

## **Affective rights to the city**

Analytical moral and political philosophy is often developed against the background of personal or group choices and political action at the national and global level. This has led to the neglect of the community and local spheres in conceptual discussions. In recent times, philosophers have explored urban agency or equality (Kukla 2022, Wolff and de Shalit 2024), showing that cities are a *sui generis* normative space where commonplace moral and political concepts ought to be re-interpreted and expanded.

This talk focuses on the concept of *affective rights to the city*, examining how emotional dimensions of urban life—such as the need to belong, to feel at home, and to participate meaningfully in communal life—can be understood as rights. Drawing on and extending David Jenkins’s (2022) reinterpretation of the right to the city (Lefebvre 1996, Harvey 2012) as a cluster of *social rights of association*, I argue that affective rights encompass the psychological elements of urban life that are not (wholly) captured in associative terms. Indeed, some affective needs are inherently social, such as the right to community and inclusion; but others are psychological, tied to the subjective sense that the city is “one’s own” or that one is recognized as a legitimate presence within it. This subjective character does not necessarily revert to an individualist conception of rights, as long as we understand mental processes—such as affect and cognition—as *scaffolded* by the environment (Krueger 2024).

Despite providing with a more finegrained urban normative landscape, the notion of affective rights has the downside of affective goods being harder to allocate in policy making, particularly from a distributive approach (cf. Archer and Matheson 2023). For that reason, I argue that affective rights are best understood, at the very least for policy-making purposes, as negative rights: rights *not* to be subjected to an unjust distribution of affective burdens, such as the ones that come with lack of street safety or community neglect.

The paper not only advances a new normative concept in the urban context, but also shows how cities allow from an expansion of the relationality of non-material rights—from relationships between individuals and groups to relation between their mental states and physical space. In that way, it shows how the shift from *applied ethics* to *engaged ethics* (Wolff 2011, 2018) is not only a more appropriate use of philosophical concepts in policy development, but also contributes to the understanding of normative theory in novel ways.

## References

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