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The Ethical City: A Rationale for an Urgent New Urban Agenda

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Abstract: The ethical city, in contrast to many other adjectives used to describe our cities, implies an approach to urban development that is about doing the right thing for and by urban citizens. Acknowledging the rich traditions of urban development studies and human ethics, this article draws on examples of existing practices in cities that reflect a principled and ethical approach to leadership, governance, planning, economic development, sustainability and citizen engagement. An increased focus on ethics and justice is central in shaping how we respond effectively to global pressing issues such as climate change while at the same time tackling diverse social and economic problems in our cities including inequality, marginalization and lack of access to opportunities for the most vulnerable. While an ethical city points towards sustainability, resilience, inclusion and shared prosperity, the opposite direction could lead to corruption, poverty and social disaffection.

Keywords: ethics; justice; inequality; poverty; marginalization; sustainability; decarbonization; inclusion; multiculturalism; liveability

1. Introduction

Cities are now variously referred to as sustainable, resilient, low-carbon, eco-mobile, green, healthy, smart, multicultural and creative. All these adjectives are applied in an effort shape the future of cities in particular ways to address perceived or real problems and opportunities. The modes of engagement associated with these terms reflect the interests of dominant actors from the policy and corporate communities, as well as those of new emerging actors seeking to promote alternatives to business as usual.

There is a growing sense of urgency across both incumbents and entrants around the need for radical initiatives to ensure that global carbon emissions peak immediately, and the associated realization that most of those emissions are tied into modern urban life. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) argues that global emissions need to peak before 2020 and decline rapidly thereafter. Likewise, the IPCC also estimates that in 2010, urban areas accounted for 67%–76% of global energy use and 71%–76% of global CO₂ emissions from final energy use [1]. The science of climate change is telling us that our cities must change but the challenge is that this transition to a low-carbon future may run counter to the dominant structures of urban societies around the globe [2].

The rapid growth of interest in inclusive and culturally-mixed cities; the Occupy Movement; the dissent of migrant youth, and the anger of a disempowered working class, together with increasing and obvious disparities in assets and income that underpin the “good life” once promised by cities also tell us that something is missing from current urban society: Something must change [3–5].

In this article we accept these starting points and then set out a rationale for the ethical city as a response to urgent urban challenges. Our concept of the ethical city encompasses urgent

decarbonization but ties this agenda firmly to what we argue is an integral need to concurrently tackle issues of inequality in cities and accountability in urban governance.

The three issues cannot be separated in our formulation of the ethical city. Consideration of how an ethical city framework influences urban development is a novel idea. While we have seen numerous initiatives across the globe to promote urban sustainability, smart cities or healthy cities, less has been documented about the experience of cities managed, planned and operating according to ethical principles. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to explore the extent to which ethical approaches have been adopted by cities and to identify some avenues for the future development of these initiatives.

The article is presented in five sections. Section 1 outlines the need for the ethical city. Section 2 charts key concepts underpinning the idea of the ethical city, recognizing that there is a rich literature on urban ethics that goes back over 50 years to the pioneering work of Jane Jacobs [6], and that there are useful non-urban building blocks of ethical thought that can contribute to the concept. Section 3 defines the key tenets of the ethical city as a response to contemporary urban challenges.

While recognizing that each city is unique and faces, therefore, a distinctive range of challenges and a unique set of possible ethical city 'pathways', cities also share common attributes that explain both their obduracy and dynamism. Acknowledging this, Section 4 sets out an approach to ethical city self-assessment and multi-stakeholder engagement and provides examples of ethical city initiatives. The central proposition here is that if progress cannot be measured against an ethical framework, then it cannot be achieved. In conclusion, Section 5 sets out an agenda for purposive action towards ethical cities.

2. Why We Need an Ethical City Framework

If you live in a city, you have a 1 in 3 chance of living in a slum [7]. Ninety-five per cent of urban growth to 2050 will occur in the developing countries of Asia and Africa, much of this in informal settlements. Meanwhile, in cities of the 'richer' Global North, economic disparities and the marginalization of large groups of citizens are worsening. Addressing inequality on multiple scales is an important task for an ethical city. What can, and should, be done?

