from the perspective of trying to manage fear in the city: fear of disorder and disease and, specifically, fear of those bodies that bring about such disorder and disease (Sandercock, 2003, p. 108). Truly, there is something about how cities, as bounded places of high density, have often intensified such fears of civil unrest, crime, epidemics, and pollution (Ellin, 1997). In turn, the city has often been modified spatially to improve legibility, and hence also control, of these urban

woes (Scott, 1998). For example, numerous scholars have pointed to the modernization of Paris from 1853 to 1870 by Baron Haussmann as the prototypical case where the city was spatially reshaped to extend a greater control and discipline of the urban population. But these spatial measures do not even begin to explain the drastic ways that fear is shaping the city today, where values of war, rather than community, are playing an ever-larger role in the design of urban spaces and experiences (Sorkin, 2008).

Recognizably, there is something new in the contemporary manifestations of fear in the city. Bruckner (2013, p. 45) once made a distinction between a salutary fear that mobilizes and a deleterious fear that weakens. The novelty of fear today can be said to reside precisely in how it is mobilizing yet deleterious at once—and paradoxically, how in spite of fear's deleterious and debilitating effects, it remains capable of mobilizing even more fear. Yet in another way, contemporary fear is novel to the extent that it represents an unprecedented sum of multiple fears all striking at the heart of the city at once. In many cities today, these triple fears—namely the fear of the migrant-outsider; the fear of radical terrorism and the corresponding militarization of once open cities; and the fear of the imminent urban catastrophe by fire, deluge, or the earthquake, or else by hapless human error for which the Chernobyl and Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disasters are merely the most representative examples of what could go badly wrong in this 'world as design'—are not only actual and overlapping probabilities, heightened by the city as a tightly coupled system, but also that each fear has regularly found its sudden and malevolent manifestation in a world tipping toward greater uncertainty and volatility in the Anthropocene.

The Contemporary Meanings of Fear in the City

While the word 'fear' has so far been rendered in the abstract, it is however important to further specify this concept here in the following three ways. Firstly, the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines 'fear' as *an unpleasant and often strong emotion caused by the anticipation or awareness of danger, or the state of anxiety and alarm*. In the context of the city,

fear is as much an emotion as it is also the state of a certain urban condition. Fear is, in this instance, the psychology behind the implementation of a security threat level advisory system in the city as it is the feeling of heightened anxiety experienced when this threat level stays 'red', or severe. Even so, and beyond the fear of a security threat, the city has always been characterized by two other ambient states of fear—notably, the fear of the stranger or the alien and the fear of the sudden and catastrophic destruction. These three sources of fear are distinct; yet they overlap in important ways in the contemporary city that demand a fuller examination later.

Secondly, in the city, fear is not just an emotion, or a psychological state. Fear is also a political project in the city armed with actual power. Sandercock (2003) notes that fear has consequences, and through the politics of fear and its corollary designation of menace, entire districts could be cleared out and redeveloped, or a specific social or ethnic group unfairly targeted for systematic prejudice. And fear, when rallied in a political project, always makes a hard distinction between friends and enemies—even when this distinction is politically speaking, always contingent. In turn, this binary of friends and enemies materializes into the spatial projects of borders, walls, and securitized fortifications. In operation, these spatial projects are always compelled by the logics of partition, exclusion, and preemptive elimination. Such spatial projects often include what Flusty (1994, p. 16) calls "interdictory space": spaces designed to "intercept and repel or filter would-be users"—often commensurately fitted with an entire gamut of control architectures and hostile apparatuses ranging from the bollard to the razor wire fence that render the invisible political project of fear unequivocally explicit. And through their unbridled implementation in the city today, fear also makes its starkest distinction from insecurity on the one hand and anxiety on the other. If insecurity is merely an inner lapse of confidence and safety, then anxiety is but a general state of unease and nervousness. However, these sentiments can neither quite explain the presence, nor the extent of all these contraptions of fear now emplaced within the city.

Thirdly, fear has altogether exceeded the sum of its dictionary definitions when set within the larger global 'war on terror' in cities today. Now, whether this 'war on terror' is mere rhetoric or not is never wholly

clear. Harvey (2006, p. 66), for instance, thinks that the war on terror everywhere has been deployed as an excuse to diminish civil and political liberties. Nevertheless, this ‘war on terror’—that is at once protracted and open-ended—has been instrumental in transposing the context of fear found in war to extend the grip of control and discipline in the city. Carl von Clausewitz (1780–1831) once wrote that in war, “so long as I have not overthrown my opponent I am bound to fear that he may overthrow me” (Herberg-Rothe, 2007, p. 45). This fear of being destroyed before the enemy has been defeated then leads to a totalizing commitment, no matter the cost, to overthrow the enemy completely (Herberg-Rothe, 2007)—a commitment that is also characterized by limitless escalation and the lack of any inhibition to limit violence (Herberg-Rothe, 2007). Because of the fear of annihilation in war, this commitment to overthrow the enemy—imaginary or real—paradoxically leads to the loss of control by merely reacting to the enemy’s moves: for, as Clausewitz wrote, “...I am not in control: the opponent dictates to me as much as I dictate to him” (Herberg-Rothe, 2007, p. 51). But because it is often impossible to know everything about one’s enemy, in war, fear always exacerbates the risk of reading the enemy wrongly—and fatally. And when everything goes wrong in war, Sun Tzu (544 BC–496 BC) wrote that in desperate straits, soldiers would lose their sense of fear; they would fight to the last person, only if because there was no longer any feasible option for either retreat or surrender. At the zenith of fear in war then, fearlessness turns rabid and irrational. In war, fear only dissolves—often at a relentless cost—after the utter destruction of one’s enemy.

Taken together, these contemporary meanings of fear point to a stark urban future of intense securitization and mistrust, where fear not only begets more fear, but also leads to consequences that are morally deleterious for civility in the city. To understand this fear better, it is important to further discuss the different sources of fear in the city. As discussed earlier, there are three primary sources of fear in the city today. They are namely, the fear of the migrant-outsider, the fear of radical terrorism, and the fear of an imminent catastrophe. Each of these fears mobilizes actions in different and intricate ways with uneven consequences—many that are also morally dubious. Here, each source of fear will be briefly explicated in turn.

The Fear of the Migrant-Outsider, or the Stranger

Mass migration has been occurring ever since the beginning of the modern era (Bauman, 2016). But recently in an unprecedented case, the European Parliament (2017) estimated that in 2015 and 2016, more than 2.3 million illegal crossings of European Union's (EU) external borders were detected, and in 2015 alone, the number of people who applied for asylum in the EU peaked at 1.26 million. The mass movement of people, both voluntarily and involuntarily, and comprising of refugees, asylum seekers, and economic migrants, has reached an unprecedented level in recent years. On the one hand, mass migration has been prompted by the worsening of lawlessness and destitution, and a general sense of despair, in many places; on the other hand, migrants are also lured by the appearance of bountiful life prospects present in their destinations. In a world characterized by extreme uneven development, and given the standing income gaps between rich and poor countries in the world today—a gap that is expected to widen even more in the coming decades—mass migration to the richer cities and nation-states in the world is unlikely to recede in the near future (Bauman, 2016).

