Philosophy of the City Journal

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Cover image: *3 Capital Drive, Hay River, as seen on June 21, 2015 (NE, E, SE, S, SW, NW, N)*, Jesse Colin Jackson, 2023

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Editors' Note

The Philosophy of the City Research Group celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2023. It was founded as a forum to bring together scholars from different philosophical traditions—as well as those working on inter- or trans-disciplinary topics—who take the city as a topic of inquiry.

Over the last 10 years, this group has organised an annual series of conferences and summer colloquia, in addition to a variety of special issues and edited volumes, all of which have furnished new conceptual foundations, methodological approaches, and practical case studies. And yet, despite the volume and vigour of our scholarly cut and thrust, the Research Group and its community have thus far been without a common venue to have these conversations. A dedicated journal was long overdue. The *Philosophy of the City Journal* is thus born of the need to build on and consolidate this new philosophical tradition, offering a venue for original research into the philosophy of the city.

We conceive of the philosophy of the city as a set of problems without a canon: problems about (but by no means restricted to) the ontology of cities, urban aesthetics, urban technologies, inclusivity, public space, justice, and political expression. In seeking to help answer these problems, philosophers of the city contribute analyses of urbanism, city life, urban planning, urban design, infrastructures, and lots of other things besides. These analyses themselves contribute to our proper understanding and evaluation of cities in their myriad of forms.

These analyses are vital for all kinds of good reasons. Cities are not only places where philosophy happens. They are also, increasingly, the place where most human life happens. As the world continues to urbanise, cities now function as the loci for the social, political, and ecological challenges of the 21st century. There is a need to apply the tools and approaches of philosophical inquiry to the city as both a real and imagined phenomenon, to processes of urbanisation, and to the specific dynamics and challenges of different cities in particular.

As philosophy of the city has become a vibrant and relevant area of study, we envision the *Philosophy of the City Journal* as a space to address these questions. As the editorial team, we hope that contributions will help improve the basic ideas and methods in this field, promote useful conversations among different disciplines and sub-disciplines—not just philosophy!—and see how philosophical ideas can be useful in planning and designing cities.

This issue opens with five contributions that deal, in different ways, with foundational questions about how we should approach the cities and their relationship with philosophy. In the first paper, "Knowing the City", Anna Bloom-Christen argues that walking is the best way to get to know the city; it is an activity that produces both participatory and procedural knowledge of urban places. In his article, "Philosophy of the City and Transdisciplinary Possibilities", Shane Epting explores the possibility of using philosophy of the city in transdisciplinary research, policy, and educational contexts. Johannes Mueller-Salo, in his "Three Ways of Doing Philosophy of the City", offers a account of some of the ways in which philosophers can analyse cities: via urban epistemology, urban normative theory, or applied philosophy of the city. In their "How to Know a City: The Epistemic Value of City Tours" Pilar Lopez-Cantero and Catherine M. Robb give an account of how city tours constitute a valuable epistemological tool for grasping a city. Finally, Alfred Nordmann's "Lost in the City: Lessons in Coordination" argues that learning a city is much like learning a language: they both begin with a distinct form of illiteracy.

The next five contributions take a more applied approach to the philosophical problems posed by cities. Robert Rosenberger's "A Classification Scheme for Hostile Design" sharpens the notion of hostile design as a critical tool and outlines a typology to classify hostile design objects in public space. Gentrification as a political problem is a central topic in Karen Adkins' article "Carving Up Community". According to her, gentrification endangers democratic processes through how it affects the use and formation of public space. Samantha Noll and Tuhina Bhar's "The Five Pillars of Urban Environmental Justice: A Framework for Building Equitable Cities" investigates the central topic of urban justice through the potential social impacts of community changes. Noll and Bhar draw from environmental ethics to carve a framework for more equitable land-use change. With their contribution "Green Areas: How to Avoid the Tragedy of the Commons" Valeria Martino and Gian Vito Zani address various dichotomies around city thinking through the example of green spaces in cities. As Martino and Zani show, these dichotomies have significant implications for the quality of life and sustainability of cities. Finally, David Flood's paper bridges urban aesthetics and postphenomenological philosophy of technology in his article "#kalasatama: Discursive Views of the Helsinki Landscape Through the Virtual Window". In this paper, the new Kalasatama neighbourhood in Helsinki is taken as a case of how urban places are presented in, and mediated through, social media.

The issue concludes with two non-peer-reviewed 'irregulars'. In the first, "The Ethics of Mapping Slums—And How AI Complicates the Picture", Tea Lobo, Isaac Oluoch, and Michael Nagenborg discuss how the use of AI will change the processes of mapping low-income areas in cities. This interview is then followed by an artist's statement by the cover artist for this issue: the Canadian photographer Jesse Colin Jackson. In this account Jackson describes his interest in the apartment building Mackenzie Place and its role in the urban landscape.

Knowing the City

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Abstract

What does it mean to know a city? Considering and synthesising two options—namely, that knowing a city is comparable to knowing a person and that a city is a process rather than a thing—this article explores how we can reasonably maintain to know a city. Taking cues from the everyday sense of understanding the question and using the example of the flâneur, walking is explored as a prime option to get to know the city by means of immersion. Participatory and procedural knowledge are identified as central to knowing a city in the relevant way and will illuminate unexplored paths to understanding the question of what a city is and does.

Keywords: procedural knowledge; participatory knowledge; immersion; walking; ordinary language philosophy

1. Introduction

What does it mean to know a city? Embedded in everyday conversation, our answer will likely take the shape of a series of exemplary character traits and salient features one knows a city to have. We might say that to know a city means to comprehend its public transport system, to be able to tell the "good" from the "bad" neighbourhoods, to understand the way its recycling is organised, to know places to get decent food or to run into familiar people. Knowing a city means knowing where to find its landmarks and iconic spots, and how to get from one to another. In an ordinary language setting, it is a small set of particular traits rather than their totality that makes the knower know a city. There seems to be something odd about how little we know about a city we claim to know if we think of how many things one *could* know about a city. Adding to this oddness, we might find only little epistemic overlap when we ask two people who confidently claim to know the same city to list all salient features known to them. Apart from the rough shape of the Eiffel Tower and the (arguably also pretty rough) summer smell of the Seine, Jane Birkin and Niki de Saint Phalle may well have held vastly different knowledge of Paris. What it is to know a city seems to escape a unifying answer.

Responding to this oddness, philosophically, we might want to treat the question in a more abstract way, intending to find a universal answer to the question "What is it to know a—that is, *any*—city?". Opting for conceptual analysis, we might get to work by first defining what we mean by "city," and then consider what it could mean to know such a thing that it is per our definition.

We might begin by stating that a city is a three-dimensional entity. As we get into further specifications, we will quickly realise that a single-sentence definition will not capture what a city is. Leafing and scrolling through dictionaries, topical books, and specialised papers, we will find that existing definitions stem from various disciplinary interests in specific aspects of a city. Some focus on population size and density, while others hone in on architectural features or cultural and class diversity. Incorporating demographic as well as sociocultural aspects, we might settle for a working definition of the city as a relatively large, dense human settlement of socially heterogeneous groups and institutions. To know such a thing amounts to recognising those defining features when they occur together. Comparing examples, we can then begin to refine and expand our working definition. For instance, we might find that Burning Man fits the bill. If Burning Man is not commonly recognised as a city, we will adjust our definition accordingly: A city is a relatively large, dense, *permanent* human settlement of socially heterogeneous groups and institutions. Then someone brings up Los Angeles—undeniably a city, but not as dense in population as some villages. And so our quest continues.

The ordinary language and the philosophical sense of the question differ in that the former asks for particular features of a particular city, while the latter seeks to track what all cities have in common in order to determine the appropriate sense of knowing such an entity. This article considers what we can learn about the essential features of a city from the ordinary language sense of understanding the question. In order to get a better grip on what a city actually *is*, the article aims to highlight the significance of knowing particular, perhaps unique features of a single city for a richer picture of what this entity we call a city can be. Fundamentally, I will propose that knowing a city is a lot like knowing a person. Using a personality-based account of knowing a city as a point of departure, I will examine Achille C. Varzi's proposal to think of the city not as an object, but as a process.

The article elaborates on three intersecting aspects of what it is to know a city. The first claim is that knowing a city is in relevant ways like knowing a person. The second claim is that knowing a city requires the kind of knowledge we have of a process rather than a thing. The third claim is that knowing a city is knowing particulars rather than generalities. I will begin by stating the ways in which a city we know is like knowing a friend. I will then interlink the findings of their commonalities with the notion of process, and of procedural knowledge. The conceptual metaphor of language will help to appreciate getting to know a city as an act of participatory knowledge expansion. Making explicit the peculiar way in which we know a city by means of knowing a small sample, I will conclude with a set of character traits of the special kind of knowledge we can have of a city. Deeming the relevant kind of knowledge that we must attain 'procedural knowledge'—that is, know-how—will offer final cues about the participatory dimension of what it is to know a city.

2. The City as a Friend

We can identify and locate a number of buildings in cities we know, but relative to how many buildings there are, only a very small portion. You might know an impressive triple-digit number of restaurants in Los Angeles, but a modern megacity such as L.A. is likely to have a five-digit number of places to eat. This suggests a rather low threshold for what it is to know a city in comparison to, for instance, what it is to know a specific restaurant or its signature dish. Yet it does not just seem to be the material size of the thing that lowers the threshold. For one, a city appears to be more than its material parts. As our working definition suggests, cities are the cities they are be-

cause of the people that move (in) them. Cities are not only material and spacial, but social in the sense that it matters for our knowledge of a city to know who moves (in) them. In other words, we know what typically *happens* in a city we know and who makes it happen. Again, we might only know a very small portion of what concretely happens in a city at any given moment, and we may only personally know a fraction of the people who make things happen, but there seems to be a sort of predictability of the kinds of people we meet and the kinds of things they do that makes up the social fabric of a city we are familiar with.[1]

This suggests that the way we think of a city we know is more like thinking of a process than a thing, an action rather than an entity. Furthermore, taking into view the predictability and familiarity of the kind of knowing we are interested in here, we can notice that knowing a city is not unlike the knowledge we can have of a person. Before considering the procedural character of cities, we may ask: Can we think of a city we know the way we think of a friend?

Both a known city's and a friend's moving appearance will not catch you by surprise in the majority of encounters. They might surprise you occasionally with something out of character—an expensive vintage store pops up in a low-income neighbourhood, your friend arrives exactly on time even though they are usually late and chaotic—but this will not immediately or sustainably change your overall opinion of them. It will be noted as unusual until it becomes an apparent as part of a bigger change or trend.

Cities and friends change over time. The direction may be predictable if you keep paying regular attention to them. The vintage store might soon get a next-door smoothie store, an artisanal bakery, and a café with free Wi-Fi. You find new words to describe this neighbourhood. Gentrified. Posh. Your friend might transition into becoming a more organised person; she might get a wristwatch and a Moleskine planner and suggest meetings weeks in advance. You will begin to think of her differently. Punctual. Provident. In order to keep the kind of connection necessary for it to be appropriate to say that you know them, you must keep track of what is typical. To know a city is to entertain a relationship with it as a somewhat fluid entity. Just as one does with a friend, one finds a habitual balance between paying close attention to change while allowing for them to be reliably predictable according to their designated character traits—the landmarks of their identity. If we lose touch with someone—for instance, because we have moved away—we might say that we used to know them, or that we know *about* them.

The difference between knowing about someone and knowing someone also runs parallel to the knowledge we can have of a city: You might never have been to Los Angeles, yet you know that it has beaches and Hollywood and that the Viper Room is located on Sunset Boulevard. Similarly, you might know facts about your favourite celebrity that you have never met in the flesh. Having read his autobiography and numerous article-long portraits, you know that Werner Herzog lives in Hollywood, that he likes oranges, and that he had never seen a telephone until he was 10. Yet you would not claim that you know Werner. You might say that you know *about* him. If you happen to live near his favourite supermarket, you might see him at the fruit counter and strike up a conversation. You might decide to get coffee together. You might become *friendly* with each other, and it would from then on be appropriate to say that you know Werner Herzog.

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[1] Likewise, this social fabric determines what makes a place an iconic spot. Landmarks, on this account, are not objectively verifiable categories, but depend on historically grown, social agreement. The classification of a particular space as iconic is dependent on consensus, which in turn must be known to the knower of a city.

Following David Matheson's account of personhood, we can adapt a distinction between personal and impersonal knowledge for our main question. The knowledge you have about Werner Herzog before you get coffee together is impersonal knowledge. It is the kind of knowledge that can be looked up online or passed on by means of gossip. It is theoretical knowledge that we can also attain about a city. Reading the Lonely Planet and an ethnography on its inner workings can get you great knowledge *about* Los Angeles, yet you will have to travel there, to spend some time and interact in it, in order to claim that you know the city 'personally.'

Matheson offers what he calls a communication account of knowing a person. On this account, to know a person, they must choose to communicate information about them to you directly. This personally transmitted knowledge, in turn, is special in the sense that it signals a special type of interactional bond: "From the fact that you know me it follows on the communication account that I have taken pains to single you out in particular as a being worthy of my self-revelation" (2010, 448). While I do not wish to attribute human agency to a city, I would like to suggest that we can adapt this distinction to tease out a feature of knowing a city, namely the feature of being embedded in a reliable structure of interaction with it. Similarly, to what is described in the communication account of knowing a person, the city reveals itself; it responds to the one who speaks its languages and knows when to code-switch into the appropriate dialect. This can mean dressing up befitting the neighbourhood you intend to dine in, adjusting your rhythm of walking to the stream of local pedestrians, or ordering a beer without puzzling your waiter. While strictly speaking, it is not the city, but your waiter, who interacts with you, the overall experience of the series of interactions with objects and subjects that make up your evening in that particular city bar space—including your handling the local customs of bathroom line chat, the swinging doors, the tipping, and so on—collectively represent a manifestation of your local knowledge

Adopting a wide notion of language, to know a city would mean to keep the flow of conversation going and, if one knows it well, to be fluent in its prominent dialects. But how do we get to know a city in the first place? How do we become conversant with a city?

3. Making Acquaintance: Walking the City

How we go about learning things we want to know depends on what it means to know them. Knowing a song is different from knowing Gödel's incompleteness theorems and different from knowing German, and yet different again from knowing how far one can swim. Correspondingly, the ways in which we come to know these things differ. How do we get to know a city?

Movement seems to be an intuitive key technique because due to a city's size compared to ours, we cannot see all of it at once. Taking another cue from everyday life, we might consider the epistemic techniques of an urban tourist, the paradigm figure of getting to know a city. Following their example, a suitable way to get to know a city is to go for a walk in it. As the social theorist and philosopher Michel de Certeau stated in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), walking in the city follows its own rhetoric. In its perhaps most famous chapter "Walking in the City," de Certeau draws an analogy between urban systems and language, comparing the improvisational walking (that is taking shortcuts, promenading, wandering, ambling, and so on) with inside jokes, turns of phrases, metaphors, or stories. He states that "[t]he walking of passers-by offers a series of turns and detours that can be compared to 'turns of phrase' or 'stylistic figures.' There is a rhetoric of walking" (1984, 100). De Certeau's technique of teasing out ways to understand the inner workings of a city is thinking about city life the way we think about speech acts. He proposes that "[t]he act

of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered" (1984, 97). De Certeau prefers walking in the city instead of viewing it from above. As he points out, a bird's-eye view means to sacrifice our knowledge of the intimate details of city life for an impersonal outline. This impersonal outline corresponds with the impersonal knowledge a fan has attained about Werner Herzog and runs counter to the personal knowledge we have of a friend. De Certeau describes the city as a 'space of enunciation,' where walkers demonstrate possibilities through their walking choices. The process of acclimatising oneself to the rhythm of a new city represents an immersed, participatory learning path.

To know a city is to know how to move in it. And the city moves fast. As Monica Smith states in her book *Cities: The First 6,000 Years*, "coming into a city, you feel the clip of urban walk-worlds as something faster than a rural gait, and you find yourself stepping up the pace" (2019, 35). The social fabric of the city is made up of conventions that must be aptly performed again and again. This applies to the rhythm of walking. We can evoke the theoretical framework of what Marcel Mauss, exploring socialised habits of how we move our bodies in public (1934), might call a habitus of urban behaviour, which allows the movement of the city to run in a predictable, and thus smooth, rhythm. This aspect of habitual knowledge leads us to consider how knowing a city dovetails with knowing a person in a way we have only noted in passing before: the aspect of predictability. We expect the city and the friend to continue their existence in the manner that we have framed as typical. A glimpse of a small part of their being represents its typical features, their personality, their character. But what is typical of something that, like a person and a city, is a three-dimensional entity that is constantly in motion?

4. The City as a Process: Acquiring Knowledge of Flow

In his essay on the question "What is a city?" (2021), Achille C. Varzi asks how a city can both remain the same and yet constantly change. Evoking Heraclitus' puzzle about the conceptual nature of a river—in which we are pressed to consider how it can be that the river is always changing, yet it seems possible to bathe in the same river twice—he proposes that we understand a city as a sort of identity while at the same time experiencing its changes because the city is not a thing, but a *process*. The puzzle can be resolved by letting go of the false belief that all three-dimensional, persisting entities—like cities—extend in space but endure in all their parts in time. Rivers don't, neither do cities nor persons. There is a sense of change and simultaneous enduring identity regarding how we experience all three.

Varzi concludes by urging us to reconsider what we deem to be necessary parts of a city, and points out that it is not entirely transparent what a process actually *is*. For the purpose of our investigation, we can extract Varzi's insight about the process-like nature of a city and apply it to our overarching question by stating that the kind of knowledge we can attain of a city is procedural knowledge. Furthermore, taking up the question of what kind of process a city is, I propose to combine Varzi's insight with Matheson's communication account of knowing a person. For it seems that knowing a person is much like knowing a process, a course of action enacted by a known entity. Targeting this point, Kenny Easwaran (2021) has argued for understanding a city as a rational, collective agent. Accordingly, we should understand the city as a "community of people whose daily lives are tied together by geography, rather than a governmental entity or a legal border" (2021, 409). Using this view as a lens onto Varzi's question of what the parts of the city are, we might say that the city consists of groups the way a group consists of individuals, yet the group is more than the sum

of its individuals in the way the city is more than the sum of its groups. It is the process of how the moving parts intersect and interact that constitutes the inner workings of a city, and to know them means to not only interact with but to belong to at least some of its parts. In the bar, you become part of the city for others by co-creating their city-experience. More generally put, and connecting with the previous claim about the procedural nature of knowledge we attain of a city: To know a city is to be a participant in rather than a mere observer of its flow.

This points back to De Certeau's preference for an immersed over a bird's-eye view of the city. It also brings this investigation full circle by returning to the ordinary language way of responding to the question, "What does it mean to know a city?." In a last step, we can now consider why it seems reasonable to maintain that knowing a city can mean knowing only a small portion of it.

5. Knowing the Whole by Knowing a Part

Revisiting the ordinary language sense of understanding and responding to our main question, we might still wonder what it is about a city that makes us confident to know it by only knowing a small portion of an enormous, ever-expanding, and changing set of its parts. There seems to be a peculiar way in which we know a city by virtue of knowing which traits matter to us as we remain immersed in it. Following De Certeau's analogy between the flow of a city and the performance of a speech act, we could say that to know a city might only require one to speak one of its dialects.

When our friend invites us to her home city and shows us around, the sense we get is that she knows that city like the back of her hand because of a structural awareness of the difference between the places and people who matter and those who don't. Following this observation, it seems that knowing a city means knowing how to choose from an abundance of possibilities of what to do, led by inner preferences and outer constraints.

Thinking of knowing a city in terms of constraints reveals another trait of cities in general. Considering social obligations, Smith states that "[t]he physical structure of cities—their formal routes, roads, and pathways, along with the written and unwritten rules for empty spaces like parks and plazas—all provide containers that simultaneously constrain physical opportunities and paradoxically free people from the cognitive overload of what would otherwise be an overwhelming number of social obligations just for the sake of movement" (2019, 36). If cities structure spaces to facilitate our preferences for specific social encounters, knowing a city means knowing this very structure.

It would be distorting to conclude from this that knowing this structure translates into knowing the entirety of spaces. In this regard, knowing parts of a city does not amount to knowing the entire city. However, Smith's observation helps to foreground two noteworthy aspects of the relationship between the particular experiences we make and the general way to experience moving (in) the flow of the city as a familiar process we co-create. The first aspect leads back to De Certeau's thoughts on knowing a language. Language is structured by the rules of grammar. Knowing this structure helps expand one's knowledge of a language: Once we know how to put together a sentence in English, we are able to pick up new vocabulary more quickly. Likewise, knowing the above-mentioned structures and rules of a city will allow for increasingly easy access to further knowledge about it. In this sense, knowing parts of a city does not automatically amount to knowing its entirety, but partially knowing its structure fosters movement toward knowing it more deeply. Circling back to my opening remark on how little knowledge two knowers can share of the same city, we can now add that this minimal sense of shared knowledge must be not only procedural but structural as well.

The second noteworthy aspect about the relationship between particular and general ways of knowing a city brings us to the final, third claim of this paper: Immersion rather than detached observation is the mode in which we get to know a city and maintain participatory, procedural knowledge of how to navigate the city as a process.

The figure of the flâneur evoked by de Certeau offers itself for making this final point. Through the work of Honoré de Balzac (1853), Søren Kierkegaard (1978), Charles Baudelaire (1970) and others, the dandy figure of the flâneur became prominent as a literary type and an insider icon of exploring the modern metropolis. A connoisseur of city life, the flâneur is seen promenading urban spaces in style and self-paced inquiry.[2] He explores urban territory while performing a bohemian lifestyle befitting its environment in sauntering otiosity. He seems to be fluent in the dialects of the neighbourhoods he visits. His walking appearance stands out, yet somewhat subtly: While much of what he does in his capacity as a flâneur overlaps with the walking practices of his surroundings, he is not to be confused with the common man on his way to work, nor the sluggard roaming the streets to find amusement. For the flâneur, the act of walking is ascribed an epistemic value. He walks the city to learn about his surroundings, and about the urban world more generally. Elaborating on the flâneur as a cosmopolitan, Bart van Leeuwen has characterised him as a representation, or allegory, of "the ambivalent attraction to the strange and unknown in the experience of anonymous city life" (2019, 301). The flâneur chooses a mix of immersed, participatory, and detached, observant positions to get to know the city, bit by bit. Following the anthropological ideal of the participant observer (Bloom-Christen 2023), he learns to become fluid in the dialects of specific neighbourhoods by means of induction: Practicing participation in particular settings rather than reading other peoples' travel reports, he discovers the particular traits of his city as a means to resonate—as Balzac, Baudelaire, and Kierkegaard did—about the state of the city in general. Training his senses, the city's secrets that are hidden to the untrained eyes become visible to the one who participates in its daily flow of interactions.

I have introduced the flâneur to function as a heuristic device to show the ideal of movement from particular to general knowledge of the entity we call a city. It is an interactional movement performing procedural as well as structural knowledge of his surroundings. In conclusion, we can now return to the real experience of walking and knowing a city.

6. Conclusion

There is more than one way to know one city. Not unlike the way we know a person, the familiarity status of a city can be that of an older sibling (you might know them from birth), a distant cousin (whom you have spent many childhood summers with and since lost touch), a new flatmate, or a long-time co-worker. Each personal relationship contains partial knowledge about the other, which in turn correlates with the procedural nature of maintaining a social connection. Cities, like people, are always changing. We may feel a deep sense of familiarity and belonging as we immerse ourselves in the flow of interaction. Likewise, we might become estranged and lose the kind of know-how—

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[2] The absence of the *flâneuse* in the literature indicates the manifold restrictions for women moving about in public space, and the gender-biased connection between procedural knowledge and masculinity. For female perspectives on walking, see Elizabeth Wilson (1992); specifically on the history of gender-based public harassment, see Carol Brooks Gardner (1995). More recently, Lauren Elkin (2016) has written a book on the figure of the *flâneuse* in 19th-century cities, which uncovers the hitherto untold stories of female intellectual urban life of that time.

procedural knowledge—that enables us to smoothly interact with them. There is a sense of liability inscribed into the notion of knowing a city that holds true for knowing a person as well. Cities and persons can be predictable, yet we are sometimes—even when we know them well—surprised by their atypical behaviour, and may have to reconsider what we take to be their core characteristics.

This article considered the commonalities between knowing a city and knowing a friend by reflecting on their common features of personal and impersonal attributes. Adapting Matheson's communication account of knowing a person to the entity of a city, we could see how knowing a city means, in a broad sense, to be in conversation with it. Employing Varzi's insight about the procedural nature of a city, we saw how knowing a city requires knowing its inner workings and actualising this knowledge by participating in the flow of interactions collectively deemed typical for that particular environment.

The offered account raises ontological questions about the interactional character of a city: What does it mean to depict a city as an interactional partner rather than a passive object? Harking back to the core implications of the communication account, we might wonder: Can a city "choose" to hide some of its traits to some knowers the same way a person might choose to conceal parts of their personality?

As stated at the outset, I do not wish to assign human agency to the conceptual category "city," but emphasise the interactional character of how knowing a city is *performed*. Taking seriously Varzi's proposal of a city as a process, rather than an object, I propose that the kind of knowledge that qualifies us to rightly claim to know a city is procedural rather than objective. Importantly, this is not to deny that there is objective knowledge to be held about a city—Birkin and De Saint Phalle both knew about the existence of the Eiffel Tower—but that this is not the kind of knowledge that captures the ordinary language sense of what it is to know Paris. Evoking the allegory of the flâneur, we could see how it is rather the immersed interaction around—and with—the tower that can partially and gradually turn the distant observer into a knower of a city. This final observation underscores and brings us back to the significance of the ordinary way to understand and to respond to our initial question: What it means to know a city is to be able to move in it as one of its parts, thus co-creating the process that it *is*.

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Philosophy of the City and Transdisciplinary Possibilities

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Abstract

Philosophy of the city has increased in popularity over the last decade, emerging as a subfield with multiple research foci. This paper explores it and some of them, showing how some are positioned to influence real-world decisions. It exhibits the pattern behind such works and, in turn, reveals what defines the philosophy of the city as an area of rigorous and socially applicable research. Due to its inherent usefulness for dealing with urban affairs, philosophers of the city could also employ their research findings for other purposes, such as being members of governmental committees, similar to researchers in environmental ethics and the philosophy of technology. Moreover, several philosophy professors have been teaching courses in this area, providing students with the critical-thinking skills to make sense of the city and helping them examine urban life and its numerous dimensions. With this view laid out, the attention turns to the possible future for the philosophy of the city by comparing it to neighboring subfields.

Keywords: philosophy of the city; teaching; urban life

1. Introduction

Philosophers of the city have made numerous contributions toward understanding how cities have several dimensions that require investigations beyond what neighboring academic areas such as urban studies, geography, and urban planning can produce by the nature of their orientations. A few include metaphysical and ethical aspects (among others). Insights regarding these topics depart radically from those disciplines, offering an orientation that exhibits elements particular to the philosophical enterprise. They include living, moving, working, playing, building, and thriving in metropolitan environments. This notion entails rethinking research methods, suggesting that what counts as research in the philosophy of the city does not align well with much of mainstream philosophy in general. Rather than existing as a subfield with narrowly defined and entrenched debates, some research in the philosophy of the city remains characterized very differently.

For instance, philosophers of the city often take it to the streets. They deal with topics such as food systems, artificial lighting and darkness, discrimination, gentrification, infrastructure, pedestrian safety, urban mobility, participatory governance, and environmental justice in metropolitan

regions. While this reality strays from some academic norms, examining it suggests that the philosophy of the city offers numerous advantages from scholarly activity that remain applicable far beyond customary boundaries. In other words, much of the research in this field could benefit scholars of the city and, perhaps in a limited capacity, influence real-world outcomes.

This point entails that some such investigations have transdisciplinary possibilities, showing promise for policy and design considerations. This area also has education aspects that deserve study, challenging long-standing curricula and practices. Consider, for instance, that many philosophy classes focus exclusively on highly conceptual topics. While work in the philosophy of the city deals with theoretical elements, focusing on the city requires looking at concrete manifestations of those abstractions. Consider, for instance, that if one talks about equitable distribution, one can examine this concept as it relates to municipal services such as transportation and waste management.

To teach lessons that can enhance students' metacognitive abilities and use their existing knowledge, forward-thinking instructors take lessons from the streets to classroom seats. They teach students to look for philosophical thought patterns and paradoxes as they manifest in their daily lives in the metropolitan sphere. In turn, this paper aims to examine these ideas, unpacking what they could mean for the possible future of this subfield. It highlights the kind of contributions that have, are, and could continue to emerge in the academy and beyond regarding urbanity.

To undertake this task, I begin surveying several unique contributions in the literature that emblematize the points above, illustrating how some scholars "do" research in the philosophy of the city. Next, I discuss why this body of work matters for philosophy as a discipline, showing how it can advance applicable insights and pathways for its dissemination worldwide. Fleshing out these notions also exhibits some of the trajectories of this subfield as it exists based on evidence, setting the stage for understanding the benefits of this research area for the immediate and distant future. Next, I explore ways that the philosophy of the city could advance by examining how philosophers in neighboring applied areas, such as the philosophy of technology and environmental ethics, have entered the public sphere, using their skills in government offices. In closing, the attention turns to advanced courses these philosophers teach worldwide, suggesting that this work could enhance pedagogical measures across colleges and universities.

2. Research in Philosophy of the City

Philosophy of the city is a new area of study. Most of its researchers have specialized backgrounds in other philosophical subfields. They include but are not limited to phenomenology, environmental ethics, epistemology, philosophy of technology, metaphysics, and political philosophy. Despite this vast array of backgrounds, the city brings them together, serving as a common topic for inquiry. These backgrounds help us understand the city and its many issues, providing numerous ways to gain unique perspectives. One could argue that approaching the city from several specific sub-disciplines will benefit philosophers striving to understand how different approaches can yield several outlooks, offering opportunities to engage in work that compares frameworks in a new fashion. This point aside, perhaps in the future, philosophers of the city will have "philosophy of the city" as their primary research specialization from the outset of their careers. If research in philosophy of the city advances this far, it could give us more wisdom about how to exist together in complex social settings. It could contribute to a more profound knowledge of humankind's shared existence.

For instance, one primary benefit that philosophy of the city provides is diagnosing the urban condition in myriad ways to learn what cities mean for humanity regarding how ordinary urban life is extraordinary when looking at it through a philosophical lens. This work is the view that comes into focus after examining the vast array of topics that *each* philosopher of the city studies. Each strand of thought, such as a research article, a book chapter, or a monograph, exposes insights into aspects relevant to city living. Examining such works collectively provides clues regarding the ways that research in philosophy of the city can benefit real-world affairs. Not only is this research valuable in this way, but the insights gained from such ventures exhibit how the philosophy in the academy continues to advance in novel ways. Bearing this point in mind, one would be hard-pressed to hold that philosophy is dead to the modern world. Although exploring the city is present in philosophy's history, its presence in current work and future endeavors must hold steady, especially considering that most of Earth's people now reside in urban environments.

For instance, looking at ancient Western philosophy, Plato and Aristotle offer enhanced views relevant to understanding cities. Plenty of works that thought about cities philosophically came before philosophy of the city emerged as it is known today (e.g., Biermann 1974; Gunn 1998; King 2000; Lawson 2001; Light 2001; Kirkman 2004; Cunningham 2007). Recent work from philosophers of the city who participate in the Philosophy of the City Research Group makes this notion evident. Some authors focus on controversial issues such as race and place, residential segregation, and gentrification, participating in these discussions by offering insights grounded in philosophy. Ronald Sundstrom's (2003; 2019) and Tyler Zimmer's (2017; 2022) work are exemplars. Other topics are lesser known, and their mere existence can motivate us to look at cities in ways that might have gone unnoticed.

For example, Taylor Stone (2017, 2018, 2021) has written extensively on urban nighttime lighting. His philosophical orientation to this topic illustrates that he is dealing with a subject that has real-world concerns and is inherently interdisciplinary—but holds steady as a philosophical enterprise. He engages with philosophical discourse, employing thinkers such as Immanuel Kant to understand nighttime aesthetics in urban environments to provide a deep understanding of the issue (Stone 2021). However, thinking about nighttime lighting in cities is not only an aesthetic affair. To make this point evident, Stone (2017) examines the issue through the lens of contemporary environmental ethics, developing a framework that can help guide policy decisions.

Examining Stone's research can provide us with several lessons. First, we can employ philosophical insights and data to enhance the views of cities and urban situations. This notion accounts for the claims I made during the introduction. Consider, for instance, that this work helps us understand a particular dimension of urban existence: nighttime aesthetics and their ethical implications for humans and nonhumans. This kind of investigation exhibits the interdisciplinary nature of work in the philosophy of the city and could have lasting impacts on municipal policy. Considering these points, we see that perhaps Stone has spent his time wisely making such studies.

If we take a step back and look at Stone's research, we can see it as a tiny glimpse of the city as a panorama. His work reveals that one esoteric issue is an entire research strand with intra, inter, and transdisciplinary elements. Yet, despite existing in this manner, we cannot examine the relevant matters in isolation from a range of other affairs. For instance, this subject ropes in considerations for topics such as energy, democracy, and public space. This point signals that aside from the robust area of exploration that Stone reveals, it remains wedded to the full complexity of the city. Theoretically, it also serves as only one element germane to understanding the philosophy

of city's applicability, one that many researchers in the philosophy of the city explore. Here is what I mean.

We know we are dealing with numerous elements of the city. Stone's work accounts for one aspect that aims to reveal its foundational issues in a kind or specific case of an urban environment. Yet, several philosophical investigations follow the type of pattern Stone's research aligns with, more or less. If we were to look at these explorations in tandem, a view would come into focus showing how each kind of investigation reveals another research vein needed to understand cities *philosophically*. In turn, this kind of transdisciplinary-oriented work in the philosophy of the city can help inform areas like policy development. Bearing in mind that philosophy of the city is a new subfield, many of its researchers have backgrounds in neighboring areas, such as environmental ethics and philosophy of food.

Consider, for instance, Samantha Noll's (2017) research on urban food systems. She examines the complexities of food sovereignty in metropolitan environments in her paper, "Food Sovereignty in the City: Challenging Historical Barriers to Food Justice." This work investigates how local communities often struggle with attaining nutritious fruits and vegetables. Her work's orientation remains inherently philosophical, illustrating the foundations of the struggles for food justice. Yet, her methodology also employs history's lessons to flesh out the conditions associated with food attainment and its troubling circumstances as communities encounter such situations in urban centers. This approach yields a view of the problematic issues related to food sovereignty. Still, it does so in a manner that endeavors to undercover the base of our understanding of such matters.

Other works in the philosophy of the city analyze the concept of the city in ways that significantly challenge how we think about the city as a technical term. For example, Lewis Gordon, a philosopher with expertise in numerous subfields, including but not limited to Africana philosophy, existentialism, and phenomenology, elucidates deep-seated problems that trouble how we understand cities foundationally. For example, Gordon's (2017) work on the constitution of cities is another topic that shows what it means to be a city. For instance, Gordon argues that citizens precede the city. Unless people have the ability to change the city, they do not count as citizens. Having intentional or systemic barriers in place to improve people's ability to become citizens is a substantial challenge for any municipality that wants to claim city status (Epting 2023). Interpreting this notion in most contexts means that people have the financial and social means to influence the shaping of the place they call home. However, such realities are too far out of reach in many locations to be meaningful. They are like mirages in the desert, seemingly always in front of but they move farther away as you approach them. In turn, it is possible to have "cities" without citizens. In light of this idea, calling such places "urban centers" is more fitting (Epting 2023). Cities are places where people can dwell meaningfully with others rather than exist as people who work, clean, serve, and entertain people with economic and social power. One main takeaway from Gordon's position is that when thinking about cities, we must examine them in their historical and present-day contexts.

Building onto Gordon's insights, Shane Epting (2021a) has dealt with the ethical dimensions of urban mobility, focusing on how transportation affects marginalized and vulnerable people, the public, nonhumans, possible future generations, and urban artifacts (e.g., buildings, bridges, and ballparks). He advocates for "moral ordering," an approach that brings these stakeholders into view for issues wherein they are simultaneously affected. Such an approach could benefit municipal, state, and national measures to improve travel in the city and beyond.

What is significant about the works above is that they demonstrate how to do philosophy in ways that do not merely produce more philosophy for philosophers, which has become a substantial critique of academic philosophy (Frodeman & Briggle 2016). Any urban dweller can talk about cities, showing that their mere existence is inherently inclusive, unlike the pages of most professional philosophy journals. In turn, writers exploring related subjects in this area are in a good position because their audience is not already excluded due to the topic's esoteric nature. Still, this notion does not entail that all such works will remain accessible, but the point is that these researchers are not relegated to areas requiring extensive training to approach them. Considering that urban topics are also inherently interdisciplinary, works in the philosophy of the city also remain within conceptual reach for academics in relevant fields such as urban planning, engineering, architecture, sociology, and public health. Philosophers of the city who keep this point in mind position themselves to rejoin conversations particular to the academy and beyond.

Perhaps the most impressive philosopher of the city who has this quality is Michael Menser. He helped launch and guide New York City's Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) while publishing the first research-based monograph on this topic (Menser 2018). Participatory budgeting involves municipal agents turning over a modest portion of discretionary funds to community groups so they can vote on neighborhood projects (Menser 2018). By employing these real-world measures, these residents can regain a small portion of influence that can help them become citizens, favoring the Gordon-ian/Eptin-ian sense of the term. This kind of work, done in the academy and in the street, illustrates how philosophers of the city can think inside and outside of established traditions. Although researchers in other disciplines, such as environmental science and geology, frequently engage in fieldwork to advance knowledge, one can argue that philosophers could also undertake such outings to observe abstract principles in practice.

Though Menser is pushing the philosophy of the city into new territory, other novel enterprises can also employ philosophical insights to address issues in urban environments. One challenge is that there are few precedent cases to reference in this new, organized research vein. However, neighboring subfields such as environmental ethics and the philosophy of technology have already made such advances. Even though these subfields differ, they are close enough to follow as a model to guide efforts. In the following section, the attention turns to those areas to understand how philosophers of the city could make similar advances.

3. Philosophers in Government Positions

Although it is typical for philosophers in European nations to consult with government leaders on pressing issues such as emerging technology, the practice is far less common in the United States. Still, a select few have served the Executive Branch in official capacities, showing how philosophers can employ their wisdom in several ways that push against established limits of professionalization. This section examines a few instances that include environmental ethicists and a philosopher of technology. In turn, we can see how philosophers of the city *could* engage in similar roles in the future as the subfield becomes more established and well-known.

For example, Andrew Light was one of the first environmental ethicists to consult for the United States Government. While he is on leave from his career as a philosophy professor, Light is presently the Assistant Secretary of Energy for International Affairs at the U.S. Department of Energy, a position that requires presidential nomination and Senate confirmation is not Light's only work in government. Previously, he was the Senior Adviser and India Counselor for the U.S. Special Envoy

on Climate Change and a Staff Climate Adviser for the Office of Policy Planning, a part of the U.S. State Department.

Philosopher Kyle Pows Whyte works in environmental ethics, philosophy of food, and indigenous affairs. He is currently the George Willis Pack Professor at the School for Environment and Sustainability at the University of Michigan. In addition to his scholarly and community work, he serves on the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council under the Biden Administration.