Cities are the result of a complex interplay of places, people and power, which, in turn, shapes and is shaped by, dynamics of technologies, materials, and economic, political, social and cultural processes. Given the practical realities that cities face, what ethical frameworks can be used to guide city shaping and how can these be utilized to enhance urban life for all citizens? If climate change responses are to lead to ethical transformations there is a need for sustainable forms of urban development capable of responding to the intermix of housing, energy, employment, welfare, water, food, security and many other pressing needs of billions of citizens in both the Global South and North. This, in turn, requires that the climate response be coupled with practices of appropriate urban governance and a renewed focus upon addressing inequality and marginalization in cities.

Cities face many common overarching, inter-generational issues—variously called mega-trends, wicked problems—including over-extended ecological footprints and resource limitations related to land, air, water, food and energy; climate change; digital and other disruptive technologies; traffic and clogged urban roadways; post-industrial restructuring; rapid economic change associated with globalization and marketization; as well as migration and population change. The city is no longer an isolated domain, but part of a globally connected network with flows of people, technology, trade, resources, finances, as well as negative externalities such as increasing un- and under-employment and CO₂ emissions, often embedded in production or waste generated from the over-consumption of goods.

Undoubtedly, there has been progress on some of these issues in cities around the world. Over the past century, clean air legislation, land use planning and the rise of the welfare state have mitigated some of the worst excesses of uncontrolled urbanization and inequality. In recent years, too, there are signs of limited progress on climate change, most recently in Paris at COP21 (Conference of the

Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) where a number of city level initiatives were clearly visible and where more than 400 mayors met at the Climate Summit for Local Leaders on 4 December 2015. Nevertheless, there is much work going on to secure sustainable water and energy resources for cities, but with much more still to be done.

Urban inequality also remains an endemic and worsening experience for many. Indeed, it has been suggested that inequality is the key challenge facing cities. At the same time, cities are also the primary incubator of the cultural, social, and political innovations that shape our planet [8]. This has profound implications for all efforts to secure smart, sustainable, resilient and/or liveable cities.

The most vulnerable people in society (e.g., low income, disenfranchised youth, refugee migrants, the physically and mentally disabled and the elderly) are most at risk of city vulnerabilities and urban disasters (whether climate-related or from other risks). In other words, their exclusion from mainstream community life questions the relative degree of sustainability and resilience of any given city. Both notions require a “we are all in this together” position. We therefore argue that measures to deal with inequality and social inclusion are a prerequisite for all efforts towards sustainable or resilient cities. There is an urgent need to rebalance the obsession with economic growth through urban development so that it is possible to plan for broader societal goals such as poverty alleviation, equality and social inclusion rather than solely where it is most profitable to locate the next office complex, factory or shopping mall [9].

At the global level, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide aspirational targets for 2030, including: ending poverty; improving human health, inclusion, food security, education, access to water and sanitation; and, addressing sustainability by combatting climate change and protecting biodiversity. Only one goal (11) is overtly targeted at cities, although, with the majority of us living in cities and the majority of resources being consumed by cities, they are implied throughout; indeed, 23% of the targets are urban related—for example, poverty, employment, inequality, road safety, sanitation and the internet. The question is, what principles should underpin these goals and what are the mechanisms by which these goals can be achieved?

3. Origins of the Ethical City

There is a rich literature on both social justice and ethical practice. The Australian ethicist, Peter Singer, provides a comprehensive overview of ethical thinking including Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarianism, Immanuel Kant’s notion of the universality and impartiality of ethics and John Rawls’ writings on social justice [10].

In the modern era and in the Global North, the urban dimensions of the topic are anchored by the pioneering work of Jane Jacobs, who exposed the negative impacts of urban renewal and advanced the concept of “social capital” in the urban sociology lexicon [6]. The seminal work of David Harvey followed [11], and more recent work on the ‘just city’ by Susan Fainstein argues that city governance systems can—at least in principle—shape environments that enable social inclusion, justice and care relative to others through pursuing deliberate urban development strategies [9].

Through exploration of social justice and space, Harvey asked us to reflect upon why much of our urban planning infrastructure is focused on the automobile. It is obvious that cities emphasising public transport over private transport enable those who cannot drive, or cannot afford to live near work and services, to have more urban access. Analysing the cases of New York, London and Amsterdam, Fainstein argued that equality, democracy and diversity are three criteria that aid the assessment of the just city.