For this reason, cities in the wealthier nations of the so called global north, and similarly for cities in the so called global south that still offer abundant job opportunities or life prospects, can only expect an increasing number of migrants and outsiders as strangers in their midst. Despite pockets of genuine cosmopolitanism, and despite the intellectual legacy that emphasizes the civilizing influence of the stranger, the 'EU migrant crisis', for instance, has nonetheless triggered something tantamount to a civic crisis in many European cities. In one recent study conducted by the Zurich University of Applied Sciences funded by Germany's Ministry of Family Affairs, it was discovered that more than 90% of an astounding 10.4% increase in reported violent crimes was attributed to young male migrants in Germany's southern state of Lower Saxony (Guarnieri, 2018)—a statistic that appears to corroborate the rising tide of fear against the migrant and outsider as stranger if the referendum gains by various European conservative and far-right political parties are any measure to go by.

According to Bauman (2016, p. 8), as much as strangers may prompt a civilizing influence in the city, they tend to incite anxiety because being ‘strange’ and so “fearsomely unpredictable”, they are “unlike the people with whom we interact daily and from whom we believe we know what to expect...we know much too little to be able to read properly their gambits and compose our fitting responses... And the ignorance of how to go on, how to deal with a situation not of our making and not under our control, is a major cause of anxiety and fear”. Importantly, these strangers in real life always enter society at the level of locality, where their presence is felt (Sandercock, 2000, p. 204)—setting up a confrontation, or clash, between often contrasting social values and ways of life. And especially in the case of the ‘EU migrant crisis’, these native fears of the stranger have also been exacerbated by the unprecedented rush of migrants and refugees entering various European cities in an unprecedentedly short time frame. It does appear, at least for the time being, that ‘mixophobia’ (that is, the fear of mixing with strangers) far exceeds ‘mixophilia’ (that is, the elation, or love, of mixing with strangers) (see Bauman, 2003), in a great number of European cities today.

Against these disruptive realities of fear invoked by the stranger, the Kantian cosmopolitan ethic, or right (Kant, 2006, p. 82)—that by the right of all human beings to the common possession of the surface of the Earth, hospitality, rather than hostility ought to be practiced—may suddenly ring hollow. Kant accepted, as the premise of this ethic, that there are hospitable surfaces on Earth, which are limited, and inhospitable terrains (e.g., the oceans or the deserts). For this reason, there is no other way but to share this limited hospitable surface, and to “tolerate one another as neighbors” (Kant, 2006, p. 82). But this premise, necessary for Kant’s ethic of cosmopolitan hospitality, did not take into account that many once hospitable surfaces today have been reduced to the state of inhospitable desolation, or what Sassen (2014) refers to as “dead land” and “dead water” by the wanton actions of protracted wars, irreversible contaminations, and exhaustive exploitations. Indeed, “originally no one has more of a right to be given at a given place on earth than anyone else” (Kant, 2006, p. 82). But what if one’s original rights to a given part of Earth have been destructively or deliberately

squandered by human actions? Then what additional rights remain, to share or to partake in another's portion of Earth that in contrast, might have been better cultivated or cared for? This selfish ethic, which suggests that one is not morally required to share what is one's rightful bounty, may even be consistent with Kant's categorical imperative on fairness. However, this ethic arbitrated solely on the ground of rights is seriously confounded by the brutal legacies of countless wars, genocides, and colonial exploitations across human history, where it is hardly easy to figure out the exact weight or the directionality of any moral debt. Consequentially, in this contemporary moment, it appears that no one could be beholden to another at least by the genetic and imaginary point of reference in the Kantian responsibility for cosmopolitan hospitality.

What then remains, if Kant's cosmopolitan ethic has been shown to be limited? In spite of the realities of fear, what claims must citizens still accord to strangers (Ignatieff, 2017, p. 210)? And what is owed to strangers by the virtue of our shared humanity (Appiah, 2006, p. xxi)? A few possibilities have emerged to these questions ranging from the most idealistic to the most practical. Firstly, it may be possible to overcome a provincial mindset—the outcome of living within a confined social network of familiar contacts—by postulating a set of cosmopolitan obligations to strangers that comprises of basic moral decency, of being conscious of our human commonality with strangers, and of values that can permit us to live together with these strangers (see Appiah, 2006). Secondly, and observing that the fear of strangers is never going away, it is possible to create new planning institutions and procedures that can respond constructively to fear and the conflicts that are brought about by this fear (Sandercock, 2000). And thirdly, ordinary virtues call for an important distinction between duty (or obligation) and charity to strangers. Ignatieff (2017, p. 210) suggests that while duty is often accorded to the fellow citizen (that is, the one who belongs to the inside of a certain group), ordinarily speaking, only charity—alongside pity and compassion—is owed to strangers. Inferring from his suggestion, it is therefore necessary to establish the institutions that can permit ordinary virtues in the city to flourish—virtues of trust, tolerance, forgiveness, reconciliation, resilience, and compassion—and from there,

to affirm these virtues by putting them into practice within the city. In turn, the deepening of these ordinary virtues in everyday life then permits a greater likelihood of decency at the level of civic behaviors to strangers. Extraordinary fear of the stranger can perhaps be assuaged by the most ordinary power of human decency.

Ignatieff's (2017) recourse to fear has the appeal of establishing a cosmopolitan ethic based on existing psychology rather than on any ideal behavior. After all, our moral imagination "has been historically shaped to deal only with others who reside inside a circle of spatial and temporal proximity, within sight and touch" (Bauman, 2006, p. 99)—and it has not yet visibly advanced beyond this threshold. Even so, Ignatieff's cosmopolitan ethic leaves a nagging feeling that it has not gone far enough and that it has to also assume the very bridging bond (that is, the bond between the citizen and the stranger) that this ethic aims to attain. In other words, this cosmopolitan ethic appears willing to accept a reduction in the moral horizon of the city in order to exchange for a *modus vivendi* that is becoming rarer in cities today.

Is there then another plausible recourse to fear—one that neither sells a cosmopolitan ethic too lowly nor elevates it too abstractly? On this point, a modification of Ignatieff's (2017) is possible. Sandercock (2003, p. 124) suggests that the discourse of fear has mostly been biased as a one-way relation against the stranger; it has been usually the fear of the citizen that has counted and not the fear experienced by the stranger. For instance, the many fears felt by the stranger—fears that Pope Francis has also defined as, fears of "confrontation, judgment, discrimination, failure" (Euronews, 2018) in the specific context of the 'EU migrant crisis', to the more general but no less visceral fears of rejection in a strange environment, and of police and citizen's arbitrary violence (Sandercock, 2003)—have hardly been registered in the discourse of fear. If so, is there then a way to compare the fear *of the stranger*, against the fear *felt by the stranger* in the city? One way is to measure each against the yardstick of the greater fear. At least going by this measure, strangers are generally the party that tends to exhibit the greater fear—if only because strangers are denied the same rights accorded to citizens, but at the same time, they have to face a constant barrage of angst and episodes of violence that citizens as a rule, do not experience

on a regular basis. If so, is there then a cosmopolitan ethic, founded on the most ordinary virtue of empathy, that offers both duty and charity to the strangers because it is they who experience the greater fear?