While philosophers with advanced specialization in environmental ethics have a proven track record, this "crossover" trend is advancing to other areas. For instance, turning to the philosophy of technology, Patrick Lin, a philosophy professor at California Polytechnic State University, exhibits how expertise in this subfield can benefit emerging issues in space exploration. Lin currently serves on the U.S. Space Council Advisory Group. He (Cal Poly para 4-5, 2023) remarks on how his background will benefit this project, showcasing the strengths of applied philosophical endeavors:

> What I hope to bring to this important group is a new perspective, guided by my ethics experience in outer space affairs, artificial intelligence, robotics, cybersecurity, bioengineering, security and defense systems, and other relevant technology domains. It's very encouraging to see this administration seek out practical expertise in ethics in this crucial work. I'm excited to serve on the NSpC UAG to help guide the responsible and sustainable development of outer space.

Although Lin's work with this group shows how philosophy professors can contribute to emerging technologies and exciting areas such as space exploration, this undertaking is not his first transdisciplinary partnership. Lin has engaged with numerous government agencies and leading businesses, as noted below (National Aeronautics and Space Administration para 4, 2023):

> Dr. Lin has worked with or delivered briefings and invited talks to government, military, industry, and academic organizations, including United Nations, U.S. Department of Defense, CIA, DARPA, U.S. National Institutes of Health, U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Cal-EPA, Google, Apple, Sony, IBM, Tesla, Nissan, Bosch, Daimler Benz, Stanford, Harvard, UCLA, US Naval Academy, U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Army War College, and many others.

Although the instances above are limited, they show how philosophers researching relevant topics can influence the offices that deal directly with these affairs. There is no reason why philosophers of the city cannot do the same. Consider, for instance, Ronald Sundstrom or Tyler Zimmer, who would be excellent additions to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Samantha Noll could work with committees for the Department of Agriculture, focusing on urban food sovereignty and security. If these philosophers were to hold positions in committees relevant to their research, it would not be the same as having philosopher kings, but at least they could influence policymakers. So, there is that.

While these examples are limited, they highlight how such research could provide new insights into the everyday urban issues that remain inherently philosophical. Examples include dealing with topics such as fair practices and the equitable distribution of resources. Moreover, philosophers of the city who research applied areas such as those mentioned above could also work with state agencies, municipalities, businesses, and community-based organizations to develop equitable

practices that directly affect several stakeholder groups. Aside from measures of this sort and traditional research, teaching classes in the philosophy of the city is also developing as an enterprise with promise. Recently, courses taught in this emerging area have enlightened students about the philosophical nature of the places many call home, providing ways to see how lessons from philosophy can be directly applied to their everyday lives. The following section moves in that direction to gain insight into these pedagogical advances.

4. Teaching Philosophy of the City

Along with the advances in the research described in the previous section, professors at colleges and universities worldwide have started offering courses in the philosophy of the city and similar classes that bring urban issues into view. Epting has taught Philosophy of the City and Transportation Justice courses at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He also teaches a course, 'Creating Future Cities', to primarily engineering students at the Missouri University of Science and Technology. Brian Elliott teaches a course called 'Philosophy and the City' at Portland State University. Remmon Barbaza teaches a course in philosophy of the city at Ateneo de Manila University.

 Gerald Erion (2018) teaches an innovative class at Medaille College, focusing on the city of Buffalo, making excellent use of Frederick Law Olmsted to deliver transformative learning experiences. To help contribute to understanding the educational benefits of teaching this course, Erion (2018) published an article that studies his experience in the classroom teaching a class on the philosophy of the city, noting the benefits that such a course can provide students. His findings indicate that the motivation is there to enhance learning experiences, which, in a sense, shows that the city can serve as a laboratory for elucidating complex thought. Erion (2018, 147-148) makes this point evident:

> We may thus have grounds for expand philosophy's traditional scope to include study of the city, in the city. In any case, I now think Medaille's City class as a genuine philosophy course that asks students to do the kinds of things that philosophy can be great at teaching: critical and creative thinking, abstract thinking, logical argument, and so on. At the same time, we can also connect with significant development in other areas, and indeed, with significant developments outside the academia. But most importantly for our purposes here, such courses can inspire new ways to teach philosophy, including non-traditional applications to significant parts of our world. We are just getting started, and this paper sketches out just one approach, but we can see that the potential for teaching and learning in philosophy of the city is significant.

 In the passage above, we see Erion's success in the classroom illustrates that taking curriculum in new directions aligns with advances in research and the history of urban thought. His testimony exhibits that his students were able to learn the skills of the philosophical trade in ways that could provide life-long lessons on how to see the world surrounding them through a lens that reveals the meaning and significance of everyday, ordinary things and events. If there is one worthwhile goal that all students should gain from any philosophy class, this skill should outrank most, if not all, lessons.

 What is exciting about the teaching of philosophy of the city by using the city as a laboratory is that it inherently provides measures that align with revered teaching practices that champion hands-on learning, such as those endorsed by John Dewey (1930). As mentioned earlier, achieving this learning outcome is challenging when teaching in a discipline such as philosophy that involves

dealing with highly abstract topics. Yet, by developing courses that address this aspect and include a kind of "hands-on" element of direct experience with the city, the challenge transforms into an experience wherein learning by doing holds steady as a central tenet of instruction. One might worry that incorporating this dimension could dilute other aspects required for education in philosophy, such as logical argumentation, which is an unsubstantiated claim. However, as Erion notes above, his experience teaching the philosophy of the city exhibits that such lessons bolster those aims.

Although the examples above are few, they show how lessons on and from the city can engage students, encouraging them to use philosophy to understand the world surrounding them. Teaching these courses shows students that philosophy not only exists in the canonical text but also teaches them that philosophy "lives" in their community. If we can agree that the unexamined life is not worth living, perhaps the unexamined city is not worth living in. If we can train the next generation of world leaders to view their cities philosophically, a better world may be possible.

5. Concluding Thoughts

The philosophy of the city has grown significantly in the past decade. Numerous research strands have emerged, signaling part of what defines this unique subfield. By examining the work of philosophers specializing in this area, we can identify characteristics illustrating that some of this work can support transdisciplinary efforts beyond the academy. Although one could argue that all works in the philosophy of the city should resemble mainstream areas with long-standing debates and polemical positions, holding that philosophers of the city should endeavor to create that kind of environment is wrongheaded. Such a view aligns with what Lewis Gordon (2006) describes as "disciplinary decadence." This notion means that instead of accepting the philosophy of the city as it is—as it has been built by the philosophers engaging in the inquiries described in the previous sections—it should conform to someone's theoretical concept of what they think it should be *instead*.

While this research will continue and could change, such advances will help redefine the subfield, meaning that how an area is defined remains subject to fluidity and shifting parameters of inquiry. This paper established this view, signaling that there is promise for lessons in the philosophy of the city to transcend the academy, providing insights that could benefit urban life and what it means to call a city by that name.

Considering that philosophy is at home in colleges and universities, it is promising to see courses engaging this area emerging worldwide. As philosophy and cities are significant for all urban dwellers, especially considering that urbanization will continue indefinitely, the hope is that these courses will enhance students' abilities to see the places they call home in ways that reveal what is extraordinary in the everyday. In turn, they can take philosophy from the classroom to the street.

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Three Ways of Doing Philosophy of the City

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Abstract

In this paper, I propose to subdivide philosophy of the city into three more specific areas of study. First, philosophy of the city as urban epistemology and philosophy of the urban sciences focuses on problems of experiencing and knowing cities and of generating scientific knowledge about cities. Second, philosophy of the city as urban normative theory seeks to interpret and spell out the central categories of practical philosophy—the right, the good, the aesthetic, the democratic, etc.—for urban contexts. Third, applied philosophy of the city aims to combine philosophical analysis with the search for practical solutions and concrete possibilities for change. The benefit of such a subdivision of the field is twofold. On the one hand, this systematization clarifies the mutual relations between philosophy of the city, other branches of philosophy, and other urban sciences. On the other hand, it helps identify open questions and blind spots within the current debate and, thereby, open up new directions for future research in philosophy of the city.

Keywords: applied philosophy; philosophy of the urban sciences; right to the city; urban epistemology; urban normative theory

1. Introduction

In recent years, philosophy of the city has been established as an independent field of research. Nowadays, philosophy of the city has its own conferences and research groups, its first textbooks and handbooks. Starting with this inaugural issue, it has its own journal as well. Philosophy is gaining noticeable influence in the interdisciplinary study of cities.

Given this dynamic and much-welcomed development, the main aim of the present paper is to map the field in a systematic way. Reconsidering the current state of research, I will propose to subdivide philosophy of the city into three further contoured areas of study, philosophy of the city as urban epistemology and philosophy of the urban sciences (sect. 2); philosophy of the city as urban normative theory (sect. 3); and applied philosophy of the city (sect. 4).

There are two main reasons for such internal differentiation. First, a systematic map of the field helps us to better understand the connection and interdependencies between philosophy of the city, other branches and disciplines of philosophy, and other urban sciences, like urban sociology and urban anthropology. Second, such a map helps us to identify open research questions and unsolved problems. If both can be achieved, the proposed tripartite division will have fulfilled its main purpose.

2. Urban Epistemology and Philosophy of the Urban Sciences

Philosophy of the city can focus on questions of concepts, experience, knowledge, and knowledge-generating methods. Contributions to *urban epistemology* analyze the basic conditions and structures of urban experience and city-related knowledge. The focus is on everyday experience and practical knowledge. By contrast, *philosophy of the urban sciences* deals with specific methodological problems connected to scientific investigations and analyses of cities, urban structures, and urban developments.

This first way of doing philosophy of the city is the one that has received the least attention so far. This is particularly true regarding basic epistemological questions. In the following, I will illustrate my claim by identifying four central problems that future philosophical research has to address within the fields of urban epistemology and philosophy of the urban sciences in a far more comprehensive way.

First, there are conceptual issues that need to be dealt with. Philosophers of action spend most of their time discussing the concept of an action. Philosophers of art have filled dozens of bookshelves with books that discuss the concept of art or an artwork. By comparison, discussions about the concept of a city do not play a major role in recent work in the field.[1] There might be two reasons for that: On the one hand, other disciplines like urban sociology and urban geography developed countless concepts and definitions of cities. I mention only a very famous one, given by the Chicago School Sociologist Louis Wirth, who defined the city as a "relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals" (Wirth 1938, 8). This definition is, of course, like any other conceivable definition, an invitation to dispute. On the other hand, the empirical phenomenon "city" might simply seem to be too diverse and multi-faceted to be reduced to a single concept.

Both reasons are comprehensible. However, they require at least a philosophical discussion on a meta-level. With regard to concepts and definitions developed in other disciplines (like Wirth's proposal), one has to ask whether they can be used as starting points for asking *philosophical* instead of sociological or ethnological questions. The second point, cities empirically given variety, raises even bigger problems. Philosophers of the city often focus on specific cities when developing their ideas, theories, and proposals. As long as these conceptual issues are not addressed, it is not clear, whether philosophical insights developed with reference to a particular city *A* are transferable to all other cities, or only to those cities that are somehow comparable to *A*, with regard to, *e. g.*, size, density, or age. In other words, when we are doing philosophy of the city, it is in many cases not clear whether we are in fact doing philosophy of the city-as-such, philosophy of the metropolis, philosophy of the small city, philosophy of Rome, philosophy of city *A* and so on. Noll, Biehl, and Meagher are surely right in claiming that philosophy of the city is in a sense "once again back in Ancient Greece", in need of critical reflection on the structure of 'good' and 'bad' settlements – and in need to "flesh out accurate conceptions of the city and/or aspects of urban life" (2020, 4).

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[1] Of course, the concept of the city is discussed in the literature. My claim is that these discussions are for the most part surprisingly brief, sometimes fulfilled in the style of a rather compulsory task. For a (quite rare) exception and recent conceptual discussion, see Varzi (2019), who defends a process-oriented answer to the question: What is a city? Varzi's study includes an informative list of metaphors that have been used within urban research to illuminate the concept of a city (*ibid.*, 401). See, as well, Meagher (2008, 5–8), who provides a readable overview of influential conceptions of the city as they have been developed throughout the history of philosophy.

Second, the crucial questions for urban epistemology are: What does it mean to know a city? And, how is this knowledge connected to personal experience? Recently, Quill R. Kukla has made a systematic proposal of what it means to know an urban place. In their view, place-knowledge is a type of aesthetic knowledge that is at the same time activity-oriented: "When we say we know a place, what we mean is that we know what it is like to *competently experience* it, through our recognition of its static and dynamic patterns, including its embodied social patterns or its place ballets. We mean that we can experientially grasp the place and orient our-selves in it—we *know our way around* it, and we *know what it is like to navigate* it." (Kukla 2022, 5)

This promising account provokes further questions: Place knowledge, as Kukla emphasizes, is knowledge of a concrete individual. A city is made up of many, maybe even countless, places. If the city is only big enough, one might probably never get in touch with all its places. In consequence, is the claim justified that one never gets to know a city, but only some of its places? And, what about propositional knowledge? Won't we accept the claim that in order to know a city, one has to know at least some basic facts about its history, its traditions and cultural patterns? Furthermore, is there also a place for testimonial knowledge? Is it possible for me to know something about an urban area that I rarely visit, but that I regularly read about in the newspaper? Urban epistemology has to answer a lot of questions.

Third, and in close relation to the previous query, philosophy of the city as philosophy of the urban sciences has to discuss what kind of knowledge can be produced through scientific analyses of cities and urban structures. Kukla's account suggests that cities are individuals. If one gets to know a city, one does not get to know *the* city, city life as such. Is something similar true regarding the scientific study of cities? If so, scientific knowledge of cities could be compared to knowledge as it is produced in historiography. Typically, historians seek to analyze and explain *single* historical processes and events. In doing so, they rely on broader, for example, economic, theories. They might even refer to general patterns of human behavior or "psychological laws". Nevertheless, good historical explanations pay adequate attention to a situation's particular contexts and specific circumstances. Is scientific knowledge of cities comparable to historiographical knowledge? Is it always knowledge tied to particular cities? Or can we justify approaches that are independent of particular cities that aim at generating knowledge about, let's say, specific types of cities?

These questions, to be sure, are interdisciplinary questions that can only be answered in exchange with, e.g., urban sociology and human geography. Likewise, the conceptual issues that I mentioned at the beginning of this section play an important role here. Nevertheless, the problem is basically a philosophical one and it should not be underestimated. If we take an epistemological account like Kukla's seriously, if we accept that urban knowledge is based on personal experience and tied to concrete places, it is hard to see how "abstract" scientific knowledge about cities—as opposed to scientific knowledge about particular urban places— should be possible at all, how it can be generated at all. If we want to allow for such abstract knowledge, we have to develop a plausible epistemological story leading from individual observations and assumptions to defensible generalizations and abstractions.

Finally, philosophy of the city as philosophy of a particular branch of sciences can contribute to ongoing methodological discussions. Philosophers of physics and philosophers of psychology discuss the philosophy of experiments to understand experimental practices, their merits and their potential flaws. Likewise, philosophers of the city can contribute to ongoing methodological discourses regarding urban research and its practices. I can only mention one very important example

here that is closely connected to the aforementioned problem of city-related urban knowledge: the practice of comparison.

Obviously, comparisons play an important role in everyday talk about cities as well as in public and political discourse and in urban research. However, it is highly contested how such comparisons should be grounded and how they can generate new and reliable insights. One could claim that only *qualitative* comparisons between single cities are possible and that they often reveal a complex mixture of analogies and disanalogies. One could go a step further and claim that it is in principle possible to develop analytic frameworks for urban comparisons. If research is focused on one aspect of urban development and if it is based on a specific range of theoretical and methodological assumptions, it might well be possible to develop a grid of categories that allow for at least semi-quantitative comparisons.[2] Of course, such accounts face the problem of theory-ladenness of observation philosophy of science has dealt with ever since. One could take another step and hold that quantitative comparisons between cities that allow for statistical analysis are possible and useful.[3] In this case, the appropriate selection of data and a study's design are of crucial importance. In discussing these challenging methodological issues, philosophy of the city as philosophy of the urban sciences can profit from philosophical investigations into the nature of comparisons[4] and from ongoing discussions in philosophy of the social sciences.[5]

Once again, many questions mentioned in this section need interdisciplinary discussions. Nevertheless, philosophy of the city as urban epistemology and philosophy of the urban sciences opens up their own perspectives on problems of urban experience and urban knowledge, independently of methodological and 'epistemological' debates in the urban sciences.[6] We need these perspectives if we are to fully understand cities and city life.

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[2] See, e.g., DiGaetano and Strom (2003), developed a framework for comparing urban governance based on theoretical assumptions derived from structural theories in sociology and rational choice theory. They identified five modes of urban governance, understood as "ideal types" (*ibid.*, 367), that provide a grid of categories for comparing political structures of cities.

[3] As an example, take Masłowski and Kulińska (2020). Using the case study of a possible introduction of public bus transport in selected Polish cities, the authors aim to demonstrate that benchmarking processes that open up possibilities for quantitative inter-urban comparisons help to significantly improve the data basis on which decisions are made, for example in urban planning. For another example of quantitative comparison, based on DEA, see Jerabek et al. (2020).

[4] For a current comprehensive study on the philosophy of comparison, see von Sass (2021, esp. Ch. 2 on different types of comparisons).

[5] See Frank et al. (2014) for an inspiring collection of case studies on how philosophy might contribute to attempts at comparing cities. The project documented in this volume is connected to the *Eigenlogik*-discourse in German urban sociology, *i. e.* the idea that, despite all tendencies to (global) conformity and adjustment, each city nevertheless develops its own inner "logic", its own local practices and local forms of knowledge closely connected to these practices. The project uses methods in the tradition of philosophical phenomenology to show how different cities—Frankfurt, Dortmund, Birmingham, and Glasgow—develop their own modes of functioning and can nevertheless be compared with each other.

[6] Again, conceptual clarity is important: In methodological debates, urban scientists quite often speak of "urban epistemology" when they are discussing methodological and theoretical issues. Take, as an example, the new "epistemological framework" for analyzing urbanization in the 21st century as proposed by Brennan and Schmid (2015) that basically deals with conceptual and theoretical questions like the adequate understanding and framing of "urban" and "urbanization". By contrast, "epistemology" in "urban epistemology" is used here in the traditional philosophical sense to denote the general theory of experience, perception, and knowledge.

3. Urban Normative Theory

Urban normative theory is a second way to do philosophy of the city. As I understand this project, urban normative theory seeks to spell out and interpret the central normative categories of ethics and aesthetics of social and political philosophy for urban contexts. It deals with categories like the right, the good, the just, the aesthetic, the democratic, and the powerful. Urban normative theory raises questions like these: What does it mean to possess a right to the city? When is life spent in a city a good, flourishing one? Which elements are constitutive for urban justice? How should a democratic city be organized? Given the state of the debate, philosophy of the city as urban normative theory has to face three important problems.

The first problem can be described as a problem of adequate, respectively inadequate exchange between normative discourses within the urban sciences on the one hand and practical philosophy and political theory on the other hand. Important parts of the urban sciences have always understood themselves not as merely empirical, but as critical, political, and normative disciplines. Therefore, they have developed their own traditions of understanding and using key normative concepts. This is especially true with regard to the idea of justice and the corresponding concept of a right to the city. Just take the most influential case of Henri Lefebvre: His well-known critique of practices of capitalistic urban development is based on a Marxist conception of justice (Lefebvre 1996). In consequence, important accounts of urban social justice, as developed by, for example, Harvey (2012, *Preface*) and Mitchell (2014, 17–21), followed Lefebvre's Marxist paradigm.

While the urban sciences have thus developed their own traditions of theorizing about justice, there has been little exchange with practical philosophy. This is surprising, as justice is *the* key concept of contemporary western political philosophy. Fifty years after Rawls published *A Theory of Justice* (1971), the variety of egalitarian, utilitarian, prioritarian, contractarian, libertarian, communitarian, sufficientarian, and capabilitarian accounts of justice, to mention just a few, is myriad.

Philosophy of the city as urban normative theory is the discipline that should aim at connecting the different normative discourses on justice and the right to the city again. All sides should welcome this. The urban sciences need such a discussion to test the robustness of their normative foundations. For their critique of urban injustice, their proposals for improvement will be less convincing, possibly even worthless, if they are based on a concept of justice that is not tenable, that is not checked against the background of current philosophical theories of justice and that cannot be defended against better theoretical alternatives. Susan S. Fainstein's *The Just City* (2011) might be considered as something like a role model for philosophy of the city as urban normative theory.[7]

Urban normative theory does not always face such problems of interdisciplinary mismatching as in the case of (urban) justice. The category of the democratic provides a more positive example of collaboration between the urban sciences, political theory, and political philosophy. To be sure, it is always possible to strengthen the exchange between disciplines. But let me mention two aspects, in which we can observe attempts at successful interdisciplinary cooperation. First, in discussing best practices, in designing procedures of democratic, participatory urban planning and urban develop-

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[7] Note that I am not defending here Fainstein's particular theoretical position (although I strongly sympathize with her). As well, it should be kept in mind that Fainstein works as an urban sociologist who combines theory with analyses of concrete cities like, in this case, New York, London, and Amsterdam. Nevertheless, I believe that her approach demonstrates how urban normative theory should connect philosophy of justice with specific questions of urban structures and city life.

ment, urban scientists adapted models developed in political science, like the idea of mini-publics.[8] Likewise, they discuss how philosophical theories of democracy, like Habermas' theory of communication and deliberative democracy (Habermas 1996), might be used as groundwork for theories of urban (participatory) planning.[9]

Second, there is an ever-growing interest to better understand and fully analyze, empirically as well as from a normative point of view, the role of the (democratic) city within contemporary political systems and societies. Urban sociologists study large cities' impact as global actors in the economic and political systems of late modernity.[10] Political theorists and philosophers analyze the relationship between democracy and the city. More specifically, they seek to determine the importance, range, and authority of democratic urban governance as opposed to other levels of statal, national/federal and transnational governance.[11] These normative discussions on democracy in cities, on democratic planning, and on cities as democratic agents illustrate the potential of an interdisciplinary exchange that enables philosophers as urban normative theorists, and urban and political scientists to learn from each other.

The second problem current urban normative theory must face is the problem of non-existent debates. Central debates in normative ethics have not yet been taken up by philosophers of the city. I believe it would be worthwhile to catch up here, as an engagement with these debates could unclose important perspectives for philosophy of the city and strengthen its conceptual equipment.

Two debates are of particular relevance. First, the question of the good life has experienced a major revival in philosophical ethics, leading to a variety of competing approaches. Philosophy of the city can draw on them in developing theoretical frameworks that enable us to understand the structures, elements, and prerequisites for flourishing urban lives.[12] In normative ethics, the category of the good has long been rehabilitated alongside the category of the right. Philosophy of the city would benefit from following this step and asking not only about the right to the city, but also about the good city.[13]

Second, in the last decades, ethicists showed a renewed interest in problems of meaning in life.[14] It seems to be clear that the meaningful is an independent normative category that cannot be reduced neither to the good nor the right. If we accept this, questions come to mind immediately: What kind of possibilities for a meaningful life do cities contain? Why is it that some people find a meaningful life possible in a particular city, while others do not? Can major works of philosophical

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[8] See Beauvais and Warren (2019) for an example of using a deliberative mini-public-model in urban planning; cf. Hartz-Karp and Marinova (2021) for the use of collective decision-making methods in the tradition of deliberative democratic thought in urban sustainable planning processes in Australia.

[9] Forester (1993) and Innes and Booher (²2018) are examples for well-known accounts of communicative/collaborative planning that have been influenced by Habermas' theory of communication and democracy. See as well the brief history of Habermas' (and Dewey's) influence on planning theory presented in Mattila and Nummi (2022, 408–410).

[10] See Saskia Sassen's seminal study (2001) and the volumes in Routledge's book series *Cities and Global Governance*.

[11] See Frick (2023) for an introduction to city-related debates in contemporary political theory. She offers a heuristic typology of four approaches that currently dominate the discussions on the relation between democracy and the city.

[12] For a brief introduction to the debate, see Crisp (2021).

[13] Note, my point is not that philosophers of the city don't talk about the good city life, about values and happiness. Of course, they do. My point is that we lack a systematic exchange between philosophy of the city and current debates on the good life in normative ethics.

[14] A current overview can be found in Landau (2022).

urban research such as Benjamin's *Arcade Project* be read as an attempt to find meaning in the city? Without doubt, confronting the meaning-in-life-debate can enrich philosophy of the city.[15]

The issues discussed so far in this section followed a certain pattern: normative categories—the right, the just, the democratic, the good, the meaningful—have been named. Urban normative theory's task has been specified as interpreting these broad normative categories for urban contexts. However, the third problem philosophy of the city as urban normative theory must deal with is the question of whether there exist normative categories that genuinely belong to the urban realm, that are not specifications of categories fundamental to practical philosophy.

In my view, the category of a city's identity is a plausible candidate for such a category. To be sure, urban normative theory might learn something from discussions about personal identity and from the ongoing debate between liberals and communitarians on the groundings of a nation's identity. Nevertheless, what distinguishes the question of a city's identity from other identity questions is a unique interaction of various factors. The identity of a city is determined by the complex interplay of physical and built structures, historically grown practices and cultures, everyday actions and much more. Because of this complex fabric, as indicated in Section Two, knowledge about a particular city is closely linked to personal experience. A nation-state's (unless it is not at the same time a city-state) or a person's identity is determined by very different factors. In this sense, urban identity is a category genuinely belonging to urban normative theory. And without doubt, identity is a category of normative importance. We might criticize as different things as a reform of district responsibilities, a new building in the city center, or the privatization of a public area as threatening a city's identity. Likewise, we evaluate political conflicts as struggles about urban identity.

Philosophy of the city as urban normative theory has developed several models to understand urban identity. I can mention only two of them here to illustrate how differently the category of urban identity can be spelled out. Shane Epting (2016) proposed a mereological model of urban identity as part of a "science of the city". According to this model, a city is analyzed as consisting of micro parts and macro parts, i.e. *e.* sets of micro parts. The interaction between these parts is defined as a city's meta-structures (*ibid.*, 1364–1366). In Epting's view, such a model shows that a city's identity is in permanent change, as its constituent parts are changing constantly. However, most of these changes are "harmless" (*ibid.*, 1366), as "meta-structures mostly remain stable" (*ibid.*, 1367).

Quill R. Kukla recently defended an ecological model, according to which processes of niche building, embodied routines, and micronegotiations are crucial for a city's and its places' identity (2021, e.g., 33–38). Identity is produced through a complex interplay between human agents and the built environment. In consequence, as different people share the same urban spaces, one city space might have multiple identities that might even conflict with each other (*ibid.*, 78, 119, 189).[16]

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[15] Once again, my claim is not that questions of meaning are not addressed within contemporary philosophy of the city. Especially within the phenomenological tradition, questions of meaning have always been present (for recent contributions, see Howell 2021 and Berstrand et al. 2022). Rather, my thesis is (again) that philosophy of the city lacks a systematic engagement with the meaning-in-life-debate as conducted in normative ethics.

[16] As Kukla's subtitle *How Urban Dwellers and Urban Spaces Make One Another* indicates, philosophy of the city must discuss a second problem of identity, the identity of the urban citizen, the urban dweller, etc. See for example the contributions of Lake and Meagher in Meagher, Noll and Biehl (2020) that could be read as studies of philosophic-pragmatist, resp. flânerie urban identities.

As this brief overview shows, philosophy of the city as urban normative theory currently addresses pressing questions. At the same time, it needs systematic expansion if the goal is to fully understand all aspects of city life that matter from a normative point of view.

4. Applied Philosophy of the City

Finally, philosophy of the city can be practiced as a branch of applied philosophy. Probably most of the work that has been done within philosophy of the city in recent years could be described as applied philosophy of the city. The topics range from questions of urban mobility (Epting 2019) and technology in the city (Nagenborg et al. 2021) all the way down to critical analyses of urban modelling in the digital age (Johnson 2020) and platform capitalism in smart cities (Prien and Strüver 2021). The research field of urban aesthetics, which is closely linked to recent theoretical developments in environmental and everyday aesthetics, has proved particularly productive. As an applied philosophy of the city, urban aesthetics deals with problems as different as light pollution and the value of the urban nocturnal sublime (Stone 2021), green design (Saito 2007, 84–103), the impact of technology on urban aesthetic experience (Lehtinen 2021), and the aesthetics of different modes of urban transportation (Maskit 2018).

Why is it justified to classify these philosophical investigations—they might be ethical, political, or aesthetic—as *applied* philosophy? Naturally, they seek to develop a theoretical understanding of their topics and discuss problems of terminology and interpretation. Nevertheless, they are applied in the sense that they analyze practical problems of urban life as connected to, for example, the use of specific technologies and modes of transportation. The search for practical solutions, the identification of concrete possibilities for change and progress is a crucial part of the philosophical project. Not infrequently, these philosophical works arise in close exchange with other disciplines or in the context of interdisciplinary projects.

Applied philosophy of the city—as philosophy of the city in general—draws from a broad range of philosophical traditions and theories. Probably, the influence of phenomenology is most notable. However, traditions as different as hermeneutics, analytic philosophy, and ancient Greek philosophy with its special interest in the *polis* bear their influence on the field.[17] Such an exchange between the different traditions has become rare in philosophy—and philosophy of the city benefits from its openness to differences.

In the future, applied philosophy of the city must address one problem well-known from other branches of applied philosophy, especially applied ethics. In treating a problem of applied philosophy, the choice of a specific theoretical framework is decisive. If one is rethinking the right to public urban space, one's ethical evaluation will surely depend on whether one chooses to apply a utilitarian or a Kantian framework. This problem is not trivial: On the one hand, if the results of studies in applied philosophy of the city should have some impact, if they, for example, should play a role in committees that advise and develop strategies for urban planning and development, they should rest on defensible philosophical foundations. As a philosopher, one should be able to defend one's philosophical starting points when confronted with an urban audience of different worldviews, and political and philosophical convictions. On the other hand, most philosophical foundations are no-

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[17] For an example of using philosophical hermeneutics to analyze urban encounters, see Pathirane (2020). Allen Carlson's work is an important example of environmental and urban aesthetics in the analytic tradition (e.g. g. 2001, 2009). References to ancient, mostly Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of the city and their modern adaptations, for example in Hannah Arendt's work, are frequent.

toriously contested. We cannot wait to do applied philosophy of the city until the endless dispute between Kantians and utilitarians on the nature of morality is solved, until phenomenologists and analytic philosophers of aesthetics agree on the concept of the aesthetic, and until deliberative liberals and theorists of agonal democracy made terms on the basic structures of urban politics. In short, philosophers of the city have to ask themselves whether it is possible to ground applied philosophy of the city on foundations that are at the same time stable and uncontested, that provide a reliable working basis for dealing with problems and contexts of application.[18]

It might be helpful for applied philosophy of the city to examine how medical ethics, maybe one of the most developed branches of applied philosophy, has solved this problem. The most influential solution has been defended by Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress in their groundbreaking work *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (⁸2019). They propose to use four principles—autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice—as the starting point for ethical reflection. These principles, they claim, are acceptable from the viewpoint of different strands of ethical theorizing like consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. These principles are in line with common (Western) morality and traditions of professional ethics of physicians and nursing personnel. In other words, the principles mark common grounds. By starting with these principles, Beauchamp and Childress avoid debates concerning the theoretical foundations of ethics where there is no prospect of reaching any agreement. Through strategies of specification and concretization, they aim to apply the principles to specific contexts and individual cases. In this way, they seek to find solutions that are at the same time ethically justifiable and acceptable for all persons involved.[19]

Can we identify principles that mark urban common ground, that might be used as starting points for studies in applied philosophy of the city? Principles we all agree upon, principles that can be further specified and concretized to deal with specific problems? Given the current state of the debate in the field, I tend to think that justice and participation are suitable candidates for such principles. Furthermore, it is striking that a great part of the recent literature in the field emphasizes the importance of the human body in the city, of bodily postures, experiences, dangers, and actions. It might, therefore, be worthwhile to think about a principle that focusses on bodily presence, whether it might be conceptualized as a principle of integrity, well-being, or flourishing.

These are nothing more than very initial considerations. Applied philosophy of the city is expanding. Therefore, it is time to reconsider its systematic foundations.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have only been able to briefly touch on many aspects. It is surely possible to criticize the proposed tripartite systematization of philosophy of the city, for example regarding the place of aesthetics within this structure. As well, the debate would certainly benefit from developing alternative proposals for systematization.

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[18] Such a discussion can, of course, also lead to the conclusion that corresponding foundations are not needed at all.

[19] I cannot analyze the *principlism* in detail here. Of course, the model proposed by Beauchamp and Childress has provoked many critical responses that are discussed at length within medical ethics. Among other things, one can ask whether the *principlism* really remains neutral with regard to different strands of ethical theorizing and whether its connections to the common morality are problematic, in the sense of leading into relativism or in the sense of endangering the theory's critical power. Rauprich (2005) provides a comprehensive account of central objections and reconstructs how Beauchamp and Childress try to counter these objections in the *Principles'* several subsequent editions.

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Whether one accepts this map or prefers an alternative: Any attempt at mapping forces us to think about the relationship between philosophy of the city, other branches of philosophy and all those other disciplines that participate in urban research. This helps us to sharpen our understanding of philosophy of the city's tasks. It helps us to identify open questions and problems that future philosophical urban research should address.[20]

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[20]I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers whose critiques have helped me improve this paper and who have alerted me to a few biases in my perception of the ongoing discussions within the vivid field of philosophy of the city.

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How to Know a City: The Epistemic Value of City Tours

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Abstract

When travelling to a new city, we acquire knowledge about its physical terrain, directions, historical facts and aesthetic features. Engaging in tourism practices, such as guided walking tours, provides experiences of a city that are necessarily mediated and partial. This has led scholars in tourism studies, and more recently in philosophy, to question the epistemological value of city tours, critiquing them as passive, lacking in autonomous agency, and providing misrepresentative experiences of the city. In response, we argue that the mediated and partial knowledge of a city acquired through city tours is not epistemologically disvaluable. Although city tours involve the transmission of testimonial knowledge, this does not necessarily render tourists as passive and non-autonomous. Instead, tourists have the potential to participate in the generation of their knowledge actively. Moreover, we argue that city tours also provide a tourist with valuable 'objectual' knowledge of a city, which has the potential to be first-personal, and active, and does not necessarily misrepresent the city's identity. This type of knowledge is valuable both for tourists as credible epistemic agents, and for the city itself, as the knowledge generated by the tour can facilitate an accurate representation of the city and promote social transformation. We conclude by highlighting four further epistemic and ethical implications of our argument.

Keywords: urban tourism, epistemology, knowledge, testimony, tour guide, city tour

1. Introduction

When travelling to a new city, we acquire knowledge about its physical terrain, directions, historical facts and aesthetic features. Engaging in tourism practices, such as guided walking tours, provides experiences of the city that are necessarily mediated and partial. This has led scholars in tourism studies, and more recently in philosophy, to question the epistemological value of city tours, critiquing them as passive, lacking in autonomous agency, and providing misrepresentative experiences of the city.

In this paper, we argue that the mediated and partial knowledge of a city acquired through city tours is not epistemologically disvaluable. In Section Two we outline the main criticism of city tourism as resulting in passivity, lack of autonomy, and a misrepresentation of the city. We suggest that the ground of this criticism comes from how tourism practices, specifically city tours, provide knowledge of a city that is mediated and partial. One of the main functions of city tours is to transmit testimonial knowledge to tourists. Despite the mediated nature of this knowledge, in Section Three we argue that tourists are not merely passive epistemic agents that lack autonomy, but instead have the potential to actively participate in the generation of this knowledge. In Section Four, we argue that city tours not only provide tourists with testimonial knowledge but also 'objectual' knowledge. The acquisition of this knowledge has the potential to be first-personal, and active, and does not misrepresent the city's identity. We conclude by highlighting four further epistemic and ethical implications of our argument.

2. What is Wrong With City Tourism?

The city is a central object of analysis in tourism studies. This focus is understandable given that almost half of the 1.5 billion global tourists in 2019 travelled to cities (World Travel and Tourism Council 2022, 7). However, in contemporary philosophy of the city, tourists are often overlooked or mentioned only in passing. Recently, Quill Kukla (2021) has addressed this gap, offering a mostly critical view of the implications of tourist practices—specifically, city tours—on visitors and the city itself.

Kukla (2021, 76–79) finds three faults with city tourism. First, Kukla claims that tourists do not interact with the place in a 'rich' way, but instead passively look at sights or listen to stories. This passivity has the potential to negatively impact a city, as tourists frequently endorse and accept, rather than challenge, the dominant narratives of a place. Second, tourists give up their autonomy by allowing others to dictate their physical movement through the city, their selection of what is worth seeing, and how to interpret what they experience. Third, Kukla claims that urban tourists fail to engage in authentic city experiences, which can be detrimental to the city. Because tourist practices focus on main attractions such as city landmarks, this means that "the city presents itself to tourists as having a fixed, unified, historically determined meaning and character" (2021, 77). As such, tourist practices misconstrue the identity of the city by hiding everyday life and failing to capture urban dynamism.

City tourism, therefore, should be criticised on account that its practices are often passive, lacking in autonomous agency, and misrepresentative of the city's identity. These features are considered to be present in all city tours, regardless of how they are designed. For instance, Kukla believes that these criticisms still hold for city tours that attempt to offer balanced political and historical narratives, and require active participation and listening from the partakers (2021, 78). Even in these cases, tourists are passive and non-autonomous recipients of information, who only receive a partial and misleading representation of the city.

It might seem that passivity, lack of autonomy, and misrepresentation are *prima facie* problematic and render city tours as wrongful or harmful in some way. However, it's not clear why and how this is the case. In fact, although such a stance is implied, Kukla does not explicitly state that city tourism is wrong or harmful. One way in which the implication is spelled out, is in the contrast made between passive tourism and 'spatial agency' (2021, 78). Spatial agency is the ability to shape the place one lives in, and to be shaped by the place in return. Kukla claims that this ability

is a valuable and necessary element of one's experience living in a city (2021, 95). Considering that people who participate in city tours are, according to Kukla, passive and non-autonomous, they are unable to shape the places they visit, and cannot be shaped, in return, by those places. If spatial agency is necessary for a valuable experience of a city, and city tours do not provide this, then city tours could be thought of as wrong insofar as they are deficient in this way.

This argument does not hold, however, as tourists do not live in the cities they visit, and so the type of experiences that are valuable for a tourist need not include the type of shaping that arises from spatial agency. City tours need not be deficient as a result of their inability to facilitate spatial agency.

A more plausible way to explain why city tours might be wrongful is to consider Kukla's account of how knowledge of a city is generated. Kukla (2023) claims that knowledge of a city cannot be acquired through the testimony of others. To know a city does not merely involve knowing propositional content, such as the dates its statues were erected, or how to interpret the meaning of certain iconic symbols. Instead, to know a city involves 'objectual' knowledge, which is an "embodied, active, and aesthetic" experiential engagement with a city, and requires us "to have a feel for what it is like to negotiate its rhythms and its dynamic patterns" (2023, 2–4). For Kukla, this sort of aesthetic orientation of a city is a skill that takes time to develop, involving practice and repeated exposure, and can only be developed from one's own first-person perspective (2023, 5).