The ethical city stands in contrast to the neoliberal city, where the latter represents a form of free market utopianism. In the neoliberal city, local government is modelled on the enterprise, the citizen on the consumer and governance on business management [12]. In the ethical city, local government co-creates the city with its community, citizens have both rights and responsibilities, and governance is a collaborative process. It represents a shift away from neoliberal thinking as elaborated by the economists, Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, which has been criticized for

the imposition and maintenance of class distinctions [13]. The implications of the neo-liberal city have been examined in the relation to the Bloomberg administration of New York where the goal was to engage with post-industrial elites and to develop the luxury city. The latter was “premised on the existence and identification of a unitary interest for the city as a whole, the de-legitimization of particular interests, and the rejection of political conflict” [14]. In contrast, the ethical city recognizes the need to accommodate diverse interests found in every city that cannot be truly mediated without conflict of some kind occurring.

More recently work has been undertaken in this area within the framework of urban ethics, with the most notable example being the activities of the DFG Research Group on Urban Ethics based at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich, Germany. This network of urban scholars is examining what can be understood as “good and proper conduct of life in 20th and 21st century cities” with a focus on eight cities—Auckland, Berlin, Bucharest, Istanbul, Moscow, Munich, Singapore and Tokyo [15]. They identify the bottom-up and top-down influences pushing for urban ethics. The former includes protest movements against social injustice or authoritarian regimes (i.e., Occupy Wall Street) while the latter are exercised through various means of governance that include “appeals to citizens as ethical subjects and the proclamation of exemplary, good urbanites” [16].

Related research has also been undertaken on ethics in city halls and in public administration in the United States. This has resulted in the production of in-depth case studies that explore the internal operations of local government in relation to existing codes of ethics [17]. Meanwhile, in Australia, there has been research on the ethical dilemmas facing local government planners [18,19].

Beyond an overt urban sensibility, ethics is concerned with what is ‘right, fair, just or good’, not necessarily with what is most accepted as normal or expedient [20]. Elsewhere, ideas of environmental ethics and moral development direct us to a sustained focus on respect for nature, resource allocation, social justice and mutual aid [21,22]. The idea has been advanced that caring for others be taken seriously [23], while emphasis has also been placed on the social structuring of human agency—both ethical conduct and moral behaviour [24,25]. Integrating the thinking behind much of this disparate work, five forces have been identified underpinning human well-being to date: the rise of the nation state and judiciary reducing lawlessness; the rise of commerce that interconnects us; increased respect for women; the rise of cosmopolitanism (literacy, mobility, mass media); and the rise of mass-education, knowledge and rationality in human affairs [26]. To this, we would add the development of modern medicine and public health systems as the sixth force and the rise of urbanisation as a seventh force underpinning human well-being.

There is a long history of urban environmental concern that extends back to clean air and water movements in the Global North, and to the rapid rise in global environmental concern sparked by researcher-activists such as Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring* [27]. Research and advocacy for environmental justice was initiated in the US in Robert D. Bullard’s *Dumping in Dixie* [28]. The question of why the neighbourhoods of the poor and racial minorities so are often co-located with toxic waste sites or freeway overpasses is a fundamental issue in urban ethics.

In connecting the ethical city to these rich and diverse origins, from urban theory and practice, ethics and moral philosophy, and environmental justice, it is clear that the concept extends beyond the need to tackle worsening inequality. Urban life is intensely social and necessitates living and getting on alongside our fellow citizens. This sociality can be harmonious, respectful, reinforcing and, thus, economically and socially rewarding or it can be characterized by conflict, suspicion and mistrust. The latter risks social breakdown, terrorism, mass shootings, and the vilification of cultures and communities in need of asylum and protection. In opposing these anti-social trends and beliefs—as Michael Ignatieff points out when exploring the experience of Los Angeles—the global-urban phenomenon of multiculturalism is also central to the ethical city and there is an urgent need to counter regressive trends while strengthening urban cross-cultural solidarity [29].

A key starting point for the ethical cities concept is the proposition that, not only are unequal, fossil-intensive, undemocratic cities morally wrong, but those cities that fail to build ethical futures,

social inclusion and citizen engagement will become less attractive, less sustainable and more vulnerable to the negative effects of shocks and mega-trends over time. They become dysfunctional and anti-social as individual citizens begin to prioritise their narrow short-term interests over those of the community.