The Fear of Radical Terrorism

On Friday, November 13, 2015, at around 21:20 h, an explosion occurred outside the Stade de France stadium in Paris, where a friendly international football match was going on between France and Germany. This explosion, triggered by a man with a suicide belt, killed the perpetrator himself and a passerby. Then French President Francois Hollande was amid the spectators, but was immediately rushed to safety when a second explosion occurred, this time triggered by a man in a suicide vest at a different stadium entrance about ten minutes later. Not far away while this was going on, gunmen armed with semi-automatic rifles fired on diners and night revelers at the Le Carillon bar and the Le Petit Cambodge restaurant on Rue Alibert. Fifteen people died while fifteen more were severely injured. These attacks were also closely followed by a third explosion at the Stade de France and other episodes of gunfire and explosion near by—all targeting civilians enjoying a good night out in bars and restaurants. But the greatest carnage occurred at the Bataclan concert hall on Boulevard Voltaire, where a Californian rock band, Eagles of Death Metal, was playing to a full crowd of nearly 1500 people or more. Three attackers, all wearing suicide belts, stormed the concert hall with Kalashnikov-type assault rifles, killing eighty-nine people—and shooting people as they sought for cover on the ground. At least another ninety-nine individuals suffered critical injuries. This night of coordinated carnage in Paris concluded with 130 people dead and hundreds more wounded, and more than 100 in critical condition. This subsequently led President Hollande to declare the terrorist attack as an ‘act of war’ (BBC, 2015). But as the world would learn later, this might have been one of the most brazen attacks in recent memory, but it was certainly not the last terroristic ‘act of war’ declared on the city by knives, guns, and careening vehicles targeting concert-goers or pedestrians.

What defines recent episodes of attack as radical terrorism is their mindless yet systematic focus on undermining city life at its most elemental—the level of going about one's daily routine, to and fro from one ordinary place to another. This most elemental part of city life is also at its most unguarded, now made even more vulnerable by a terror attack could happen anytime and anywhere. Even more perplexing is an emerging acknowledgment that many confirmed terrorists were hardly outsiders, but rather, unsuspecting insiders—or else also permanent residents or citizens of the state that they had assaulted. And since the September 11 attack of the World Trade Center in New York City, various terrorists belonging to different groups have been understood to favor a form of low cost but highly organized and networked operation, facilitated by a savvy reliance on information technology as their primary tool of communication, fund-raising, recruitment, and propaganda (Boyer, 2008). This fluid and surreptitious nature of contemporary terrorism, hedged within the novel conceptions of 'sleepers cells' and 'lone-wolf operations', and employing everything from the mundane machete to the careening truck as their instruments of slaughter, further compounds a pervading sense of vulnerability that is precipitously edging toward an urban atmosphere of constant fear.

In reckoning with this radical nature of contemporary terrorism, the city is nearly always caught off guard. Terrorists neither seize nor hold territory (except for a short time, in the various ISIS strongholds in the Middle East), and they do not engage the military in combat at least in the city (Boyer, 2008). Yet they often demand a reciprocal form of engagement that implicates the military. Even so, militarized counter-measures against radical terrorism are especially limited by the physical nature of the city. Firstly, while war has been declared on the city through radical terrorism, the city can scarcely respond in the form of a total war against terrorism. Boyer (2008, p. 55) suggests that "cities and armies are antagonistic to each other: for the army a city offers opportunity for unopposed violence and plunder; for the city the army is a monster, bent on its annihilation". There are only so many soldiers and armored vehicles that a city can garrison, or else deploy in clear sight in plazas and along shopping streets as a deterrent, before civility in the city is completely and irreversibly corroded. For example, in his study of the recent securitization of St. Peter's Square in Rome,

Tan (2016) suggests that the imposition of a closed, carceral system of security checkpoints and barricades to prevent terrorism undermines the very civic and open nature integral, and symbolic, to St. Peter's Square as a public space. After all, the urban design of St. Peter's Square by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), with its metaphorical outstretched arms welcoming pilgrims and non-believers alike, was never designed with its radical negation by carceral securitization in mind.

Secondly, the city as a spatial form confers strategic advantages to the terrorists, but complicates matters for the security forces—amplifying what is already a highly asymmetrical form of warfare. For the terrorists, the city with all its nooks and crannies, busy streets, and crowded squares packed with unarmed civilians provides not only all the likely targets for their malicious operations, but also at the same time, offers the necessary decoy and cover for these operations. In contrast, the city as this “maze of urban canyon...restrict troop movement, change the rules of engagement, and diminish technological superiority” (Boyer, 2008, p. 59). And because the city is inherently a network of interconnected and strategic targets, it is not possible to barricade every point in this network, and barricading any one point is merely to deflect possible attack to another point.

In these limitations, cities vulnerable to radical terrorism confront an intractable ethical dilemma on two simultaneous fronts. On the first front, to securitize the city, the ‘war on terror’—at least on the home front—has to be waged through a war of “information and disinformation” (Boyer, 2008, p. 70), comprising of preemptive surveillance and intelligence collection in order to forestall any planned or imminent attack before it can happen. But to do this means keeping the primary channel of communication, the Internet, free from explicit censorship, which simultaneously facilitates and encourages the terrorists’ communication and planning (Boyer, 2008, p. 71), while also leveraging on this very openness to sieve out intelligence by tapping on, and trawling through, the mass of data produced by civilians in their everyday life in the city—a violation of privacy that has on various occasions been justified on the grounds of national security interests. If the preemptive deterrence of radical terrorism has to rely on a high probability of violating privacy and breaching public trust in the city, then what kind of public ethics is able to justify this action—beyond the oft-cited reasons of national security interests?

And on the second front, much of this ‘war on terror’ is waged behind the scene of the public eye for clear strategic reasons. But this veiled reality neither boosts the eroding confidence on public safety, nor is on its own, constitutes a sufficient or effective immediate counter-response should an attack occur. For this reason, cities deemed vulnerable to radical terrorism today have to contemplate on implementing the “battlespace” (Graham, 2009, p. 389), where absolutely everything in the city would fall under the purview of military guidelines conventionally employed in scenarios of war. And unlike the geographically and temporally demarcated areas of war such as the battlefield, battlespace instead renders “a boundless and unending process of militarization where everything becomes a site of permanent war. Nothing lies outside battlespace, temporally or geographically” (Graham, 2009, p. 389). In this reality of cities as battlespaces, boundaries, and separations between policing, intelligence (collection) and the military are increasingly blurred (Graham, 2009)—normalizing the explicit visibility of police personnel, equipped with military-grade firepower, routinely patrolling the once most convivial places in the city. In the same way, enormous bollards and blast walls have been installed in close proximity to what are deemed the most vulnerable targets, or else hidden within ‘deputized’ objects, where no place in the city, subjected to the doctrine of battlespace, can be excused from this form of total securitization. But even more perplexing is how battlespace always encompasses both the innocent urban civilian and the (potential) perpetrators of radical terrorism, where the beneficiaries of securitization cannot be clearly distinguished from the targets of this militarization. In the battlespaces of cities then, fears are simultaneously assuaged yet paradoxically stoked at the same time.

The Fear of an Imminent Catastrophe

Founded by the scientists who had participated in the Manhattan Project, the Doomsday Clock has been in use since 1947 to indicate how close humanity is to apocalypse, which is represented by midnight on this clock. Every year, a group of eminent scientists in the Science

and Security Board at the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, in consultation with its Board of Sponsors, which includes fifteen Nobel laureates, would make a decision to move, or to leave the minute hand of this Clock in place (Mecklin, 2017). To move the minute hand forward toward midnight signifies a growing threat of apocalypse; conversely to move it backwards away from midnight indicates an amelioration of this threat level. The minute hand of the Doomsday Clock had stayed set at three minutes before the hour in the two years before 2017, which was also the closest it had been to midnight since the early 1980s when US–Soviet relations were at their iciest (Mecklin, 2017, p. 15). However, in the annual announcement on the Clock in 2017, the minute hand has been set at two and a half minutes to midnight—reflecting the highest threat level of apocalypse second only to the state of two minutes to midnight in 1953, when a nuclear arms race between the USA and the Soviet Union was underway to produce and test the hydrogen bomb. In this 2017 Doomsday Clock report, scientists cited a plethora of risk factors, beyond the escalation of nuclear threats today, on issues such as climate change, disruptive technologies with uncertain implications, and volatile geopolitical relations that can easily tip toward a full-fledged nuclear conflagration.