Given this account of knowledge, we can construct a case for what is wrong with city tours, according to Kukla. Passivity, lack of autonomy, and misrepresentation seem a direct result of the fact that city tours are mediated experiences. They are designed and conducted by someone other than the person who is trying to know the city, and so cannot be first-personal. Kukla assumes that city tours consist merely of the transmission of testimonial knowledge, which is passively accepted by the tourist. In these tours, the tourist's experiences are directed by someone else, and so are non-autonomous. Furthermore, tours only present a partial and time-limited view of the city, thus misrepresenting the city's identity. As a result, these tours cannot provide objectual knowledge and are therefore epistemically disvaluable.

In what follows, we reject the criticism that city tours are epistemically disvaluable. We argue that (i) instead of being merely passive, tourists can be active when receiving testimonial knowledge in city tours, and (ii) city tours also provide objectual knowledge that can be autonomously acquired and does not necessarily misrepresent the city's identity. In our discussion, we focus on the example of guided walking tours; however, in the conclusion, we consider the implications of how to extend our argument to other types of city tours.

3. The Value of Testimony

The fact that city tours are guided plays an important role in the criticism that these tours make tourists passive and non-autonomous. The epistemic value of city tours is therefore influenced by the presence of the tour guide. The tour guide fulfils the role of mediating any knowledge that is gained by the tourist, curating and controlling the tourist's experiences and interpretations of the city.

In his influential view of the role of tour guides, Erik Cohen (1985) identifies two main roles, as a 'mentor', and a 'pathfinder'. In the next section, we discuss further the tour guide's role as a pathfinder, but for now, we focus on the role of mentor. The tour guide, in this role, is a transmitter of knowledge. There are two dimensions to this role. First, the tour guide selects the information

that is transmitted to the tourist, choosing what is shown of the place (1985, 14). Second, the tour guide not only selects the content of the tour but interprets the information that they have selected, giving specific meanings to what the visitors see and hear (1985, 15).

As a mentor, then, the tour guide facilitates a tourist's testimonial knowledge of the city. This type of testimony focuses solely on the transmission of propositional content. Through their testimony, a tour guide controls and mediates the knowledge that is transmitted, and how it is delivered and interpreted. As we will argue in Section Three, tour guides do not only transmit testimonial knowledge of the city, but can also facilitate objectual knowledge. First, however, we reject the claim that a tour guide's testimony renders the tourist as a passive and non-autonomous recipient of knowledge.

The view that tourists are passive and non-autonomous corresponds with an influential account of testimonial entitlement, 'anti-reductionism'. According to this view, knowledge acquired by testimony is "easy to come by: all you need to do is listen to what you are being told. […] We don't need to check on the facts ourselves; […]. We can just go ahead and believe on mere say-so" (Simion 2020, 891–2). If this understanding of testimony is correct, then the tourist who relies on testimony to acquire their knowledge of a city would indeed be passive, relying on the intentions of another agent. However, there is good reason to reject the anti-reductionist view. In general, testimony itself is widely accepted as a valuable form of knowledge transmission, that may uncover previously unavailable knowledge (Gelfert 2018), or foster expressive social values of accuracy and sincerity (Kusch 2009). More specifically, regarding city tours, it is possible to show that tourists are active both in receiving knowledge through testimony and in producing the testimonial knowledge that is exchanged.

To begin with, merely receiving testimony still involves active participation on behalf of the tourist. Being part of a guided tour involves listening to the content of the information, and applying the content to an interpretation of the object that is being discussed. There are two aspects to this activity of listening and understanding. First, the tourist very simply has a choice to pay attention and focus on the information and activities that are being shared by the tour guide. As Jonas Larsen and Jane Widtfeldt Meged (2013, 94) have explained, tourists can "log on and off" during city tours, alternating between attentive and absent practices. Second, over and above merely paying attention, a tourist has the choice to actively attempt to understand what is being said. Understanding is widely accepted to be more cognitively demanding than merely receiving information, requiring active participation from the receiving agent. If this is the case, then understanding the information and interpretations shared by the tour guide requires at least some active participation from the tourist. For example, if a tour guide explains the relevance of certain symbols on a statue, in order to appreciate this a tourist will have to listen to that information and then apply it to the statue they see in front of them. It could be that one of the relevant symbols is on the side of the statue furthest away from where a tourist is standing, and so to grasp the information that is being shared, the tourist might have to move to the other side.

The reasonable recipient of testimonial information does not merely passively accept what they are being told, but actively participates in the transmission of the knowledge. As opposed to anti-reductionism, 'reductionism' holds that testimony is only reasonably trusted if there is some positive non-testimonial evidence to support the credibility of the information that is shared. This non-testimonial evidence may take the form of first-hand observations, cognitive reasoning, and memory (Gelfert 2018). In this way, a tourist only reliably accepts the testimony of the tour guide if they have good reason to trust the tour guide and the information that is being shared. Neil Levy

(2023) similarly argues that testimony should be considered as interactive. In Levy's view, the good knower is someone who has the ability to think with others, discerning when to defer to testimony, whose testimony to rely on, and thinking independently about the testimony received (2023: 8). As such, when testimony forms part of knowledge generation, an epistemic agent necessarily plays an active role in how that knowledge is acquired.

Kukla's account of the passivity and lack of autonomy found in city tourists largely corresponds with a critical view of tourism which has been widespread in sociology (e.g., MacCannell 1973; Urry 1990) and philosophy (e.g., Rawlinson 2006). However, it is now increasingly accepted within tourism studies that tourists actively participate in the exchange of testimonial knowledge. Tourists are not merely passive: they choose where to travel and which activities to book. These choices are not random or unreasoned, since tourists spend a great deal of time researching their destination and the kind of activities in which they would like to participate. In fact, tourists often seek self-realisation (Welten 2014) and many reject passive experiences in favour of active urban exploration (Jansson 2018).[1]

Besides choosing to engage their attention, and activating the cognitive skills for understanding and assessing the tour guide's reliability, active epistemic engagement is highlighted by the way in which tourists regularly engage in participatory practices. For instance, as Larsen and Meged (2013, 94–95) explain, tourists regularly interrupt the guide, asking questions and making comments on the facts explained by the guide; tourists often answer questions directed at them by the guide, and can even correct the guide and challenge the guide's authority. This makes tourists *de facto* "co-producers" of the content of the guided tour, emphasising the tour guide as a facilitator rather than a sole producer of the knowledge that is acquired (2013, 89).

The conceptual frameworks explaining the role of tour guides have been revised and developed to acknowledge the complex role of facilitator of reciprocal interaction with the active tourist. For example, Cohen has expanded his view to define a guide whose aim is not merely to transmit knowledge and guide through certain locations, but to "promote debate and discussion" with tourists (Cohen *et al.* 2002, 92). Similarly, tour guides are defined as 'storytellers' who portray their knowledge of the city through engaging stories, and also as 'cultural brokers' who mediate between the audience and the local culture they are visiting (Ap & Wong 2001). In these more progressive and complex accounts, the tourist is not merely passive but is actively engaged in a conversation with the tour guide, other tourists, and the city.

Although city tours consist of a tour guide's transmission of testimonial knowledge, we have argued that this exchange does not necessarily render the tourist as passive and non-autonomous, given that testimony often requires the active engagement of the tourist's attention, and that testimonial knowledge is often actively co-produced by the tourist. As such, city tourists are not necessarily passive epistemic agents but have the potential to actively engage in the generation of their knowledge.

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[1] Commentators have recently recognised the figure of the 'post-tourist', a term coined by Maxine Feifer (1985) to describe travellers who are aware and self-reflective about the content of tourism experiences and their own role in these. This distinction between 'tourist' and the post-tourist (or, for some, 'traveller') could suggest that Kukla is right—insofar as *tourism* is epistemically flawed, and the tourist stance needs to be overcome with the more epistemologically active and reflective post-tourist or traveller. However, this distinction is not uncontroversial, with some critically rejecting the conceptual difference between the two (see Welten 2014). For the purpose of our argument here, we leave this debate to one side and use the term 'tourist' generally to refer to people that participate in tourist activities. Our claim is that not all tourists, generally understood, are passive and lack autonomy.

4. Objectual Knowledge

To know a city does not merely involve knowing propositional content. As we have explained, Kukla (2023) claims that a city is known through objectual knowledge, which is necessarily first-personal. It is implied that the generation of this objectual knowledge is not possible in city tours, because they are directed by someone else, consist in the transmission of testimony, and only offer a partial (and often misleading) view of the city. In this section, we argue that city tours can transmit valuable objectual knowledge of a city. First, we show that being physically guided does not necessarily diminish a tourist's autonomy. We then argue that the partiality involved in knowing a city is widespread and does not necessarily entail an epistemic flaw or misrepresentation of the city's identity.

In the previous section we focused on Cohen's description of the tour guide as a 'mentor', as a transmitter of propositional knowledge. Cohen also claims that the tour guide adopts the role of a 'pathfinder', as a "geographical guide" who not only takes visitors to specific locations but who leads tourists "through an environment in which his followers lack orientation or through a socially defined territory to which they have no access" (1985, 7). As such, the tour guide shapes and facilitates the way in which tourists orient themselves in the city, by providing access to certain locations, navigating through different sites and routes, and modelling how to interact with these sites. The tour guide, therefore, acts as a facilitator and mediator of a tourist's embodied and aesthetic 'objectual' knowledge of the city, as termed by Kukla.

It is objected by Kukla, though, that the pathfinder role of the tour guide results in the possibility for tourists to remain passive rather than autonomously navigating around a city, practicing and learning the relevant aesthetic skills that are involved in the acquisition of objectual knowledge. Letting oneself be led by a tour guide, rather than find one's own way, is the epitome of the negatively critiqued non-autonomous city tourist.

Against this view, we argue that a tourist who partakes in city tours does not necessarily lack autonomy when generating objectual knowledge of a city. To begin with, a tourist will usually have chosen a tour with a certain itinerary, making an active decision about which parts of the city they want to orient themselves within and learn how to navigate. As we have noted in the previous section, it is now commonly understood that tourists' choices do not simply respond to what they are told they should experience, but instead correspond to their own self-perception and sense of agency.

Furthermore, we suggest that tours have the potential to enhance autonomy for some tourists. A walking tour provides a relatively safe way to explore a city, which is especially important for those who systematically feel unsafe in the way that they navigate the city. The paradigmatic example of the active and autonomous tourist is Walter Benjamin's (1983) *flanêur*, who is traditionally a male, white, able-bodied individual who can use his privileged position to roam aimlessly through the city and engage with its inhabitants. Unlike the male *flâneur,* many women feel like they cannot wander alone and unnoticed in cities, making this sort of independent exploration unattainable (Wolff 2003). Racialised people often report feeling unsafe in certain destinations, as is the case for many African-American tourists in South Carolina, for instance (Hudson *et al.* 2020). With approximately seventy countries worldwide still criminalizing homosexuality (and, by extension, visible queerness, including transness), walking alone in the streets of certain cities can be a life-threatening enterprise for people in the LGTBQI+ community. As such, the facilitation and mediation that is offered by tour guides provide a valuable way for many tourists who cannot (or feel

like they cannot) navigate a city individually to acquire objectual knowledge of the city, effectively enhancing their autonomy.

The tour guide's facilitation of a tourist's objectual knowledge is also valuable because it can provide access to parts of a city that a tourist did not have access to before due to public restriction or accessibility issues. For example, a tour might uncover little-known places that reveal important features of the city. But, also importantly, it might only be possible for physically disabled travellers to access certain parts of a city by following a pre-designed itinerary with a guide who is familiar with the accessible routes. For example, people with sight impairments report a richer experience of the visual arts in museums and galleries through the use of guided visits (Szubielska 2018). In these instances, the tour guide not only facilitates a tourist's aesthetic experience of a city but provides access to it as a condition of possibility, thus also enhancing, not diminishing, their autonomy. Kukla (2021, 261–267) does discuss extensively how urban design can restrict a person's spatial agency due to their gender, race, sexual identity, ability, and age. However, due to their critical epistemological stance with regard to city tourism, Kukla does not recognise that that city tours can be a valuable way to acquire knowledge of a city because of these restrictions. In some cases, as we have stated, city tours might be the only way for certain tourists to acquire this knowledge.

Besides lack of autonomy, the second obstacle that Kukla raises for the transmission of objectual knowledge in city tours is that they offer a partial representation of the city, so misrepresenting the city's identity. Indeed, Kukla is right that the objectual knowledge gained through the mediation of tour guides is partial. The guided tour merely functions as a way to acquire an initial understanding, which will always be more fully appreciated the longer one stays and engages with the city. But partiality itself does not justify Kukla's denial of the possibility of acquiring objectual knowledge. For example, the meaning of a tourist's utterance, 'I know Buenos Aires', after attending a day-long city walking tour does not have the same meaning as the same statement uttered by a long-term resident. But the statement makes more sense uttered by the tourist than by someone who has never been to Buenos Aires. The tourist has *some* objectual knowledge after following a city tour, in virtue of being better able to orient herself around the city than she was prior to following the tour.

Moreover, denying the value of partial knowledge of the city is in contradiction with Kukla's own claim of objectual knowledge always being a matter of degree and never complete, "None of us will ever experience a place from every possible perspective, and none of us therefore, can have complete knowledge of a place" (2023, 6). Partial knowledge of a city is widely experienced and does not render the knower epistemically flawed, or automatically entail that one misrepresents the city's identity. Most long-term residents also have objectual knowledge of only certain parts of a city. Suppose, for example, that Alejandra lives in San Telmo, now a middle-class neighbourhood of Buenos Aires, and she can navigate that area competently. Nevertheless, she may be completely lost if she is dropped off by a taxi in the affluent area of Caballito, and even more lost if she accidentally falls asleep on the bus and arrives in one of the suburban slums. Alejandra has objectual knowledge only of a physically delimited part of the city, but it is nevertheless *her* city and one that she can claim she *knows*.

As Kukla acknowledges, objectual knowledge of a city goes beyond geographical orientation and includes having an embodied interaction with the city. Objectual knowledge is also partial in this sense, as one's circumstances may offer different and unique perspectives of the city. For example, even though Alejandra might know Buenos Aires better than Micah, Alejandra's knowledge of Buenos Aires is generated by her own perspective and experiences. As a wheelchair user, Micah

might have experience of Buenos Aires's accessibility points in a way that Alejandra could never experience. As such, Alejandra's experience of the city is always indexed to her own perspective.

Considering that objectual knowledge of a city is partial, city tours cannot be epistemically flawed merely in virtue of offering partial knowledge. In fact, as described above, city tours are an important way to acquire partial knowledge of this sort for certain groups that could not acquire it otherwise.

Kukla's characterization of city tours implicitly assumes that the tour guide's partiality regarding what to share with the tour participants misrepresents the city's identity dynamism. This stance, though, overlooks that a tour happens in the city and accommodates interaction with the city. While being led through a specific route or path, a tourist will interact with and have a feel for the place, experiencing and acquiring an understanding of what it is like to walk across certain roads and stand in particular areas of the city. A tour is an embodied experience of the city, which can very well incorporate itself into the dynamics of the city.

As Jonathan Wynn (2010) explains, walking tours often provide serendipitous moments of interaction with the city and its inhabitants, facilitated and navigated by the tour guide. For example, Wynn (2010: 156) collects stories from tour guides who recall city residents who have passed by and interrupted a tour to haggle with the tour guide or have had their tour groups invited into private homes by residents. Some tour guides do not have pre-designed itineraries, and so modify their itineraries during the tour itself. This can be done as a response to the current circumstances of the city or as a response to the active engagement of the tourists. Wynn does not see these examples as exceptions but instead claims that tours constitute a special "disposition to such interactions" (2010, 157). Regardless of how common these serendipities and improvisations are, they are examples of the thickest mode of interaction that tourists can have with the city and its residents during a tour. Even when tours lack this serendipity and improvisation, tourists are, at the very least, walking through the streets of *that* city and interacting with it in a thin way. Whether the interaction is thick or thin, they provide examples of the first-personal acquisition of objectual knowledge that is facilitated by the tour guide.

It could be argued that even though a tourist does interact with the city, this type of interaction is not sufficient to offer an accurate representation of the city. Kukla seems to make such a claim when distinguishing between passive tourism and spatial agency, the latter of which enables long-term city residents and the city to mutually shape each other. This allows city residents to radically change the meaning of specific locations through their prolonged interaction with the place (2021, 79–80). This can result in a profound rejection or alteration of official and dominant narratives of the identity of a place. For example, due to the traffic jams around the Washington Monument, residents of Washington, D.C., often give no significance to the monument beyond its practical nuisance. Kukla claims that residents' repeated interaction with the monument has resulted in its defetishization, depriving it of its power as a political symbol for the U.S. government. By contrast, Kukla claims that tourists cannot change the meaning of places in this way. Tourists are more likely to accept and reaffirm established narratives of the city and are considered an obstacle to valuable transformation (2021, 79).

In response, we argue that city tours provide a platform for the accurate representation of cities, that highlight and encourage social transformation. For example, Wynn (2010, 150) claims that tour guides are able to transform the identity of cities through the creation of stories, and by highlighting information and experiences that are often left at the margins of society. Tours can have the effect of making the participants "better" inhabitants or visitors of the city by being more respectful and

knowledgeable of the city's identities (2010, 152). Indeed, some tours are intentionally designed to disrupt official narratives and existing norms. For instance, *Invisible Cities* offers tours in several British cities led by guides who used to be homeless. The guides use well-known tour itineraries and content but relate these to their own experiences of homelessness (BBC News, 2016). This awareness of homelessness is particularly disruptive in well-known tourist cities such as Edinburgh, where the policy is to remove homeless individuals from the city centre (Scott 2019). Furthermore, the tour guides relate their own experiences with the accounts of the city's past, for example, relating their own involvement with the authorities when discussing the story of a famous crime in the 19th century.

In cases like these, the tour guide does not misrepresent the city but instead provides accurate knowledge that may otherwise have been silenced. In this way, the mediation offered by the tour guide serves to enforce social transformation by highlighting the diverse and dynamic nature of how a city is experienced, and by bringing invisible urban experiences to the fore. As a result, city tours can provide tourists with valuable testimonial and objectual knowledge of cities. This knowledge is valuable more generally insofar as we value the acquisition of knowledge. More specifically, the knowledge generated by city tours is not necessarily passive, non-autonomous, or misrepresentative, as critics suggest. Instead, even though city tours are mediated, they have the potential to generate active, first-person knowledge. This is valuable both for the tourist as a credible epistemic agent, and for the city, as the knowledge generated by the tour can facilitate an accurate representation of the city and engage in social transformation.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued against the criticism that city tours are epistemically disvaluable. First, we suggested that even though city tours partly consist of the transmission of testimonial knowledge, this does not entail tourist passivity. Instead, tourists can be active when receiving testimonial knowledge. Second, city tours provide a tourist not only with testimonial knowledge but also objectual knowledge that can be autonomously generated, and does not necessarily misrepresent the city's identity. Instead, city tours have the potential to enhance a tourist's autonomy, and the partiality of the knowledge is a result of the partial nature of objectual knowledge in general. Finally, we claimed that city tours can be transformative and challenge established official narratives. As such, city tours are not epistemically flawed in the way that Kukla suggests.

Despite these conclusions, we do not argue that city tours are always valuable. Our assessment of the epistemic value of city tours reveals several epistemic and ethical considerations. We outline four of these here in the hope that this will initiate further research into the conditions under which city tours are considered to be valuable.

First, our argument relies on actively engaged tourists—who listen, ask questions, and attempt to orient themselves in a place—and tour guides who do not limit themselves to reproducing a list of facts, but who encourage discussion and critical thinking. Not all tourists actively participate, and some types of tours are more likely to facilitate passivity. For example, bus tours are designed so that tourists can passively look out of their designated window and listen to a pre-read script through headphones. In these tours, tourists do not actively engage in the generation of their knowledge and are thought to 'commodify' the city they are visiting and so fail to accurately represent the identity and dynamism of the city (Wynn 2010, 146). Although we have focussed on guided walking tours,

further research is needed into the extent to which certain types of city tours facilitate passivity and non-autonomy in tourists.

Second, in Section 2, we explained that tourists are active epistemic agents insofar as they assess the credibility of a tour guide's testimony. However, there will be tourists who are epistemically unreasonable, who either believe the testimony of an unreliable source, or who do not care about the reliability of the source. Similarly, tour guides also have the potential to be epistemically unreasonable, transmitting false propositional content or offering partial interpretations that obscure significant parts of the city's history and identity. In these cases, it could be argued that the tour guide not only violates epistemological norms but also ethical norms and obligations.

Third, even when both tourist and tour guide are considered epistemically reasonable, it could be that some city tours are morally objectionable. This worry is particularly salient in the case of slum tourism, which has been claimed to promote exploitation even when tours are conducted with the permission from the inhabitants of economically deprived urban areas (Whyte et al. 2011). In cases like these, the broader context in which the tour is conducted might place further conditions on the way in which testimonial and objectual knowledge is shared and experienced.

Finally, our analysis highlights the prevalence of asymmetrical power relations between tourists and tour guide. Tour guides hold epistemic power over the tourist, which goes beyond the mere selection and interpretation of facts. This selection is often shaped by a tour guide's own biases and prejudices, which have the potential to influence a tourist's understanding of the city. However, tourists also have power over the tour guide. As Larsen and Meged suggest, because tourists are paying clients who dictate demand for certain tours, they will often have the "upper hand" over the tour guide and can influence the way in which the tour is conducted (2003, 89, 91). Further research would highlight the nuances of these epistemic power relations.

These epistemic and ethical considerations reveal that the value of city tours, and city tourism more generally, depends on those practices meeting certain conditions. These conditions need to account for the existing worry that they might misrepresent the city and render tourists as passive and lacking autonomy, but also the worries that we have mentioned here: epistemic reasonableness, epistemic power relations, and ethical considerations regarding the nature of the tour. In order to plausibly analyse the power dynamics and responsibilities of the tourist and tour guide and how this impacts a city's identity, it is not productive to claim that all city tours are, by nature, epistemically disvaluable. Instead, in this paper, we have shown this not to be the case, bringing to light the conditions under which city tours are epistemically valuable for both the tourist and the city.

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Lost in the City: Lessons in Co-ordination

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Abstract

This short essay offers a Wittgensteinian reflection on the problem of knowing and learning one's way about in language, in the city, in technology. What a philosophy of the city, the philosophy of technology, and the philosophy of multilingualism have in common is that they might fruitfully start from a position of illiteracy. The paper makes some programmatic suggestions on how to assume this position.

Keywords: Ludwig Wittgenstein; philosophy of technology; philosophy of language; philosophy of multilingualism; illiteracy

1. Introduction

Not all of Ludwig Wittgenstein's similes are compelling. They can be a bit labored, even confusing, and yet prove instructive in surprising ways. Consider the famous passage in which Wittgenstein compares language to the layout of a city.

> Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses. (PI, 18)[1]

By showing that in the city the depth of time is flatly spread out in space, Wittgenstein is not so much speaking about language but about the philosophy of language. The most recent suburbs are logically built up on the model of scientific language as conceived by Rudolf Carnap and others. Terms are operationally defined and fit a conceptual grid. The old town, in contrast, resembles a Heideggerian medieval maze that has not been tidied up by the logicians of his day but, at best, has been subject to patchwork renovations.

That cities do not actually develop along this pattern of medieval and modern is one reason why this is a somewhat labored comparison. The writing or composition of the city does not simply

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[1] Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations (PI)* (1958) are here referenced by citing the numbered remark. "Unsere Sprache kann man ansehen als eine alte Stadt: Ein Gewinkel von Gäßchen und Plätzen, alten und neuen Häusern mit Zubauten aus verschiedenen Zeiten; und dies umgeben von einer Menge neuer Vororte mit gerade und regelmäßigen Straßen und mit einförmigen Häusern."

move outwards from its historical center but involves constant rewriting and overlaying, extrapolation and revisioning, fusing and joining with centers here and there, as village structures become incorporated or reinvented, as topographic features and existing infrastructure need to be negotiated.

If this is nevertheless a most instructive remark, there are at least three reasons for this, with the third one offering a surprising twist to the story. Firstly, Wittgenstein invites us to turn the comparison around: We might compare not language to a city but cities to languages—an invitation to view them as compositions with a peculiar grammar. Cities then need to be read, interpreted, and understood in terms of their elementary units threaded together by way of streets, electric grids, sewage systems, and transportation infrastructures. This suggestion, to be sure, has been taken up implicitly and explicitly by urban planners and theorists alike, and it works with a received view of what a language is and how it can afford clarity of understanding (for example Christopher Alexander et al. 1977, Roland Barthes 1986, Ben Hillier 1999, or Amos Rapoport 1982, but compare Barry Shelton 2012).

Secondly, the remark is instructive in regard to Wittgenstein's own punchline which grants it a peculiar place of prominence: This punchline comes with his conception of what is a philosophical problem and how it manifests itself, namely that philosophical problems take the form, "I don't know my way about" (PI, 123).[2] Lost in the city, needing orientation—this is how Wittgenstein's problems of philosophy present themselves. The challenge is not one of solving the problem as in a puzzle or mathematical homework assignment but of finding for oneself or showing others the way out of the problem, a way of steering clear from it, and "To shew the fly the way out of the flybottle" (PI, 309).[3] We get lost, sometimes trapped even in the world of our own making because, like our cities, what we make is not therefore made according to plan—even the built world is not a world of our design.

Thirdly, the remark becomes instructive when one more closely considers how we get lost in a city and when we come to acknowledge that we do not know our way about. Clearly, this does not happen in our own neighborhood where we share a language and thus a form of life (PI 241 and Winner 1989). It happens when we encounter the city as a strange place with many crisscrossing, overlapping forms of life, where the city is a multilingual place with Chinatown bordering on Little Italy, when cleaning crews do not share in the lives of house-owners or office-buildings, when tourists locate themselves on subway maps, where some street-names are in Cyrillic letters only, others transliterated in the Roman alphabet, where one cannot ask a person on the street but latches on to church steeples and memorized street-corners, golden arches, and other landmarks. If one thus takes Wittgenstein's comparison seriously, it leads us from a philosophy of language to the philosophy of multilingualism (Aronin 2017, 2018, 2020, Nordmann 2023a), leads from grasping determinate meaning to the negotiation of a bewildering cacophony of signs.

2. Illiterate Perspectives

The philosophy of the city can benefit from Wittgenstein's simile when it is concerned with a multilingual assemblage of codes and signs, a layering of forms of life and socio-technical systems. This would be the most salient aspect of Wittgenstein's critique of the philosophy of language. While the received view and his own earlier view begin mono-lingually from the vantage point of literacy,

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[2] "Ein philosophisches Problem hat die Form: ‚Ich kenne mich nicht aus.' "
[3] "Was ist dein Ziel in der Philosophie?—Der Fliege den Ausweg aus dem Fliegenglas zeigen."

fluency, or mastery ("new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses"), one must begin from illiteracy instead, that is, without a map that tells us how the relation of signs on the map provides a picture of reality. The idea of such picturing "held us captive" writes the philosopher. "[I]t lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" (PI 115).[4] So, even when philosophers write about language, they do so supposing that speaking and writing are always about something, that they represent thoughts by expressing them or situations by depicting them. This position of "aboutness" is one of critical distance, knowledge and power, fluency and mastery—held captive in this position, philosophers of language could do nothing but reaffirm it. Simply by virtue of speaking a language together and sharing in a form of life, we seem to be in possession of German, French, and Japanese maps where each tells us how the relation of signs on the map provides a picture of reality—and of course, these various maps can be compared. However, in the later work of his *Philosophical Investigations,* Wittgenstein has many reasons to doubt that such maps are sufficient to provide orientation, and begins anew, abandoning his picture theory of language, begins illiterate in the city, in the multilingual condition, in the built environment with its machines and technical routines: "I do not know my way about."[5]

Most cities bear the imprint of urban planning; they adopt an international system of signage, and every effort is made to render them readable with intuitive interfaces, designed affordances paving the way. And yet, if only heuristically, it makes sense to begin from the position of illiteracy, that is, with the challenge of making sense and rendering the city readable by any means necessary. No matter how well-equipped, the strangers who enter the city find themselves in the middle of things—they lack what Wittgenstein was seeking and what maps promise to provide: a synoptic view, a place from which to survey the situation. At best, with a printed or digital map in hand, a stranger might try with considerable effort to relate the synoptic view of the map to the experience on the ground. The strangers cannot survey from above, nor can they look straight ahead and claim a horizon of action in which they confidently forge a path. Typically, strangers look down or decipher close-up—down to the ground like Hänsel and Gretel, who seek to retrace their steps, and down at their smartphones to which they entrust themselves as they are located and nudged along so many meters straight ahead, then a right, finally left—by this method they reach their destination. By reading signs close-up, mediated by devices and experiences, one can build a sense of familiarity through habituation, participation, and repetition. Illiterates thus learn to orient themselves quite successfully without understanding urban design principles, the master plan, or the layout of a city.

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[4] "Ein *Bild* hielt uns gefangen. Und heraus kommen wir nicht, denn es lag in unsrer Sprache, und sie schien es uns nur unerbittlich zu wiederholen." PI 115 follows immediately upon a remark that evokes the captivating power of Wittgensteins earlier picture theory of language which epitomizes like none other the representational significance of mapping relations between propositions and states of affairs.

[5] Wittgenstein himself, to be sure, did not philosophically address the city or technology or questions of multilingualism. But he offered a broad notion of grammar that may have been grounded in engineering science and that extends far beyond natural language, allowing us to consider the grammar of things, the working orders of people and things, social and technical routines, different ways of worldmaking (Nordmann 2018, Pezzica 2023). Some take this as an invitation simply to extend the monolingual paradigm of understanding the world through understanding a language: There are many "languages" but what they have in common is that each can be mastered and translated into the others under the perhaps unattainable ideal, but ideal nonetheless, of the preservation of meaning. By choosing a different vantage point, Wittgenstein no longer insists that we must mean what we say, or that there are meanings which somehow attach to signs and somehow become expressed through speech acts, broadly conceived. Sense-making as learning to find one's way about even in mono-lingual language games need not presuppose this conception of meaning.

This is an achievement of co-ordination and not of representation—co-ordinating the body with the trodden paths, rituals, and signposts that provide orientation without requiring knowledge of plans and designs or historical meaning.

Similarly, if the philosophy of language is concerned with questions of representation and how the world becomes intelligible to the speaker of a language, the philosophy of multilingualism does not privilege the potent speaker but foregrounds the illiterates who gain orientation through co-ordination. Even pluri-lingual individuals who speak three or more languages will find themselves in the position of illiteracy in a multilingual condition—which is characterized by the confluence not only of many natural languages, pidgins, dialects but also by the formal codes, signage, beeping sounds, emojis, professional jargon, sequences of keys that need to be entered to purchase a subway ticket, etc. This consideration of the multilingual condition highlights the peculiar form of intelligence that is required to navigate the world by way of co-ordination rather than representation. This is the intelligence of the person who cannot read or write and still manages to blend in, to compensate and cover up what is commonly regarded as a humiliating form of ignorance.

In quite another sphere, this form of ignorance and its compensation is generally accepted as normal. We can pretend to be computer-savvy without understanding anything at all about how computers work, merely by virtue of being habituated to input-output patterns in normal use and occasional break-downs—that is, by co-ordination and participation in the working order of things. To be sure, there is engineering science and engineers acquire representational knowledge of what the world is like, including theories and laws of nature. And yet, what engineers and users, the fine and the mechanical arts, have in common is a kind of cohabitation with the things, a feeling for the organism, the mechanism, the algorithm. In virtue of participating haptically and mentally in different working orders, we learn something about the interplay of things and the effects that can be produced by configuring or composing things in this way or that. Here, participation conditions attunement to the world of things and our ways of learning how things can work together.

Participating in the world of things, of symbols and codes—this is the core of urban experience and of living in the city. It signifies the immediate connection between urban experience, the multilingual condition, our technologically constructed environment. Participants are initially illiterate, and from this position acquire orientation and the capacity to read or anticipate through habituation, repetition, or socialization.

3. Attunement Through Participation

Wittgenstein's comparison of language and a city led us from one idea to quite another of how to orient oneself in the city, in the technosphere, in language. From literate concepts, categories, and propositions, or plans, maps, and designs that are somehow in our possession, we shifted to initially illiterate participation that affords knowledge as one learns to navigate and to discern how things work. The move from veridical representation to reliable co-ordination comes with an epistemic challenge. Can a philosophy of the city or a philosophy of multilingualism retrace and reconstruct the the attainment of knowledge strictly on the surface of things, that is, without relying on depth, without referring to underlying structures or meaningful intentions?

> In the use of words, one might distinguish 'surface grammar' from 'depth grammar.' What immediately impresses itself upon us about the use of a word is the way it is used in the sentence structure, the part of its use—one might say—that can be taken

in by the ear.—And now compare the depth grammar, say of the verb "to mean," with what its surface grammar would lead us to presume. No wonder one finds it difficult to know one's way about. (Wittgenstein PI, 664)[6]

There are interestingly different ways of working with this remark (Pezzica 2023). I here read it as a rejection of depth grammar which considers the use of a verb like "to mean" with respect to a (literally) obscure picture of mental acts that occasion utterances or else to the structuring function of concepts that serve as conditions of possibility—either way, hidden from view and detached from what is taken in by the ear. One will never gain a synoptic view of the lay of the land by following words into a lexical depth where they are rooted in intentions or meanings., we miss what "immediately impresses itself upon us" if we insist on tracing an utterance or string of signs to a referenced thing or pictured state of affairs. If orientation requires a synoptic presentation [*übersichtliche Darstellung*] of surface topography, this overview must not require a vertical ordering of above and below: If I want to find the *Centre Beaubourg* I will succeed neither by climbing up the Eiffel Tower nor by digging down and understanding on a mental map the meaning and former location of "*Les Halles.*" Knowing how to find it is to know that one takes the RER train to the station *Châtelet Les Halles,* or the metro to *Rambuteau*—but only if one finds signs to the correct exit, for otherwise one might still wander about, lost (and beware that the *Centre Beaubourg* might go by the name of *Centre Pompidou*). So here again is the epistemic or programmatic challenge for a philosophy of the city: If orientation does not require a view from above, how do we build up a synoptic view through participation, that is, through living and moving in a city, our eyes and ears immediately impressed, gaining peace-meal glimpses from multiple vantage points. One way of pursuing this challenge is to take up Walter Benjamin's interest in a cinematically dispersed or distributed mode of beholding—a form of scrutinizing the world cursorily, critically but without set criteria, dispassionately but with an ever better-developed sense of what fits or does not fit, what works and does not work, what is jarring and what goes unnoticed (Benjamin 1969).

Historically and phenomenologically, cinematic gaze and urban experience belong together, condition each other. But are we to assume that the scattered movement of light on the one hand, the distracted glance (*zerstreuter Blick*) of the beholder on the other hand, give rise to casual judgments of right and wrong, sedimenting finally as knowledge of co-ordinations in a working order of people and things? This would imply that a synoptic view arises gradually as one ascends to a partial perspective here and there, achieved by way of habit formation. Moreover, are we to assume that this form of knowledge-production can be accounted for in a non-mentalistic fashion without reference to beliefs, meanings, representation, or intentions? This programmatic paper suggests as much, fully realizing that the work only begins here: What does mere participation, and what does living in the city, afford epistemically? And how does the comparison of city and language work if one does not derive an urban grammar of things from the mono-lingual paradigm but takes language as it impresses eyes and ears in the multilingual condition (Shelton 2012)?[7]

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[6] "Man könnte im Gebrauch eines Worts eine ‚Oberflächengrammatik' von einer ‚Tiefengrammatik' unterscheiden. Das, was sich uns am Gebrauch eines Worts unmittelbar einprägt, ist seine Verwendungsweise im *Satzbau*, der Teil seines Gebrauches—könnte man sagen—den man mit dem Ohr erfassen kann. — Und nun vergleiche die Tiefengrammatik, des Wortes ‚meinen' etwa, mit dem, was seine Oberflächengrammatik uns würde vermuten lassen. Kein Wunder, wenn man es schwer findet, sich auszukennen."

[7] And if, say, Henri Lefebvre's conception of inhabiting a social space implies a critique of a reified syntactical view of the city as an organization of powerful referents or system of signification, does his critique equally apply to the city as it appears from the perspective of multilingualism? (See Lefebvre 1996, 147–154.)

4. Conclusion

And so, to a series of literary vignettes that characterize the multilingual condition (Nordmann 2023b), this Wittgensteinian story can now be added:

> Getting to know the city by subway is a bit like a mole sticking out its head here and there: Leaving this or that subway station and finding one's destination from there, slowly piecing together the layout of the city, discovering only after a while that two apparently different streets are actually the same, sometimes walked in this direction, and sometimes from the opposite end. Walking past a playground, a football stadium, a betting parlor, toddlers frolicking in a water fountain, chessplayers by the roadside, teenagers in cosplay outfits, a pub with slot machines—we wouldn't learn what a game is, were it not for occasional shouts of "let's play," "stop playing," and the many different uses of "game" in our native tongue. But then in our housing development, we sit in the courtyard by an improvised soccer field and soon learn that "Tor!" is another word for "goal!", that the word "foul" is shared by all the players, that the curses and insults all sound different but are clearly just that, curses and insults. Next time our computer freezes up, we will use some of these expressions before we unplug and reboot it, because this is the only language the computer seems to understand.

All of these are lessons in attunement—to the city, to a multilingual world, to socio-technical systems.[8]

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A Classification Scheme for Hostile Design

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Abstract

A discussion is emerging over what is called "hostile design," among other names, i.e., the construction of public-space objects in ways that exclude particular usages and with an alleged effect of discrimination against already vulnerable populations. Critics outline various examples, from spikes added to a ledge to deter loiterers from sitting to armrests added to a bench to discourage the unhoused from using it as a place to sleep. In an effort to sharpen the notion of hostile design as a critical tool, I develop an original typology, one in which the various examples are organized in terms of the mechanisms through which their hostility is enacted. This sets up reflections on some variables of hostile design—such as their level of "conspicuousness" and their "domain of effect"—that cut differently across these categories.

Keywords: hostile design; hostile architecture; public space; homelessness; defensible space

1. Introduction

The notion of "hostile architecture" or "hostile design" has become important within contemporary research and criticism on the politics of urban spaces, especially in online journalism, blogging, and social media. An academic discussion is also beginning to emerge, one that is widely interdisciplinary and still largely fragmented and exploratory (e.g., Savicic & Savic, 2013; Rosenberger, 2014; Schindler, 2015; Chellew, 2016; Petty, 2016; Armborst et al., 2017; de Fine Licht, 2017; Jensen, 2017; Rosenberger, 2017a; Stevens, 2017; Smith & Walters, 2018; Chellew, 2019; de Fine Licht, 2020; Eggersglüß, 2020; Crippen & Klement, 2020; Jensen, 2020; Lorini & Moroni, 2020; Rosenberger, 2020b; Binnington & Russo, 2021; Lynch, 2021; Nitrato Izzo, 2022; Giamariano et al., 2023; Kullman, 2023; Moatasim, 2023). The fledgling status of this discussion is reflected in the variety of terms used in different writings to refer to similar phenomena, which, in addition to "hostile architecture" and "hostile design," include "unpleasant design," "disciplinary architecture," "architectural exclusion," "defensive architecture," and others. In what follows, I primarily use the term "hostile design."