In the industrialized world, this process has been described by Paul Roberts as the Impulse Society, characterised by individuals who are self-absorbed and narcissistic, wanting everything now, regardless of the consequences [30]. Elsewhere more extreme examples can be found where the social contract between urban governments and citizens has been broken; historical and present examples might include Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar, Belfast and Berlin [31]. Cities fracture as inequality of rights and resources soars and along with it, crime and anxiety. In turn, these trends even in less extreme cases threaten both social security and the urban economy as, in a post-industrial, knowledge-driven, global economy, people vote with their feet and leave for better places.

4. Defining the Ethical City

Social inclusion, respect, care and justice are at the heart of the ethical city, and are insufficiently emphasised in current urban initiatives. Emphasis and action mean responding to multifaceted, complex, dynamic and rapid change. Informed ethical city responses build social capital and address insufficiently recognised rapidly rising inequality within and between all cities and regions in the Global North and South. We propose four interlinked dimensions to the ethical city as presented in Table 1: ethical leadership and governance; ethical planning; ethical citizens, and an ethical business environment.

Table 1. Four Dimensions of the Ethical City [32].

Ethical Leadership/Governance	Ethical Planning
<p>Local politicians and policymakers understand the importance of ethics in their work and go into public service to ultimately do good. Their aim is to promote good urban governance, transparency and accountability while weeding out corruption, conflicts of interest and the abuse of power. These measures are essential in maintaining public trust and fairness in local government action.</p> <p>Characterized by the following: Code of ethics, ombudsman, Ethics Commissions, Internal Audit Group, Open Governance, Transparency, Open Data, Accountability, Ethical Leadership, Anti-corruption, Whistle Blower Programme, Identification of Conflicts of Interest</p>	<p>Considers how various complex issues are understood by urban communities and how planning takes place with reference to what makes a sustainable, healthy, resilient, safe, liveable, economically vibrant and inclusive city. Recognizes that planning is a politicized profession where there are personal values involved, and that planners are accountable to communities.</p> <p>Characterized by the following: Personal engagement with the community, Personal reliance on good planning outcomes, ethic of caring, making explicit the values underpinning planning, holistic vision, integrated approach and aware of global implications. Codes of professional conduct.</p>
Ethical Business Environment	Ethical Citizens
<p>Conditions can be created within the city so that it supports an ethical stance from local businesses and influences how they operate and interact with each other. City governments can use their financial spending power to promote ethical business practices within their boundaries so that the local economy can flourish within a framework of the common or greater good.</p> <p>Characterized by the following: Ethical municipal procurement, ethical supply chains, local enterprise and entrepreneurship, labour rights and fair work, youth employment, CSR/Social Initiatives, Shared Value/Shared Economy, Urban Commons, Access to Employment, Anti-corruption in the Private Sector, Local Currencies, Universal Basic Incomes.</p>	<p>Perhaps the most important dimension is the role of the individual citizen and their civic duties and responsibilities. In our busy relentless world of endless distractions and demands on attention, it is challenging for citizens to remain connected with the development of the city around them. But this is happening at a time when such commitment is paramount.</p> <p>Characterized by the following: Community engagement, participatory budgeting, local democracy, social inclusion, community and cultural identity, trust in local government.</p>

4.1. Ethical Leadership

When discussing the importance of leadership, Singer suggests that ethical leaders need to put themselves in the position of those affected by their decisions [10]. This is not a simple task since the stakeholders affected by a decision can be extensive and diverse. Thus, the challenge for the ethical leader is to be able to identify the preferences of each group and to somehow take them into account. This becomes an issue of accessibility to the leader (i.e., proactively reaching out to local stakeholders rather than just being lobbied by interest groups) and good governance in general. Moreover, in the ethical city, where justice, care and inclusion are centre-stage, so accountability, engagement and respect must be central.