Even if the Doomsday Clock could be dismissed as a blunt barometer of the high level of global danger today, the evidence of these simultaneous threats—of the energy, food, and water crisis, together with an unprecedented expulsion of the multitude from once productive lands and states (Sassen, 2014), and all exacerbated by an unequal global economy constantly threatening to disintegrate only to be reconfigured in an even more inequitable state—is nearly incontrovertible. And drawing on the work of environmental scientists, Evans and Reid (2014, p. 142) point out that the state of the world today has already crossed at least three planetary boundaries toward an unprecedented zone of unsafe operating space for humanity and is near to crossing as many as nine boundaries soon—boundaries of “climate change, species extinction, the disruption of the nitrogen-phosphorus cycles, ocean acidification, ozone depletion, freshwater usage, land cover change, aerosol loading, and chemical use”. Even without the doomsday apocalypse of a nuclear war, the beginning of the Anthropocene is already

pointing to an impending ecological catastrophe of global proportions—if nothing is done to curb and reverse the negative impacts of anthropogenic activities soon.

In view of these global dangers and risks, Evans and Reid (2014) argue that the human, natural, and moral spheres have coalesced in the Anthropocene. Human decisions and actions have now become sufficiently impactful to change once dynamic but stable planetary systems—and for the volatile worse if prior prognoses are anything to go by. The overall picture inferred from these prognoses point to an immediate future that is likely to be characterized by scarcities in energy, food, and clean water, and the conflicts that tend to accompany struggles for these scarce resources. In turn, these conflicts are more than likely to precipitate into significant security issues, which lead to even more anxiety and greater fear. To address this highly probable reality of the Anthropocene, Evans and Reid (2014, p. 3) suggest that there is a critical imperative to seek out new ethical sensibilities and modes of governance. If the present situation is any indication, neither business-as-usual nor political inertia and inaction is ethical. The scientists at the Science and Security Board of the Bulletin concur (Mecklin, 2017).

At this point then, this discussion returns to an older but no less relevant question of great contemporary import: can fear do the job (Jonas, 1984, p. 23)? Can the fear of an ultimate catastrophe of planetary proportions change collective behavior when genuine wisdom or virtue cannot? If the love for a *summum bonum* (that is, the highest good) is unable to motivate ethical behavior, then surely the fear of a *summum malum* (that is, the highest ill, or the fear of violent death) has to be the starting point of morality in the Anthropocene (Jonas, 1984, p. 28)? Jonas's (1984, p. ix) philosophy of responsibility then, created to address the new "enlarged nature of human action, with the magnitude and novelty of its works and their impact on man's global future", relies on the prognosis of dread, rather than bliss, to position fear as the main driver for its core morality.

However, the power of Jonas's philosophy rests on two major assumptions that have remained unarticulated, but are crucial. Firstly, Jonas assumed that human nature would—given a sufficiently clear and

present threat on the human condition—prompt corrective action. In other words, Jonas's philosophy has to assume that mankind is generally receptive to responsibility when the imperative to take charge becomes clear. But reality, on the other hand, appears to point in the opposite direction. Ellin (1997, p. 36) argues that rather than to nip the sources of fear in the bud, the more common reflex has been the avoidance of fear and self-protection. Secondly, Jonas's philosophy did not take into account the highly unequal socioeconomic reality where, to paraphrase Badiou (2016), there are over two billion people in the world today that count for nothing—if only because they are neither consumers nor producers in globalized capitalism—and one percent or so of the global population that possess nearly forty-six percent of all available resources. And if Piketty's (2014) data is any indication of a much broader trend, a minute minority within this one percent elite own a vastly disproportionate share of this forty-six percent—and the economic hegemony of this super-elite class can only be expected to enlarge even more in the coming years. In such a drastic attenuation of global human solidarity by unequal economic wealth, could everyone then be counted on to respond equally to the same global threat or fear? Or perhaps, could certain members of the human society literally afford to sit back and do nothing, while the multitudes scramble in fear before a corroding social, economic, and environmental order? Can fear actually be democratic when democracy has been thoroughly undermined by gross socioeconomic inequality?

If the phenomenon of the luxurious doomsday bunker—nay, mansion—is anything to go by, then the ineffectiveness of Jonas's ethics of responsibility in the context of an inequitable socioeconomic climate today becomes clearer. The CNN (2017) reports the rising trend of high-security shelters among the super-rich, often fitted with every luxury amenity one could imagine while their occupants, in the event of a doomsday scenario, luxuriate in these cozy garrisons to wait out the apocalypse. Whether this is merely a sensational morsel of news, or the more troubling sign of a deepening trend of inequality, is unclear. But what is clear is the human tendency for escapism into fantasy worlds at the precipice of radical fear (Ellin, 1997)—if one could actually afford it.

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7

The Urban Commons

The Commons at the Limit of Capitalism

Never before have the contradictions of capitalism been so stark, and the limits of capital so close to imminent danger, when there are also so few recourses in place. Paradoxically, capitalism is sustained by an insatiable drive for constant and limitless growth within a closed planetary system otherwise governed by the laws of limit and scarcity. In order to grow, and at a compound rate, capital has to privatize, commodify, and monetize as many entities as possible—relations, land, labor, and even nature itself. But after nearly four decades of neoliberal privatization, pretty much everything possible in the world has been commodified, and this has left little that can be further privatized and enclosed (Harvey, 2014). On the other hand, the worldmaking activities of urbanization—the wholesale creation of new urban districts, of posh towers, office buildings and shopping malls, and their corresponding multiplier effects—which have so far been serving as a robust channel to absorb, engage, and further create surplus capital (Harvey, 2010), are also showing signs of an impending limit. After all, the city cannot keep growing indefinitely after more than half a century of continuous

expansion in physical infrastructures, workforce, consumption, and production capacities globally (Harvey, 2014).

Harvey (2014) notes that at this limit, there is a general tendency for capital to fold back on itself, where capital deliberately sets out to destroy or devalue other existing forms of capital. Another tendency is for capital to seek out remnant geographies or spaces that have yet to be completely conformed to the socioeconomic formations of capitalism. One such remnant is the commons (Harvey, 2006, p. 43). It is this that prompts de Angelis (2016) to suggest that capital is always engaged in a process of destroying the commons—to enclose what was once commonly shared or differentially owned—and then privatizing and transferring these resources into the folds of capital itself. Harvey (2012, p. 78) accounts one such episode of accumulation by dispossession, where a lively, ethnically diverse, and lived-in neighborhood suddenly found itself in the crosshairs of capital, which subsequently led to the displacement and eviction of the original residents through the process of urban revitalization by gentrification. Only here, revitalization has contradictorily led to ‘devaluation’ (Harvey, 2012, p. 78), where tracts of the city were sold to the highest bidders at the expense of the poor and socially vulnerable populations. This process tends to result in urban spaces that are neither revitalized nor inclusive (Foster & Iaione, 2016, p. 283).