Roughly put, these notions refer to the ways that the objects of public spaces are sometimes designed to shut down usages typically taken up by specifically targeted and already-vulnerable populations. In contrast to a language of "defensive" spaces in particular, with its associations with crime reduction strategies and "broken windows" policing programs, the other notions are most often used as tools for criticism, i.e., as concepts for putting a spotlight on a particular aspect

of allegedly unjust larger strategies adopted by cities for controling, pushing away, and otherwise concealing poor, unhoused, and marginalized people.[1] This work thus builds on a history of critical efforts in political science, geography, philosophy, urban studies, and related fields of research (e.g., Foucault, 1977; Winner, 1980; Whyte, 1990; Davis, 1990; Lefebvre, 1991; Flusty, 1994; Zukin, 1995; Deutsche, 1996; Smith, 1996; Dovey, 1999; Low, 2003; Loukaitou-Sideris & Ehrenfeucht, 2009; Minton, 2012; Mitchell, 2014). Hostile design must be understood, at least in part, as the concretization of urban revanchism.

To better understand what is referred to by this notion, let's briefly run through the main examples of public-space objects that are often labeled as hostile within academic and online discussions, as well as a few others that should also fall under our consideration. Perhaps the most paradigmatic example is what could be called "anti-homeless spikes." These often come in the form of pointed metal protrusions, and they serve to deter those who may want to rest upon a ledge or other surface (e.g., Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Ledge spikes, San Francisco, CA. (Photo by author.)

Another central example is what could be called "anti-sleep benches," i.e., public-space benches somehow modified to disable the use of their sitting surface as a place to lie down. Anti-sleep bench designs include things like armrests or seat dividers, or bucket seat and other separated seating options (e.g., Fig. 2).

Another main example in these discussions is what are referred to as "skatestoppers." These are small, often metal nubs added to places such as ledges, curbs, or railings to cut off their potential as a place to perform skateboard grinding tricks (e.g., Fig. 3).

Security cameras are also often noted in this literature as an example of hostile design. They may be situated in a highly visible manner or may be hidden from view (e.g., Fig. 4).

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[1] For a helpful set of reflections on the different connotations of these different terminologies, such as "defensive" and "hostile," see de Fine Licht, 2020.

Figure 2: Benches with rounded surfaces and armrests, Washington DC. (Photo by author.)

There are many other forms of hostile design that are commonly noted in these online and academic discussions. They include everything from noise machines that make it annoying to spend time in a space, to fencing that blocks off access to places like small green spaces or highway underpasses, to water sprayed onto objects or alleyways where people might want to rest.

There are of course many more, some of which are not yet widely recognized. One that I would like to note is the hydrant lock (e.g., Rosenberger, 2017b; 2020b). Water access can be an important issue in some regions of the world, especially those that experience heat waves, and hydrants are at times tapped as a means for cooling off.

To prevent unauthorized access, sometimes locks or other devices are installed on fire hydrants (e.g., Fig. 5).

Another notable form of hostile design is what could be called "anti-pick trashcans" (e.g., Rosenberger, 2015; 2017a, ch. 3). Garbage bin lid configurations sometimes make it difficult or impossible to reach down inside. This can deter those who may want to use the trashcan as a source of discarded food or recyclable materials. Anti-pick lids are sometimes combined with outer can casings that may be sealed with built-in locks or hanging padlocks and chains (e.g., Fig. 6).

In addition to all of these examples of hostile designs added to objects or spaces, analysts are increasingly noting that hostile design may instead involve an act of removal. For example, rather than add an anti-pick lid and tamperproof casing to a trashcan, an area may simply not include any trashcans at all.

A complete understanding of a particular instance of hostile design often requires approaching it within its broader context. The effects of an individual instance—e.g., a particular anti-sleep bench or a particular set of spikes set into a ledge—may not reduce to those directly imposed by this instance in isolation. In many cases, they may also have effects as part of what could be called

Figure 3: Skatestoppers in Atlanta, GA. (Photo by author.)

a "hostile agenda," i.e., a pattern of hostile designs, laws and policies, police practices, social customs, and other things that together target a particular population. These agendas can also include the interests of the bustling industries that manufacture the objects under consideration here, including skatestoppers, hydrant locks, noise machines, surveillance systems, outdoor furniture, and amenities, etc.

For example, that individual anti-sleep bench may enact its hostile effects not merely by shutting down the option of sleeping in that one spot; it may also accomplish this by working together with other things that deter someone from sleeping in an entire area (such as a park, subway station, or even an entire region of the city). That is, the anti-sleep bench might be one small contributor to a larger agenda that shuts down sleeping in a whole area, working together with, say, other anti-sleep benches, other types of hostile design (such as those spikes), anti-homeless laws and rules, as well as human actors that enforce these laws and rules, such as police officers and security guards.

One way this issue has been addressed is with the claim that hostile design should be understood as an unrecognized form of regulation. For example, in an extensive analysis of law, zoning, and design, Sarah Schindler argues exactly this, writing that:

> The built environment does not fit within the definition of "regulation" as legal scholars traditionally employ that term; it is not a rule promulgated by an administrative body after a notice-and-comment period. However, the built environment does serve to regulate human behavior and is an important form of extra-legal regulation (2018, 1944).

Or, as Valerio Nitrato Izzo puts it, for those targeted by systems of oppression, including the law, "Hostile design is just another normative face of a set of regulations" (2022, 533). Giuseppe Lorini and Stefano Moroni have been developing an account of the various forms of non-linguistically-

Figure 4: Security cameras, Philadelphia, PA. (Photo by author.)

based regulation, including those enacted through artifacts (e.g., 2020; 2022). They issue the warning that this kind of regulation "usually occurs in a 'hidden' fashion (resulting from its structural characteristics). This makes it a powerful yet, at the same time, risky form of intervention because it is not immediately recognisable and identifiable" (Lorini and Moroni, 2022, 522). These lines of thinking build on recent work expanding the notion of regulation to include things beyond written law (e.g., Lessig, 1999; Katyal, 2002; Shah & Kesan, 2007).

The unhoused population is a primary target of hostile design. They are also often subjected to a variety of anti-homeless laws, including those against camping, panhandling, loitering, vagrancy, storing objects in public, and even sitting and lying down in public (sometimes called sit/lie laws). Critics—myself included—argue that in many cities, these laws function to make homelessness itself a crime. This means that one of the primary ways that many cities address the problem of homelessness is by prosecuting the unhoused as criminals. Many other institutions target the unhoused as well, from the posted rules and hours of public parks to transit authority policies regarding the spaces under its jurisdiction to the patterns of privatization and the rules of the public spaces within privately held portions of the city. As Don Mitchell puts it,

> The anti-homeless laws being passed in city after city in the United States work in a pernicious way: by redefining what is acceptable behavior in public space, by in effect annihilating the spaces in which the homeless *must* live, these laws seek simply to annihilate homeless people themselves, all in the name of recreating the city as a playground for a seemingly global capital which is ever ready to do an even better job of the annihilation of space (2014, 167).

In this way, one aspect of the hostility of a device like an anti-sleep bench is the role it plays in a larger anti-homeless agenda that may have purchase to different degrees across the city, constituted

Figure 5: A fire hydrant with a "custodian"-style plus-shaped lock installed on top, New York City, NY. (Photo by author.)

by a variety of actors, including an assortment of anti-homeless laws, and patterns of anti-homeless designs.

An emerging challenge for this research is to somehow organize, and perhaps even taxonomize, these various examples so that they can be better understood, anticipated, identified out in the world, and subjected to criticism. The categorizations of hostile design on offer so far have tended to take the form of online repositories of the various examples, with categories like "benches," "spikes," "skatestoppers," etc.[2] One useful kind of classification scheme can be found in the work of scholars such as Steven Flusty and Jeremy Németh, who develop categories for the different ways that spaces

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[2] For helpful examples, see the websites of Nils Norman, Cara Chellew, and Dan Lockton: www.dismalga rden.com/archives/defensive_architecture, www.defensiveto.com/typology, and http://architectures. danlockton.co.uk/architectures-of-control-in-the-built-environment/. See also the thorough work of the Interboro collective, especially in their collection, *The Arsenal of Exclusion & Inclusion* (Armborst et al., 2017).

Figure 6: Trashcan and recycle can with lids, casings, and locks, Athens, GA. (Photo by author.)

can be designed to exclude particular behaviors and people (Flusty, 1994; Németh, 2009). For example, Flusty proposes a list of "interdictory spaces" to outline the various ways that public-space features can become hidden, blocked off, or made uncomfortable (with category names that include "stealthy," "slippery," "crusty," "prickly," and "jittery" spaces). A similar categorization scheme is needed for hostile design.

In what follows, I hope to contribute to the advancement of this critical toolkit through the development of an original scheme for categorizing the various examples of hostile design under discussion. My strategy is to attempt to group these examples in terms of the manners by which their hostilities function. Through what means are these various forms of hostility enacted? I offer a list of six "hostile mechanisms" through which the various specific examples enact their hostility and two "variables" that can apply differently across instances within these categories. I suggest that these categories may be useful for activist criticism of hostile design and for prompting further thinking about what it means for public-space objects to be labeled as "hostile." However, let's first reflect further on the meaning of hostility in design.

2. What is Hostile Design?

What ideas should be conveyed by "hostile design" and the related set of concepts? We can begin with a kind of working definition: hostile designs are things that can be criticized for closing off usages of objects or areas of public space in ways that target vulnerable populations. Such restrictions enacted by these designs work to the benefit of some and to the detriment of others in a condemnable manner. If we think of this phenomenon in roughly these terms, then several things become apparent.

For one, the notion of "hostile design" possesses an ineliminable value connotation. The classification of something *as* hostile is not an innocent or objective description; it is a judgment and an accusation. This is the case for other terms also used to refer to these phenomena, such as "unpleasant," "exclusionary," or "defensive," although the implied evaluations do not always go in the same direction.

This issue of values is highlighted when we recall that for any particular instance of design, alternatives are possible. That is, the installation of hostile design is a choice that has been made in the face of other options. This becomes clear when we consider examples of resistance, such as the work of designers to create different ways to address the same situation or the work of activist artists that call attention to and criticize existing hostile designs.[3] One of my favorite examples is the New York City spray cap program.[4] Like many cities, NYC has systematically mounted locks on its hydrants. However, residents have the option of asking the local fire department to install a temporary spray cap on a particular hydrant to transform it into a community sprinkler.

Of course, not all alternatives to hostile design rely on official channels. For example, the artist Stuart Semple has developed eye-catching stickers to be posted upon instances of hostile design to quite literally slap these objects with this label.[5] Other straightforward examples of resistance can be found in simple acts of vandalism, such as when anti-surveillance activists sabotage cameras or when skateboarders pop off skatestoppers with grinders or crowbars.

It may be tempting to attempt to develop a neutral terminology. However, I worry that this would have the effect of obscuring the nature of these phenomena. Many things stop people from doing things. Many things influence people's behavior. And it does not seem appropriate to put the label of "hostility" on all of these restrictive or behavior-influencing designs. Some fences keep people from falling off a ledge or cliff. A lowering warning arm deters cars from driving onto the tracks when a train is approaching. Our work on hostile design should be able to identify when a vulnerable group is being targeted in a condemnable way. Otherwise, these ideas risk a failure to distinguish between the perpetuation of unjust societal hierarchies and things like a fence at a cliff.

A second thing to be noted is that an accusation of hostility should not imply that the effects of the thing under criticism are somehow entirely or exclusively hostile ones. In addition to an alleged hostile effect, the object (or modification to an object) in question may, of course, perform many other functions. For example, the labeling of an anti-pick trashcan as hostile could usefully point out the ways a can's lid configuration may deter people from accessing it for things like food or recyclables. However, we can also recognize the various additional effects that the same anti-pick lid designs may also have, from preventing rain from falling into the can to deterring animals from entering, among others.

A third thing to note about hostile designs is that responsibility for an object's alleged hostility rarely, if ever, reduces to that of one particular actor. It can even be the case that a particular object may enact a hostile effect even though nobody had intended for that outcome. As Karl de Fine Licht puts it, "Even though this might seem strange, that, for example, an environment can be hostile even though you had no hostile intent while creating it, it seems reasonable given how we generally think about similar matters in other areas" (2020, 5). Of course, occasionally, we see cases in which a powerful actor clearly states their hostile intentions in the design of a particular space or object,

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3 For some examples of activist artwork that criticizes anti-homeless design, see (Rosenberger, 2017a, ch. 5).

4 E.g., Rosenberger, 2017b, and see: https://portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-01035.

5 See: https://hostiledesign.org.

and such moments can be useful.[6] However, in most cases, an instance of hostile design will reflect the work and decision-making of many people, including designers, manufacturers, retailers, and then anyone involved in their purchase and installation, from city officials to park planners to the best practice guidelines for the design of things like bus stops and subway platforms. It is important, then, to keep an eye on all of the various actors potentially responsible for hostile designs and also to maintain our focus on the hostile effects of our designs rather than only the intentions of particular people.

A fourth thing to be noted about hostile design is that it often relates to issues of visibility. One reason that a critical toolkit of concepts regarding hostile design is important is that instances of hostility are not always obvious. If you are among those *not* targeted by a particular design, then in some cases, you may not notice an instance in front of you. For example, someone who may never think about the possibility of sleeping on a bench may only perceive a particular armrest on a particular bench *as* an armrest and may not also recognize its anti-sleep function. Critics of anti-homeless agendas, like myself, often claim that the inconspicuousness of the design is no accident; a key part of a hostile agenda against the unhoused is that much of that agenda itself remains hidden from those not targeted by it. A critical conception of hostile design helps not only to put a spotlight on particular instances as they appear in our cities but also upon larger hostile agendas.

If the above constitutes a rough characterization of hostile design, then it seems possible to sort out the various identified examples into useful groupings.

3. Six "Mechanisms" of Hostile Design

Instances of hostile design can be categorized in different ways. Here, I attempt to spell out the various means by which hostile designs dissuade people from using particular devices and spaces in specific ways and, in effect, to push away targeted groups. That is, I want to catalog the different ways hostile designs shut down specific uses of public space. Let's consider the different hostile functionalities at issue, or what we can call here, the different "mechanisms" of hostility that characterize the various examples of hostile design. In what follows, I outline six hostile mechanisms: "physical imposition," "sensory interference," "concealment," "confederacy," "self-coercion," and "absence."

3.1. *Physical Imposition*

The majority of the examples typically identified as hostile design function in a similar manner: they interrupt or impede a particular bodily engagement with an object of public space. They "get in the way" of a particular manner in which the device or space could be used. We could say that such instances of hostile design operate by a mechanism of "physical imposition."

People can physically interact with a device in multiple ways. And spaces afford multiple uses. Alterations to such devices or spaces can be made in accordance with a hostile agenda, deterring particular physical engagements. For example, if someone wishes to keep others from sleeping on a particular bench, then they may attempt to impede this usage by adding physical "anti-sleep"

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[6] See, for example, the public spaces of Trump Tower in Manhattan (Rosenberger, 2018a), or the more recent case of the removal of benches from a New York City subway station: "MTA Deletes Tweet Explaining Why Subway Station Benches Were Removed," by S. Nessen. *Gothamist.com*, 2/7/2021. https://gothamist.com/news/mta-deletes-tweet-explaining-why-subway-station-benches-were-removed

barriers to it in the form of armrests, dividers, or some other design modification. If someone wants to deter others from using a skateboard to slide across a particular ledge, they may attempt to disrupt the physical possibility of this action by studding the ledge with metal nubs. If someone does not want merchants selling goods along a particular sidewalk, then they may attempt to cut off this space by installing a series of large planters or bollards. If someone doesn't want others taking items out of a particular recycle can, then they may redesign the opening to make it physically difficult to reach one's arm down inside.

Anti-homeless spikes, hydrant locks, and graffiti-resistant surfaces all function by a mechanism of physical imposition. So does the practice of fencing or caging off areas like underpasses, dumpsters, grassy hillsides, alcoves, and vents. Setha Low has chronicled the phenomenon of "gated communities" and has noted that they tend to be:

> surrounded by walls, fences, or earth banks covered with bushes and shrubs, with a secured entrance. In some cases, protection is provided by inaccessible land such as a nature reserve and, in a few cases, by a guarded bridge. The houses, streets, sidewalks, and other amenities are physically enclosed by these barriers, and entrance gates are operated by a guard or opened with a key or electronic key card (2004, 12).

As such, gated communities can become defined, at least in part, by an array of design features that operate through physical impositional mechanisms.

3.2. Sensory Interference

Some examples of hostile design interfere with users' sense perception. They present sensory stimuli that are annoying, unpleasant, or unbearable, or render it difficult to perceive the world in particular ways. We can refer to these as instances of hostile design that operate through a mechanism of "sensory interference." The main examples are machines that emit specific hostile sounds and certain forms of lighting that disrupt targeted behaviors. As Erin Lynch writes, "Often times, hostile design in the city involves tactility; since touch is a very localized experience of space, the effects of these measures can be targeted. However, defensive spatial intervention can also involve the sound of spaces," and she notes instances of classical music used to deter teenage loitering and even the hostile changes to the smell of spaces, such as the use of stink bombs to clear out squatters in abandoned buildings (2020, 105).

A good example in these discussions is the Mosquito noise device. It is a small speaker that projects an irritating high-pitched sound that only young people can hear. The idea is that the annoying auditory stimuli will drive away youths who may otherwise loiter outside storefronts or in school parking lots. The Moving Sound Technologies company, a distributor of the Mosquito in the U.S., pitches the device as a "simple, safe and benign way to disperse crowds of anti-social youth."[7]

Sometimes, music broadcast very loudly in public spaces can constitute an example of hostile design. This can have the effect of indiscriminately shooing everyone away. However, it is the unhoused who tend to be targeted by this form of hostile soundscape alteration; loud music, annoying music, and noisy industrial sounds are sometimes played at night in parks and other public spaces to deter campers.

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[7] See: movingsoundtech.com/mosquito-faq.

Another example is the installation of uncool or unflattering lighting. The target population is once again loitering young people. Some forms of lighting may be deemed not sufficiently masculine by a group of boys concerned with looking tough. At least, this was the idea behind the installation of pink bulbs within an underpass in Mansfield, England, and other places across Britain.[8]

3.3. Concealment

Another form of hostile design is when an expected amenity *is* available within a public space but is somehow hidden from view. This kind of hostile design could be understood to operate through a mechanism of "concealment." An amenity may be tucked away and largely unnoticeable, rendering it functionally available only to those who already know that it is there. Steven Flusty has raised concerns over the ways that important amenities in public spaces sometimes "cannot be found" or are "camouflaged, or, more commonly, obscured by such view impediments as intervening objects or grade changes" (1994, 16). For example, if a space were to include a public restroom, but that amenity were to be positioned around a corner and out of view, and if no signage points to its presence, then such a situation could have the hostile effect of discouraging its usage. We could expect that this will, at times, be to the benefit of property owners, planners, or city officials who receive recognition for providing the amenity and yet, at the same time, benefit from the hostile effect of concealing its presence.

This can be of special concern for "privately-owned public spaces," or POPS, i.e., public spaces owned and maintained by a private entity in exchange for zoning bonuses or something else beneficial to the property developer (e.g., Kayden, 2000; Németh, 2009; Rosenberger, 2018a; Schindler, 2018). POPS tend to take the form of things like plazas, breezeways, sunroofs, and atriums. Each POPS agreement is different, with different benefits to the private owners and different public amenities legally required in return. However, as Jerold S. Kayden notes, "Privately owned public space introduces an axiomatic tension between private and public interests. After the euphoria of receiving the floor area bonus has faded, the owner is left with a space whose public operation may not necessarily please the building's occupants or otherwise serve profit-oriented interests" (2000, 55). Thus, it is a perpetual problem that some owners continuously fail to live up to their agreements or skirt requirements through hostile design strategies. For example, a recent audit by the Comptroller's Office of New York City reports that "151 of the 333 POPS are not required by the Zoning Resolution to post signs identifying the location as a POPS because they were built prior to signage requirements being put in effect. Without such signs, however, members of the public would be highly unlikely to know that a location is a POPS."[9] Public groups such as the Advocates For Privately Owned Public Space (APOPS) have emerged to help bring awareness and visibility to otherwise concealed POPS in our cities through mapping websites, guides, and smartphone apps.[10]

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[8] See: news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/nottinghamshire/7963347.stm.

[9] See page 2 of "Audit Report on the City's Oversight Over Privately Owned Public Spaces," SR 16-102A, April 18th, 2017. comptroller.nyc.gov.

[10] See, for example, the website of APOPS for privately-owned public spaces in New York City: https://apops.mas.org/. Or see the work of SPUR on the city of San Francisco: www.spur.org/publications/spur-report/2009-01-01/secrets-san-francisco.

3.4. Confederacy

Some examples of hostile design function in direct collaboration with human authorities. They stand in ready assistance to the security guards, managers, police officers, and others who may be working to control a public space in a hostile manner. If a person is acting according to some hostile agenda, then the objects that directly assist them in those actions can be conceived as instances of hostile design. We can say that such objects operate through a mechanism of "confederacy."

One example can be found in efforts to quasi-privatize public spaces through the use of sign-in desks. Manned by a human receptionist or security guard, sometimes buildings with spaces open to the public' require visitors to sign in and out on a clipboard or computer. Such a procedure can have the effect of discouraging certain populations from entering. For example, someone living unhoused and whose everyday behaviors have been criminalized may not appreciate such monitoring. That desk may assist the receptionist in an effort to enforce rules in the area that function in accord with some hostile agenda. The desk, clipboard, and computer do not serve their hostile act alone but function as a confederate to human authorities enacting a hostile agenda.

Hidden cameras are a paradigmatic example of hostile design that operates through this mechanism. We can note that cameras in public spaces are potentially hostile in two distinct ways: (1) they enable authorities to monitor a space more efficiently and thus enforce potentially hostile rules, and (2) their visible presence incites people to follow the rules for fear of drawing the authorities' attention. It is this first form of potential hostility that operates through a mechanism of confederacy. The camera—insofar as it is used by authorities to watch over the space and insofar as those authority figures act according to a condemnable agenda—functions in hostile confederation with the human watchers. It is a tool that extends their visual range. The hiddenness of a camera furthers its efficacy in these terms; those under surveillance remain unaware that they are being watched.[11]

3.5. Self-Coercion

Some examples of hostile design do not force particular behavior or enforce restrictions, but instead pressure a target population to actively restrict their behavior. We could say that the mechanism of hostility at work in these kinds of public-space designs is one of "self-coercion," that is, one that incites the target population to police themselves.

One straightforward example is clearly posted signage. Of course, one major function of public-space signage is simply to provide information. A sign that lists park rules is an object that functions to inform people about what is and is not allowed, e.g., park hours, whether dogs are welcome, etc. However, a prominently posted sign that lists a rule that is part of a hostile agenda can itself additionally function to coax the members of the targeted population to act accordingly. It serves as a reminder that behaving otherwise could bring down consequences from the authorities (e.g., Fig. 7). A "No Camping," "No Loitering," or "No Skateboarding" sign is not simply a device that communicates the existence of a regulation. It is a physical object in public space that has hostile effects on a targeted population, effects that the targeted people are incited to impose upon themselves.

The specifics of the design of public space can also communicate hostile attitudes toward the targeted group. Take the case of anti-homeless spikes. They restrict a particular behavior through a mechanism of physical imposition; you cannot easily sit or lay on a surface studded with spikes.

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[11] One cutting-edge issue related to hostile hidden camera confederacy is facial recognition and its potential for algorithmic bias (e.g., Garvie et al., 2016).

Figure 7: Signage, New York City, NY. (Photo by author.)

But the spikes are additionally very noticeable, and the intentions behind their installation are unmistakable. This unhidden and unequivocal signal of the attitude toward a specific behavior of a target population may also discourage this group from behaving in that way and possibly also from spending time in such spaces altogether. That is, not only do the spikes prevent sitting, but they also send a loud message to the unhoused that they are not welcome. Insofar as the hostility of the effects of a design is obvious to the targeted, this communication of hostility could incite self-policing. In this way, there is often an element of the mechanism of self-coercion at work in many of the examples of hostile design under consideration above.

The paradigmatic example of a public-space object operating through a mechanism of self-coercion is the conspicuous security camera. As mentioned, the visibility of a highly noticeable camera communicates to those in its presence that they are under surveillance. The highly visible camera itself—in its very visibility—can serve as a threat that there are consequences to violating the rules. The presence of the camera, as an object in public space, serves to remind people that they are being watched. A version of this mechanism is apparent in the example of the highly visible camera that is also "masked" such that those under surveillance cannot see where the camera is pointing. This is the case for a camera positioned behind a tinted dome or hanging within a tinted sphere (e.g., Fig. 4). Since such a tinted sphere hanging from a ceiling or mounted on a pole is itself a highly visible thing, and since the exact spot being watched by the camera within in the sphere cannot be observed at a given moment, people in the entire surrounding area are encouraged to behave as if they are under surveillance.[12]

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[12] These issues of self-coercion in relation to security cameras are a central issue within the field of surveillance studies (e.g., Lyon, 2001; Ball et al., 2012; Marx, 2015), and in particular work in relation to Michel Foucault's philosophy of the panopticon (e.g., Foucault, 1977; Friesen et al., 2009; Rosenberger, 2020a).

3.6. Absence

It is also important to develop ways to describe a lack of expected features of an object or area and how such a shortage can result in hostile effects. For example, rather than add an armrest to a bench, authorities might decide to remove the entire bench altogether.[13] Or, rather than removing an already existing feature, developers may decide to fail to include commonly expected amenities. A community may decide to remove (or never install) sidewalks to deter pedestrian foot traffic. To deter loiterers in a region with high temperatures, there may be none of the expected trees or shade.[14] We can refer to these designs as operating through a mechanism of "absence."

Cara Chellew has alternatively referred to this phenomenon with the useful term "ghost amenities," observing that,

> These are public amenities like washrooms, benches, and water fountains that are often included in public spaces to make them more comfortable, but are absent due to disrepair, reduced operation, or intentional omission. This is done as a way to reduce maintenance costs, avoid vandalism, or to deter loitering (2019, 23).

Such absent features can function as crucial elements within larger hostile agendas against poor and unhoused individuals, with a paradigmatic example in the absence of public restrooms. Entire swaths of a city may lack public restrooms, with the only options available to paying customers in private businesses. As Mike Davis claims, public-space restrooms are "the real Eastern Front of the Downtown war on the poor. Los Angeles, as a matter of deliberate policy, has fewer available public lavatories than any other major North American city" (1990, 234).

The purpose of this kind of categorization scheme is to help in the identification of hostile mechanisms as they appear in the world. Of course, there is no reason to assume that the above suggestions for categories are necessarily comprehensive. Another purpose of this scheme is to set up the possibility for recognizing additional mechanisms not yet commonly included in research and activist discussions on hostile design.

The categories listed above are not mutually exclusive. It is possible for an individual instance of design (however they are individuated) to enact hostility through more than only one mechanism. There is also the potential for borderline cases. That is, there will be examples that defy attempts to clearly fit within one category to the exclusion of others. Take the example of an area designed with a rough or bumpy ground surface that does not lend itself to skateboarding. The rough surface could be conceived as a form of physical imposition, one that merely discourages skateboarding through its sub-optimal surface texture rather than prohibits it. This same example could instead be conceived as a form of sensory interference, interrupting the smooth haptic experience with the skateboard; skateboarding is still possible, but the preferred touch sensation of the experience has been disrupted. The point of this kind of taxonomizing is ultimately not to develop exclusive categories but to provide practical tools for critical analysis and to offer jumping-off points for further conceptual work.

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[13] See both examples in footnote 7.

[14] There are yet unexplored connections to be made between issues of the hostile absence of urban tree coverage and empirical research on issues of canopy equity (e.g., Heynen, 2004; Schwarz et al., 2015; Locke et al., 2021).

4. Two Variables

Hostile designs can be characterized in various manners that refract differently across the mechanisms listed above. Let's refer to these aspects here as "variables," and let's consider two of them: what we can call "conspicuousness" and "domain of effect."

4.1. Conspicuousness

The various examples of hostile design can be more or less conspicuous. They may call more or less attention to themselves. Some may be designed specifically to be as unnoticeable as possible, especially to those who are not targeted by them. And as noted, of course, many instances of hostile design also simultaneously perform other non-hostile functions. For example, the anti-sleep bench modifications might also serve as armrests or seat dividers. The anti-pick trashcan lid might also serve as a rain hood. These additional functions can obscure a design's hostile effects, a longstanding strategy finding new expression in contemporary design. Or as Rosalyn Deutsche puts it, "These tactics of urban restructuring are not entirely new; neither is the erasure of the less appealing signs of its manufacture or the denial of its social consequences" (1986, 86).

It can be to the advantage of a hostile agenda to be as inconspicuous as possible to the non-targeted. This can be achieved in part by creating hostile designs that do not draw attention to their hostile effects. The results of such inconspicuous design can be twofold: (1) The non-targeted may fail to notice instances of hostile design, and (2) this could have the result of hiding not only the hostility of the design but also the larger issues to which it relates. For example, as Maria Foscarinis and colleagues plainly observe, "Some cities have pursued comprehensive policies with the stated purpose of driving homeless people out of sight" (1999, 147). The anti-homeless agendas at work—to different degrees and in different ways—within many cities across the globe should be understood to not only attempt to force the unhoused out of public spaces but also to attempt to hide the problem of homelessness itself.

However, we must also note that some hostile designs are conspicuous in the very manner by which they enact their hostility. One example is anti-homeless spikes. A ledge or other surface adorned with spikes may be very noticeable, even to those with no inclination to sit in that space. (There are versions that are less so, such as bolts or bumps that may serve the same purpose.) Spikes are an interesting example of hostile design because not only are they highly conspicuous in themselves, but they are often immediately noticeable in terms of their hostile functionality. It's often obvious exactly what they're for.

There are other examples of hostile design that are conspicuous as an inherent part of their hostile functioning, such as a highly noticeable security camera that enacts hostility through a mechanism of self-coercion. Think about the way a security camera may have a hostile effect as a targeted person sees the camera, recognizes that they are under surveillance, and becomes incited to police their own behavior in line with some hostile agenda. In such a case, for this hostility to function, the camera itself must stand in plain sight. Some instances of highly visible security cameras engage in a kind of performative conspicuousness; they are designed specifically to be seen, and they may even be accompanied by signage to remind people that they are under surveillance. (There are even examples of fake security cameras, objects that are intended to give people the false impression that they are being watched.)

Also, some examples of hostile designs that operate through a mechanism of sensory interference must be highly conspicuous as a part of the way they function. Loud music or annoying music

played in a public space to, say, deter camping is almost necessarily conspicuous as a part of being loud or annoying. Even still, we see that such music might be played only at night, and thus at a time when the non-targeted would be less likely to be around. The Mosquito anti-loitering noise machine, while highly noticeable to young people within its range, is at the same time inaudible to older members of the public.

Thinking about the variable of conspicuousness raises an important point about the situatedness of hostile design: the hostility of public-space objects will be more or less noticeable to different populations of the city. On the one hand, it may be the case that hostile designs, in particular, and hostile agendas, more generally, will be more apparent to those targeted by them. This hostility may be noticeable to targeted populations precisely because they experience this hostility directly. On the other hand, it may be the case that hostile designs (and the wider agendas in which they take part) will be less apparent to the non-targeted. As noted, such designs may be configured specifically to be inconspicuous to the non-targeted, to have additional non-hostile purposes, and to be otherwise non-disruptive to non-targeted people's use of the space. These kinds of issues more generally reveal the situated politics of human perception and their relationships with the political situation of the built environment.

Let's return once more to the example of the anti-homeless spikes. As noted above, they are highly noticeable. This noticeability has, on occasion, drawn them into controversy. In their ready comparability to the kinds of spikes used to shoo away pigeons and other vermin, activists raise awareness of the seemingly clear and objectionable intentions behind their installation and have, at times, successfully petitioned for their removal. And yet, they are a complex case. On the one hand, the outrage occasionally provoked by anti-homeless spikes reflects the way that the smooth functioning of many hostile agendas is in part dependent on the inconspicuousness of such agendas to the non-targeted; the various other examples of anti-homeless design do not prompt the same outrage as often because they tend to go unnoticed. On the other hand, it is not always clear what the outrage on the part of the non-targeted represents. For some, it may represent a genuine solidarity with the vulnerable population—the unhoused in this case—unjustly targeted by a wider anti-homeless agenda. But for others, the motivation may be merely a distaste for any reminder of the problem of homelessness at all. As James Petty observes, "The spikes, as a protrusive and always visible spectacle of coercion, mean that homelessness remains within that space as a residue, haunting it and destabilising its constructed meaning" (2016, 76). Put differently, some may support the removal of anti-homeless spikes not in solidarity with the unhoused but instead for their failure to maintain the invisibility of both the problem of homelessness and the anti-homeless agenda itself since they'd prefer not to think about these things at all.

The variable of conspicuousness also relates to the fact that hostile designs sometimes function not merely as a kind of physical coercion but also as a kind of sign, a form of implicit communication. They sometimes serve as a signal of hostility. The spikes are again instructive in the atypical way they broadcast their intentions loudly and unequivocally. In some cases, this explicit signaling may be a feature, not a bug. An effect, for example, may be to communicate brazenly and brutally to a targeted population that they are not welcome. The signaling function of an extreme case like the spikes may be useful for what it reveals about less conspicuous examples. The spikes may announce to everyone that the unhoused are not welcome in a particular shared public space. Other hostile designs that target the unhoused—such as the anti-sleep benches or anti-pick trashcans—may make the same pronouncement, with the same brazenness and the same brutality, but do so in a way that is at once explicit to the targeted and at the same time slyly inconspicuous to the non-targeted.

4.2. Domain of Effect

Another aspect that differs between examples is the location of the hostility enacted by a particular device. The nature of the hostility of a device, in part, determines its area of operation. We can observe, for example, a contrast between (1) a hostile design whose domain of effect is how it—as a device—may be used and (2) one whose domain of effect is instead the options available in the surrounding space. Let's refer to this particular distinction as a difference between an "individual-object domain" and a "surrounding-space domain."

A hostile design with an individual-object domain of effect is one that, by the nature of its hostility, restricts the way that the object itself may be used. For example, the bench redesigned with anti-sleep armrests has a domain of effect of that bench itself. The anti-sleep design has the effect of closing off one of this bench's own potential usages. The skatestoppers affixed to a handrail deter skateboarders from performing tricks on that particular rail. Many of our examples of hostile designs that operate through a mechanism of physical imposition have this kind of domain of effect.

In contrast, a hostile design with a surrounding-space domain of effect is one that, by the nature of its hostility, restricts the way that the space around it may be used. For example, a sound system that plays annoying music to deter loitering has a domain of effect of the space where it can be heard. Unlike the examples of designs with an individual-object domain of effect, the sound system does not restrict the usage of the sound system itself as a material thing. The sound system has an effect on anyone that can hear within its acoustic range. This is similarly the case for the hostile effect of a security camera operating under a mechanism of self-coercion. If the presence of a highly noticeable security camera incites a targeted population to police themselves in a hostile manner, then this can be understood to be a surrounding-spatial domain of effect. The camera's presence does not change the targeted person's usage of the camera itself; it changes their relationship to the spatial area under surveillance. It is possible, too, for examples of hostile design that operate through a mechanism of physical imposition to have a surrounding-spatial domain of effect. For example, a fence that closes off an area in a hostile manner has an effect on that entire closed-off space. The fence does not place restrictions on the usage of the fence itself. It provides a form of physical imposition to the affected area.[15]

Reflection upon these differences in domain of effect highlights the nature of larger-scale hostile agendas. For example, this may help to articulate how an individual instance of hostile design both functions in isolation and how it may also contribute to a larger hostile agenda with a more expansive domain of effect. One individual anti-sleep bench might enact its hostility upon a domain of its own sitting space. However, in combination with other anti-homeless designs, including other anti-sleep benches as well as other anti-homeless tactics such as anti-homeless laws, the bench additionally becomes one piece of a larger agenda that targets the unhoused across a potentially wide-ranging domain of the city. As part of a pattern of anti-sleep benches, and possibly other designs that close off places to sit or lie down, and perhaps also laws that target exactly the same behaviors, these things function in the aggregate to deter not only sleeping in a particular spot; they disafford stopping and resting anywhere within a city's shared and visible public space.

In addition, insofar as the agenda has some success in these effects, the bench becomes a sign—at least to those targeted by its hostility—communicating that they are unwelcome. For example, as

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[15] There are surely additional variables that could be identified. For example we could consider a variable of "temporality" in which examples are distinguished in terms of the durations of their effects. Or we could consider a variable of "discriminateness" in which examples are distinguished in terms of whether their effects target specific behaviors or instead that less discriminately close off many or all usages for all users.

Ole B. Jensen notes, "The complex relationship between laws prohibiting people from gathering and making shelter is together with the concrete artifacts of dark design working to create an atmosphere of rejection" (2020, 328). If the anti-sleep bench has the effect of signaling to the targeted population that they are not welcome, then a pattern of these and other hostile designs targeting that same population can create an atmosphere of hostility that extends across the city. Such atmospheres of hostility can even potentially overspill and be experienced by the non-targeted. As Anna Minton observes, " 'Defensible space' in fact produces isolated, often empty enclaves which promote fear rather than the safety and reassurance that automatically come in busy places, where people are free to come and go" (2009, 72). The cumulative effect of the spikes, fences, and cameras at times may be to leave many users feeling uneasy.

Even more, in its participation in a wider hostile agenda in these corporeal and semiotic ways, the bench becomes an accomplice to a larger revanchist undertaking, reclaiming cities in line with a particular vision for the public spaces, parks, downtowns, and business districts constituted by the systematic exclusion of the poor and other perpetual subjects of discrimination. As Neil Smith wrote on 1990's New York City, "The central areas cleared of homeless people are now open for business. The dynamic geographies of culture, real estate capital, and revanchism seem perfectly synchronized" (1998, 7). The domain of effect of hostile design can be more than only the immediate space around the device itself. Hostile designs can function as contributors to larger discriminatory visions for the future of the city.

5. Discussion

Hostile designs are, of course, not necessarily themselves the central cause of the issues to which they relate. Anti-homeless design, for example, is not itself the cause of homelessness. The removal of anti-homeless designs will not somehow by itself solve the problem of homelessness (even if such work would constitute at least some small level of harm reduction). However, a growing accumulation of contemporary activists and scholars are finding that the critique of hostile design can be useful for drawing attention to issues of concern in our cities.

There is a special potential in activism regarding hostile design. The exposure of hostile design can sometimes be useful for putting larger agendas on display. For example, a non-targeted person who was unaware of a particular hostile agenda within a particular city may at first be surprised to learn about the hostility of an individual object. This may prompt them to suddenly see a pattern of these hostile designs installed across the city. The recognition of these and other designs targeting the same vulnerable population might then set this person up to notice other things, such as laws or other institutions specifically aimed at this same group. As Sarah Schindler observes, "Architectural exclusion is pernicious in that it is invisible to most, and yet it continues to solidify otherwise defunct forms of legal exclusion" (2018, 1990). In this way, hostile designs can, at times, be the tip of the iceberg, jutting out into public space and indicating the existence of a larger agenda below the surface of what is readily visible. The work of revealing hostile designs to the public can be an important first part of the project of exposing larger-scale hostile agendas.

It is possible that raising awareness of hostile designs and larger hostile agendas will lead some members of the non-targeted population to sympathize with targeted groups and support efforts to resist their subjugation. Of course, not all non-targeted people will be moved to compassion. As Francesca Piazzoni points out, "Visibility alone, then, cannot guarantee justice. But the ability to see and be seen in the city remains a prerequisite for the empowerment of underrepresented groups"

(2020, 3). For example, making the problem of homelessness more visible will not lead everyone in the community to support the unhoused. However, it may be impossible to make progress on the problem of homelessness if the problem itself is made invisible.