By contrast, an example of unethical city leadership is the case of Bell City in California US where the failure to exercise the principles of democratic government resulted in corruption by civic leaders that threatened the integrity of the entire city [33]. One of the key issues that emerged in this instance was the fact that corruption occurred in government partly because the citizens were disinterested and disengaged in government affairs. Of course, acting ethically in urban governance is riddled with difficulties due to the widely diverse constituencies involved as Lisa Belkin elaborated in *Show Me a Hero*, her account of the motivations and actions of Mayor Nicholas Wasiczko and his fractious Council to deal with public housing projects in Yonkers, New York [34].

4.2. Ethical Planning

Conversely, with respect to the operations of local government, a good example of the importance of ethical conversations comes from a five-year study of local government in Denver, US, observing hours of official meetings, conducting interviews, executing surveys and organizing focus groups [35]. The study found that ethics in local government is about how we do business, how we interact with one another, and an expression of core values. Most importantly, the study concluded that the emergence of an ethical culture is influenced by the degree of communication that takes place and the extent to which it involves all stakeholders.

Through the pursuit of deliberate urban development strategies, city governance systems can—at least in principle—shape particular environments that enable social inclusion, justice and care relative to others [9,11]. Current primers on best practices in place-making illustrate how this can be done [36] while a contrary example is the privatization of the public space of cities by building in the primacy of private car access via freeways and parking, while minimizing public transport and public space for walking and cycling.

In the last decade, a significant switch has occurred such that few cities are now trying to bring more car traffic into their city centre. Indeed, the municipal government of Oslo has proposed banning private cars from the city centre by 2019 as part of a plan to slash greenhouse gas emissions [37]. There are also signs of coupling inequality and greenhouse gas emissions reduction in city plans. The 2015 development plan for New York, for example, includes measures aimed at raising 800,000 New Yorkers out of poverty, providing 200,000 new affordable homes and a proposal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent by 2050 [38].

4.3. Ethical Citizens

When we consider the ethical actions of citizens we recognize that cities by their very nature influence the form of the local ethical framework. A study using data from the General Social Survey in the US between 1972 and 1998 made a number of observations on the relationship between cities and ethics [39]. First, people living in cities tend to have more liberal/progressive moral values on a range of social issues (e.g., around homosexuality, sex before marriage, birth control, etc.) compared to those who do not live in cities. Second, living in a city can influence the degree of adherence to stringent ethical standards, with for example, the possibility of a citizens being arrested for committing a crime increasing. Third, cities eliminate distance between people and let innovative ethical ideas

move more quickly. Fourth, just as cities facilitate specialization in the workplace, they also facilitate the existence of specialized ethical groups. So reflecting upon the above it is possible to argue that the city is the place in which rapid ethical innovations have the potential to occur.

There is a school of thought that focuses on the role of citizens as ethical consumers and argues that corporate social responsibility activities of businesses are unlikely to make major gains without consumer social responsibility [40]. While this is an interesting development potentially supporting the goal of forming an ethical local business environment, it too narrowly defines the importance of ethics for citizens in relation to their consumption of goods and services. The citizen in the ethical city, however, should exemplify behavior that goes beyond consumption to include a sense of responsibility about working towards positive change and improvements for everyone in the city.

The participatory budgeting movement is a well-recognized example of such innovation in the making of ethical citizens. Even without going as far as the example *par excellence* of whole-of-citizenry participatory budgeting as found in Porte Alegre (Brazil), a large number of cities have shown that it is possible to build active and involved ethical citizens and community leaders through the allocation of small amounts of money for citizen-generated local sustainability projects. For example, the New York City Council (US) and the City of Westminster (UK) have demonstrated how this process can enhance positive civic interest and the experience of Freiburg (Germany) illustrates local governance structures that promote community engagement and “leadership of place” [41].

4.4. Ethical Business Environment

There are numerous experiments and innovations at the local level designed to respond to the changing nature of employment and to build local economic resilience. Three key examples are local currencies, universal basic incomes and sharing economies.

In the City of Bristol (UK), the Bristol Pound was launched in September 2012. The primary purpose of the Bristol Pound is to strengthen the local economy by providing an incentive for people to shop at independent local businesses as well as encourage and reinforce the strong sense of identity and civic pride that people in Bristol feel for their city. Data for August 2013 suggested that more than 600 local businesses accept the currency and more than £260,000 has been converted into Bristol Pounds [42]. Interestingly, it has been argued that neoliberal thinkers such as Friedman and Hayek shared concerns with local community activists about the problems of nationalized fiat money systems and/or the government monopoly over the money supply. It has also been suggested that there is insufficient evidence on whether local currencies are necessary in order to solve development problems in cities. Rather their adoption is ideologically motivated as a critique of the current political economic system and a desire to move away from business as usual [43].