At the same time, the environmental and social costs of sustaining the political economy of capitalism are becoming visibly clear and unacceptable to the majority of the population (Harvey, 2014). These costs are also increasingly borne by this population—a growing multitude of few resources to escape from, or to buffer against, their ills. The cumulated effects from decades of receding public provision and state regulation have resulted in the declining quality and coverage of health care, affordable education, clean air, and water standards, among many other forms of public cutbacks. In the deterioration—or so often, the provision vacuum—that ensued, market options have emerged in their place. However plentiful these options may be, they are nonetheless only reserved for those who have the ability to pay. Caught between the threefold crisis of an increasingly untenable system of capitalism, a worsening state of spatial justice in the city, and

an unprecedented rollback of public goods and services substituted now only by their market counterparts that are inaccessible to all except for the rich, what then is the recourse for the vast majority of the global—urban—population?

The Definitions of the Urban Commons

Ineluctably, it is in this context that the idea of the commons has become ascendant. What then is the commons? There are at least three broad attributes that begin to define the commons. Firstly, the commons is not the public (Linebaugh, 2014): the public is defined as the contrast of the private, while the commons is solidarity in opposition to individual egotism. In the same way, public spaces and public goods are maintained by state power and public administration, while the commons is maintained by the commoners (Harvey, 2012, p. 72). Secondly, the commons is a generative paradigm for formulating new social relations beyond that of the market economy and simultaneously, also a protective recourse against the overwhelming marketization of everything in social life (Bollier & Helfrich, 2014). The commons therefore constitutes relations, in Harvey's (2012, p. 73) words, that are "off-limits to the logic of market exchange and market valuations". In this way, the commons is also as much a political imagery and vocabulary as it is also a material aspiration and organizing tool (Chatterton, 2010, p. 626). Thirdly, the commons entails the activity of commoning (Linebaugh, 2008)—a practice where commoners come together to collectively manage shared resources that are held in common. On this, the Latin root of the commons comprises of two parts: '*com*', which means coming together, and '*munis*', which implies some kind of obligation (Linebaugh, 2014). Etymologically then, commoning is never found without a commensurate moral economy. This reality has been well corroborated in the empirical study of Ostrom (2006), where she discovered that rules and norms exist to govern the use and management of common-pool resources (henceforth, CPRs).

However, scholars and activists have been more divided on the definition of the urban commons. At the heart of the urban commons is a

fundamental distinction, which Hardt and Negri (2009, p. viii) define as a distinction between the “common wealth of the material world”, which is the air, water, and all of nature’s bounty, and the immaterial commons that are the “results of social production” necessary for social interaction, which are artifacts such as knowledge, languages, codes, and information. It is, in other words, a contrasting notion of commons between one that is independent of human design and one that is the outcome of ‘the world as design’. The significance of this distinction becomes clearer when the city—the metropolis—is posited as a vast reservoir of this immaterial commons in contrast to the commons of the natural or material world (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 153). For any thriving city to exist, a living dynamic of “cultural practices, intellectual circuits, affective networks, and social institutions” has to exist beyond the physicality of the built environment (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 154), and it is this living yet artifactual system that constitutes the immaterial commons of any city.

But even if the city could be conceived as one vast urban commons this way, it is, however, a very general, if not also an unwieldy, unit of analysis. On this, certain scholars have challenged the definition of the urban commons by seeking to clarify its reference point: is the commons ‘urban’ because one tends to find them in the city, or is the urban commons defined by the urban process (Kip, 2015)? Without a clearer conception of either the city or the urban, it is not easy to understand how the urban commons can be distinguished from its non-urban counterparts (Kip, 2015, p. 45). Following this, the city could be defined as a geographical entity, which is distinct from the urban as “a multi-scalar constitution and its linkages to other spaces and places”—or as a particular “spatial organization of society” (Kip, Bieniok, Dellenbaugh, Muller, & Schwegmann, 2015, pp. 16–17). In defining the urban commons by the urban process this way, this may mean keeping the boundaries of the commons porous to all (i.e., to be as inclusive as possible despite differences) and in tandem, to recognize that there will be some social fluidity to membership in the urban context (Huron, 2017, p. 1065).

Other scholars, however, have focused on identifying the core attributes of the urban commons as a way of defining this concept.

The central question in this approach is: what may be the core attributes or properties that define the urban commons? On this, the work of Parker and Johansson (2012) suggests at least three attributes that define the urban commons. Firstly, the urban commons is likely to comprise of a larger scale of operation and entails more extensive sharing and communication relative to the smaller-scale commons of the CPRs. And in contrast to the more discrete CPRs—resources that are unambiguously clear in the form of meadows, fisheries, or water—the salience of the urban commons or the boundaries of what is being managed in common are usually more ambiguous. Furthermore, what is being shared is also more changeable and complex in nature. To illustrate this point, Parker and Johansson (2012) invoke the example of a community garden as a form of urban commons. The spaces and the produces of this community garden, as well as their spatial practices, are shared in common. But is the concomitant increase in property values in proximity to this community garden also a dividend engendered to be shared? In surfacing this possibility, the urban commons can be characterized by positive and negative spillover effects that may begin in the commons, but are hardly circumscribed by the boundaries of this commons.

Secondly, because the urban commons is set within a context abound with people of different interests, it is also likely to be characterized by contestation (Parker & Johansson, 2012). Reusing the same example of the community garden again, this garden may be for some a location used for food production, while it is for others, a space of community and communication (Kip, 2015, p. 45). This observation corroborates the earlier discussion in Chapter 4, where stakeholders are frequently seen to assign different weights and priorities to the same resource under consideration, and where such differences often form the sources of many conflicts. For this reason, the urban commons is likely to entail a great deal more communication between users of this commons to either improve mutual understanding or resolve likely conflicts. In contrast to the more or less unchanging norms that govern the use of CPRs, for instance, seen in the similar practices of scarce water resource management found across many different traditional communities (see Trawick, 2002), the urban commons appears to require constant

negotiation and compromise between irreconcilable differences if it is to have any chance of thriving in the city.

Thirdly, the urban commons is expected to operate on the basis of what Parker and Johansson (2012) refer to as cross-sector collaboration comprising of many diverse agents and stakeholders. In other words, the commoners of any urban commons are expected to comprise of many members and entities from the civil society, performing interchangeable roles—sometimes as contributors or managers of this commons and in other times, as its users, guests and visitors (see Bradley & Pargman, 2017, p. 243). Unlike the more tightly knitted communities of the CPRs, where there is a clear differentiation of privileges that distinguish the insider from an outsider, the urban commons is likely to depend on a more loosely knitted and contingent community of commoners in the city.

Beyond these key attributes, Kornberger and Borch (2015) also suggest that the urban commons comprises of resources that increase in value when they are consumed. Unlike the CPRs that Ostrom (2006) studied, which are subtractable (i.e., resources or rival goods where consumption by one individual implies the denial of consumption of the same good by another individual) but non-excludable resources, urban commons is likely to comprise of resources that are non-subtractable and non-excludable, which furthermore yields an overall increase in value as they are being used.

As a case in point, Parker and Schmidt's (2017) study of the Stapelbäddsparken skateboarding park in Sweden comes close to demonstrating this attribute of the urban commons. Parker and Schmidt (2017, p. 207) suggest that instead of an anticipated subtractive impact by overuse and congestion in the park, the presence of a large group of skateboarders, mutually learning from each other in their particular domain of interest—a process that the researchers call the “networking effects”—has significantly outweighed the realities of subtractive usage in the park. In turn, these networking effects invoked by a large group of skateboarders draw in even more users, increasing the reputation of this park as a place where acquiring new knowledge on skateboarding, and interactions with leading personalities in skateboarding are possible. This study also suggests another insight: even if the

urban commons is characterized by certain subtractive properties (e.g., the circumscribed space of this skateboarding park can only accommodate so many skaters at one time comfortably), it is nonetheless possible, through design choices and strategies on top of governance (Parker & Schmidt, 2017, p. 211) to overcome this otherwise subtractive nature of the urban commons.