The notions of "hostile design," "hostile architecture," and related ideas are providing scholars with a new way into the study of long-standing issues regarding the politics of city space. As Sanna Lehtinen observed, "We need a better understanding of how technologies are experienced, especially in cases where social justice is at stake. A better recognition of how new technologies are affecting the distribution of attention or aesthetic qualities of everyday environments is thus something in which philosophical and applied aesthetics can assist" (2020, 87). Perhaps the notion of hostile design and its related concepts can be useful for these kinds of critical projects. There is a need for empirical work and not merely for itself but for the refinement of this idea as a tool for criticism. There is also a need for further scholarly work to sharpen these concepts through their connection to traditions of thought on these issues.

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Carving Up Community

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Abstract

Gentrification presents a political problem for cities. Practicing democracy requires a commitment to and preservation of meaningful public space so as to support community voice. Democracy as a political institution requires the ability for diverse publics to gather and encounter one another in order to flourish. Gentrification threatens democratic practices by withering away of public space, and its effects particularly impact communities of color. Gentrification's negative spatial effects reduce the cumulative impact of voices of communities, reduce the diversity and availability of public space, and results in a thinner concept of urban community.

Keywords: gentrification; diversity; public space; democracy; racism; voice

1. Introduction

Practicing democracy requires a commitment to and preservation of meaningful public space. While public assembly predates democracy's emergence, democracy as a political institution requires the ability for diverse publics to gather and encounter one another in order to flourish. Gentrification[1] is a singular threat to the continued health of democracy, in part because of its withering away of public space and, in particular, the ways in which it targets communities of color. While other scholars have examined gentrification's impacts on communities as a question of resource justice[2], here I want to focus on the way in which gentrification changes the perception and use of public space as it affects the emergence and impact of community voice. My concern for the use of space has a family relationship to the concept of occupancy rights (Stilz 2013), particularly as incorporated into gentrification critiques based on unjust resource allocation (Huber and Wolkenstein 2018, Kohn 2016). But my particular focus on voice follows Bart van Leeuwen (2020) in framing the justice issues of gentrification through their impacts on community recognition and respect. Because gentrified communities don't form accidentally but out of longstanding practices of *de jure* racism like redlining (Rothstein 2017), I contend that gentrification represents a significant diminishment of the vitality and vibrancy of public space, and thus dilutes already marginalized

[1] The examples and analysis in this paper are focused on gentrification as it occurs in the United States. Gentrification is seen elsewhere in the world, particularly in Europe, as other scholars have demonstrated (Schafran 2014). Scholars debate the extent to which gentrification applies to the Global South (Ghertner 2015).

[2] See Putnam (2021) and Brake (2019) for representative recent examples.

community voices. Taking the idea of 'community' seriously as a site of public values, activity, and orientation requires cities that foster a diversity of communities within their boundaries as a contribution to better and fuller political debate and policy-setting. The weakening or elimination of public space, including its transitory or informal uses, mutes the public voice for these communities and thus suggests that cities value only a narrow and homogeneous model of community.

2. Public Space and Democratic Practices

Public space and assembly are crucial for the kind of public deliberation that grounds democracies. While we often focus on formal public assembly, here I stress the value of less formal and more ephemeral public encounters, in particular, the specific value of people from different backgrounds sharing public space. This line of thinking was first developed by Jürgen Habermas (1991), describing the emergence of informal spheres of engagement as spaces of collective encounter and lower-stakes communication that foment political creativity and rebellion. But it has older roots; Melissa Lane locates cosmopolitanism as an ancient political virtue less in formal disputes and more in the daily interaction of migrants in crowded Greek city-states (2016, 66 - 68). More recently, Margaret Kohn describes the public goods of the city, including its public spaces, as "common-wealth, a concentration of value created by past generations and current residents" (2016, 2). Each of these accounts are descriptions of the political value of urban public space as a site of deliberation that functions in part due to encounters with diverse communities.

Public space can also offer more quotidian community benefits. Bart van Leeuvwen conceives of public space as "normative. . .structured by different patterns of recognition, namely care, respect, and esteem, and that is embodied both by physical structures, institutions and intersubjective relations between individuals and groups" (2020, 170). We can design, build, and maintain spaces so that they welcome and support individual and group recognition and exchange. Jane Jacobs illustrates this at the mundane level of sidewalks, observing that well- and frequently-used sidewalks in cities, and the presence of observant neighbors, are part of what makes cities safe and vital. Jacobs' Greenwich Village neighbors are strangers to each other, but function as spirited citizens in their neighborhood because of a sense of publicity. People are not merely on the streets but share a basic sense of ownership of and responsibility towards the neighborhood, even if and as they behave in diverse and divergent ways in the neighborhood. In other words, the mere physical occupancy or emptiness of streets and buildings is itself insufficient for a neighborhood to be functional if its residents do not have any sense of shared informal ownership or obligation towards one another. As she states, "[p]eople must take a modicum of public responsibility for each other even if they have no ties to each other. This is a lesson nobody learns by being told. It is learned from the experience of having other people without ties of kinship or close friendship or formal responsibility to you take a modicum of public responsibility for you" (1992, 82). Jacobs' city neighbors are not friends; they remain strangers to one another in crucial ways, they diverge in many public practices and values, and yet they fulfill basic obligations of trust and intimacy. Van Leeuwen reminds us social attachment isn't just on the individual level but on the group level; I can recognize the value of shared public goods not just for myself or some vague public, but "for the social group involved" (2020, 174). We see this public recognition and public responsibility observed and maintained on Jacobs' sidewalks. Public recognition and respect is an ongoing, but low-stakes, demand of us, and it is one that gentrification attenuates.

3. Gentrification's Origins and Operations

There are many available definitions of gentrification; the term was first coined in 1964 (Glass). At its core, the term describes a relatively rapid and significant change in neighborhood population from lower- to higher-income residents (Clark 2005, 25). As connoted by the root of the term ("gentry"), gentrification was originally understood mostly through a lens of economic class. But from this narrow definition, there are wide divides in scholarship on gentrification. It can be understood as a consumer-driven phenomenon as an inevitable consequence of market economics at work (Cortright 2019, Jager 2013), which conceives gentrification to be the logical result of relatively free individual economic choices. Alternatively, "production side" theorists argue that gentrification's processes are seeded through the incentives of neoliberal capitalism (e.g., investment firms' capacity to buy up parcels of under-resourced properties and renovate them for significantly higher rents), and emphasize the role of government policies and uneven development between neighborhoods in seeding the conditions that make gentrification a live option, such as rent gaps (Smith 1979, Hackworth and Smith 2001, Smith 1987, Hammel 1999). The dynamics of gentrification have shifted over time (Lees 2000) and in location (Huber and Wolkenstein 2018, 380).

Here, I follow the "production side" theorists generally, and specifically, I focus on the ways in which gentrification in the US is driven not just by class dynamics but race dynamics. Gentrifying neighborhoods in the US so often were primarily working-class immigrant neighborhoods, or majority black neighborhoods during the Great Migration, before becoming mostly white neighborhoods. Richard Rothstein deems racial segregation in the US as *de jure*—caused by law and policy—and lays out the panoply of laws that existed throughout the 20th century that created and sustained racially segregated neighborhoods (2017). To list just some of these policies, segregated New Deal public housing, publicly financed housing for WWII defense workers available only to white families, high-rise public housing to concentrate communities of color in cities, segregated and redlined post-war suburbs subsidized by the FHA, redlining residential neighborhoods from the 1910s through the 1960s, the limiting of FHA mortgages to "desirable" neighborhoods that were segregated for white families, the clustering of industrial and commercial facilities in majority-minority neighborhoods (which depresses the value of the available housing stock), the limiting of VA mortgages to majority-white suburbs, are just the more obvious policy mechanisms that functioned to create and perpetuate racial segregation in US cities (2017, 20–71).

Segregation has many direct and indirect harms. Most directly, segregation dramatically limits families of color's ability to accumulate generational wealth by limiting how much mortgage equity communities of color can accumulate and transfer. But the effects aren't merely financial; as Tommie Shelby (2016) points out, neighborhoods of color are also and not coincidentally disadvantaged by other public structures (availability of work, funding of neighborhood schools, and other public services [2016, 40]). In the United States, lower property values result in lower public investment and availability of public goods and amenities. Finally, there are clear health effects due to the concentration of industrial and commercial properties in communities of color. To take one example, the majority-minority neighborhood of Globeville/Swansea in Denver, which has a high concentration of industrial and commercial buildings and traffic, has the highest rate of childhood asthma in all of Denver, significantly higher rates of children visiting the ER for asthma than Denver overall, and is seeing the rate of childhood asthma rise much more sharply than other Denver neighborhoods (ATTOM 2018). Longstanding government neglect primes these neighborhoods for gentrification and has already isolated communities of color from economic and political en-

gagement. In other words, racial segregation is no accident, and it perpetuates significant and systematic dis- or under-investment in communities of color that has ripple effects beyond the directly economic.

Even this resource-focused account of the roots and effects of residential segregation ignores the value of community for its inhabitants. What Tommie Shelby describes as the "medical model" of examining residential segregation minimizes the affirmative values these communities practice. Black people may still prefer living in black neighborhoods "to maintain long-standing community ties, to sustain black institutions and cultural practices, and to ensure access to establishments that serve black needs" (2016, 71). Kohn reminds us that original residents develop an attachment to their neighborhoods and neighbors, and build up informal support networks and community practices to sustain and support themselves (2014, 83).

Just as many public and financial policies systematically undervalue neighborhoods in which people of color live, those same neighborhoods benefit, once gentrifying, from a wide variety of public and financial policies. "Gentrification. . reorient[s] the purpose of cities away from being spaces that provide for the poor and middle classes and towards being spaces that generate capital for the rich" (Moskowitz 2018, 22). This has concrete instantiations: state-subsidized forgivable loans for areas of gentrification do not go to heritage residents of the neighborhood to improve their property, but to companies to develop condos (Moskowitz 2018, 95). State-subsidized tourist entities like sports stadiums come at the cost of support of public services like schools, creating a ratcheting effect on educational inequity. "Closed loop" models of public transit emerge that serve only a gentrified urban core (Moskowitz 2018, 86). Public money gets disproportionately directed to previously neglected neighborhoods once those neighborhoods are populated with affluent white people. Lifestyle benefits—improved mass transit, publicly subsidized downtown sports arenas, improved recreation centers, and libraries—are created or improved for the affluent folks who now live there.

4. Gentrification's Erasure of Public Spaces

I want to sketch at least three different ways in which gentrification serves to carve up or wither away community space. First, *communities as capital are not communities at all.* Gentrification covers its own tracks by using an entirely economic language to describe and assess the vitality and viability of communities, and reframes gentrifying choices as individual only.[3] The immediate and necessary response to this is for people to stop thinking of social ties and connections (which often cannot be directly economically measured) as relevant at all in policy decisions about how we incentivize or disincentivize tax dollars towards communities. As Moskowitz puts it, people who move into gentrifying or gentrified areas justify their choices through individual, cost-benefit language, framing their choice as one of lifestyle (2018, 141–142). This language extends to public goods like education. The 2013 takeover of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) included district references to a "portfolio of options" to describe a choice process imposed upon an unhappy community (Ewing 2018, 23). The marketplace language suggests infinite choice, but the reality is that the choice is generally available only to affluent, usually white families. Seeing publicly occupied and shared space exclusively in terms of its economic value to be exploited is to devalue other aspects of city life and existence. This capitalization of community is invariably a thinning out of diverse ways of

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[3] And to be clear, even defenses of gentrification as not destructive for communities of color still make this case entirely through economic language and framing. See for instance Cortright 2019.

life, contrary to Kohn's contention that cities are "vibrant and vital because [they] are shared with other people" (2014, 12).

City life is devalued in part because dense housing is hollowed out from within. Expensive urban real estate is increasingly purchased as tax write-offs or investments for absentee owners (Badger 2017). Apps like AirBnB or VRBO turn what had been busy urban apartment buildings into hotels without services. A $21 million lawsuit against a New York realty firm makes this manifest; a brokerage firm illegally rented out apartments in 35 buildings in Manhattan, "including an entire building in East Harlem" (Ferré-Sadurni 2019). But these *ad hoc* hotels do not include the sort of amenities that proper hotels provide as a way of ensuring communal safety, such as outdoor lights or doorkeepers. Less directly, some of the ways of creating density in gentrifying communities, like slot townhomes (a longer, narrower lot filled front to back with townhomes), result in fewer possible windows and doors on the street and no front stoops or steps on which neighbors would loiter. The absence of these features makes it less possible to have the sort of public ownership of space that Jacobs describes and the kind of social recognition for which van Leeuwen advocates.

Second, carving up happens literally, in the sense that *previously public spaces are privatized*.[4] Jane Jacobs' praise of city sidewalks speaks to the value of public spaces; "they bring together who do not know each other in an intimate, private social fashion and in most cases do not care to know each other in that fashion" (1992, 55). This description suits urban public spaces like parks. Because cities are looking for income opportunities, monetizing public parks for events and festivals that require tickets and passes, or transferring public school buildings to sometimes profit-seeking charter businesses, work to deprive cities of the kind of informal but lively diverse use of space that was previously a given. Gentrification is closely associated with this sort of repurposing of public space for private, income-producing purposes. In her account of gentrification and urban justice, Margaret Kohn describes the legal incentives that produce the oxymoronically named "privately owned public spaces" (2016, 146). For example, New York City passed statutes that allowed real estate developers to build taller buildings than zoning limits allowed as long as they also created and maintained public gathering spaces therein, but the features of these spaces make it clear that they are not substantively public. They can be located in ways that are less accessible or visible from the streets and can be lit or designed to be useful only for residents. These are popular strategies, cropping up in parks in Atlanta (Cole and Immergluck 2022, 141) and Dublin (Anguelovski et al 2022, 207). These "public" spaces can also be use-restricted for revenue generation that primarily benefits their private owners, not the city, and result in placing the park off limits to all but a paying public. Moskowitz describes New York's Union Square as "often blocked off by BID [Business Improvement District]-sponsored barricades, its grassy areas protected with BID-approved netting. . .thanks to the BID, Union Square is less dirty than it once was, but it's also no longer a public space in any true sense" (Moskowitz 2018, 171). Ray Oldenburg's ode to "third spaces" of public community (1999), while in theory highlighting Habermasian public gathering spaces, focuses most of its attention on commercial spaces like coffee houses and bookstores that prioritize patrons with ability to pay; these are not fully free spaces.

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[4] This practice has a historic precedent. As Kevin Kruse describes in his history of Atlanta after *Brown v. Board*, the "city too busy to hate" responded to official desegregation orders by closing up or neglecting public facilities used primarily by black people (pools, parks, golf courses, transportation, schools) while white Atlantans created lavishly funded private or quasi-private versions of these utilities for themselves (2005, 105–130, 240). This practice was widespread throughout the Jim Crow South.

Public space can be privatized informally as well as formally. As Isabella Wilkerson describes it, public spaces are "test tubes of caste interaction" because they bring together people from diverse backgrounds for sharing of space, and gentrification too often reveals sharp disparities in who feels a right to assert entitlement to public space (2020, 293). Margaret Kohn reminds us of the value of the unexpected "interstices" of cities: streets, impromptu visual displays, public parks, and libraries that welcome a variety of uses and patrons (2016, 6). These "in-between" places, as she describes them, can be zones of contention and struggle (*ibid*). Many of the instances of racist harassment that became publicized through the #livingwhileblack threads on Twitter are about white people asserting "proper" uses of public space against longstanding practices of long-time residents. For instance, a white woman called Oakland police on some folks who were barbecuing in Lake Merritt Park because they were barbecuing in a section where grills are not allowed (but in which residents had grilled for years without interference).[5] Disputes over suddenly privatized access to public soccer fields in the Mission district in San Francisco and the Columbia Heights neighborhood in Washington DC were a fraught and visible symbol of the ways in which neoliberal logic created visceral clashes over who had access to "free" park space (Kohn 2014, 156-159; Kukla 2021, 111). New systems, which required credit card deposits for reserving fields through the park department's online system, while ostensibly neutral, served to displace the neighborhood children's ability to play pickup games after school and favored adults with disposable incomes, the time and ability to navigate websites, and credit cards.

Interstitial places can be sites of contention because informal conflicts are about how neighbors explicitly or implicitly allow space to be used, what uses have social legitimacy, and which uses are deemed deviant. Jane Jacobs[6] reminds us that parks get used for reasons that far surpass their originally intended uses; "[p]laces to wash bikes. . .dig in the ground, places to build ramshackle wigwams and huts out of old lumber, are activities usually crowded out of cities. The Puerto Ricans who come to our cities today have no place to roast pigs outdoors unless they can find a private yard for the purpose, but outdoor pig roasts and the parties that follow can be as much fun as the Italian street festivals many city dwellers have learned to love" (Jacobs 1992, 110).[7] What counts as a public space can be expansive; Quill Kukla's analysis of gentrification in one Washington DC neighborhood reminds us that alleys, along with porches and sidewalks, can be public gathering sites for long-term residents before they become surveilled and policed by gentrifiers (2021, 105). Gentrifiers acting to restrict or surveil public space uses to a narrow band of social acceptability is an insidious way in which community is weakened; only some people have legitimate claims to

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[5] There are many other available examples, but just to illustrate the aggressive reclaiming of public space, "Permit Patty" called the police on an 8-year-old girl selling water without a permit, but her initial complaint was that the child was too loud on the sidewalk while she worked from home with her window open. See https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jun/25/permit-patty-eight-year-old-selling-water-san-francisco-video.

[6] Some recent critics, particularly Peter Moskowitz, criticize Jacobs' theory as enabling gentrification, in particular due to her advocacy of what she calls "unslumming." I think the criticism is misplaced, as Jacobs clearly critiques or anticipates what we now see as dangers of gentrification (147, 207, 249). But regardless, the criticism does not bear on the concepts of community as I describe them here.

[7] Indeed, the Oakland PD did not arrest or issue citations to anyone, and the community sponsored a "BBQing While Black" festival in Merritt Park two weeks later as a response to the angry gentrifier. https://thegrapevine.theroot.com/oakland-holds-massive-bbqingwhileblack-festival-at-lak-1826201280?/setsession

public space.[8] "Appropriate" uses can be apparently similar, but differently valued depending upon the community doing the use. Sharon Meagher and Quill Kukla both cite instances of behavior (public drinking and eating, idle gathering) that looks innocuous to gentrifiers when done in the acceptable framework (expensive restaurant patios or street tables) but becomes threatening and disorderly when occurring on a porch or sidewalk absent QR code menus and craft beer (Meagher 2007, 17; Kukla 2021, 105–106). These collisions matter because they serve as an assertion of power and exclusion. Valli reminds us that the fact that these encounters occur in places longtime residents "(formerly) experienced as 'home' is perceived as a threat. . .to the very identification of that place *as* 'home' " (2016, 1195). While brief, these informal collisions can be disorienting and alienating for longtime community members.

Informal carving up also occurs because of how space is re-allocated in gentrification, both within gentrified neighborhoods and for the displaced longtime residents. Many scholars have described the ways in which longtime residents can be dispersed across metropolitan areas when they become priced out of their longtime neighborhood, and this brings with it communal costs. In the US, the suburban poverty rate has risen at a faster rate than the urban poverty rate since 2000 (Moskowitz 2018, 8); I suspect part of this is due to the effects of 21st-century gentrification and the dispersal of neighbors. In some respects, it is easier to live on a lower income in a city than in a suburb: public transit, public space, and public services are often located near, if not in, the neighborhoods most at risk of gentrification, making it easier to, for instance, not own a car. Increasing numbers of city poor moving into suburbs out of financial necessity when cities are gentrified highlight this problem. Suburbs are not built for common space and public use; they were built as retreats from more public cities. They typically have quite limited public transit options. Additionally, those who leave gentrifying neighborhoods lose their neighbors as well as previously accessible services. Many commentators rightly observe that the loss of informal support neighborly networks for child and elder care, which has philosophical value for Jacobs, are vitally important for long-term residents in gentrifying neighborhoods (see Kohn 2014, 34; Huber and Wolkenstein 2018, 385; Putnam 2021, 170). The loss of this informal support for displaced residents can have significant impacts, making it difficult for residents to find and hold employment, or provide care for their families.

Finally, the carving up happens procedurally. *Gentrification minimizes or silences opportunities for diverse community voice* as neighborhoods change. Procedures for seeking, recording, and utilizing community input are put in place late, poorly advertised, and not done iteratively. Those attending one public forum out of several about the re-zoning of their building or a school takeover have no idea what other community members think of this. They may be unable to attend other forums due to their work or family obligations; meeting notes may only be posted on complicated-to-navigate city websites, which would be unavailable for those who do not have internet access at home; translators may not be available for those who need them. Meetings are scheduled at locations far from the community members' homes, at times inconvenient for work or without necessary supports like childcare for low-income attendees. The effect of this is that any resulting policy decisions about one's community look like a *fait accompli* because community voice is dispersed and muted.

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[8] Homeowners' Associations (HOAs), common in both suburbs and gentrifying 'infill' neighborhoods, do not represent an improvement on this practice, despite their outwardly democratic trappings. The time commitment of the boards can mean that inexperienced members can use them to, as Spencer MacCallum tartly phrases it, "politicize[] daily life" (2005, 419).

At their most extreme, bureaucratic structures that mute community voice can approach the Kafkaesque. Kohn recounts Chicago residents of Section 8 housing following laws that supported residents' councils to participate in deliberation. Residents used these councils to protest the ways in which the transformation of formerly dilapidated public housing was going to result in less available low-income housing and to disperse the neighborhood. While the threat of legal penalties led to a plan by the housing authority and residents to meet residents' needs, "then Congress changed the law, which allowed the [Chicago Housing Authority] to permanently decrease the supply of housing" (2014, 83). Similarly, a New York judge invalidated the protestors' claims to space in the 2011 Occupy New York protests (in which gentrification was a prime target of protesters' anger) as illegitimate "camping," while recognizing that the rules he used to justify the removal were adopted *after* the protests began (2014, 146). In both cases, the substantial effort required to expend community political voice was only momentarily recognized before a governmental end-run erased it.

This isn't a new tactic; Jacobs quotes one elected official in New York acknowledging the trivializing of community voice in 1961. Decisions are made in executive session shortly before the public hearings, which are then hosted "with complete courtesy and with deaf ears" (Jacobs 1992, 406); a public show of democracy is pure political fiction. More recently, Ewing's account of public resistance to CPS's attempted takeover of Chicago's South Side schools documents pervasive public silencing (2018, 41–42). Indeed, several parents at public meetings would question whether or not their comments were even recorded or if the city was listening, or emphasize that their comments were on the record. The fact that multiple parents make versions of this claim indicates the deep level of skepticism community members have that the public officers are working from any sense of obligation to the diverse public they serve (Ewing 2018, 114). There is a dual effect of this procedural community silencing; first, the community loses its concrete input on policies that most directly affect it, and second, this kind of dismissal can lead to a general destructive apathy about political engagement. As one longtime resident of a gentrifying neighborhood sums up, "I don't mean anything, my likes and what I think don't have a place at the table here anymore, even if I've been here when it was so shitty and tried to make something of it" (Valli 2016, 1204).

5. Gentrification's Damages to Democracy

This resident's observation describes the most basic harm gentrification has on democracy. Its erosion of public space sends a clear message to neighborhoods that its space is not for neighbors to govern, but for the city to manage, and that the city's interest and the neighbors' interests are opposed. Public space is valuable to a community in part and especially because its use is indeterminate, indeed sometimes chaotic. Margaret Kohn reminds us that the lack of control of public space itself represents the value and existence of popular voices, as opposed to governmental ones (2014, 136). Gentrification functions to replace this indeterminacy with the ostensibly smooth and efficient functions of capital, but its effects are unequal; some voices and uses of space get privileged and prioritized at the exclusion of others. The authority of investors is taken for granted such that it is observed even when the investors themselves are absent. Quill Kukla describes protests against gentrifying developers that take place "outside empty, small, regional offices of international developers. . .companies that have, literally, no meaningful *location*—no embodied existence" (2021, 88). Even physically absent voices can exert outsized pressure; the investments do the speaking for the remote developers.

By obvious extension, the longtime neighbors themselves are also disrespected and silenced; their voices do not count to the larger community. Van Leeuwen rightly observes that the kind of neighborhood neglect that facilitates gentrification is an "*intersubjective* expression of a lack of concern by city government," and "dehumanizing" (2020, 180). Sometimes, the lack of concern is expressed explicitly rather than implicitly. Most baldly, one real estate developer casually and callously describes a historic neighborhood of New York as a "blank canvas" for their gentrifying efforts (qtd. in Valli 2016, 1191). Residents are literally erased from this neighborhood. A newcomer to a gentrifying DC neighborhood complains about having to "step over" unhoused people who've long occupied the neighborhood; Quill Kukla acerbically suspects that gentrifiers never contemplate "'step[ping] over' the middle-class White people who often lie in the sun in the [neighborhood's] plaza" (2021, 108). Longtime residents register this erasure. A resident of Chicago's Cabrini-Green values his neighborhood and playground as "home. . .and it's precious from right here (pointing to the heart)" and sees his forced relocation from a closed Cabrini-Green as a loss of community and familiarity (Kohn 2014, 65). As Ewing phrases it when writing about Chicago schools, "[a] fight for a school is never just about a school. . . [W]hether you're in Detroit or Austin or Louisiana or Chicago, you want to feel that your school is your school. That you have some say in the matter, that your voice can make a difference. . .*You want to feel like a citizen*" (Ewing 2018, 47, emphasis added). The fact that this activist resident describes citizenship as an aspiration, if not a simulation, illustrates her sense of whose voices count in her city. Ewing documents at least one case in which Chicago neighbors successfully fought the city, but this was in part due to a neighbor-organized hunger strike, the extremity of which speaks to both the importance of schools for neighborhood identity and the degree of anger towards a callous city government. Even a successful protest against a school takeover comes with a high cost for its protestors and reveals a fundamental alienation from and antagonism to a supposedly representative government. While Lance Freeman reminds us that some longtime residents appreciate the improvement in amenities that come with gentrification (2006, 66–71, 98–106), the residents still experience alienation in their neighborhoods. Chiara Valli quotes one longtime resident describing how she self-surveils and self-silences as she walks around her gentrifying neighborhood. "[Y]ou feel different from how you felt before. You become more aware of yourself, you watch how you behave and how you speak, not to fulfill a stereotype" (2016, 1202). This sort of communal alienation and hostility is destructive for democratic rule; cities can not effectively represent their communities if significant portions of their communities see themselves as alienated from their neighbors and their city.

6. Restoring Voices by Respecting Community

Margaret Kohn provides the principle for thinking about why the privatization of community should be addressed through practice and policy; privatized community perpetuates a falsely zero-sum understanding of property. She argues for the paradigm shift of recognizing that property is "naturally social," which implies that providing for and supporting public goods and public spaces is a defense of the common rather than an unfair taking from another's acquisition (2014, 18). Since federal and state action and funding led to residential and commercial neglect in some neighborhoods, federal and state policies can provide redress to make it easier for longtime residents to buy housing (so

they are not trapped in rent cycles of gentrification) or to support local commercial tenants.[9] There are existing federal and nonprofit programs that provide assistance and funds for those who receive rental assistance to make down payments for home purchases (Rothstein and Rothstein 2023, 68).

Responsibility for remedies should also extend to the businesses that profited from the predatory lending and contract leasing that drove some of the gentrification. Richard Rothstein and Leah Rothstein's *Just Action* argues that since some of the US's biggest real estate lenders have profited handsomely from past redlining (and have publicly acknowledged their responsibility), they should respond more than symbolically by, for instance, diverting a small fraction of agents' commissions to funds that could work to support black home ownership (2023, 209). Licensing organizations for real estate agencies and credit reporting agencies could also change their standards so as to make future discrimination in mortgage approval less likely. The Rothsteins rightly note that not everyone wants to own a home, and there are ways that public housing and rental housing could be made more sustainable and appealing for long-term residents of a neighborhood and also more resistant to gentrification pressures. Francesca Mari's recent profile of Vienna's "social housing" (2023) illustrates a model of public investment for neighborhoods that are targets for gentrification that does not require its residents to invest in mortgages and to commit to ownership. Inclusionary zoning and rent control policies can also make it easier for longtime residents to stay in neighborhoods and avoid displacement. Additionally, the kinds of public disinvestment present in communities that become targets for gentrification (under-resourced public parks, schools, recreation centers, libraries) should be a priority for federal, state, and local rectification. Tax dollars should follow need rather than property values. To that end, early gentrifiers often benefited from getting houses and blocks designated as historic, which made available federal funds for maintenance and improvement. These gentrifiers had the social capital to take advantage of these programs—postgraduate education and awareness of political processes—which means that these funds are often a form of indirect federal subsidy for the already privileged (Freeman 2006, 41). Historic designation policies could be revised so that they benefit the historic residents of neighborhoods and not just the physical buildings. The practice of public-private partnerships in city renovation should be discontinued, as its benefits flow disproportionately to the private investors, and it results in sham or disingenuous use of public space.[10]

But in addition to formal responses, there are informal ways in which communities at risk of or experiencing gentrification can resist and respond by using their voices. In addition to conventional means (public protests or assembly), longtime neighbors can simply, visibly, and collectively assert their presence. Melissa García-Laarca and Aaron Vansintjan (2022) describe ways in which long-term members of a gentrifying Montréal neighborhood visibly claim space (physically and aurally) by "hang[ing] out on their balconies, sidewalks and in public parks, where they make connections with other residents who share food with them. . . [one] elderly resident began a guerilla community garden behind her apartment, which led to connections and neighborhood meetings in the garden" (2023, 196). These are gentler versions of what Kohn refers to as "expressive outlaws," or visibly and publicly breaking the law for the persuasive purpose of demonstrating the injustice of

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[9] These were policy *choices*, Bart van Leeuwen reminds us (2020, 185). As governments made choices to commodify housing and prioritize capital accumulation, they can make different choices to prioritize community flourishing and recognition.

[10] Uberoy and Collins (2023) provide a vivid illustration of how lopsided these partnerships are in New York City real estate. They calculate that developers have gained roughly $10 billion for 20 million additional residential square feet, while providing 3.8 million square feet of "public" spaces that are often gated or fenced off, or otherwise maintained for inhospitality to an actual public.

the law (2014, 52). The fact that expressive outlaws can work in such pro-social and benign fashions as creating a community garden or hosting a block party (see fig. 3 in Valli 2016, 1205) demonstrates how appealing, accessible, and persuasive some forms of informal resistance can be.

7. Conclusion

"Public space—the parks, plazas, schools, and promenades—are sites of low-level conflict, but they are also places where we imagine ourselves as connected to one another" (Kohn 2014, 173). At their core, cities are spaces in common, and Kohn reminds us that common space gives us the possibility for connection, even in conflict. Gentrification, particularly in the US, serves to divide and weaken these possibilities by limiting and minimizing shared public space and by prioritizing the use and claim of public space to those with capital. Losing opportunities for inhabiting shared space is a loss for shared governance and should be resisted through policy and through collective action.[11]

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The Five Pillars of Urban Environmental Justice: A Framework for Building Equitable Cities

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Abstract

Cities face unprecedented challenges in the 21st century, as this age is marked by drastic economic, environmental, and cultural shifts. These issues push stakeholder groups to leverage land use and design in ways aimed at mitigating harms. City planning commissions are tasked with developing and implementing these plans. But not all community changes are equitable; thus it is important to consider potential social impacts. In fact, environmental injustices are often prompted by failures to enforce zoning or to plan properly. Thus, we need to guard against creating "downstream" harms when making land-use changes. The aim of this essay is to provide an equity-grounded framework to help identify potential harms during the planning process. Drawing from environmental justice literature, we identify five common types of equity-focused land use concerns to be considered when striving for equitable land use and design. These are 1) Environmental Health, 2) Essential Amenities Access, 3) Transportation, 4) Housing Opportunity & Displacement, and 5) Equitable Development. They make up the Urban Environmental Justice Framework, a tool designed to guide equity-focused discussions during the planning process. Preventative measures at the city planning stage could protect citizens from future injustices, thus contributing to equity in urban areas.

Keywords: city planning; environmental justice; social determinants of health; public health

1. Introduction

Cities face unprecedented challenges in the 21st century, as this age is marked by drastic economic, environmental, and cultural shifts. Even during the last twenty years, urban areas[1] have weathered global financial crises, economic recessions, growing inequality, climate change impacts, and myriad other problems. These issues push stakeholder groups to leverage land use and design in ways

[1] It should be noted that this paper uses the terms "urban" and "city" interchangeably. We recognize that there are nuances in the literature concerning these terms (Meagher et al. 2020). However, planning is done in all built environments, and so we have taken liberties with terminology.

aimed at mitigating harms. City planning commissions are tasked with developing and implementing these and other plans that impact how their community changes over time. Not all changes are equitable, however, and low-income and minority communities have historically endured unjust distributions of benefits and harms (Bullard 1990; Murdock 2020). Zoning and land-use redesigns could lead to "the unequal distribution of income and wealth, spatial housing segregation, uneven allocation of public goods and services, and unfair exercise of political rights, along lines of class, race, ethnicity, and gender in the context of… metropolitan regions" (Fujita 2020, 377). In this vein, scholars from several disciplines argue that there are connections between city planning decisions, health inequities, and environmental injustices (Brinkley and Wagner 2022; Maantay 2002). Due to these intersections, this paper presents the argument that justice concerns should play a major role throughout the planning process. This first section discusses the history of city planning, its fraught relationship with normative approaches, and what constitutes a "good" city.

We then develop an equity-grounded framework called "The Urban Environmental Justice Framework," meant to aid city planners and stakeholders during the planning process. In many ways, planning commissions already do this. However, as discussed, not all community changes are equitable. Thus, it is important to consider potential social impacts. This section identifies five common types of land use concerns to be considered when striving for equitable land use and design. These are 1) Environmental Health, 2) Essential Amenities Access, 3) Transportation, 4) Housing Opportunity & Displacement, and 5) Equitable Development. Each captures a prominent type of harm or concern faced by environmental and urban justice movements, as these community groups have decades of experience challenging unjust planning decisions and inequitable conditions. The collective wisdom of those facing injustices in situ provides invaluable insights moving forward. We hope that stakeholders committed to equitable planning will find this framework useful. Preventative measures at the planning stage could protect citizens from future injustices, thus contributing to equity in urban areas.

2. City Planning & Visions of a "Good" City

Contemporary city planning is a modest affair, and often prioritizes economic development over other values (Carmon and Fainstein 2013; Krumholz 2019; Fainstein 2009). This is not surprising as the discipline has a fraught of history using normative commitments to guide urban land use and design. In many ways, the project of developing the Urban Environmental Justice Framework grapples with an old debate concerning how to design "good" cities. Attempts to define what is a "good" city bring up connected questions, such as what constitutes an improvement, what and who the city is for, etc. Urban areas are often contested, as various groups attempt to shape the context in ways that align with their ideals. For example, the process of city planning is historically steeped in normative considerations of the cityscape. Drawing from Norman Krumholz's (2019) and Susan Fainstein's (2009) overviews of the discipline, its roots lie in the radicalism of 19th century urban progressives, such as the English urban planner Ebenezer Howard and his peers, the French official Baron Haussmann, and their technocratic European counterparts. While each approach differed greatly, they all started from the position that cities of their time were unhealthy and chaotic and thus needed to be reformed. Howard's garden city movement was motivated by the desire to create utopian cities where people live in a harmonious balance with nature (Gataric et al. 2019). By the 2000s, the community development movement (which started in the 1960s) had taken root, maturing into a community development industry (Krumholz 2019). This new generation of city

planners focused on building projects aimed at helping the poor, such as developing mixed-income housing and giving new life to commercial corridors.

Historically, a handful of well-known planners embraced the view that design has the power to improve the lives of residents in their cities. However, due to these conflicting visions, as well as historical design failures, planners were increasingly skeptical that they could ever agree on what constitutes a "good" city. Today, cities are shaped by the constant need for new jobs and taxes and what Krumholz (2019, 4) calls the "dialectics of growth". During recessions, cities typically respond by stimulating new investment in real estate projects in downtown areas, hoping that benefits will "trickle down" to other segments of the population. Beyond growth, it is accepted that stakeholders involved in city planning should not impose their values on the public. According to Fainstein (2009), "attacks on the visionary approach have come from across the ideological spectrum" (1). The right attacked planning for denying freedom (Hayek 1944), reducing efficiency (Anderson 1964), and not relying on the market to allocate urban space (Klosterman 1985). The left is worried about the top-down nature of planning (Davidoff and Reiner 1962; Yiftachel 1998), that the process smuggles in class bias (Harvey 1978, Gans 1968), and that it does not consider difference (Thomas 1996). Finally, centrists argue that comprehensive planning is unattainable (Altshuler 1965), destructive to the urban fabric, and indifferent to stakeholder desires (Hall 2002; Jacobs 1961). These historical yet powerful critiques were taken seriously. For the last forty years economic competitiveness now "tops every city's list of objectives [and] causes planning to give priority to growth at the expense of all other values" (Fainstein 2009, 3). The result is a proliferation of new hotels, office buildings, and convention centers, but the benefits have not "trickled down" (Krumholz 2019).

This change in priorities led to the relative lack of interest in social-equity issues. In response, the scholars Tietz and Chapple (2013) wonder if "planners hate the poor," as their idealistic rationales for actions often don't line up with the irresistible lure of building large projects "no matter the cost in human suffering," (pg. 205). Echoing this sentiment, scholars increasingly argue that planning often serves developer interests "at the expense of everyone else" (Fainstein 2009, 3). However, this myopic focus on economics led to a resurgence of calls for a just and democratic city, both within city planning circles and beyond. These calls permeate prominent debates in planning, such as the one over "smart cities," which claims to include social justice as a key commitment (Alizadeh and Sharifi 2023; Kitchin 2018). Yet detractors argue that this approach tends to focus on technological and physical elements of planning, potentially at the expense of democratic values and social justice (Rosol & Blue 2022).

Echoing these calls for a just city, this paper argues that normative considerations should again play a role throughout the planning process, as the myopic focus on economic growth is harmful. Both scholars and citizen groups argue that there are connections between city planning decisions, health inequities, and environmental injustices faced by low-income and historically marginalized communities (Brinkley and Wagner 2022; Maantay 2002). If so, then adopting a "trickle-down" economic structure does not protect against bias or harm. Rather, it allows for inequitable land use. Examples to support this view are not hard to find. For instance, United States citizens have been protesting environmental harms for nearly half a century (Murdock 2020; Bullard, 1990). Environmental justice (EJ) protests and collective resistance were carried out, starting in the 1970s and early 1980s, by diverse communities to challenge unfair placement practices of environmental externalities, including chemical waste dumps, landfills, oil refineries, and other noxious facilities. According to Murdock (2020), "communities of color and poor communities identified their neighborhoods as being overburdened with particular environmental ills, especially those linked with

toxicity and pollution related to the fossil fuel and petrochemical industries" (7). Grounded in the realities of these events, environmental justice movements demanded the application of fair strategies and processes in the resolution of inequality related to environmental contamination. Life in marginalized neighborhoods is often correlated with substandard services, unhealthy housing and water, degraded infrastructure, and serious environmental hazards (Anguelovski 2013). In contrast to wealthier communities that often exclude cultural and ethnic minorities, low-income neighborhoods generally receive fewer services and resources (Pellow 2009; Landry and Chakraborty 2009). According to the American Planning Association, many environmental injustices are prompted by either a failure to enforce zoning or a failure to plan (Eley 2016). This critique implies that planning could do otherwise; thus, normative considerations still play a major role in planning circles.

3. What is "Just" City Planning?

Today, a growing number of professionals are embracing equity-focused or "just" city planning, thus returning to the normative roots of their discipline. Like historical debates on what constitutes a "good" city, understanding the connection between a "good city" and a "just city" plays an important role in contemporary discussions. Urban scholars have a long history of critically engaging with concepts of social justice (Rosol & Blue 2022). Important scholarship includes Lefebvre's (1970) work on the right to the city, which was further developed by Marcuse et al. (2009), and Harvey's (1973) highly influential work on justice and the city, which informs contemporary debates, such as those on smart cities (Vanolo 2019). Discussions of spatial justice (Marcuse 2009) and participatory engagement also feature prominently in the literature (Fainstein 2009). Despite the richness of this scholarship, questions of ethics and justice are often intertwined, and the distinction between the two is sometimes muddied. For example, Fainstein (2005) defines the just city in terms of equity, democracy, growth, diversity, and sustainability, even though she acknowledges that philosophers might find fault with the intermingling of "good" and "just." She is correct that philosophers are careful to describe and separate distinct types of justice claims and other types of normative claims (Noll and Murdock 2020). However, in the pragmatic context of city zoning and land-use decisions, many options that bring about equitable outcomes would be considered good in the colloquial sense of the word. For example, zoning or design changes that do not negatively impact the residents of the municipality within which these are made (while providing the desired benefit prompting the change) would constitute a "good" planning decision. Here, the normative status of the change depends on the consequences or outcome. And, as planning commissions are committed to serving the needs of their specific communities, the normative determinations of these outcomes depend on whether the specific goals have been met and duties have been discharged. If city planners are committed to equitable design, then justice outcomes become important criteria for determining whether or not particular land-use decisions are good. Thus, a "good" city would be one where inequities are addressed.

But which types of justice are considered important for the design of good cities? According to Marit Rosol and Gwendolyn Blue (2022, 685), most of the literature critiquing cities "directly or indirectly invoke questions of justice; however, they rarely define its meaning". Drawing from Nancy Fraser's (2005) conceptual model of justice, they argue that social justice has three dimensions that are equally important. These include 1) redistribution (who gets what), 2) recognition (who is heard), and 3) representation (how and where decisions are made). For Fraser (2005), these dimensions are connected: "redistribution is the acknowledgment and remedy for economic

inequality, recognition for a failure to treat all social groups as equivalent, and representation for a failure to ensure due process across multiple scales" (Rosol and Blue 2022, 685). These align well with Fainstien's list of 5 criteria, as equity, democracy, and diversity play important roles in Fraser's conceptual model. However, sustainability appears to be adding further dimensions to the conception of justice.

Another area of scholarship particularly sensitive to environmental harm and sustainability is the environmental justice literature. As discussed above, EJ movements contributed greatly to the resurgence of calls for a just city, and they are careful to outline how environmental harms are specific types of injustices (Bullard 1990; Murdock 2020; Whyte 2017). Global environmental justice movements also use a threefold conceptual model (Schlosberg 2004). The dimensions are 1) the distribution of environmental risks, 2) recognition of the experiences of impacted communities, and 3) participation in the creation and application of environmental policies. Each aligns well with Rosol and Blue's (2022) justice model, as it also stresses how benefits and harms are distributed, who is heard, and how decisions are made. Thus, both urban justice and EJ scholars recognize the importance of distributive justice, procedural justice, and justice as recognition, though they are framed slightly differently, depending on the conceptual model. Each of these three frameworks are well represented in both literatures and forms the basis for determining if an environmental change is a justice issue.

This overlap is not surprising, as scholarship on urban justice and environmental justice share common theoretical roots. Importantly for this essay, each draws from the work of Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser, especially concerning theories of recognition and procedural justice, defined as the demand that decision-making processes be fair and include impacted parties (Coolsaet and Neron 2020; Rosol and Blue 2022).[2] The idea of recognition is complex and has a long philosophical history, yet both Honneth and Fraser provide important insights for populations facing injustices. Honneth describes recognition as the "moral grammar of social conflicts," as it grapples with the ways we respect diverse people, their cultural practices, their identities, and systems of knowledge, but is also sensitive to issues of self-worth and self-respect (Coolsaet and Neron 2020). For Honneth (2000), recognition and participation are intertwined. He identifies three forms of recognition in his typology, the second of which is respect in legitimate institutional interactions. Here, being respected in these spheres is important for the dignity of people. The third form includes the social esteem that you gain when you are a part of "networks of solidarity," or community groups with shared values. Similarly, Fraser argues that the "most general meaning of justice is parity of participation" (Fraser 2005, 5). Parity occurs when adult members of society can interact with each other as peers (2001). There are ways that parity of participation can be impeded, however, as social subordination (cultural injustice), material exploitation (economic injustice), and political disenfranchisement could render citizens unable to participate (Coolsaet and Neron 2020; Fraser 1995; Fraser and Honneth 2003). Recognition and participation play an important role in each of the conceptual models of justice discussed above, irrespective of whether they are coming out of work on urban or environmental justice. This makes sense, as parity of participation is needed to bring about just environments and is harmed by injustices *in situ*, such as disenfranchisement that allows for material exploitation.

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[2] Though it should be noted here that environmental movements embraced justice as recognition throughout its history, as a strategy to identify that injustice is occurring (Murdock 2020; Whyte 2017).

4. EJ and the Distribution of Environmental Risks Contextualized

While scholarship on urban justice and EJ utilize similar theoretical frameworks, they are unique in that they often provide novel insights concerning justice. For example, each model above includes distribution (of resources and risks and benefits, etc.) as a key dimension. However, these frameworks are largely theoretical, as they are conceptual in nature. This is because specific circumstances (surrounding unjust distribution) change depending on context. We typically agree that situations where one group shoulders harms, while another group enjoys the benefits of an action is unjust (Bullard 1990; Murdock 2020). Thus, it is an important part of theoretical work on justice. (Though even this position is contested in theoretical literature.) EJ scholars agree, as they clearly embrace a distributional justice framework built on the idea that social and economic benefits and harms should be equitably distributed across populations (Noll and Murdock 2020; Svarstad et al. 2011). In addition, EJ movements also have over fifty years of experience identifying specific examples of unjust distributions of harms on the ground. Even during the early days of the EJ movement, citizens' concerns highlighted city planning failures, including untenable practices in land use, housing, sanitation, and infrastructure. While the particulars fall outside the scope of discussions defining justice, they are very useful for planners who are committed to equitable design. According to Brinkley and Wagner (2022) justice-focused planning and policy are being hampered by a lack of data and evaluation-focused tools. We argue that one way to address this barrier is to provide decision-makers with examples of the most common injustices faced by communities as a heuristic to facilitate implementing justice criteria during the planning process. Specifically, we argue that a) identifying these concerns and b) keeping them in mind during the planning process could help address future harms before they become an issue.

As will be discussed below, the five categories that make up the Urban Environmental Justice Framework are grounded in EJ and urban justice scholars' normative commitments yet also provide a more detailed overview of historical lessons gleaned by EJ movements. These categories are 1) Environmental Health, 2) Essential Amenities Access, 3) Transportation, 4) Housing Opportunity & Displacement, and 5) Equitable Development. While the categories do not at first blush appear to be normative, each concerns themselves with the "on the ground" harms communities have endured when distributive, procedural, and/or recognition justice are violated.

The last category prompts city planners to grapple with parity of participation or whether impacted parties are recognized and represented. As Kyle Whyte (2017) so aptly argues, activists, politicians, scholars, and others use the recognition paradigm as a way to identify that an injustice is occurring. When actualized in an EJ framework, it helps to raise awareness of wrongdoing and motivate policy and political solutions aimed at improving impacted peoples' futures. Thus, this framework includes lessons concerning recognition from Fraser's (2005) and Honneth's (2000) conceptual justice models while drawing from EJ insights to flesh out the distribution dimension. As such, the subsequent discussion will refer to these theoretical foundations as we move forward.

5. Urban EJ & Social Determinants of Health

The collective wisdom of communities facing injustices in situ provides invaluable insights moving forward. If cities hope to address challenges in an equitable fashion, the EJ literature provides concrete examples of injustices to be avoided when making planning decisions. The following section of the essay distills these into a framework to help guide discussion-making during the public

planning and policy process. In a recent analysis of the future of urban EJ, these movements were roughly broken down into two categories helpful for our analysis. According to Anguelovski (2013), early EJ movements focused on remediation projects or cases where communities were disproportionately exposed to environmental toxins and other related health risks, such as water contamination, air pollution, toxic spills, etc. (Bullard 1990, Carruthers 2008, Murdock 2020). This category of environmental injustices aimed at addressing harms is already impacting communities. In this way, they can be understood as a type of backward-looking project addressing unjust situations in place. However, EJ scholarship also focuses on providing forward-looking recommendations. Struggles to obtain "green" environmental justice include projects aimed at creating greater community livability through the creation of parks, urban agriculture, and other open spaces. These projects embrace the goal of improving spaces to alleviate future harms. Thus, green EJ projects are preventative in nature. While forward-looking projects are important, Anguelovski (2013) argues that green EJ projects are just beginning to be taken seriously in the literature. However, we argue that city planners should adopt a forward-looking stance concerning urban justice. In addition to focusing on addressing remediation cases, we should also be deeply committed to the goal of ensuring that these types of injustice never occur. One way of doing this is by fostering "green" projects, though it should be noted that they can be problematic (Kato 2018). Another way is by taking justice considerations into account during city planning processes. Thus, we can work towards a future where remediation projects are a thing of the past. Environmental realization is only achievable if we address injustices before they begin.

The same lessons hold concerning urban injustices more generally. With this goal in mind, literature on social determinants of health (SDOH) also provides insights moving forward. EJ movements are aware of the importance of SDOHs, as communities bearing a disproportionate burden of environmental risks are also impacted by nonmedical factors influencing health (Prochaska et al. 2014; Wakefield and Baxter 2010). These nonmedical factors (including risk exposure, health knowledge and attitudes, etc.) are social determinants of health or "upstream" factors that play a causal role in poor health outcomes (Williams et al. 2008). In this metaphor, "downstream" realities can be understood as health emergencies that medical professionals face in clinical settings. Health outcomes can be improved by addressing the causes (aka "upstream" factors) of health emergencies before they become emergencies. Prochaska et al. (2014) argue that environmental risks and social determinants are inextricably linked, and thus cumulative risk assessments need to include both. Socioeconomically disadvantaged populations tend to experience higher rates of mortality and morbidity "due to the cumulative effects of exposure to environmental stressors, including chemical agents (*e.g.,* benzene), physical agents (*e.g.,* noise, build environment), biological agents (*e.g.,* disease vectors), and psychosocial agents (*e.g.,* unemployment, lack of access to health care)" (Prochaska et al. 2014, 980). City planners should be cognizant of both EJ and SDOH impacts, as both are connected to environmental factors. As stakeholders who prioritize EJ and SDOH are concerned that communities could bear disproportionate burdens, both can be placed under the umbrella of urban justice. As such, the pragmatic strategy to address the causes of harms is an important one. We argue that urban justice emergencies of various kinds can also be mitigated if we address the causes of these injustices. However, stakeholders involved in urban planning decisions need to be cognizant of various potential equity-related impacts. This aligns with justice-oriented movements, as an important aspect of the resolution of inequality includes fair strategies and processes (Holifield 2012). It is the authors' hope that this essay provides a useful tool and shared vocabulary for fruitful discussion.

Urban Environmental Justice Categories	Sample Concerns	Examples of Common Questions
Environmental Health	• Proximity to environmental contaminants (such as poor air quality & toxins), heavy industrial sites, transportation infrastructure, and floodplains. • Health burdens, such as low life expectancy elevated health risks, and pollution burdens.	• Will the planning decision place industrial facilities or infrastructure in or near residential communities? • Could changes to zoning potentially cause environmental harms in the area? • What steps will be taken to mitigate potential environmental health impacts? • How will the involved parties assess and document potential impacts?
Essential Amenities Access	• Access to safe drinking water, food, and other essentials. • Access to childcare services, proximity to parks and greenspaces, community facilities access, proximity to health care, proximity to financial resources, and access to the internet.	• Will the proposed changes impact or disrupt water, food, or sewage systems? • Does the proposed change improve community proximity to necessary services? • Will environmental sustainability and livability be impacted?
Transportation	• The distribution of transportation services. • Access to affordable transportation. • Environmental hazards associated with transportation systems.	• Will transportation services be disrupted due to this change? If so, how? • How are transportation services distributed? • Will the proposed project impact access, especially for marginalized and disadvantaged groups? • If transportation infrastructure is impacted, how will any environmental harms be distributed?
Housing Opportunity & Displacement	• Access to affordable housing. • Resident displacement. • Land value impacts and shifting retail landscapes.	• Will this decision impact property values? • Could residents be displaced from the neighborhood? If so, are there any protections in place to mitigate harms? • Will the retail landscape shift? If so, who could be impacted by this shift?
Equitable Development	• Inclusion of impacted residents in development decisions. • Authentically engaging with stakeholders. • Prioritizing equity-focused investments and projects.	• Who is at the table? Have key stakeholder groups been included in the process? • Are community concerns being respected and seriously considered? • Will the proposal help to address a current inequity?

6. A Heuristic Framework for Just City Planning

EJ metrics are being used throughout Europe (Heyen 2020) and the United States (Koniski et al. 2021) to help identify potential areas where residents may be facing a justice issue. For example, Oregon State's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) uses EJ metrics to guide outreach when aiding communities and when issuing relief funding and loans (Department of Environmental Quality 2022). The framework specifically focuses on the following categories: Whether a community is a) economically distressed, b) health burdened, and/or c) pollution burdened. These categories are then linked to criteria, which refer to a specific metric. Tools, such as Oregon's framework, are increasingly being adopted as governments continue to recognize the importance of shielding citizens from environmental harms. They are excellent for identifying potential areas where residents face these types of challenges and for prioritizing institutional resources. However, like Anguelovski's (2013) analysis of EJ above, cases where communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental toxins are typically prioritized over preventative projects. This isn't surprising, as it is imperative that downstream emergencies (such as water contamination, air pollution, toxic spills) should be given precedence. However, this is problematic when placed in a larger context, where city planning commissions tend to emphasize economic competitiveness at the expense of other values and concerns (Krumholz 2019; Fainstein 2006). As discussed above, injustices are often prompted by failures to enforce zoning or failures to properly plan, as the American Planning Association recognizes. If this is the case, then justice-related concerns should be taken seriously during the planning process.

In this vein, city planners, planning commissions, and land use and zoning committees all make decisions that can drastically impact urban environments. This isn't surprising as they typically make choices that impact economic growth and development, street and road design, transportation systems, land use regulations, zoning, etc. (Vicuna and Galland 2018). Drawing from Fujita's (2020) analysis of urban injustices, this could lead to "the unequal distribution of income and wealth, spatial housing segregation, uneven allocation of public goods and services, and unfair exercise of political rights, along the lines of class, race, ethnicity, and gender in the context of… metropolitan regions" (377). The literature on urban justice and EJ is filled with accounts of injustices faced by communities. However, before many of these cases became examples of injustices, city planning commissions made specific decisions that contributed to the manifestation of community harms. So, what does just city planning look like? How can injustices be mitigated before they become harms? Due to the connections between planning and equity, we argue that a basic urban equity-focused framework can be used to help identify a) potential areas where residents may be facing a justice issue and b) potential negative impacts that could arise after land use decisions are made. Unlike the metrics discussed above, where categories are linked with specific standards or measurements, this paper highlights key normative concerns that should be discussed. It is our hope that these value-focused categories will be connected to standards. However, we recognize that contextual factors matter when developing measurement tools and thus request that city planning groups develop them

Rather than a metric, our framework should be understood as a heuristic or ethos. A heuristic acts as a conceptual tool that helps stakeholder groups discuss potential injustices by providing a shared vocabulary and a starting point for discussion. For instance, medical professionals typically use the four principles of biomedical ethics outlined by Beauchamp and Childress (2001) to guide ethics-focused discussions in clinical settings. In this context, various experts, patients,

and family members are often faced with tough ethical decisions that need to be made quickly. The four principles act as a type of shorthand or shared vocabulary to discuss ethically important considerations that should be considered during the decision-making process. In this example, professional discourse on normative impacts begins with this shared vocabulary, as well as a professional commitment to continuing conversation for the sake of continued growth and expansion of understanding. Clinical settings and biomedical frameworks are great example of how ethical frameworks can be used to achieve better decision outcomes. The Urban Environmental Justice Framework outlined below is intended to do similar work in planning contexts, where decisions are being made that could greatly impact the lives of citizens. Drawing from several local EJ and equitable justice frameworks, we've identified five common types of land use concerns that should be considered when striving for equitable land use and design.

These are 1) Environmental Health, 2) Essential Amenities Access, 3) Transportation, 4) Housing Opportunity & Displacement, and 5) Equitable Development. This list is not exhaustive and can be expanded depending on the needs of the community. In addition, these concerns could be prioritized differently based on the individual project or proposal. However, each captures potential types of harm identified by communities facing environmental and urban injustices, more generally. Concerning environmental health, different metrics focus on different considerations. Oregon, for example, focuses on health burdens, such as low life expectancy, elevated health risks, and pollution burdens, including proximity to contaminated water and heavy industrial zones (Department of Environmental Quality 2022). The city of Charlotte uses five measures, including tree canopy, density of impervious surfaces, proximity to heavy industrial sites, proximity to transportation infrastructure, and floodplain (Charlotte Future 2023). In contrast, the City of St. Paul asks more general questions, such as how the project assesses and documents beneficial and harmful impacts to environmental health in partnership with impacted communities. (Ramsey County 2023). These examples highlight how cases, where communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental toxins, differ from context to context. One area might be concerned with water contamination, while others might be worried about air pollution or toxic spills (Bullard 1990). While the specifics may change, it is important to take environmental health impacts into account when making land use decisions, as community health is deeply connected to place-based factors (Murdock 2020; Prochaska et al. 2014).

Similarly, EJ movements are concerned with access to safe drinking water, food, and other essentials. Low-income and minority communities often face disproportionately high pollutant exposures, and these realities are reflected in the EJ literature of the last forty years (Bullard 1990; Murdock 2020). A stark example is the public health crisis in Flint, Michigan, where water for the city was contaminated with high levels of lead and legionella bacteria (Campbell et al. 2016). In addition to clean water, the lack of access to fresh fruits and vegetables is a major justice issue in urban contexts (Alkon 2012, Noll 2020). Local food collectives, urban gardens, and other green projects can often be understood as community-based solutions to unjust distribution in the city. Other necessary goods and services discussed in equity-focused literature include access to childcare services, proximity to parks, community facilities access, proximity to health care, proximity to financial resources, and access to the internet (Ramsey County 2023). Access to amenities is an emerging theme in EJ scholarship, as "green" environmental justice includes projects aimed at improving community livability (Anguelovski 2013).

Transportation systems also feature prominently in both the EJ and urban justice literature. For example, Epting (2020, 2021) argues that transportation policy and infrastructure have extensive

histories in social justice movements. For urban residents, "such concerns include environmental factors such as climate change that affect people in several regions and across the globe. There are also topics such as subsidies, disability services, land use regulations, distribution of services, urban sprawl, and zoning issues that require consideration for transportation decisions that are not immediately known" (360). In many ways, transportation is a double-edged sword for urban EJ movements. On the one hand, lack of transportation falls under the previous category, as this is an access issue. Many of the goods and services necessary for living a good life in the city require that individuals have a means of transportation. On the other hand, living too close to infrastructure could produce environmental health hazards, such as air and water pollution. Thus, while this topic was historically neglected, transportation justice is now an area of importance within EJ and urban justice movements. City planning commissions should ask themselves whether zoning changes or development plans could be beneficial or harmful to neighborhoods, with an eye toward mobility.

Similarly, housing concerns have been also gaining traction in EJ movements. For example, gentrification caused by various planning initiatives has greatly impacted urban areas. Green projects aimed at creating open spaces, planting trees, and enlarging city parks are common strategies for making cities more sustainable and increasing neighborhood access to amenities that could improve city life (Silva et al. 2018). However, some planning decisions have not been executed with justice in mind, impacting housing access in urban neighborhoods. According to Kato (2018), sustainability rationales can "enhance, rather than ameliorate, environmental injustices in the city, and this is why we must critically examine the social impacts of sustainability policies" (1). The term "ecological gentrification" (Dooling 2009) signifies how sustainability rationales for urban redevelopment have been used to remove unhoused populations from public spaces. In addition, the rhetoric of "greening" has been used to increase urban development with the goal of attracting businesses and wealthy, educated people into neighborhoods. This leads to gentrification, where residents are displaced from neighborhoods due to property value hikes, shifting retail landscapes, and changes in demographics (Kato 2018). EJ asks us to think about how the benefits and harms of projects are distributed across groups (Bullard 1990; Murdock 2020). As Kato (2018) argues, "the mantra of "*green it* and people will come" seems to be working. We must pause, however, and ask— what happened to the people who used to live there? They are being priced out and moving into the areas that are less *sustainable*, environmentally, and economically". If neighborhoods could be displaced due to a planning decision, then justice considerations arise. Gentrification is increasingly a priority for EJ and SDOH (Smith & Thorpe 2020) and should be discussed during planning discussions.

Finally, equitable development brings up other important considerations during the planning process. The inclusion of this category doesn't mean that we should return to the days where city planners emphasized economic competitiveness and growth at the expense of all other concerns (Fainstein 2006). Developer interests shouldn't be given priority above communities, but equitable development can be beneficial. EJ communities are concerned with SDOH, as environmental exposures and health outcomes are deeply connected (Prochaska et al. 2015). For these groups, neighborhood quality of life and community health outcomes are connected to contextual factors and thus justice-sensitive economic development could improve various outcomes for communities (Curren et al. 2015). The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (2015) states it well when it argues that equitable development is achieved when there is "fair and just inclusion of all residents into a region's economic, social, and political life—an essential component of planning for sustainable and thriving regions" (5). Environmental equity is achieved when your neighborhood

can no longer be used to predict life outcomes for individuals and communities. Policy recommendations on this subject typically involve fair and just inclusion of community members in the decision-making process, authentically listening to community needs, and prioritizing investments and projects that support those who need it most. Equitable development also embraces place-based actions that aim to create resilient and livable communities (epa.gov).

The following chart provides an overview of the Urban Environmental Justice Framework, as well as examples of common questions that could arise in planning contexts. This framework is not exhaustive, as communities could face additional inequities and there is a diverse array of potential impacts. Thus, it is not meant to capture every potentiality. Rather, the framework is intended to provide a common vocabulary during planning discussions and highlight common equity considerations identified by communities on the ground. These should be on the table during the process if equitable planning is a goal. Planning commission's primary roles often include acting as an advisory group to the municipal governing body concerning issues related to land use, community development, and other planning decisions (Vicuna et al. 2018). They are tasked with developing and implementing plans that impact how their community changes over time. But, not all community changes are equitable; thus it is important to consider potential social impacts (see table).

7. Conclusion

City planning commissions are tasked with developing and implementing plans that greatly impact the makeup of built environments. But not all community changes are equitable; thus it is important to consider potential social impacts from a justice perspective. In fact, environmental injustices are often prompted by failures to enforce zoning or failures to plan properly. Thus, we need to guard against creating "downstream" harms when making land-use changes. The aim of this essay was to provide an equity-grounded framework to help identify potential harms during the planning process. Drawing from EJ literature, we identified five common types of equity-focused land use concerns that should be considered when striving for equitable land use and design. These are 1) Environmental Health, 2) Essential Amenities Access, 3) Transportation, 4) Housing Opportunity & Displacement, and 5) Equitable Development. They make up the Urban Environmental Justice Framework, a tool designed to guide equity-focused discussions during the planning process. We also provided an example of how this framework could be useful during zoning decisions and planning processes, more generally. We hope that stakeholders committed to equitable planning will find this framework useful. Preventative measures at the city planning stage could protect citizens from future injustices, thus contributing to equity in urban areas.

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Green Areas: How to Avoid the Tragedy of the Commons

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Abstract

The growing importance of green spaces in evaluating a city's quality of life and sustainability has prompted us to delve into this topic in this paper. Specifically, we aim to clarify two key distinctions: the difference between public and common goods and the distinction between collectives and aggregates. The first distinction relates to whether a resource is open to all and managed by the state (public goods) or managed collectively but with limitations (common goods). However, we can also examine this differentiation by considering the type of entity utilizing these resources. In the case of public goods, it involves individuals forming an aggregate, whereas for commons, a plural entity must be assumed to effectively manage the resource collaboratively. By exploring these distinctions in detail and examining their implications, this paper seeks to apply them to a common public resource—the green areas within cities. We aim to demonstrate the potential benefits of shifting our perspective on such resources from being considered public to being viewed as common goods.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent decisions to restrict citizen travel have triggered a reassessment of living situations and environments, and, as a consequence, cities. Specifically, there has been significant attention given to green areas (Ingaramo, Negrello, and Robiglio 2020). The increased usage of these spaces during and after the pandemic, as they offer safety due to their openness and suitability for various activities, has prompted a reevaluation of their importance within cities, particularly in areas where apartments are very small. However, maintaining green areas also requires substantial effort and commitment from the cities themselves, often positioning them as public goods. It is precisely these types of assets that, along with private assets, shape the city and thus form its building blocks.

Nevertheless, there is potential to rethink the management of green areas, viewing them as potential commons (Hardin 1968; Ostrom 1990; Shiva 2002). In this paper, we aim to distinguish common goods from public goods, highlighting the different criteria used to define them and the specific characteristics they must possess to be considered as such.

Rather than dwelling on the ownership-based distinction between the two types of property, which would focus on the question "who owns this property?"—a technical and straightforward matter determining the number of owners—we will instead concentrate on "who manages the good?". While the definition of property may seem to encompass management, we find it useful to distinguish between the two concepts. The management relationship we wish to emphasize is not about an individual managing their own property or that of others (such as a managing director of someone else's company) but rather the relationship among different individuals using a property, whether it be their own or that of a third party, and their relationships to places (de Certeau 2011).

We can also differentiate between public and common goods by considering this second aspect, which introduces subjectivity not provided by the classical paradigm of interpreting common goods. This recognition allows us to acknowledge that ownership can be public while management remains common. By doing so, we obtain a more comprehensive interpretation of the commons, applicable to the city context in general and green areas in particular.

To achieve this, we will focus on the subjects capable of managing and benefiting from various types of goods, utilizing the distinction between aggregate and plural subject proposed by Margaret Gilbert. This distinction enables us to explore the possibility of an alternative subject, genuinely collective and not merely the sum of its constituent individuals. This concept becomes instrumental in understanding the sustainable management of common resources and goods. Economic and sociological studies have already addressed the principles necessary for proper commons management (Ghorbani and Bravo 2016; Nordhaus 2014; Ostrom 2000). We will examine how many of these principles align with those used by Gilbert in defining her pivotal concepts of plural subject and joint commitment, which are of particular interest and assistance when considering green areas as commons.

As a premise, we should also clarify that our intent is normative, as we aim to describe a potential paradigm shift in the interpretation of common goods and their subjects—a shift that we believe is necessary for enhancing practices. Consequently, we do not intend to describe how individuals behave when faced with common goods; instead, we aim to provide a framework that, if adopted, could lead to changes in the behavior of people involved.

2. Public and Common Goods: Not Just a Question of Exclusivity

The distinction of goods within the discipline of economics is traditionally based on two criteria: rivalry and exclusivity (Blaug 1985; Musgrave 1959; Samuelson 1954; Sandmo 1989). A private good, also known as an economic good, is both rival and excludable. For instance, a bicycle is rival because only one person can use it at a time, and after purchasing it, the owner can choose to exclude others from using it. On the other hand, public goods are the opposite; they are neither exclusive nor rival. An example of a public good is night lighting, where many people can benefit from it simultaneously, and it is impossible to prevent anyone from enjoying it. Non-excludability can arise due to technical reasons, like with lighting where it is impossible to exclude certain users, or economic reasons, where exclusion may be technically possible but too costly—consider, for instance, a toll system for the use of public arcades in cities.

It's essential to note that a good can become public through political will. For instance, the health care system can be considered a rival and exclusive good, leading to the emergence of a health care market. However, through political choices, it can also be transformed into a public good, accessible to everyone without exclusion and at the same time—thus requiring the state to ensure an adequate number of hospitals, for example.

Common goods are a hybrid of these polarities: they are rival and not (totally) exclusive. The classic example is fishing on the high seas, in that the catch is a rival good (the fish in my net cannot be in someone else's net at the same time), but not excludable, in that everyone can go fishing. In fact, this "everyone" is delimited, in that those living near the fishing spot will mainly go fishing. This limitation comes across more as practical than theoretical, but it highlights the difficulty of using the yardstick of ownership alone to distinguish common goods from other economic goods. Given this definition of the commons and starting from an individualistic and maximizing anthropology as postulated in neoclassical economic science, but also from the perspective proposed by the so-called Austrian School of economics, the "tragedy of the commons" is inevitable. In fact, as Garrett Hardin (1968) states in his seminal article, each individual behaves rationally if he or she tries to maximize their share of the use of a finite common good by offloading the discomfort of scarcity onto everyone else, which leads the good itself to disappear in a short time: if it suits everyone to catch the most fish, the ending is already written (Feeny, Hanna and McEvoy 1996; Acheson 2003).

As pointed out by several critics, the limitation of this description of the commons and Hardin's approach to the problem is that the management of the commons can only take place through private or state initiative, *tertium non datur* (Ostrom 1990; Mattei 2011). We add, and we will show, that this limitation is due to economists' own lack of capacity to think of a plural subject capable of managing commons, and not to the nature of commons themselves.

The contemporary debate on commons has shown how their description by economists is insufficient. First, it should be noted that the notion of commons refers not only to consumption but also to the production and management of the commons itself. Common goods, as Ostrom (1990, 90) points out, are those goods that are managed by a community: more or less large, but never indeterminate. This characterization of commons is not foreign to or in opposition to liberal-capitalist economic thought. The latter is a system that is based on private property but does not say who and how many should be entitled to such property.

As Carlo Lottieri clearly shows, it is possible from the latter perspective to think of and accept commons not as an alternative to property, but instead as a specific form of property itself (Lottieri 2020, 11). The liberalist economic critique of the commons is that it requires inefficient management. For example, following the evolutionist approach by Friedrich von Hayek (1988, 40-64), it is possible to argue that the disappearance of medieval commons[1] is due to their inefficiency and inability to meet the needs of a community as opposed to an organization based on private property and assets—which, however, does not detract from the possibility that in the future cooperative management of property may again be successful (Burns and Dietz 1992).

The reference to property—that is, the question of defining owners—does not fully capture the essence of the commons. Instead, what these refer to can be deduced from the very origin of the term "commons". If one sticks to a strictly economic reading of the phenomenon of the commons,

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[1] The reference to the medieval commons is a classic that finds one of its greatest interpreters in Marx and his theory of enclosures, cf. Karl Marx, *The Capital*, ch. XXIV. For a liberalist reading of the enclosure phenomenon see Lottieri (2020, 65-74). For a reading of the commons in the Middle Ages, through a historical approach, cf. Grossi 1992.

their foundation is shared ownership. But, as Roberto Esposito points out in his work on the concept of *commune*, "the ancient, and presumably original, sense of communis must have been 'one who shares a burden (an office, a charge)'. It follows that communitas is the group of people united not by 'property', but, precisely, by a duty or debt" (Esposito 2006, XXIII; our translation), which shows that the essence of the commune, and thus also of the commons, is not property, but the joint commitment in administering, managing, and consuming that property. What distinguishes the commons from other economic goods then is not the different answer to the question "to whom does it belong?", but their reference to a duty, a charge, that different individuals have freely decided to share.

The difficult relationship between the commons and the discipline of economics is due to the latter's simplistic view of human beings. As Ostrom (1990, 3) notes, "Hardin's model has often been formalized as a prisoner's dilemma game". This means that the decisions to be made by the individual, regarding the commons, should be part of the explanation of rational behavior. What we would like to point out is how the human being postulated by this game, and consequently also by Hardin, is an individual on the one hand untethered from relationships, and on the other hand not autonomous, in the sense that he or she is incapable of expressing positive freedom: "the prisoners in the famous dilemma cannot change the constraints imposed on them" (Ostrom 1990, 7). What the commons instead requires to function is a totally different subject, relational, communicating with other "appropriators" to define management strategies, and autonomous—that is, able to give itself shared rules (Cox, Ostrom, Sadiraj & Walker 2013). The author's choice to use the term "appropriators", and not "owners", goes in the direction we have indicated, emphasizing once again how for the definition of the commons the reference to the concept of ownership is secondary: if owners are those who own an asset, appropriators are first and foremost those who use and manage it. As we shall see, they are a plural subject.

Alternative schools to neoclassical modeling and Austrian evolutionism, such as civil economics, have also emphasized the crucial role of relationality within the economy. For instance, Stefano Zamagni's work (Bruni and Zamagni 2015) exemplifies this perspective. To describe civil economy, Zamagni himself adopted the term "productivist" to define the inherent logic of the commons. According to Zamagni (2016), the concept of "sum" allows some addends to be null without resulting in a negative outcome. However, in a "produttoria" (multiplication), a single factor being null leads to a null result. This analogy applies to the management of common goods. While neoclassical or Austrian markets allow for totally asymmetric distribution and consumption of economic goods, which is then what is usually arrived at; and thus a summative logic is sufficient for the smooth functioning of the totality, as far as common goods are concerned this is never possible, since their productivist logic implies that the interest of one is always together with others'. Hence, it is no coincidence that Zamagni views the economy itself as a collective good, specifically civil, or in other words, the market should be considered a common good. The operating logic of common goods, therefore, is not based on mere exchange—"I give you something so that you give me something equivalent"—but on reciprocity—"I give you something so that you can give, according to capacity, to others or to me" (Zamagni 2016, 169).

This distinct logic of the commons necessitates a different subject compared to the one proposed by the methodological individualism used by economists. It calls for a pluralistic view of the subject, while still preserving the freedom and autonomy of the individual.

3. Aggregates and Plural Subjects: Social Interactions and Shared Values

Having clarified the distinction between public and common goods and highlighted some limitations in interpreting the latter, let's now focus on the subject that manages and utilizes these two types of goods. It is evident that their interpretation is not neutral; rather, it presupposes a specific conception of human beings—how we are and how we should be. Taking a further step, we can examine the individuals who interact with these different types of goods and view them as a single subject performing actions either directed towards public or common goods. In the case of public goods, those who manage and those who utilize the goods are distinct entities: the state (or its smaller delegates like regions or municipalities) acts as the manager and owner, while citizens utilize the goods. On the other hand, with commons, a single entity both manages and utilizes the assets in question.

To gain a better understanding of this concept, we can adopt a distinction within social ontology proposed by Margaret Gilbert (e.g., 1992; 1996). Gilbert differentiates between two types of subjects in her analysis of the social world, namely "aggregate" and "collective" or "plural subjects". The former refers to a group of people who share one or more characteristics but are independent of one another due to a lack of what we can name "social interaction", in accordance with sociological theories. For instance, Gilbert's example of a set of people named Susan illustrates this concept (Gilbert 2014, 59). These individuals might never meet, live far apart, and remain unknown to one another. Another reason why people with common characteristics may remain an aggregate is the absence of (explicit) shared values. In such cases, we might have social categories where individuals share socially significant traits, such as skin color, age, or gender, but without sharing values or necessarily interacting socially, they remain an aggregate.

The condition of plural subjects, also known as collectives, is rather different. According to Gilbert's definition, plural subjects engage in joint commitment, wherein individuals commit "as a unitary body to X", with X representing various functions like shared values, beliefs, or coordinated actions. This joint commitment can change over time, allowing extended communities to become plural subjects. For instance, individuals who move to a new place and adopt the values and purposes of existing inhabitants exemplify this phenomenon (Gilbert 2014, 189ff). One crucial aspect of joint commitment is that it binds all involved parties, granting each member of the plural subject the right to express grievances or reprimand those who breach the covenant and deviate from the agreed-upon behavior. Gilbert has extended these concepts of joint commitment and plural subjects to explain collective actions in broader communities, like national ones (e.g., Gilbert 1996). Although there are some differences, especially in terms of complexity between, for example, two friends deciding to take a walk together (Gilbert's classic example from 1990) and a nation sharing a common value, this distinction can still be highly useful in analyzing public goods and commons.

When considering public goods, joint commitment is not applicable since each person can use the good individually without considering others. Additionally, using a public good does not create any constraints on other users, nor does it require mutual knowledge, except possibly the awareness of using a public good like street lighting. Hence, the group benefiting from a public good might resemble an aggregate, made of people walking down Fifth Avenue in New York City on November 22, 2005 at 3 p.m. (Gilbert 2014, 59).

Another element that could be added—although this feature is not made explicit by Gilbert—is that a joint commitment seems to imply that at least some people are not part of it. It is true that from

a theoretical point of view, all humanity could act as a single body committed to doing *X*, but this seems to have practical limitations precisely because of the stringent characteristics of the formation of joint commitment. This in turn seems to confirm Elinor Ostrom's observations about the fact that, while common goods refer, through non-excludability, to a theoretically infinite public, in their actual management they instead appeal to an always defined and never too large community. The latter would imply costs that are too high to combat certain inefficiency phenomena such as free riding. A plural subject enlarged to a potentially infinite community would thus be impossible, precisely because what gives meaning to the plural subject is a set of characteristics: namely the formation of social obligation, readiness, and openness of mutual knowledge, which according to us risk to lose meaning if attributed to too large a number of individuals. The definition of plural subject would be weakened to such an extent that it would become meaningless. People fail to join plural subjects when they unilaterally stop their commitment—that is, without the assent of all the individuals who are part of it (or those who have been delegated to give this assent, in the case of more complex groups). In a broad context, where control is made virtually impossible, it is equally impossible to maintain meaningful use of joint commitment and plural subject whose strength seems to lie precisely in the social sanction it entails. We believe it is helpful to explain some forms of social power such that we can expect people to conform to some social norms.

Different, however, seems to be the case with common goods. We have seen how in economics they are treated as not totally exclusive, but rival goods. Given this definition, lest we arrive at the infamous tragedy of the commons, it seems necessary to introduce a virtuous system: a system such that the rivalry of the good does not turn into rivalry among those who use it. One way to promote this conception of the commons seems precisely to focus on the subject who makes use of it, understanding it not as an aggregate but as a proper plural subject. Although individuals may enter the subject at different times, for one to be able to speak of a common good it is essential that those who use it are aware of the norms used to regulate it, are accepted by others as members of the group, and behave line with the accepted norms; essential that they act as a single body that manages and makes use of that good. Only in this way can the formation of a social (not moral) obligation to other appropriators of the common good be promoted (and justified).