The Ethics of the Urban Commons: A Preliminary Discussion

Despite these emerging ideas on the urban commons, little attention has been focused on understanding the urban commons as an ethical construct even when ethics—either in the form of the moral economy governing the use of CPRs, or in the moral aspirations of the urban commons as an alternative institution beyond the state and the market—has been foundational to the constitution of the commons. Specifically, the everyday practice of the urban commons is likely to involve sharing work and resources, reciprocating favors, and even making compromises together—practical activities that are often regulated by some form of moral norms, if not also facilitated by a shared belief on the ideal commons. Especially for the urban commons, how to recruit and motivate enough commoners with the necessary commitment to maintain the common resources is a crucial question (Bradley & Pargman, 2017, p. 243). In contemplating this question of motivation, one recalls Bateson's (2000, p. 512) formulation of a problem in the design ethics of ecology: should the original designers “put into the very fabric of their plans collateral incentives which will seduce those who come later into carrying out the plan for reasons quite different from those which inspired the plan?”. This question of motivation has both an ethical dimension and design dimension, and Bateson is clear that this is first and foremost an ethical question before it becomes a design question.

And on a different scale, the urban commons as an institution or place interacts with other systems in the city, generating issues and

problems of moral significance that have yet to be properly examined. For instance, Harvey (2012, p. 70) recounts the possibility of an irreconcilable dilemma between two equally valuable commons—where both are morally significant in some important ways but only one could flourish upon the extirpation of the other. To situate this dilemma through the similar example of community gardens in New York City again (see Chapter 4), Schmelzkopf (2002) describes this as an incommensurable conflict between affordable housing and publicly accessible green spaces—each an invaluable good in a neoliberal city and each is morally significant in its own ways. However, only one could exist. And yet another key dilemma revolves around a central ambiguity of the urban commons in the neoliberal city: is the formation of the commons as a non-capitalist form of exchange or provision indirectly supporting the neoliberal project of dismantling the state as a means of providing infrastructure, welfare, and other forms of social organization (Dawney, Kirwan, & Brigstocke, 2016, p. 21)?

For these reasons, the ethics of the urban commons could be broadly divided into two parts: An *internal ethics* that facilitates commoning, or the various practices that perpetuate the urban commons, and an *external ethics* that evaluates issues or problems of moral significance elicited by the urban commons in relation to the city. Because of the limited scope of this chapter, and because many issues and problems raised by the perspective of the external ethics have been covered in other chapters, the subsequent discussion will only focus on the internal ethics of the urban commons.

Specifically, this internal ethics suggests that certain virtues—tantamount to a moral conviction for the commons—are necessary for motivating the maintenance of the institutional framework that regulates the use of the commons. These virtues also play a stabilizing role when this framework that regulates behavior in the commons is nascent or still developing. Analogical cases have shown, for instance, when Gouldner (1960, p. 175) observes how honoring the norm of reciprocity, despite the absence of any enforcement institution to do so, could elevate reciprocity into an “all-purpose moral cement”—useful for filling the gaps and bonding the fissures in human relations. In a separate account, Ignatieff (2017) suggests how ordinary virtues and common

decency have kept highly vulnerable social relationships from further fraying in culturally diverse cities today.

However, these postulations on the ethics of the urban commons are contradicted by an important but tacit assumption in Ostrom's (2006) work, which suggests that the institutional framework for managing CPRs is both the necessary and sufficient criteria for the effective governance of successful commons. In reading Ostrom's work this way, Kratzwald (2015, pp. 33–34), for instance, argues that when the right institutional arrangements have been found, the commons will function and this functioning does not require morally 'better' or superior people. This particular way of reading Ostrom's work is, however, not at all peculiar; after all, Ostrom's response to Hardin's (1968) 'Tragedy of the Commons' was not a normative answer but rather, a regulative framework. For Ostrom, Hardin has depicted a resource crisis, which required an answer that could either avert this crisis, or at least, to manage it. In this way, ethics, or the consideration of a normative answer to a moral lapse perceived in the tragedy of the commons, was never a significant part of Ostrom's seminal work. But just as likely, Hardin has also depicted a moral crisis—and one that requires a normative response.

On noticing the absence of ethics in Ostrom's work, one then wonders: has ethics no role in the cultivation and the persistence of the commons? Or to state this in a different way, is an institutional framework even adequate to address the moral lapses perceived whenever a scarce resource is used—or abused—by a large group of people? Furthermore, what keeps this institutional framework buoyant when it confronts external challenges that can diminish its effectiveness? While Ostrom's (2006) institutional framework is necessary for many successful commons that she had studied, this framework could still be argued to be insufficient given the following two reasons: an outstanding moral lapse that was never substantively addressed on the one hand, and on the other hand, external buffeting that could weaken commitment to this institutional framework.

Specifically, this moral lapse entails that the maximization of self-interest would eventually lead to the ruination of all—herders and

the commons alike (Hardin, 1968). Each herder, in this commons as the scarce resource, receives a direct benefit from increasing the number of animals grazing in the meadow. But the costs imposed by overgrazing are, however, shared among all the herders. In this way, a difference exists between the direct benefit received, and the shared cost imposed on all. This leads to the moral hazard where each herder benefits fully from increasing as many animals as possible to graze in the commons while this herder is only burdened with a fraction of the costs for doing so—until ruin awaits all. In depicting the typical herder this way, Hardin's anthropological assumption is not just a negative one, but moreover depicts people as selfish maximizers, or else utilitarians characterized by a sociopathic streak.

While a counter-argument could defend a less deplorable depiction of human nature, or else argue against Hardin's own deplorable depiction, the following argument does not take either form. Instead, the following argument accepts Hardin's negative anthropological assumption but relies on it to sharpen the limitations of Ostrom's institutional framework. Along this line of thought, all effective and successful institutions regulating the commons can only constrain and deter the worst possible violators of these institutions. Either by the promise of a costly sanction against the violator or else by a history of enforced exile from the commons for the gravest form of violation, these institutions are nevertheless only effective up to a point in keeping the worst violators at bay.

However, these institutions can neither entirely do away with the moral hazards associated with the difference between direct benefits and shared costs (i.e., also the difference between the *certain* benefits accrued from free-riding and the *probable* risks of being caught), nor directly address the moral lapses perceived in Hardin's depiction of human nature, which may not be entirely untrue in certain conditions. For example, under conditions of radical scarcity, people have been observed to hoard resources, which is to say that the fast processes of their moral brains for self-preservation override the slower processes of ethical deliberation informing that hoarding behaviors actually exacerbate scarcity for others (see Greene, 2014).

Following this, commoning institutions have also been shown to be ineffective when all compliant commoners are coerced by external pressures to ‘defect’ at the same time, or in other words, to subvert the commoning institution under conditions of extreme duress. For instance, Bresnihan’s (2016) ethnographic work documents how the fishermen as commoners in Castletownbere in southwest Ireland were coerced to overfish by the pressures of the market in order to continue their livelihood—a practice that would ultimately undermine their commons even when all of them complied with a commoning institution that had so far up to that point regulated the use of their commons. On this, Ostrom’s (2006) work was deduced from the commons that *had* been successful; the commons that had either failed or fragile was noted to have only weakly conformed to her institutional framework (Ostrom, 2006, p. 180). But could there have been other factors, unaccounted for by Ostrom’s framework, that might have been also decisive for the success or failure of the commons? At least on this question, one could draw two conclusions: Firstly, Ostrom’s work does not, and cannot, deny the under-determined possibility of other factors that might have been decisive for the successful or the failed commons; secondly, it is within this gap between the successful and the failed commons that the following projective question also becomes salient—how, and to what extent is ethics, in the form of aspirational intentions and behaviors, relevant for sustaining a commons on the *imminent edge of failure*?

To describe the limitations of the institutional framework this way is neither to disparage Ostrom’s significant contributions nor to suggest that ethics, or even the virtuous character, is the panacea for all the possible tragedies of the commons caused by moral lapses. But if these moral lapses are real—and the work of Greene (2014) on the dual-process moral brain seems to support this possibility—and if the limitations of Ostrom’s institutional framework are also true, then there are legitimate grounds to consider the commons, and the institutions that sustain them, from the normative perspective of ethics. This normative approach is further elaborated through an explication on the nature and ethics of sharing, which is a central activity of commoning.

The Sharing Economy and the Urban Commons

One further way to understand the ethics of the urban commons is through the ethics of sharing. On this, sharing is a central activity of commoning. However, sharing today is also a trending concept associated with the ascendant sharing economy. According to one widely cited source, the five key sharing sectors—comprising of travel, car sharing, finance, staffing, and music and video streaming—are expected to increase from approximately \$15 billion in global revenue to around \$335 billion by 2025 (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2015, p. 14). Based on this projection, the sharing economy is anticipated to become a key driver of economic growth in the near future. Despite many well-founded misgivings on the sharing economy, it has—just like the urban commons—managed to trigger something akin to a social reimagination of other possibilities for consumption and production. Inferring from the work of Bradley and Pargman (2017, p. 232), there must have been sufficient similarities between the sharing economy and the urban commons to warrant their suggestion that certain practices in the sharing economy today could well be conceived as the “twenty first century commons”.

Specifically, there are at least two salient similarities shared by both the urban commons and the sharing economy. Firstly, central to both phenomena is a claim to relocate—or to return—discretion and autonomy to the individual on the organization of consumption and production processes in the city. This is a radical departure from the top-down, command-and-control, and corporatist market economy that has been exerting a hegemonic influence on these processes for more than half a century. In reclaiming these processes, individuals are now free to constitute new socioeconomic formations that are independent from the hegemony of the corporatist market economy. Secondly, both phenomena claim the activity of sharing as the key tenet of these new socioeconomic formations. Grassmuck (2012, p. 25) goes as far as to suggest that the ethics of sharing is in fact the ethics of the commons. This common activity of sharing, symmetrical in both the urban commons and the sharing economy, has become a response to the overwhelming privatization and exclusion by enclosures in the neoliberal city.

But there are also key differences. Although all commons involve either activities or practices of sharing, not all sharing practices, in spite of genuine sharing activities, will ever attain the status of the commons. On this point, it does not help that many empirical examples in the sharing economy actually subsist less on the principle of sharing but rather operate more like the economic activity of renting in practice (see Slee, 2015). And even if there are genuine sharing activities to be found in sharing practices, these activities as a whole do not yet constitute to the commons that is free from the logic of market exchange and valuations, which Harvey (2012) argues as the definitive attribute of the commons. On this, if most definitions point to the following threefold constitution of the commons, namely (i) common resources; (ii) institutions or commoning practices to govern these resources; and (iii) the communities, or the commoners, involved in the production and reproduction of the commons (Kip et al., 2015, p. 13), then the distinction between the urban commons and the sharing economy becomes even sharper. After all, the fundamental tenet of common resource ownership integral to the urban commons is not necessary for successful (or effective) sharing of this resource in a sharing practice. For instance, and at least based on present models of successful bike-sharing programs, it makes little or no difference to the success of the bike-sharing initiatives whether these shared bicycles are property held in common or else privately owned by companies or municipal authorities (i.e., public property).

Even so, there are sufficient similarities between the urban commons and the sharing economy to warrant a focused discussion of the latter in order to elucidate and sharpen the definitions of the former. Specifically, the central tenet of sharing will be explicated to advance the discourse on the urban commons. And although sharing is always done in concrete settings and under particular conditions, it also points to something beyond the activity of sharing itself: to new horizons of “transformed social relationship, cultural dynamics and normative frameworks” (Sützl, Stalder, Maier, & Hug, 2012, p. 8). In this way, sharing, even when it is practiced under the canopy of the sharing economy, always contains an ethical possibility for the city. And because of this possibility, sharing offers an important starting point to further explore the ethics of the urban commons.

The Ethics of Sharing: An Internal Ethics of the Urban Commons

Drawing from the work of Chan and Zhang (2018), there are at least three major types of sharing. To sustain sharing and also to increase the likelihood that sharing can persist, each type of sharing is argued to depend on one salient form of ethic. Firstly, the first type of sharing can be referred to as a subtractable and also excludable form of zero-sum sharing. In this type of sharing, sharing more with one individual means having less for either oneself or another individual and, conversely, sharing less with this same individual means having more for either oneself or another person. Insofar as the total value of sharing is concerned, this value is also fixed. In other words, sharing depletes the total store of what is being shared. This type of sharing is usually limited to tangible, measurable, subtractable, and divisible goods—if only because these are the attributes that fit the procedural logic in this type of sharing. Interestingly, this is also the type of sharing that is readily visible (i.e., one could always perceive the quantity of the portion that has been shared). To the extent that this type of sharing is more visible than other types, it is also sharing that can be most easily appraised. To possess abundance but to have shared little, one is a niggard; yet to possess little but relatively to have shared much makes one generous. For this reason, the sharing of tangible and divisible goods—especially in the most visible and readily understandable ways—always carries a normative valence.

Integral to this type of sharing is the nature of the distributive rule: what is considered a fair or just distributive rule for sharing? And who or what can decide on this rule, and furthermore, what are the reasons for implementing this rule? Even when this distributive rule is never absolute, the goal is nonetheless to render it in as clear and as fair a manner as possible. For instance, Rawls (1999) goes as far as asking those who are formulating this fair distributive rule to imagine themselves in a hypothetical original position and, behind a veil of ignorance, where they could imagine not knowing their actual lot in life. In such an imaginary position, any distributive rule selected is projected to be just. While this is a robust thought experiment, it is unlikely that the

more quotidian practices of everyday sharing in the urban commons would invoke Rawls's theory. Most likely in situations where there is uncertainty on what constitutes a fair share, the contingent rule to divide all shares equally usually prevails. But in other cases where the total quantity of what could be shared is roughly known, a fair share is usually decided on the basis of what one needs. For example, in traditional commons created to manage scarce water supplies, Trawick (2002, p. 7) notices that the amount considered as one's entitled share is decided on the basis of the amount that one might need—a tradition that is supported by what he refers to as "the principle of equity". This principle of equity, which is practiced on the basis of contingent and situational judgment, then complements the commons institution to manage scarce water resources.