In this regard, it is still interesting to note how Gilbert, while not explicitly opposing so-called ontological individualism—the position according to which only individuals exist—nevertheless argues that plural subjects are equally fundamental building blocks of social reality (Gilbert 1992, 427-36). This allows us to admit at least one other possibility in the roster of social agents, namely, not only individuals who act with a view to their own good as rational agents (albeit in the different ways in which it is possible to understand this locution), but also plural subjects: multiple individuals who act as one in conforming to a goal and coordinating their actions to achieve it, even opposing their own immediate desires in order precisely to pursue a goal that would be impossible to reach individually.[2] A relevant example given by Gilbert (2014, 263) is that of two parents who, although they have different individual ideas about their children's upbringing, decide to commit themselves to a common line: the children will not, in the example, be allowed to come home later than midnight. Now, if one of the children transgresses this rule, both parents, including the one who would have liked to adopt a less strict upbringing, are obliged to reprimand him or her, otherwise they would break the joint commitment themselves. The plural subject, therefore, takes on

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[2] On the idea of the community as a central element in order to foster commons see for instance Kohn 2016; Firth, Maye & Pearson 2011.

the shared values and makes them their own. This is the main feature we must keep in mind, along with the possibility of sanctioning those who stray from sharing, which follows directly from it.

But perhaps the best way to understand the usefulness of Gilbert's theory for explaining the commons is to compare some of the principles identified by Ostrom in her explanation of the management of common goods with the characteristics that define the plural subject according to Gilbert's account.

3.1. Comparing Gilbert's and Ostrom's principles

When considering the subject who makes use of the commons, an interesting aspect to consider is the rules for proper design and management of common resources (Baland and Platteau 1996). In her analysis with respect to the resources' common management, Elinor Ostrom (1990, 88ff) notes the importance of eight design principles that she calls speculative. By inciting and promoting certain individual actions, those principles make community institutions possible. Ostrom points out that *long-lasting* commons resource management institutions are only possible if certain design principles are adhered to: the more principles adhered to by the institution, the stronger and longer-lived it will be. We report some of these principles, which we believe are of relevance to the specific discourse we are addressing.

The first principle states that the limits of the resource and management must be clearly defined. In our terms, the appropriators must be aware of the object of the joint commitment and this object, as well as its knowledge, must itself be common knowledge among them. There can be no joint commitment without common knowledge, although the reverse is not true. Which implies that it must be well clarified within the management of the common green area what the duties and limits of the appropriators are. For example, the city government in ceding the management of the green space to the citizens of the neighborhood makes it clear from the outset what area it is responsible for, what facilities it can use, and who are those who will participate in the management. Regarding the latter point, one could think of a call by the municipality of the residents of the area who can then voluntarily and freely decide whether to participate in the management of a particular asset.[3]

A second principle refers to collective choice agreements. According to the latter, those affected by the co-participatory rules can participate in the choice of the rules themselves. This, too, is interesting from the perspective of joint commitment because it is the plural subject itself that defines the content of the rules, in a collective choice. The manager(s) must be able to actively intervene in the management rules, which should not be imposed (or not only) from the outside. In our case this implies that the appropriating parties are not only free to meet with each other to discuss the best rules to give themselves, but more importantly that they have a wide sphere of autonomy to give themselves regulations. However, the limits within which management rules should move should be clear, so that in any case it would not be possible to exploit areas to the detriment of other legal norms, for example by making them places of discrimination of other ethnicities or religions. The management rules should concern the management itself and no other aspects such as the use of the area, which should be discussed in advance with the city administration.

Again, another criterion is that of monitoring: for proper management of the common resource, there must be someone to monitor its use and to hold others accountable. This task can be performed by officials or by the appropriators themselves, in the principle reported by Ostrom. Mon-

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[3] There are several case studies showing how this can be practically ruled out. See for instance, Bradley 2015; Coscarello 2012; Giacchè e Rezende Silva 2018; Olivi 2010, 2012.

itoring compliance with the joint commitment by all members of the plural subject is an equally significant element, since in Gilbert's view, the ones who unilaterally leave the joint commitment fail in their joint tasks. In addition, among the principles listed by Ostrom there is the possibility of sanctioning (gradually in proportion to the violation committed) those who violate management rules. We have already seen how (social) sanction is a key element in maintaining the plural subject. Even in the definition of the management of the commons, it would be sufficient to refer to a social obligation, avoiding the introduction of a moral evaluation that would make the bond established between the managers of the good too stringent and would require, at the same time, a justification of an entirely different kind, which we are neither interested in nor is from our point of view in any way necessary. These criteria imply that for proper management of the green area it is not necessary to give the appropriators any special sanctioning power, such as the power to fine those who litter, for example, with the legal problems this may entail. In fact, social pressure is a sufficient internal corrective to the proper management of a common good when all appropriators come to know each other and, for that very reason, can be controlled by every other appropriator. Any serious violations of common management, such as destruction of a part of the green area or use that violates existing legal norms, could be sanctioned by traditional channels, with which the appropriators would still have a constant and direct link.

All these elements reinforce, we believe, the possibility of using the notion of plural subject to understand the management of the commons from a perspective that is not necessarily proprietary, and hopefully show the advantages that can be drawn from a correct interpretation of the subject that can manage these commons and, consequently, from their theoretical relocation. The benefits that would follow would not, however, belong only to theory, but would have a practical effect through their application to specific concrete cases.

To better explain what we mean, we will now focus on the application of the two binomials elaborated, namely, public good/common good and aggregate/plural subject, to the concrete case from which we started in the introduction: green areas in cities. Only in this way, albeit only preliminarily, we will be able to verify the tightness of the interpretation we have provided in the previous two paragraphs.

4. Green Areas: A Ground for the Commons

Green areas in cities are for the most part public assets: areas managed by the municipal government, which everyone can use. Sometimes they are private assets that can be accessed after making a payment: the classic case is condominium green areas that can be accessed only by condominiums, who pay for its maintenance.

What we are proposing here is to rethink the model of green area management starting from the administrative possibilities opened by so-called urban gardens or community gardens (Colding and Barthel 2013; Panzini 2021; Schmelzkopf 1996). On the one hand, these areas allow a declination of property rights close to that required to define an asset as common. They are publicly owned, usually by the municipality, but granted to a group of private citizens, usually to grow vegetables or plants[4]. On the other hand, however, these areas demonstrate the fact that what characterizes them is not so much the owner, which in fact remains the public domain, but the pattern of management,

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[4] Urban gardens are a complex phenomenon. Born in the 19th century, it has had various realizations over the years, as gardens to support the poor and workers in industrialized cities, as school gardens, as war gardens, as an expression of the sustainability of cities. On this topic, see Panzini 2021. We, however, do

namely the appropriators who organize among themselves. The idea we propose, therefore, is to rethink green areas as commons managed directly by their users. Of course, we are aware that not all green areas can be treated as commons. However, a greater spread of them could have several positive effects in their maintenance by the users themselves, which in the city mainly implies the need to refer to the inhabitants of the neighborhood where the green area is located.

The inhabitants of a neighborhood, per se, can be considered as a simple aggregate, consisting of all those who in each period live in each area of the city. This same fact could, although it needs not, also lead to the formation of a social category, for example related to income. Cities, at least as we know them today, presuppose a division between rich and poor areas, central and suburban neighborhoods, and so on. As we have said, however, even social categories are not necessarily social groups, unless they explicitly share some form of value.

In the vision we are proposing, they might, however, share a joint commitment, consisting precisely in the management of the common good. This could result in a justified normative (and norm-setting) attitude toward those who deviate from proper stewardship of the asset and promote positive examples of common management. Of course, there is no causal correlation between the formation of a joint effort and its success. Rather, what we are asserting is that adopting an explanation such ours, and assuming the possibility of a plural subject composed of people who can make common interests their own without solely looking out for the maximization of their individual interests according to the trivial meaning of this expression, may be a good way to understand the phenomenon of the commons and to promote a sense of belonging to the community identified by the joint commitment. Currently, the most common joint effort in the management of city green areas seems to be related to the action of volunteers who periodically meet to clean them up. But in this case, we do not reach the status we have described, in particular because of the lack of a fundamental element, that of duration, which is allowed by the formation of established norms suitable for managing the common good. But something different is possible and has been already done.

Our interest in this article was primarily theoretical: we tried to show the need for a paradigm shift that would bring the notion of management to the center and outline the characteristics of the subject that such management implies. But, in the last few lines, we would like to briefly refer to a concrete case that has arisen in the city where we live, Turin, namely Cascina Falchera[5], which illustrates some of the characteristics we have identified in the previous paragraph. Through a participatory planning process and a 19-year concession entrusted to the Kairòs Consortium, this is a clear case of a commons, born by a lasting joint commitment. Established in the outskirts of the city of Turin, with the help of the city itself, Cascina Falchera is developing numerous agricultural and educational projects to promote environmental education and a closer approach to nature in a community composed mainly of the citizens of the neighborhood and the city. Thus, it can also be thought of as a meeting place for the members who manage it and those who contribute to its growth. Among the numerous projects that Cascina Falchera carries out, it is interesting for our topic an aquaponics cultivation greenhouse, i.e., a practice that combines cultivation (particularly of herbs and salad) without soil (namely hydroponic cultivation) with the breeding of fishes (aquaculture) that contribute to the cultivation itself. The cultivation is managed by the citizens of the Falchera neighborhood and is supported financially by both family training workshops organized by the citizens themselves and by public funds. Through these few lines we can see that Cascina

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not intend to retrace a history of urban gardens, but to propose a theorization of the subject that manages the commons that has a philosophical and economic value and that can find practical realization.

[5] https://cascinafalchera.it

Falchera presents the following features: it is owned by the municipality, but managed by the citizens; they are mostly the inhabitants of the neighborhood and they come to know each other, even though they are not established once for all, but can change over time; they form a plural subject in that they have shared interests and goals, and organize themselves in order to achieve them through a joint commitment; the joint commitment is long-lasting and not fully fixed, but can change together with community's goals and further specified.

As a consequence, this is a virtuous example of how it is possible to recover abandoned green areas and use them to promote shared values by individuals who, in participating in this common endeavor, come together to form a plural subject whose members may change over time, just as objectives may be adjusted and thus change over time, but whose existence is the basis for success in maintaining a green area as a common good.

5. Conclusion

In this paper we analyzed two dichotomies: one internal to economics and law, and the other to social ontology. The first consists of the public good/common good dichotomy. We have seen how the public good is usually defined as non-rivalrous and nonexclusive, while the second as a rival but nonexclusive good, or one with limited exclusivity.

There are, however, different ways of understanding commons and it is possible to identify a critical line that opposes the pessimistic conception of the commons carried by what has been called their tragedy. This critical line is based on a definition of commons that can go beyond mere reference to the notion of ownership and can take on a different definition of the economic subject, not exclusively as an individual, but as a collective: something possible if we focus on the subject who manages and makes use of these goods. This is where the second dichotomy came into play, namely that between aggregate and plural subject. If the former is a collection of individuals who share insignificant features or which provides for neither social interaction nor shared values, the latter presupposes, at least in the Gilbert's view adopted here, the formation of a joint commitment with the assumption of the relevant common values and goals and, above all, with the formation of a real social obligation, which entails a form of sanction for those who, although fully part of the joint commitment, deviate from it, precisely by failing to meet the commitment or part of it, thus entitling the other members to complain about it.

We have used these two dichotomies to understand a valuable yet problematic element of cities: green areas. These, in fact, can be configured as the object of a joint effort that gives rise to a plural subject, with all the characteristics that this necessarily entails, or as public goods whose tragedy yes is well known to any of their users. Reinterpreting green areas not simply as public goods, but as commons in public ownership, but under the management of a plural subject makes it possible to give them a different reading and to move toward a different management of a part of the cities that is so relevant that it constitutes an element of its evaluation, as green areas are precisely.

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#kalasatama: Discursive Views of the Helsinki Landscape Through the Virtual Window

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Abstract

The article explores the relationship between the user, smartphone, and landscape as part of everyday social practices, proposing that the screen and camera of the smartphone co-constructs our understanding of the landscape. Focusing on encounters with the Helsinki landscape through the practice of making, sharing, and viewing images, I examine the between user—smartphone—landscape relationship in understanding the new Helsinki landscape. I look at these landscapes in the context of the changes wrought on the Helsinki skyline by the construction of the tall towers at Kalasatama. Kalasatama is a suburb to the east of Helsinki's city centre. It was previously an industrial area with a small port and is currently being developed as both a commercial and residential space. I argue that the perception of these landscapes can be seen as co-constructed through the practices of making, sharing, and viewing images, as they have become embedded into the everyday through a state of perpetual connectivity. Using postphenomenology and philosophy of technology, I reflect upon the place of the smartphone in the phenomena of experience and the embeddedness of image-making within contemporary social practices.

Keywords: smartphone; social media; photography; landscape; postphenomenology

1. Introduction

The perception of landscapes, while being a multi-sensory experience, is frequently reliant on a ocular experience of space. With most people now having instant access to a camera as part of a networked mobile device, how we experience the landscape has changed with the practice of making, sharing, and viewing networked photographs now embedded in our everyday practices. What can be discerned from the reciprocal relationship between the individual, landscape, and photograph through these practices in light of our perpetual connectivity through the smartphone? How does that constant connectivity shape the production of the contemporary Helsinki landscape? The city of Helsinki is changing rapidly, with tall buildings, such as those in Kalasatama, coming to dominate the new Helsinki skyline. There is a growing prevalence of networked landscape photographs tagged with #kalasatama that may indicate the current trend of building high is playing a part in influencing how we experience and imagine the landscape of contemporary Helsinki. Therefore, how

does the practice of making, sharing, and viewing these photographs influence our understanding of Helsinki and its landscapes?

This article examines the production of contemporary Helsinki landscapes through the practice of making, sharing, and viewing images. I argue that the perception of these landscapes can be seen as co-constructed through these practices, as they have become embedded into the everyday through a state of perpetual connectivity. We no longer 'go online' and, therefore, our relationship with the smartphone, its camera, and screen, is constantly shaping our perception of the world around us. Reflecting on how the landscape is co-constructed through the smartphone's camera, I open by examining the role of the screen in our experiences of the world, situating it within the practice of looking. Within that practice of looking, I then examine the production of landscapes as not only the outcome of representations but also as a set of practices involving encounters within the landscape itself.

The use of the term landscape is important within the context of the article. Although landscapes are often thought of as being a result of representation, they are, it has been argued, a process that is constantly being reformulated. (Ingold 2000, Malpas 2011) Therefore, landscapes can be understood as taking an active role in the practices of making, sharing, and viewing photographs. While terms such as cityscape, place, or skyline are also useful when examining these practices, they are too limiting and do not necessarily create a sense of Kalastama's influence over an understanding of contemporary Helsinki. Landscapes are generally something we move through, whereas places can be something that we move between or move with us. Being on a train, for instance, we are moving from one place to another, and the train itself is a place; therefore places could be said to be contained within the landscape (Souza e Silva and Frith 2012, Massey 2005). The skyline, while having a considerable influence over how we perceive the landscape (Gassner 2020), tends to suggest a fixed view, not necessarily something we can move within. Therefore, when examining practices, in particular, ones that are the result of movement through spaces, landscape seems the most appropriate term to describe multiple constituents of place that are experienced through everyday practices.

There is a growing trend in media studies to focus on practices related to technology by employing a combination of media theory, phenomenology, and actor-network theory. While these approaches are relevant, I wish to examine the relationship between user—smartphone—landscape as one already constituted. Actor-network theory's usefulness lies in examining the constitution of such networks, postphenomenology, and the experiencing of and by the constituted subjects and objects. This hybrid version of phenomenology, developed with philosophy of technology in mind, acknowledges that all aspects of experience play an active role in perception and that rather than being inscribed with particular uses, technological devices are 'multistable'. Often, their uses reach beyond what they were initially developed for, which has implications for practices within society. In the case of my research, that translates into examining the relational context between user—smartphone—landscape, where all three are actants in a reciprocal relationship that co-constructs how we perceive the contemporary Helsinki landscape.

The investigation focuses on the growing prevalence of publicly available networked landscape images tagged with #kalasatama and appearing on the social media platform Instagram. Key to the investigation is understanding the formation of the landscape through the practice of making, sharing, and viewing these photographs. Through the article, I argue that in the context of the new Helsinki landscape, there is an increasing reciprocal relationship between user—smartphone—landscape due, in part, to the changes Kalasatama's towers have wrought upon the Helsinki skyline. Analysing the increasing frequency of landscape images tagged with #kalasatama on the social

media app Instagram can demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between user—smartphone—landscape. The prevalence of such images also has the potential to show how the practice of making, sharing, and viewing images co-constructs our perception of the landscape as part of an understanding of contemporary urban space in Helsinki. While I do focus on the digital visualising technology of the smartphone, my analysis does not set it out as the *object* of experience but the *means* by which we experience the landscape.

The practice of photography is now ingrained in a multitude of social activities. Therefore, focusing on practices rather than images, I intend to examine the relationship we have with the landscape through the camera and screen of the smartphone. Using the frequency of landscape images posted to Instagram tagged with #kalasatama, I aim to demonstrate the relational context embedded within the user—smartphone—landscape in the production of the landscape. The images tagged with #kalasatama frequently feature the three towers, Lumo, Majakka and Loisto, which are now among Finland's tallest buildings. A key reason for focusing on these buildings within this study is their dominant position in the Helsinki skyline, making them difficult to ignore, both in the sense of this study and, as shall become apparent, for photographers, too. The buildings are visible from a great distance; for example, some images featuring the towers and tagged with #kalasatama are geotagged as being taken from locations well beyond the area of Kalasatama, as I will discuss in greater detail further down. These practices and the images are produced from them will form the basis for a postphenomenological analysis of how the world is co-constructed through the camera and screen of the smartphone.

To garner a more complete picture of a contemporary experience, I foreground how the world is present to us through the smartphone screen, where 'the world' is based on a perception of reality that acknowledges there is no way to experience the world in itself, but only a world for me (Verbeek 2005). Foregrounding my analysis, I look to an existential and hermeneutic approach to phenomenology (Heidegger 1977, Jaspers 2009) that has been developed into postphenomenology (Verbeek 2005, Ihde 2009) to avoid forming a deterministic image of technology. Postphenomenology, in combination with philosophy of technology, helps analyse how the world is present to us and how we are present in it through technology, and how these experiences can be considered authentic in terms of co-constructing our understanding of the world.

The study uses posts tagged with '#kalasatama' to investigate the use of the smartphone as an image-making, -sharing, and -viewing device that often amplifies the ocular in relation to the landscape. One of the defining aspects of Kalasatama is its noticeable architecture, not in the sense of a distinct visual style, but that it stands out as part of a new Helsinki skyline that currently features three of the tallest buildings in Finland. My focus on the hashtag, rather than a geotag, demonstrates that Kalasatama is becoming a byword to describe the landscape of new Helsinki. Instagram has characterised second-generation camera phone practices as 'emplaced visuality' (Hjorth and Hendry 2015; Pink and Hjorth 2012). The practice of tagging images places them, "across temporal, geographic, electronic, and spatial dimensions" (Hjorth and Hendry 2015, 1). In the case of the tag #kalasatama, images using it are emplaced with a geographic location. Therefore, Kalasatama has become a way to orientate one in the landscape of Helsinki, where we see many images tagged with #kalasatama yet made from locations a great distance from it. There are two samples of Instagram data used within this study: a large sample of data from 2015 to 2020 to demonstrate, firstly, growth and current frequency in the use of '#kalasatama' on images posted and, secondly, interactions through 'likes' with the images posted, shown above in Fig1. That data is useful to show the growing frequency of images posted with #kalasatama. The second sample, which I discuss later,
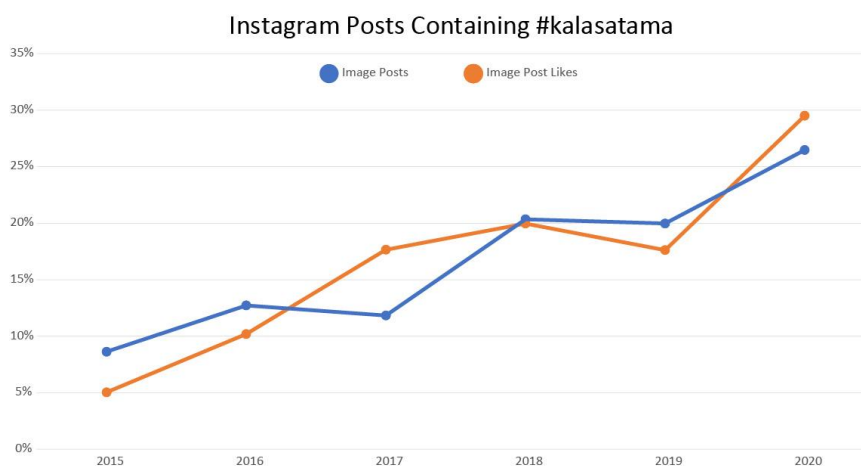
Figure 1: Trend in image posts and post likes using #kalasatama from 2015 to 2020.

takes images from August 1st to October 6th, 2021, for a closer examination of images posted using '#kalasatama'. Both datasets are used within a discussion around the practice of making, sharing, and viewing images, and as such, I do not discuss individual images.

How do we situate the photograph within the user—smartphone—landscape relationship? The term 'photograph' may appear to be irrelevant in contemporary discussions about its use on social media due to its transient nature as a digital image. As the photograph is disseminated across net-worked devices, it never reaches a fixed state, leading some to argue that the term 'digital image' or 'image' may be more applicable (Hand 2020; Manovich 2001; Ritchin 2013). It is not the aim of this article to define the most applicable term for the networked digital image or to analyse the image's place in our networked society but to look at it as part of a practice now deeply embedded within society. Studying the image as an individual entity on social media may even feel like a futile prac-tice as the vast majority of images get little audience, and our attention to them is fleeting at best. It has been suggested that, in relation to social media images, the *practice* of photography becomes the pertinent question (Hand 2020; Shanks and Svabo 2014). That makes it necessary not to focus on the images themselves but on the practice of making, sharing, and viewing images as part of the phenomena of experiencing the world through technology.

While Instagram is not the central focus of this study, it is a valuable research resource that offers ways to examine various facets of urban life and everyday social practices not included in more tra-ditional data collection methods (Zasina 2018). Personal experiences of the city and its exploration are constantly communicated through social media and, therefore, examining Instagram content can give some important insight into how we both experience and use the city through practices of making and sharing images (Rose et al. 2021; Jensen et al. 2019; Acuti et al. 2018; Zasina 2018; Toscano 2017; Boy and Uitermark 2016). The examination of images on Instagram can also be, as mentioned, underlined by a marked increase in both the use of and interaction with '#kalasatama', as indicated in Fig. 1. Studying the practices that produce these images on Instagram can demon-strate the reciprocal relationship between the practice of making, sharing, and viewing photographs and the landscape in co-constructing an understanding of Helsinki's contemporary landscape. In

addition, it analyses the place of the smartphone within the phenomena of experiencing the landscape.

A 2011 report by the City of Helsinki's urban planning office (Kaupunkisuunnitteluvirasto) on high buildings in Helsinki emphasised the city's low skyline and its importance as part of the city's international image. However, it also acknowledged that the new projects in the suburbs, including Kalasatama, will "affect the entire cityscape and image of Helsinki" (City of Helsinki Urban Planning Office 2011, 11). Kalasatama existed as a very different place in 2011. Its role within the landscape of Helsinki was much more localised. However, in 2021, it is not only Kalasatama that has changed, but with it, the landscape of Helsinki has been permanently reformed due to these changes. This paper is not necessarily about Kalasatama as a place but tackles how places, as part of the landscape, influence the practices that play a part in how we understand and exist within the landscape. Therefore, within the context of understanding Kalasatama's influence over the landscape of Helsinki, I give a brief description of Kalasatama.

Kalasatama is a new suburb to the east of Helsinki's city centre. Formerly an industrial area hosting a small port, it is currently being developed into a commercial and residential space with an envisioned finish date in the late 2030s (City of Helsinki, 2018). The City of Helsinki describes Kalasatama as having an "excellent location, lively urban culture, and a seaside promenade" (City of Helsinki, 2018). Kalasatama is also being described as a platform for smart urban construction, an area served with excellent transport connections, and a place where you can view environmental art (funded by a fee paid by developers). All in all, the area of Kalasatama is being rebranded as a future commercial and residential space, with the Redi shopping mall at its heart. These changes are very much in line with the global shifts that cities have experienced since the late 1990s. However, for Helsinki, this is a relatively new experience as Kalasatama is one of many planned projects in the redevelopment of the wider city. These changes have sparked debates about how the city's development is being carried out. One such debate resulted in the publication of the pamphlet 'Kenen Kaupunki' (Whose City) in 2021, which contains a collection of articles contributed by 19 experts in urban planning, architecture, and cultural environments. The essays call into question some of the decisions made about planning and investing in the city, claiming it is being handed over to construction companies and financial investors. Therefore, it feels like we are at a turning point for Helsinki as it is being reconstructed in the image of a global city.

As part of an analysis that focuses on practices as well as representations, we should acknowledge how the smartphone camera is used. The smartphone camera has become a ubiquitous part of our everyday life as it is now firmly embedded in our routines and habits, therefore playing an important role in how we sense our environments (Pink and Hjorth 2012). Therefore, I examine how the landscape is perceived through the embodiment of the smartphone camera within our everyday practices. On an individual level, it is difficult to determine each 'Instagrammer's' personal relationship with the spaces they inhabit and photograph. The aim of this study is not to make observations about personal relationships with space but, through the growing prevalence of images shared on Instagram, to investigate how the landscape is there for us and how we understand it through the practice of making, sharing, and viewing images.

Rather than examining the landscape as something external to our mind-body we should look at it as being interrelated with the environments we inhabit (Ingold 2000). It is through that interrelatedness that we imbue landscapes with meaning. We do not just look at landscapes, but the views we experience through the smartphone screen affect how we think about the landscapes we inhabit. Therefore, examining the practices of making, sharing, and viewing images within a re-

lational context of user—smartphone—landscape can assist in understanding how contemporary landscapes are co-constructed through technological perception. Landscapes influence practices that are carried out within them, changing how we are in our landscapes and how we think about them. The smartphone has increased the prevalence of images in our lives, changing how everyday images participate in them, while also influencing our daily practices, such as sharing images of our meals or places we have visited (Pink and Hjorth 2012). Therefore, the reciprocal relationship between user—smartphone—landscape deserves an examination in the context of how these practices influence how we are present in the world and how the world is present to us.

2. The Virtual Window

The materiality of experience has changed rapidly with the development of the smartphone. Since the introduction of the smartphone in 2007, screens have become a greater part of our everyday experiences. Prior to their introduction, screens had already been part of our daily experiences for many years, but the smartphone differs slightly from other screens as it often replaces the materiality of the switch and button with its haptic controls. While I acknowledge that the haptic nature of the smartphone screen makes it different from other screens, my focus in this article is on the ocular nature of the screen in our experiences of the world. In relation to photography, the growing presence of the screen in our lives has greatly reduced the use of other media. That has led to a convergence of media devices which, from the perspective of photography, has been widespread. With the convergence of media, Marshall McLuhan's once seminal statement, "the medium is the message," has been made redundant (Friedberg 2006, 238; Negroponte 1995, 71). Nicholas Negroponte argues that due to the convergence, the medium is no longer the message in the digital world but "an embodiment of it" (Negroponte 1995, 71). Therefore, a photograph as a digital image may have many different embodiments based on the same data as it is passed through different digital filters and networks. Within these embodiments, digital images are in a constant state of flux, never reaching "a 'fixed state' because they can always be altered or circulated in the future" (Hand 2020, 13; Rubenstein and Sluis 2013, 27). Most images are experienced now through the smartphone screen, making it important to reflect on how we experience the world through it and how its presence has changed our everyday practices.

The smartphone's screen is a technological artifact that forms a dominant part of our contemporary experiences. Peter-Paul Verbeek has argued that in Martin Heidegger's "analysis of 'being-in-the-world' things play an important role" in the form of tools, making it feasible for "relations between humans and the world [to] come about" (Verbeek 2005, 78). However, within that relation, one is not focusing their attention on the tool; rather, it becomes a means to experience. Therefore, when examining the role of the screen within the phenomena of experience, it is apt to think of it as something we look through rather than at, similar to a window. The window plays an integral part in our visual-based understanding of landscape. We often experience the landscape through it, and it encloses the landscape within a frame, making it available to us as a view. (Friedberg 2006). It has been argued that the screen acts as a virtual window, constructing a seamless reality through which we experience the world (Friedberg 2006; Hristova 2017). It is important to note here that the term 'virtual' is used as a reference to the immateriality of the material window. Anne Friedberg states that "the term 'virtual' serves to distinguish between any representation or appearance that appears 'functionally or effectively but not formally' of the same materiality as what it represents" (Fried-

berg 2006, 11). Therefore, the description of the smartphone screen as a virtual window would seem apt in that it is a viewing device through which we experience views of the world.

Where, then, might we place the smartphone screen in terms of experience? Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky argued that "[t]ransparency may be an inherent quality of substance, as in a glass curtain wall; or it may be an inherent quality of organization. One can, for this reason, distinguish between a literal and a phenomenal transparency" (Rowe and Slutzky 1963, 46). The smartphone, as a virtual window, has the inherent quality of phenomenal transparency in terms of how it is placed in our field of view. However, the opaque nature of the screen is bypassed; we do not experience the screen as a 'thing', but the screen becomes a means for experiencing the world (Hristova 2017). Screens are not transparent in a literal sense but rather in a phenomenal sense. The phenomenal transparency of the smartphone screen means our experiences of the world with and without the smartphone screen overlap. The 'seamless reality' that exists on both sides of the smartphone screen creates a coherent reality where, in terms of garnering an understanding of the world, one side can be seen as inseparable from the other. Such an experience raises the question of how the world is co-constructed as we switch between the immaterial and material views. Therefore, to fully grasp how the presence of the smartphone screen acts as a mimetic window, we can examine how we experience the world through it using postphenomenology and the philosophy of technology.

When examining how the world is available to us, I argue that we should acknowledge that experience through the practice of making, sharing, and viewing images can offer an authentic experience of the world as part of an intertwined relationship between user—smartphone—landscape (Lehtinen 2019; Lehtinen and Vihanninjoki 2019; Verbeek 2005). I am concerned with examining technology as offering an authentic experience of the world through technological artefacts. The way I disclose the world comes from my understanding of it; for example, how I understand the tree I climb is different from how I might understand it by interacting with it through the screen of a smartphone, but both understandings are equally authentic. They can be viewed as co-constructing our understanding of the world (Verbeek 2005). Therefore, experiencing the world through technology can be as authentic as experiencing it without technology in that it allows us to experience something. While phenomenology may offer robust theories regarding how humans perceive their environments, it falls short when examining experience through technology as it often places technology as coming between human perception in experiencing the world. Instead, using postphenomenology and the philosophy of technology, I explore how the world is present to us and how we are present in the world through the virtual window of the smartphone screen.

Postphenomenology is built upon the theories of a nonsubjectivistic and interrelational phenomenology that avoids the pitfalls within traditional philosophy of technology and phenomenological analysis that often reduces experiences through technology to deterministic views of the world (Ihde 2009). Postphenomenology recognises that technology, as a piece of equipment, withdraws from our attention when being used (Verbeek 2005; Ihde 2009; Harman 2010). The smartphone screen, as a virtual window, withdraws from our attention as we look through it into the world. Within an analysis of perception through the virtual window, I examine how the world is available to human beings through the smartphone screen, where 'the world' refers to "reality as disclosed by human beings" (Verbeek 2005, 108). The smartphone screen is not encountered as the object of experience but as a means to experience the world. It is important to point out that the smartphone is not a neutral means but plays an active role in the relationship between user and landscape. However, a technological artifact co-constructs the world, not as an intrinsic property of the artifact itself, but within the relationship that human beings have with it (Verbeek 2005). In

terms of the practice of making, sharing, and viewing images, the photographer, smartphone, and landscape are intertwined, and the camera, as part of the smartphone, actively contributes to the way we experience the world.

While there are varying approaches in media studies used to examine how the world is present to us through technology, such as combining phenomenology and actor-network theory, postphenomenology is situated in perspective, making it ideal when focusing on how the world is experienced through technological artefacts. In postphenomenological terms, the smartphone is a technology that both embodies our relations to space and gives us a representation of space to interpret. Within Ihde's framework, which provides different kinds of human/technology/world relations, the smartphone's camera and screen are emblematic of embodiment relations (((I—technology) → world), where we take technological artefacts into our experience and hermeneutic relations (I → (technology—world)), where artefacts provide "a representation of the world, which requires interpretation to impart something about it" (Verbeek 2005). A postphenomenological perspective analyses technology as co-constructing how the world is present to us. Therefore, we both embody the experience of using the smartphone to view the world through it and interpret the data it gives us (de Klerk 2020). From an embodiment perspective, we view the world through the smartphone screen when taking a picture. The screen frames the world in that moment, and through the camera, we perceive the world with the camera's different angles of view, limited dynamic range, overlay of functions, and grid lines. Within the virtual window of the smartphone screen, one searches for a meaningful image that represents our perception of the world. From a hermeneutical perspective, when making an image, we interpret the data that is returned to us regarding the functionality of the camera: is the image too bright or too dark, does the image offer up an index of place, and does it communicate how we understand the landscape.

Focusing on the screen and how it functions in our relationship with the world helps reveal its place in our perception of the everyday. However, it would be too limiting to examine only our relationship with the smartphone's screen as it may lead to a conclusion that it somehow alienates us from having authentic experiences of the landscape. The social practices of using the camera and smartphone to make and share images have changed how we experience the world, but it does not necessarily mean we experience the world through it in a less authentic way. The immediacy and quantity of images available to us have grown exponentially, leading to our relationship with the everyday as one now entangled with the smartphone screen. Within that changing relationship, how do we view landscapes and imagine their presence in our lives and our presence within them through the practices of making, sharing, and viewing images? Analysing the camera and screen of the smartphone in a relational context of experiencing landscapes should also include examining the landscape's role in the practices of making, sharing, and viewing images of it. Before we examine the role of the landscape, it is necessary to discuss the role of the image in the practice of making, sharing, and viewing them across social media.

3. The Practice of Making Images

Our relationship with photography has changed over the last 20 years, first with the introduction of digital photography and then the smartphone and social media. The availability of a perpetually connected device in our pocket has changed how the world is present to us and how we are present in it through the practice of making and sharing images. The social media image, therefore, no longer represents the past, as the photograph once did. Instead it communicates, if even briefly,

the present (Hand 2020; Larsen and Sandbye 2014; Lister 2013; Rose 2016; Villi 2015). Instagram, as part of the smartphone, is a platform designed to share photographs on the go, which places its images closer to present time. Therefore, through the practice of using the smartphone's camera and screen, the experience attached to the image comes very much from the present, bringing the understanding of landscape very much into that moment rather than as a memory of the past. That is significant in terms of our understanding of the new Helsinki landscape as it suggests that through a practice of making, sharing, and viewing images, our experience of it is an experience of Helsinki 'as-it-is-now' rather than 'as-it-was'. The 'Instagrammer' taking the image as a 'here-now' moment signifies a mediation of the landscape in the present.

Such a shift in the temporal materiality of the image is at the basis of what modern images shared across social media have become, where practices appear to be more relevant than the images themselves. With the sheer quantity of images produced and shared over social media, the impact of the single image is undermined. However, we must remember that social media use, in particular Instagram, is "a matter of visual communication" (Hand 2020, 313). Therefore, based on the number of images shared, we should not value the importance of the social media image any less but rather take a different approach in how we look at them as part of contemporary image-making practices and their embeddedness in everyday social practices. In relation to the images tagged with #kalasatama on Instagram, it is not my aim to visually inspect each image for signifiers of a redefined Helsinki landscape. Instead, I examine the vast landscape of images that are produced within the relational context of the user—smartphone - landscape through the social practices of making, sharing, and viewing images.
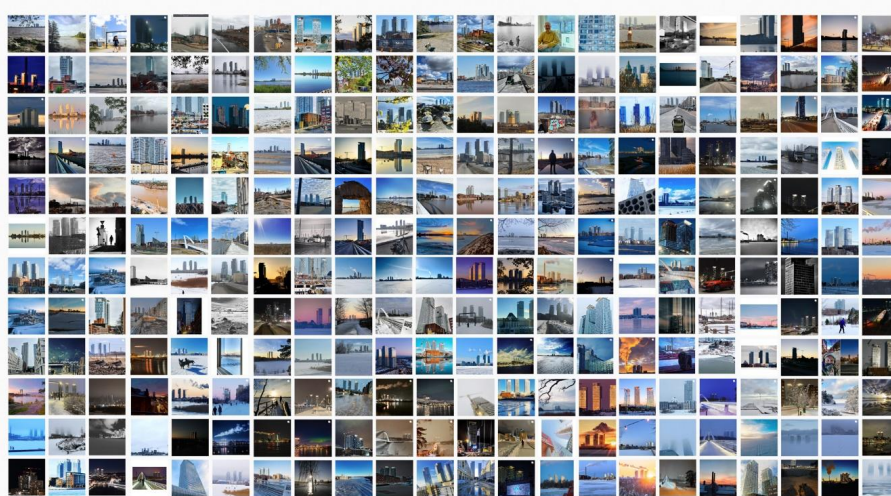

Figure 2: 264 of the images shared on Instagram and tagged with #kalasatama.

Looking at data from August 1st to October 6th, 2021, there were 1,243 images shared that contained the tag #kalasatama, which is roughly 33 images posted per day. Within the 1,243 images, 535, or 43%, featured images that focused on landscapes. Landscape images are defined as images that feature the landscape or external spaces of Helsinki and are tagged with #kalasatama. Of the 535 landscape images, 311, or 58%, feature the three towers, Lumo, Majakka, and Loisto, which are now among Finland's tallest buildings. This smaller sample was used to examine the types of images that were made and shared to understand how the new Helsinki landscape influenced the practices of making, sharing, and viewing images. As social media has 'become a matter of visual

communication' (Hand 2020), how does that ubiquitous visual communication co-construct our understanding of the new Helsinki landscape? The practice of making, sharing, and viewing images through social media would seem to centre around an ocular understanding of the landscape. However, when we see something and decide to make an image of it to communicate something about it, we share it along with some other information that further communicates something about it. Therefore, our understanding stretches beyond the ocular to something more immaterial within the landscape. What part does the landscape then play in these practices?

4. Re-presenting Landscape

It is necessary to set out an understanding of landscape and how it is produced through experiences of the world and the practice of making, sharing, and viewing images of it. Discussing how landscapes are produced within a postphenomenological analysis could be viewed as problematic, given that landscapes are commonly seen as objects of our experience. That is further exacerbated when studying the relationship between the image and landscape, as the photograph and the practice of making them is often placed within an Albertinian linear perspective that links it to a modernist subject-object dictum, the looked-at and looked-upon (Batchen 1999; Wells 2011; De Klerk 2020). Through the process of being looked at and looked upon, landscapes are imbued with meaning and gain competing identities. However, that does not mean they are "passive screens onto which people project values, but they can be actors in social and political conflict" (Filippucci 2016, 2; Bender 1993). Therefore, landscapes are both materially and immaterially constructed by humans through a process of being endowed "with meaning, memory, and value" (Filippucci 2016). The landscape plays an active role in the practices of making, sharing, and viewing images of new Helsinki. Landscapes shape our understanding of Helsinki as a place and shape the practices of those who inhabit them.