In contradistinction, the second type of sharing is a non-subtractable, non-excludable, and non-zero-sum sharing. In this type of sharing, the total value of sharing is never capped. This means that the total value of sharing can increase with repeated sharing, or conversely, it can also decrease with diminished sharing. An example of this non-zero-sum sharing could be seen in the sharing of news. The more frequently this news is circulated and shared with more people, the greater is its perceived value. But like all popular news after a while, it will fade away to be replaced by another news, and the perceived value of the original news also diminishes. In this way, this type of sharing usually pertains to the sharing of non-subtractable, non-excludable, and intangible goods such as information, knowledge, and even sentiments. Because of the nature of these intangible goods, this type of sharing is limited by neither the frequency nor magnitude of sharing—an individual can theoretically share as much as the receiver of these goods can accept them. This said, the upper limit for this type of sharing may nonetheless adhere to the saying of, 'after all, there is such a thing as having too much of a good thing'.

If this is an outline on non-zero-sum sharing, what can be said of the ethical concepts associated with this type of sharing? Unlike the previously discussed zero-sum sharing, which is predicated on the principle of equity, non-zero-sum sharing is instead based on the ethics of integrity: for instance, is it possible to share without distorting what is being

shared? This point is readily perceived in the children's game of 'Chinese Whispers', where the original message whispered to the first child is usually altered by the time it reaches the last child in line after being successively shared from one child to the next. Ambiguities of language and the carelessness of interpreting the message, and most critically of all, willful mischief in deliberately altering the message, are all likely factors that could impact the integrity of what is being shared here. A more alarming example and with no less trivial consequences are the impacts of sharing 'fake news'. The magnitude of these impacts points to the importance of integrity, which entails the checking of veracity on what is shared, and to ensure as much as possible that there is minimal distortion in what is being shared. In the context of the urban commons, this type of non-zero-sum sharing is anticipated to be especially important in communicating knowledge or information to new commoners.

Finally, the third type of sharing is a hybrid between the first two types. This third type of sharing usually pertains to the sharing of spaces; for after all, the common space is always a shared space (Stavrides, 2016). Here, sharing is characterized by subtractability. For instance, when sharing a community garden between five persons equally means dividing the plot up into five equal lots, but when there are ten persons, each lot is further halved. But at the same time, sharing is also paradoxically non-subtractable and intangible, where not only knowledge and life experiences are likely to be shared in the same spaces, but also that the give-and-take ethos of sharing spaces (Stavrides, 2016) is likely to constantly revise the logic of subtractability. For instance, the knowledge that a certain roommate who now needs more space because of a visiting relative may lead to the revision of allocated spaces in an apartment. In this way, this is a type of sharing that can lead to many outcomes, but where none can be adequately predicted with any certainty in advance.

But if there is at least one clear attribute in this type of sharing, then it is in the malleability of space. This means that the individuals sharing this space can drastically transform the constitution of what is being shared, and usually in a more beneficial direction by design. In turn, this can impact sharing behaviors. For example, a shared space between

two roommates could be transformed, by design, into a space that can accommodate three more roommates. To split this space equally into five equal shares may satisfy the ethics of fairness but this leads tragically to tiny allocations of space that benefit no one. Instead, a more beneficial design may entail the wholesale transformation of this space into a common space that is interchangeably used for living and sleeping.

If this is the characteristic of the third type of sharing, what is the ethics that can facilitate sharing here? Stavrides (2016) notes that in shared spaces, commoners have to learn to give and take. At least on this point, an ethic that facilitates mutual accommodation is needed. But then, what kind of morality can motivate the social capital necessary for mutual accommodation to exist? One possible answer lies in the ethic of reciprocity. Importantly, the reciprocity here is not simply about material reciprocation, for instance, when a roommate now shares his pizza with another roommate who had shared his pasta the day before. Instead, what is at stake here is an attitudinal form of reciprocity that can help to build the necessary social capital for the mutual accommodations and compromises that are part and parcel of sharing the same space.

What then is this attitudinal form of reciprocity, and importantly, how is it in any way ethical? Drawing from Gouldner's (1960) seminal work on the norm of reciprocity, two broad attributes emerge. Firstly, and in spite of the norm of reciprocity, this norm, however, neither specifies nor determines the trigger of beneficence. Instead, it only specifies that insofar as people live under such a norm, "when one party benefits another, an obligation is generated" (Gouldner, 1960, p. 174). This norm does not indicate why one party would be willing to help another party—only that if the former does, then the latter is obligated to return the favor in equivalent form or value. In other words, reciprocity alone does not, and cannot explain, beneficence. Instead, the norm of reciprocity has to presume beneficence while beneficence does not need to depend on the commitment to reciprocity (see Chapter 3). What then triggers this initial beneficence, which then can jumpstart a positive cycle of reciprocal behaviors? Could the possession of a good will, informed by the situational judgment that to help and to demonstrate beneficence is the right thing to do, be the answer?

Secondly, Gouldner (1960, p. 171) also hypothesizes that in its universal form, the norm of reciprocity imposes two demands. The first demand is internal to the logic of reciprocity: it entails that people should help those who have helped them. In contrast, the second demand is external to this logic: it states that people should not injure those who have helped them. And because of this second demand, Gouldner (1960, p. 174) suggests that in certain cultures, people actually take time to repay their benefactors so that both parties could enjoy a longer period of peace. Because one is obligated not to injure those who have helped them, the longer the time one takes to repay, the longer the period one could cement, and enjoy peace. In the same vein, this means that every time a favor has been reciprocated after an extended period, social trust is repeatedly strengthened and mercy successively expanded—assuring subsequent parties that would have shown beneficence first that there is no need to press the other party to return the favor promptly. Consequentially, the social trust that is built up here has the same effect of encouraging individuals to initiate beneficence generously.

Furthermore, Gouldner (1960, pp. 175–176) rightly points out that in reciprocity, a sentiment of gratitude always accompanies the sentiment of rectitude (i.e., to repay the equivalent in kind); it is the nature of this gratitude to go beyond—surprises—what is considered an equivalent reciprocation. Because the expectation for reciprocation could be exceeded, abiding by the norm of reciprocity then not only stabilizes relationships, but it can also motivate the improvement of these relationships. In these ways and more, reciprocity depends on the considerations of morality (e.g., the desire for peace and mercy, and the valuation of gratitude) that are critical for the perpetuation of reciprocity, but are, however, not circumscribed by the behavior of reciprocity.

In sum, if the urban commons is anticipated to host all three types of sharing in some form, and if success in all these types of sharing has to depend to some extent on their respective framework of ethics, then at least one further question remains: How can the urban commons be designed to maintain a consistent ecosystem of at least these three ethical frameworks? Or to say this in another way: what are the conditions that can be designed to promote, and to perpetuate, the ethics of fair

distribution, integrity, and reciprocity? At least on first glance, there appears to be little conflict between these three ethical frameworks. Yet on closer inspection, fairness involves a commitment to sharing that is preferably determined beforehand in a clear, specified, and definitive manner. In contrast, reciprocity is comparatively indeterminate and situational (see Gouldner, 1960, p. 175) and relies on a longer history of social observation to warrant the trust necessary for reciprocal behaviors. Indeed, if fairness ultimately involves justice but reciprocity has to rely on mercy, then one can only anticipate a deeper conflict when these two ethical frameworks come to coexist in the urban commons. In turn, this may then imply two contradictory design specifications for the same urban commons. On this point, if the urban commons is indeed a “spatio-temporal and ethical formations that are concerned with ways of living together that resist the privatization and individualization of life” (Dawney et al., 2016, p. 2), then to further develop the intersecting area between the ethics and the design of the urban commons is an important subsequent step.

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