How and why do we imbue the landscape with meaning? Tim Ingold has argued that a 'dwelling perspective' reinforces landscape "as the outcome of physical and symbolic implications of people with their surroundings" (Filippucci 2016, 3; Ingold 2000). In terms of the practice of making images, the photographer inhabits the landscape and communicates about it through making and sharing images. Through that communication, the photographer expresses their identity and their relationship to that landscape. The landscape and its re-presentation are indelibly linked. Landscapes are constructed in certain ways, leading to the re-presentation of the 'possibilities of being' (Ingold 2000, 177) through practices such as making and sharing images. Views of a landscape can be seen as a "re-presentation of a relatedness to place" (Malpas 2011, 7), affirming that every view is an addition to place. The enframing of the landscape into an image on the screen of the smartphone and the practices that involves can be explored in the context of that addition, where the landscape is an entity that is both materially and immaterially constructed.

How do visual media frame the landscape? Re-presenting the landscape through images is often seen as a form of objectification. Continuing the tradition of landscape painting, photography encapsulates a way of looking that could be viewed as "a way of looking at the world that separates subject and object as viewer and viewed" (De Klerk 2020, 201). However, using postphenomenology to analyse the relationship between photographer—camera—landscape allows for an examination of the practice of photography through a "relational co-determination of the photographer, the technology and the places" (De Klerk 2020, 202). The photograph is often placed within an Albertinian linear perspective that separates it as the looked-at and looked-upon. Therefore, in

terms of perception, the camera and image have been defined as coming between us and our experience of the world. However, I argue throughout the article, that the smartphone camera and the practices it produces co-construct an understanding of the world within a relational context of user—smartphone—landscape. When examining the user—smartphone—landscape relationship, I am focusing on the smartphone's properties, the camera (its ability to make images), the screen (its ability to view images), and the perception of the landscape. Therefore, rather than viewing the photographer as separate from the landscape, I view them as reflected within the 'views of the landscape' re-presented through the images they make.

The practice of making, sharing, and viewing images of the landscape constructs landscapes in our imagination, as we use the images to interpret and understand the landscape; thus, they can be seen as an addition to place (Malpas 2011). Through the smartphone camera, we are confronted with a view of the landscape, and the practice of making, sharing, and viewing images contributes to how we interpret and define the Helsinki landscape. Indeed, the landscape, in terms of representation, plays an important part in both orientating one within the city and recognising the city (Gassner 2020; Murray 2012). The definition of the Helsinki skyline as part of its overall landscape is perpetuated through the reciprocal relationship between image and landscape. However, it is not only defined through a visual relationship. As mentioned, many of the images tagged with #kalasatama feature the new Helsinki skyline with Finland's tallest buildings at the site of the Redi shopping mall in Kalasatama. It is worth pointing out that images are not just something to be looked at but something that we actively produce through our daily practices, and these practices have increased exponentially with social media (Hand 2020). Photography represents a way of seeing and understanding the world. We actively participate in the landscape by making, sharing, and viewing images. Therefore, the data examined from Instagram can give further insight into the relationship that exists between user—smartphone—landscape concerning contemporary photographic practices, their effect on everyday practices, and the influence of Kalasatama on the landscape of Helsinki.

The towers in Kalasatama hold a dominant position in the new Helsinki landscape, as they are visible from a great distance, which often encourages an ocular-centric experience of the landscape. For example, many of the images featuring the towers and tagged with #kalasatama were taken at a great distance from Kalasatama. The towers appear in the images as part of the new Helsinki landscape. Some images are even geotagged with locations such as Pohjoisranta, Lammassaari and Arabianranta, all of which are over two kilometres from Kalasatama. One of the furthest images to be tagged with #kalasatama was at Purolahden lintutorni (Purolahti bird tower), which is about 4km from Kalasatama. Therefore, the impact of Kalasatama and these three buildings have a strong influence on how we conceive the landscapes we inhabit. The activity of making, sharing, and viewing landscape images is a means of experiencing the landscape, thus meaning we are active within the landscape. The landscape itself influences us; it is the very nature of the places we move through that affects how we think about them and what we do in them (Malpas 2011). The views created through the making and sharing of these images perpetuate an understanding of the landscapes of Helsinki. Kalasatama, with its towers, plays an active role in the practice of making, sharing, and viewing images of Helsinki's landscape, which requires an examination of how such landscapes are formed.

When constructing our worlds, we build them based on our own conceptions and "possibilities of being" (Ingold 2000, 177). The City of Helsinki published its current development plan in 2016. The long-term strategic plan aims to see the city through to 2050. One of the key developments

outlined in the plan is to densify the city, which includes making space for more business hubs and retail areas. In addition to the expansion of commercial space, residential building is to be increased, with much of that supply being met by the private market. The plan has caused some consternation due to the level of private financial investment allowed to carry out many facets of the expansion. There has been much discussion in the Finnish media about Helsinki's development, and several academics and architects have spoken about their concerns regarding the direction the City of Helsinki is taking, accusing it of delegating the building of new Helsinki to financial investors and construction companies (Kenen Kaupunki 2021). In the context of these ocular changes to the Helsinki skyline, it is necessary to explore the changes to the city and how the visual transforms the urban environment (Gassner 2020, 7). What are the 'conceptions of the possibilities of being' (Ingold 2000) within the context of the new Helsinki landscape? How is the landscape experienced through the presence of the towers in Kalasatama? Kalasatama's place in the new Helsinki landscape is so dominant that it now forms the backdrop to a multitude of activities. These activities are re-presented through views of the landscape within a practice of making, sharing, and viewing images. For example, the social practices of mid-summer on Mustikkamaa, summer holidays at a cottage in Kivinokka and cross-country skiing in the winter on a frozen Baltic Sea are part of the landscape of Helsinki. Within a practice of making, sharing, and viewing images of these landscapes, Kalasatama now forms an intricate part of how these landscapes are produced as part of the new Helsinki.

The images produced through the practices of making and sharing images of the new Helsinki landscape are a result of particular social and material configurations through which we encounter the landscape. Not only do the images offer a 're-presentation' of the landscape through these practices but they are also emplaced within digital maps, leaving a trace of our movement through the landscape. For instance, an image tagged with #kalasatama yet geotagged at another location demonstrates Kalasatama's part in the new Helsinki landscape. The image is emplaced within a view of the landscape and within a digital map, thus co-constructing our understanding of the contemporary Helsinki landscape and how it is being reformed. The multiple constituents of place that are the outcome of the visual content created reconstruct the Helsinki landscape. It is the presence of the towers that encourages the practice of making and sharing images of the new Helsinki landscape; thus the landscape is reimagined through such practices. Tall buildings reaching upwards have long been a symbol of status and wealth, historically linked to the presence of the corporation in the city (Graham 2016). However, as corporate headquarters vanished from the city, the tall building took on a new purpose as "embodiments of contemporary dynamics for circulating the vast capital surpluses of oligarchs, oil sheikhs and global financial and super-rich elites" (Graham 2016, 159). These new residential buildings offer the city up as an elegant backdrop with breathtaking views from the inside, and on the outside, they are often built to "create a skyline, a marker and recognisable shape that help us remember, relate and form positive associations about a place" (Murray 2012, 5). Therefore, the tower building on the skyline performs an important symbolic function in modern cities, and that is reinforced, in the case of Kalasatama, with the perpetuation of the new views of the landscape through the everyday practices of making, sharing, and viewing images on Instagram. Kalasatama, therefore, holds a symbolic place over the city of Helsinki, not just because it has altered the landscape forever, but it is also representational of the wider changes coming to Helsinki through increased global financial investment and the building of further tall towers as outlined in the City of Helsinki's recent urban plan.

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5. Conclusion

The smartphone, as an embodied experience, withdraws from our attention when we use it as part of the practice of making, sharing, and viewing images. As we move through the landscape, it is the relationship between user—smartphone—landscape that shapes our experiences in and of the new Helsinki landscape. How the landscape is there for us and how we are in it has changed due to shifting social practices, our perpetual connectivity, and the reforming of the Helsinki landscape. Therefore, we can say that through the virtual window of the smartphone screen, our perception of what appears to be immaterial landscapes is co-constructed along with our perception of the material ones. Landscapes and the places within them, however, are not fixed entities but are formed through the multitude of experiences of and within them. The things, such as the smartphone, that we experience as part of our perception of the landscape, are not passive or external to our perception but form active components within the social practices that construct the landscape. The smartphone's screen, acting as a proxy for a windowed opening into the world, becomes part of a seamless experience that co-constructs the landscape.

From a postphenomenological perspective, when we use equipment, it leaves our immediate experience, becoming a means rather than an object of our experience. Therefore, the smartphone's screen, as an image-making, -sharing, and -viewing artefact, can be seen as a means to understand the world authentically. The process of making, sharing, and viewing images with #kalasatama co-constructs our understanding of the contemporary Helsinki landscape. The experience of landscape, through the emplaced everyday social practices of image-making and -sharing is multidimensional. Therefore, the essence of the new Helsinki landscape cannot be confined to one view or 're-presentation' but is, instead, constitutive of the multiple relations that are formed through the practice of making, sharing, and viewing images of the landscape. The towers in Kalasatama play an active role in both how we are in the landscape of new Helsinki and how it is there for us. As we move through the landscape, the multiple constituents of place on offer shape the practices of making and sharing images. Therefore, we can see the formation of a relationship between user—smartphone—landscape as one that co-constructs our understanding of the new Helsinki landscape.

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The Ethics of Mapping Slums—and How AI Complicates the Picture

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Abstract

This is an interview conducted with Isaac Oluoch (Twente) and Michael Nagenborg (Twente) on 1 March 2023. It is about their research on mapping deprived areas in lower-income countries, better known as slums or informal settlements. They talk about technical and especially ethical challenges involved in practical mapping projects, and also discuss what complications may arise when machines (AI) start participating in interpretations of spaces. We also discuss our situatedness as researchers in wealthy countries, the practice of philosophy in general and how it might contribute to concrete real-world problems.

Keywords: ethics; applied philosophy; mapping; deprived areas; Global South

Transcript

Tea: What is a slum, that is, how do you define deprived living conditions?

Isaac: It is often about morphological aspects—so the building structure—but also where exactly the place is, its environmental situatedness along with economic factors such as proximity to resources or healthcare or job facilities, as well as more cultural ideas of what exactly it means to be impoverished. Because if you look at what typical neighborhoods in low-income countries or cities look like, you get much more variability between a "rich" house and the houses which you would call "poor" or "middle-income". So, it is about looking at the entire area, and you might get a lot more variability than if you just say, "Here is a slum; here is not a slum." There is not such a clear-cut distinction between one and the other.

Michael: For me, even though I come from a more Western perspective, it's about people who must live without that which we take for granted, so basic infrastructure like a sewage system, access to clean water, access to health care services, waste management. All the things that make European cities such nice places to live that do not exist in other places. And we are talking about 1 out of 8 people living on this planet who live in these kinds of conditions. And these numbers are probably too low.

Tea: You argue that official census data on cities often omit large deprived areas. However, precise data on these areas is urgently needed so that concrete steps can be taken to improve the living conditions there. Why does this happen, and what can remedy it?

Isaac: I think the leading problem is two-fold. The first aspect is that these spaces are growing too rapidly for their own good. Being able to make a good census means being able to allocate specific resources to find where people are in the city. But as urbanization in these low-income countries increases, so does the difficulty in finding the funds to properly take care of people. Because the populations are rising too quickly, it is becoming impossible to know who exactly is coming into the city. And so the slums grow at a much faster rate than cities can accommodate.

The second aspect [is] a bit more negative, or nefarious, perhaps. Most cities would not want to take account of whether people are in the slums, either because of planning situations where they want to take care of private stakeholders who want the land on which the slums are growing. Therefore, it's much easier to say "Here is some land you can take over", or "Here is some land which you can build on", even though there are people living there. And so most slum communities end up being evicted, forced out for the sake of these private stakeholders.

Michael: Nobody might feel responsible for counting the inhabitants of these settlements. We also learned about policies completely backfiring: For example, I think it's an Indian law that states that municipalities must provide basic infrastructure when they recognize an area as a slum. And of course, if the municipality itself doesn't have enough budget, then everybody goes like "What slum? We don't see any slum here." So, there might be very strange incentives for the local authorities not to account for what is there. And let's not forget that also sometimes the inhabitants don't have an interest in being mapped or being counted, because of the risk of an eviction that is already has been mentioned. Maybe you don't want other people to know how many people you are and where you live.

Tea: Counting and mapping are intimately connected because when you map, you make visible who is counted, who counts. And as you already suggested, this is not such a straightforward thing. It's not exactly like you're representing reality as it is, but you're making decisions that influence how this reality is interpreted or viewed. So, you could argue, if I may gloss it this way, that maps are in some ways performative. They turn something into truth rather than simply objectively reporting on what is there. And can you give some examples on this?

Isaac: I believe that one of the most famous or most talked about examples, in the geographical circles anyway, is the Mercator projection. Our geographical consciousness is so shaped by this projection whereby you have the so-called global north looking a lot bigger, looking a lot more vital to the way the world looks to in comparison to the so-called Global South. And this, of course, has its own sort of knock-on effects of situating specific countries as more powerful or more important to how the world develops.

Another example is borders. Country boundaries are drawn up to look as if they're objectively there on the earth. But for most people who, let's say, are of a more nomadic culture, these boundaries make no sense whatsoever. And in most cases, they're drawn up by people who are not in the country itself, but by external powers. So, these lines which, are drawn on pieces of paper, divide up places in the world like pieces of cake, as some illustrations show. For instance, the Berlin Conference of the late 19th century could be considered as leading to the way that Africa was carved up into distinct areas.

Michael: And in my own work, I like to think about maps as not so much concerned about what is there, but what there could be. It's more about mapping potentials, what you could do there, where you could go, what can be, how the world can be changed rather than what the world is. So that was my way of making sense of all these different layers of different quality of data that is being projected on maps. Maps are very confusing objects from an ontological and epistemological perspective. But maybe it's not so much about the ontology of what is there, but what people try to do there or what could be done there and how they discover potentials in those areas.

Tea: So, it's more about what maps do than what they represent.

Isaac: Yes, and one of the most comical examples, of course, is people who follow Google Maps almost to a fault whereby they end up driving into ditches, driving into lakes, taking the representation of Google Maps at face value instead of looking at the actual road that they're on. So again, this statement of truth becomes so much more embodied than just thinking of maps as neutral objects that I trust them so much I won't even look at the world around me.

Michael: Also, what I find super fascinating about maps is that they have become everyday objects thanks to smartphones. We take them to be very easy to read, as an intuitively graspable piece of information. But once you start looking into the process [of] how maps have been produced, it becomes anything but intuitive what you are looking at.

Tea: What are some of the specifically ethical challenges when mapping deprived areas in general, and how does AI complicate the picture?

Isaac: I think one of the leading ones is the fact that most of this research is being done by Western countries or by Western researchers who are not always in very close contact or any actual contacts with the people whose spaces they're mapping. Now, this is perhaps difficult because of, of course, the geographical distance between the people mapping and the people being mapped, as well as the fact that not all the research being done in this area goes out to the people. It remains in research silos. So, in this case, it's somewhat like experiments being done by people in a laboratory which do not always go out into the world until they have some real-world applications. But there is, of course, the concern that as researchers do go out to meet the communities, they often end up making promises which do not always end up leading to the data going back to the communities themselves. So the research ends up staying with the researchers. The finalized map products may end up going to certain private institutions, whether it's World Bank, for instance, or certain governmental municipal authorities. But the communities are often left in the dark. And so the data justice concern is quite important in this case because as data is "the new oil", as it's been said over the last couple of I think the last decade or so, this oil is not going out to the people who need it the most.

It is also about the transparency or lack thereof with regards to how these algorithms lead to the classifications that they make, because it's very easy for someone to say my algorithm has 85% accuracy, therefore you should trust it. But in a research environment, this can be much more easily broken down to well, use this kind of training, this modeling, etcetera, and so on. But for those who may not speak the same language as the researchers, this accuracy idea does not really translate very properly. And if you're going to make any policy decisions based off of this concern for accuracy, then there should be a good way of explaining how you got there or what potential fuzzy boundaries there may be with regards to how these boundaries are drawn up. Nothing is as objective as claiming this is a slum, and that is not a slum. So, a way of explaining that in the final product of these algorithms or these models is very, very necessary.

Michael: And I would say, in general, accountability is more complicated once you use machine learning because that's another high-tech aspect. If you say we want to have people participate in the decision-making on the ground, then you need to acknowledge that the people in deprived areas most likely will not have the highest of educational standards. So that makes participation quite hard. And when machine learning comes into place, it becomes even harder.

Take our "Do No Harm" project,[1] for example, where we work together with people from 510 Global and the Red Cross Data Science Group, and where we try to identify weak building structures which are likely to be affected by heavy rain. There, you really have a very clear-cut accountability problem because if you make the wrong predictions and the flood doesn't turn out as simulated and predicted and measured, then you should be able to explain to people why you made a mistake, and I think it's a little bit too easy to say, "Well, the computer said so, so sorry, guys."

On the one hand, machine learning adds a lot of ease and convenience to the process, but at the same time, it is a question about how much time do you need to invest in order to be accountable and to audit the systems that we have. For me, being a responsible agency using this kind of technology also means you need to invest some time in order to make sure that you are auditing for local variations.

Tea: We have come to a point when machines are participating in the interpretation of spaces. Mapping is a way of making spaces legible, making them intelligible, interpreting them. And as you also mentioned, Isaac, it's important that actual communities be involved in, participate in the interpretation of their own spaces. But as is the case with machine hermeneutics, a new concept that came up that you guys also mention in your joint paper,[2] this is not always possible because, as Michael mentioned, sometimes the level of education is not high enough, and there's also no access to schooling in machine learning.

I think that here Miranda Fricker's concept of hermeneutical injustice[3] is very useful because she says it's a matter of justice that people participate in our collective interpretative endeavors, in a collective making sense about things that pertain to them, and these spaces pertain to them. How do machine hermeneutics play into the notion of hermeneutical injustice?

Isaac: I like that notion of hermeneutical injustice because, indeed, the fact that maps are being used to read the area, make legible these areas in this more governmental sense is problematic. Because if the machines are only doing this from one side, from the side of, let's say, the researchers or from the side of the government, municipal authorities who want to make some policy decisions, those who are being read by the machines are not part of the process. Then, immediately, you have a concern wherein those who are being mapped remain invisible or remain voiceless, and the map continually speaks over them. The machines, in this case, also continually speak over them. So being able to account for this is very, very important.

Or being able to mention this and make this very clear that the objective reality, which the maps are supposedly projecting out there, as Michael mentioned, is not very objectively clear because if there is enough bias in the mapping training or in the labeling process of classifying where these areas are, you're going to have a situation where places which do exist don't end up existing on the

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[1] See: https://www.nwo.nl/en/projects/mvi19007

[2] Cf. Isaac Oluoch, Monika Kuffer, and Michael Nagenborg, "In-between the Lines and Pixels: Cartography's Transition from Tool of the State to Humanitarian Mapping of Deprived Urban Areas," *Digital Society* 1, no. 5, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1007/s44206-022-00008-0.

[3] Cf. Miranda Fricker, "Hermeneutical Injustice," in *Epistemic Injustice: Power & Ethics of Knowing*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

maps. And in this case, if all you have is as a researcher or a government, or a municipal authority, is the map which you're presented with and not going out to the actual place which the map is a map of, then you end up with a situation where you're not really talking about what's in the world itself. You're only talking about what the machine is presenting to you.

Michael: And I also really like the idea of machine hermeneutics because it emphasizes that counting and measuring are indeed hermeneutical activities. It's not always obvious what is a house, what is a household. So that requires interpretation, and that is quite demanding to expect that from a machine. So, in a way, it is a reminder that maybe the task that is actually not very suitable for machines.

But you also need to recognize the limitations of the machinery. Most of the time we work with visual data, and, for example, if you have a nicely newly built housing complex where people are reallocated from a deprived area to what is supposed to be a nice area, but which lacks all kinds of basic infrastructure. If you then only base your judgment on the satellite image, you might say, "Oh yeah. Area of improvement, huh? Clean streets now. Nice buildings. Looks good." But, of course, the satellite data doesn't tell you anything about accessibility or operational ability of basic infrastructure. You don't see if there's water running or not. So, I think it's very important to keep in mind what machines cannot do.

Tea: Isaac, you also focused specifically on challenges and opportunities in mapping deprived areas in the context of COVID-19 management. So, can you tell us something about the challenges and opportunities involved?

Isaac: Perhaps to begin with the opportunities. The main one was that capacity building became very, very important during the pandemic, as is the case in any disaster-related situation. And we…in the paper, I use the definition given to us by UN Habitat and what capacity building is, which is essentially the skill or the capacity of individuals, groups, collectives to have the necessary ability to strengthen their processes or to strengthen their adaptability given in the face of a disaster or in the face of any emergency situations. And COVID completely took everyone by surprise, of course. But at the same time, in the context of slum communities, because they were allegedly already in a marginalized position, the need for understanding where exactly people were, the need for understanding how accessible or inaccessible certain areas are, as Michael also just briefly mentioned, became more and more important. And so this was perhaps the most vital aspect of using geographic information in the context of mapping these communities. And there are many examples of this, whether from the humanitarian OpenStreetMap or other organizations, such as the Demographic Data for Development, who are working with a lot of communities and other participatory actors for making sure that those living in these areas were well taken care of, at least as much as possible.

But there are, of course, more challenges to this as well. I think the fact that it is easy to say, "Yes, be socially distant. Yes, stay at home. Yes, You know, you can wait for X amount of money to be sent by the government," but in the context of communities in the deprived areas, number one, they were often far too close together to be able to actually isolate or to stay away from each other in terms of quarantining. Number two, because they make up a lot of the informal economy of the cities which they're in, they were drastically impoverished because of having to stay at home.

So we in the West, of course, have it much easier: we can stay at home, we can work from home. We have Zoom; we have Teams. We can do whatever we want in terms of working conditions. But for those who are living in these communities, they don't really have that ease of accessibility. So

being able to map these areas makes you understand that it's not just a matter of yes, they complied or, yes, they didn't comply, but why couldn't they comply? And so understanding their more geographical situatedness helps to understand that you cannot dictate these sorts of measures and assume everyone will be able to follow them or everyone is going to be able to comply as easily as possible.

Tea: Can you tell us more about what it is like to participate in fieldwork as a philosopher?

Michael: I have to say, whenever something goes wrong in the fieldwork, I always remember the good old times when we just wrote books—that was so easy, right? But besides all of that, I think there's a there's a really a value in discussing with stakeholders on the ground, trying to understand what you will not find in the books. That's something that I've learned over in my projects where we work together with groups of different people with disabilities and medical conditions in order to better understand where the challenges lie.

If you look back to applied ethics, as we did it when I was a student, a long time ago, applied ethics meant, "Let's look at the newspaper, let's grab a headline, and let's show why Kant was right." And without any reflection on how this news reporting came about, what were the underlying disciplines involved, if there was a discipline involved? It was mostly to illustrate the case that you wanted to make or to show there's an interesting challenge in this particular one. Um, and I don't know if we do it now correctly, maybe we are going in the wrong direction. Sometimes I feel like a bad social scientist. Probably I'm becoming a better ethicist, but by trying to be more conscious about how we relate to real-life cases, how we relate to real-life positions and views. I think it's that we become more flexible in trying to understand what people really need and what they think and where the challenges are lying. And you don't get that from reading newspapers at times.

But there are, of course, also major challenges. One of my colleagues just organized focus groups in poor rural communities to talk about their opinions about drone data acquisition. We spent a lot of time trying to understand what is the level of data literacy that we can expect and what are people familiar with. I mean, even when we now talk about it among ourselves, it's sometimes hard to explain what exactly machine learning is. To understand it all completely, all details. So, we had meetings with locals also working here in Twente. And we learned that WhatsApp is a commonly used tool in these communities. And that was actually our entry point. We said, okay, if you use WhatsApp and there are discussions about data-sharing practices, we can use that as a guiding metaphor to talk about what basically Red Cross is doing. And actually, it was way more easy than we thought to talk about data sharing and to see what people want. And basically, we received confirmation of what we were already expecting. They want something back. So as long as the local communities were under the impression that the data is being collected for benevolent purposes that would serve the community, it wasn't seen as a major thing, but in the moment where somebody would try to make money out of it, and they don't get a share, that was an issue.

What we found interesting is that there was a clear opposition to the idea that you just need to talk to the community leaders. People in the meetings were clearly rejecting this idea: "No, we want to be asked, it's not enough to ask the community leader, since they also have politics, right?" I found that interesting because there is often seen as a minimum requirement. If you cannot get informed consent by all individuals, that you at least talk to community representatives or community leaders. But this discussion clearly showed that once you start talking to individuals, they might disagree and say, "No, I may have a different opinion here."

Tea: Isaac, do you want to add something to that? You also have experience with fieldwork.

Isaac: Unfortunately, I didn't get to because my project started just at the sort of beginning of the pandemic. So just as we were about to get our plans for, you know, potential field opportunities and such, well, of course we couldn't fly anywhere. But one sort of saving grace of that was being able to be in virtual meetings, at least with some colleagues in South America. There, I learned, similarly to Michael's situation, the ground politics. One colleague from South America was telling us how in Brazil, specifically, the mapping situation there is quite funny in the favelas, which is what informal settlements are called in Brazil. They also have a different kind of politics because there are a lot of gangs present in those areas. And it's a very weird triangle relationship, you could say, between the communities, the gangs, and the police. So the police want, of course, to capture the gangs, but at the same time, the people in the communities don't trust the police fully because the police often are abusive or are not so much as understanding of the situation there.

So, in one of the mapping projects, they also involved the gangs in the mapping. Obviously the gangs don't want to be mapped. So because they know that if these maps end up being taken to the police, well, the police will find where the gang members are. So you have a situation where you want to have an open access map to know where people are, but you also have this internal dynamic of the sort of people like the gangs or other stakeholders who do not want to be physically mapped.

So we often say from a distance, you would say, well, yes, open data is always good. We should always be able to know where everyone is. But as you talk to people who are actually in the community, as in Michael's case in Malawi or in the context of Brazil or in other contexts in general, if you want to look more into the nitty gritty of it all, there are so many dynamics going on that you wouldn't get from simply, let's say, reading a book on how maps are presented or reading a book on how technology is always good or always bad. These internal dynamics you can only get from interaction with people on the ground as opposed to just making up theories in your head. But knowing the actual ground truth or the ground dynamics adds a lot more to how more interactive and dynamic. The process of mapping itself is not just the final product but also the site of argumentation.

Tea: Is there something that we, as philosophers, can contribute to help people who live in deprived areas?

Isaac: Whenever I introduce my topic to people, they wouldn't say, "Oh wow, you're really helping the people in the slums." I say, "I try to put the conversation out there." I try to enter the dialogue, but I'm not going to go as far as to say that I'm completely, let's say, leading to any policy changes there, because the only thing I feel I can do in my little circle, my little stage, is to make the conversation as significant as possible. We need to talk about data justice, we need to talk about transparency, we need to talk about the place of bias in the training and also in the actual finalized product. When you talk about the explainability of these models, because as we're engaging in much more of these sort of transcultural or interdisciplinary way of doing ethics, way of doing philosophy, also of putting technology out there, it needs to be nuanced in this case. Geographers are also talking about these dynamics, which we talk about only in ethical circles, perhaps not as heavily as we philosophers are, but the conversation is also there. The same thing with computer scientists or data scientists, where privacy is a big buzzword now in terms of big data or AI, but it is often also a buzzword that is not, let's say, translated properly across because we need to also know what do people in communities think of privacy. Because for us to say this is what they should think about privacy, but what are they also concerned with in terms of their own stakes, in terms of their own, let's say, understanding of what privacy is. So that dialogue, I think, is getting more and more crucial as opposed to just saying we have solved all the ethical problems, just output it into the sort of papers, and that will

lead to more changes. But it's more of a dialogue that needs to be had in what exactly ethics is across the board.

Michael: I'm always surprised how often I don't think of myself as a philosopher, but then I always have to recognize that I have a philosophical training and that it shines through. But I raise questions in interdisciplinary transdisciplinary dialogues which other people seem to find strange, stimulating, or something where I feel like, yeah, this is a typical question to ask here. So, we can bring in our perspectives of our desire for clarity, our knowledge about conceptual frameworks. Think, Isaac, what you just brought up with privacy, for example, is a is a good case. Somebody throws in something like, we should uphold privacy, and the philosopher goes like, what kind of privacy? What kind of justification exactly you're building your account on? And have you considered the intercultural impact? So, I think that this is the added value that we bring in which we are good in problem reframing and framing and where we can make our good contribution.

Indeed, also our own impact will be limited. But I think it's also important to recognize that philosophy is not done by one person. I mean, that is maybe also one of the things that is misleading in the way that we still teach philosophy or history of philosophy to our students. That is all about these major figures that had this one idea, and then it changed the world. This is not how it works. And I think we can be a little bit more relaxed. So, maybe it's also important with all my energy that I put into making philosophy more empirical. I'm totally fine with armchair philosophers. We need them. Yeah, we even need more is a combination of different kinds of philosophy in order to make philosophy work nowadays. Maybe that helps a little bit for people who are a little bit hesitant and saying, "Oh, is this still philosophy what I'm doing?" Don't worry too much if you go wrong, and you do cultural studies instead. Well, hopefully you do good work and philosophy will survive. So, it's fine. Don't be too worried.

Also just good to emphasize, in view of the colleagues that we are collaborating with from remote sensing, that these people are quite clever, they're really good, and they have a good sensitivity about the conceptual issues. So, this view that engineers are just concerned about technology: forget about that. I learned a lot also about what to pay attention to and what the problem really could be in these collaborations.

Tea: Then we need to burst philosophy's superiority bubble and talk to people. Thank you very much for the conversation!

Artist's Statement: *Mackenzie Place*

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1. Introduction

I've spent much of my career as an artist looking at tower apartment buildings—mostly mid-century examples made of reinforced concrete—and the ways in which these structures relate to cities. The buildings, the material, and the urban design philosophy that led to their construction emerged in the early modern period, seemingly without precedent. They have since proliferated beyond our wildest imagination, at this point so ubiquitous around the world as to be interchangeable with the city itself: one does not exist without the other. My *Mackenzie Place* exhibition examined an exceptional instance of this urban condition: a lone seventeen-story tower that presides over the center of the small near-arctic town of Hay River (Xátłodehchee) in Canada's Northwest Territories (Jackson 2023). Far from its expected high-density context, the building is a symbol of both the reach and the edge of global capital, settler colonization, and the urban forms these forces engender. *Mackenzie Place* engages you in what the building sees, how it is seen, and the lives lived within its walls.

2. The Place

Officially named "Alexander Mackenzie Place" after the explorer but informally known as "the High Rise," the tower was completed in 1975 to house workers for the controversial (and ultimately cancelled) Mackenzie Valley Pipeline. Never filled to capacity, and empty since a major fire in 2019, this relic of colonial resource extraction was home to newcomers to Hay River for nearly fifty years, whether Indigenous (Dene, Inuvialuit, Cree, Métis), immigrant, or settler. Since the fire, new owners from "down south" have promised renovations, citing urgent and growing housing needs, but, as of March 2023, no work has begun. Locals are quick to try to divert attention from the building, stating that the tower is not characteristic of Hay River. Yet the tower is omnipresent, both visually and in the narratives of residents and visitors alike; it is the hub of "the Hub of the North."

Anthropologist Lindsay Bell, a former resident of Hay River, introduced me to the town and its tower in 2013, and it has linked our careers ever since. We set out to create—collaboratively and in parallel—visual and textual representations that "picture the north" as heterogeneous, complex and unfolding rather than reproducing polarizing views of the arctic as a place of extreme fragility or boundless opportunity. Hay River's unexpected urban infrastructure has provided an anchor for these efforts, drawing us back again and again even as our jobs take us further away.

Figure 1: *Woodland Drive and Commercial Road, Hay River, as seen on April 22, 2013 (Nothing Going On redux)*. Inkjet print, 40"H x 60"W. Jesse Colin Jackson, 2023.

3. How It Is Seen

Hay River's tower is visible from nearly everywhere in town, and from many kilometers away. It's a visually dominant gravitational anchor that, like the sun, residents learn to avoid gazing at directly, but live their lives in constant reference to. Two large images in the exhibition attempt to reveal the tower as it inhabits the mind's eye. Featured on the cover is *3 Capital Drive, Hay River, as seen on June 21, 2015 (NE, E, SE, S, SW, NW, N)*, which collapses images from multiple positions in space into a representation of one aspect of the town's ambivalent relationship with the building: revolving around but never resolving it. The partner artwork *Woodland Drive and Commercial Road, Hay River, as seen on April 22, 2013 (Nothing Going On redux)* provides another aspect, collapsing images from multiple positions in time into a representation of the building as the feature around which the town's urban life is organized (Figure 1).

The piece takes its title from a young Dene woman who lived in the High Rise and would watch over the town's main intersection to see if anyone she knew could be called on to socialize. Often, she would declare to Bell, her then neighbor, that despite the orbiting activity there was "nothing going on".

A further artist's portfolio consists exclusively of images taken either of, in, or from the tower between 2013 and 2018 (Figure 2). This served as both a longitudinal experiment and a meditative exercise, exploring different relationships between the tower and its surroundings, and registering its ever-presence through repetition. In the exhibition, a selection of Bell's raw field notes was arranged above, suggestive of the parallel universe of anthropological inquiry that exists alongside these visual investigations.
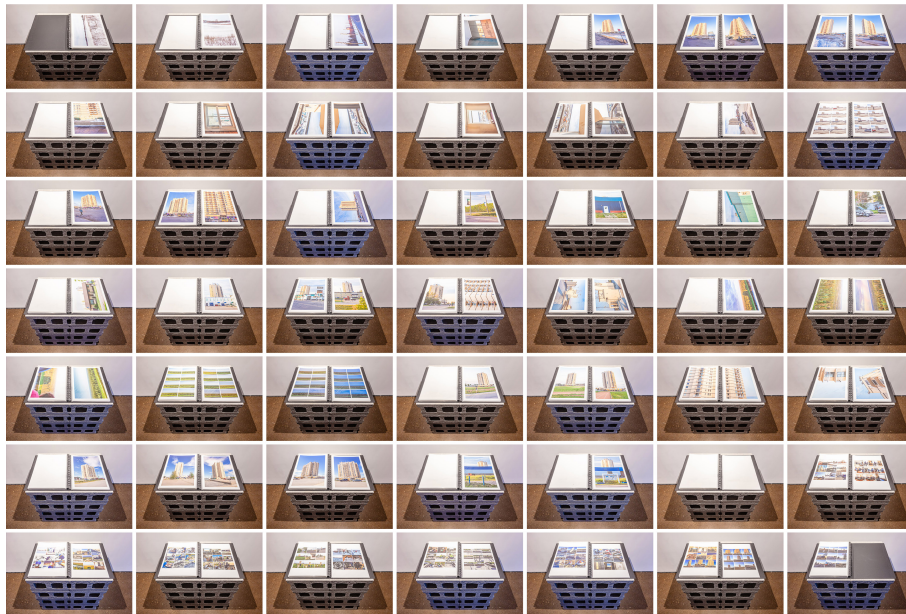
Figure 2: *Mackenzie Place 2013–18.* Inkjet prints, 18"H x 12"W. Jesse Colin Jackson, 2023. As installed at Pari Nadimi Gallery, Toronto, Canada, March 23–July 22, 2023.

4. What It Sees

The tower's singular presence also provided a unique opportunity for generating creative representation of its surroundings. Typically, towers beget further towers; in this case, "the High Rise" is the tallest structure within hundreds of kilometers, and overlooks the entire town, the adjacent K'atł'odeeche First Nation, and the surrounding wilderness. Shot from the roof of the tower, and derived from nearly one million still images captured over five years, the film *Mackenzie Place* brings to life a panorama of environments and activities across all four seasons (Figure 3). To the north,

Figure 3: *Mackenzie Place*. Multi-channel video, total length 1:00:00. Jesse Colin Jackson, 2023. As installed at Pari Nadimi Gallery, Toronto, Canada, March 23–July 22, 2023.

we see institutional infrastructure such as schools. To the west, we see industrial areas, with the Great Slave Lake (Tucho) visible on the horizon beyond Canada's northernmost train line. To the south, commercial and residential fabric are visible, and to the east, we see the namesake river and the seemingly limitless boreal forest beyond (Figure 4).

The film aggregates the carousel of space and time that the building and its diverse inhabitants bear witness to, year after year. The landscape around the building is sometimes beautiful, sometimes banal, and inexorably evolving. The film's audio is four voices—High Rise residents, perhaps—reading aloud from Bell's book *Under Pressure: Diamond Mining and Everyday Life in Northern Canada*, which tells the building's story and the stories of those who have made it their home (2023). As befits its conflicted position in the local imaginary, the building is seemingly erased from the town in the film, remaining present only as a shadow. Because Hay River is just below the Arctic Circle, the sundial silhouette of the tower evolves from a single moment of visibility on the winter solstice to a full rotation across all four channels on the summer solstice.

The film is also a meditation on creative monomania. The original goal—to capture one image per minute per direction for 365 continuous days—proved elusive, despite years of trying. Freed from this obsession, the film's five chapters instead register the peculiarities of technology, timing, and teamwork present during a given period in the project's trajectory. The final result captures the creative process—and Hay River itself—with more authenticity than a film derived from a complete set of images ever could have.

Figure 4: Stills from *Mackenzie Place*. From *Chapter 5: Chris; Marion; Disappointments; The Fire (September 1, 2017 — October 3, 2018)*. From top: South 8410, East 0359, North 0469, West 0865.

5. The Bigger Picture

Mackenzie Place concluded a trilogy of my exhibitions focused on the consequences of the architectures we construct. Each exhibition presented a variation of the internationally ubiquitous mid-century concrete tower apartment building, inviting us to consider the evolving significance of this type of urbanity. *Radiant City* (2014) examined tower apartment neighborhoods across Toronto, while *Skip Stop* (2019) focuses on the rise and fall of this building type in Toronto's Regent Park public housing project (Jackson 2014; 2019).

The tower that is the focus of *Mackenzie Place* represents an extreme case of the one-size-fits-all logic these buildings represent. But the results on the ground in Hay River, fifty years later, are not unique: the challenges this typology presents are similar to those faced by all cities that built them. As I noted previously, these buildings are "arrival destinations for incoming immigrant populations, essential housing for the city's population, the decaying location of urban poverty, products of modern ideologies gone awry, and locations of past glory, current dynamism, and future potential," and these complexities are present whether located in a major city like Toronto or a remote town like Hay River, one thousand times smaller and thousands of miles of away. Lewis Mumford described the city as both a container and a magnet, and Alexander Mackenzie Place has amplified and distorted Hay River's capacity for both functions (1968, 97). Per Bell, the tower was constructed "in order to signal urbanization and produce a common visual conceptual paradigm if what it means to be modern," and across fifty years, its fate has tracked that of modernity, right up to its final evacuation in 2019 (2023, 68). We need new ways of thinking about cities, so that the Hay Rivers of the world can better grapple with the legacies of our old ways of building them.

Acknowledgements

Hay River's High Rise was built on a gathering place of the K'atl'odeeche First Nation and Dehcho Dene peoples. Pari Nadimi Gallery is located on the historical domain of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples. I travelled to both locations from the unceded territory of the Acjachemen and Tongva peoples. Indigenous presence in these lands date back over 10,000 years; colonial actions have irreversibly transformed them in a small fraction of this time.

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