The notion of a universal basic income has been around for some time and the most recent experiment at the city level are being undertaken in the Netherlands beginning with the City of Utrecht. Under this initiative, around 50 disadvantaged people will receive an unconditional and regular payment of a basic income meant to provide enough money to cover a person’s basic living cost [44]. Past experiments have found that the introduction of a basic income reduces poverty and alleviates several other social problems.

The third example is the sharing economy which provides citizen-centric alternatives that focus on increasing the sharing capacity of existing infrastructure like public buildings and free Wi-Fi [45]. It provides access to idle or underutilized assets for ridesharing, co-working or urban agriculture; and strengthens the social fabric through deliberative decision-making like citizen juries, participatory budgeting and other forms of active citizenship.

These are just three examples of the transitions currently underway as cities seek to generate new forms of economic development and new industries without losing existing communities to poverty, drugs or socio-economic breakdown. In the US, these transition mechanisms have been referred to as part of a Metropolitan Revolution where local leaders are doing the hard work of growing the job

market and making their communities more prosperous [46]. This requires physical resources and political will to ensure that ethics takes a central role in city development.

4.5. *Shaping Our Cities*

Even within this ethical framework the critical question becomes who does the shaping of cities and how. In his manifesto for city leadership, Benjamin Barber argues that mayors and local executives can exhibit a non-partisan and pragmatic style of governance that is lacking in national and international halls of power [8]. Moreover, he argues that cities are increasingly collaborating with each other giving credence to ideas of democratic “glocalism”, of horizontalism rather than hierarchy, and of pragmatic interdependence rather than outworn ideologies of national independence. Cities and their leaders have emerged as alternatives to nation states in tackling global problems, although many questions remain about the ability or likelihood of mayors to deliver ultimately on inequality agendas, or on the extent to which the fate of cities remains tied to the fact that nation states often still do the policy heavy-lifting for cities, in areas such as health care, education and the environment.

Undoubtedly, mayors can harness citizen engagement in countering inequality, injustice and poverty, and the idea of a global parliament of mayors has currency as a means to propagate innovation. However, in an increasingly globalized and market driven economy, city autonomy is relative, and relies upon co-operative and collaborative actions, not only with other cities, but also within multi-level systems of governance and across geo-political regions and systems of governance. Questions also remain about the inter-competitiveness of cities over time and how spaces for inclusive city solutions can be created and propagated. From minimum wages to pro-affordable housing policies, across a wide range of innovative interventions, a range of cities can make, and are making, a positive difference for their communities.

The fate of cities is tied into national and global policy settings. Increasingly the globalized economic system has a profound influence on urban processes and governance. The need for cities to remain globally competitive can constrain the scope for local action and innovation out of which ethical cities can emerge and be sustained. A good example is the impact of global tourism on major cities around the world. For example, in several Spanish cities, including Barcelona and Madrid, an upsurge in the use of local accommodation for tourism has impacted on rents and prices. This is undermining the functioning of communities as local people are crowded out. The city governments, in response to this phenomenon, struggle to balance the interests of the impacted communities and those of the tourism industry.

Without focusing directly on the city scale, economists have made critically important contributions to the debate on inequality as a result of the current economic system [47]. For example, through forensic research it has been revealed how rising income gaps have accelerated since 1980 so that even those who manage to work full-time often fall behind [48]. Current dominant neo-liberal policies can unfairly punish those who suffer bad luck and undermine economic growth and social cohesion, causing profoundly negative impacts on quality of life for everyone.

5. Ethical Cities—Measurement and Processes

Although the specific term ethical city has been rarely used to date [32,49,50]—some progress has been made in a number of cities that contributes in various ways to realizing ethical cities, in policy and programme development, and practically within cities. Key initiatives and some examples are summarized in this section, along with a sketch of how progress towards the ethical city can be measured.

Like the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda of Habitat III launched in Quito in October 2016, the ethical city concept provides an initial set of targets and frameworks. The test is the extent to which these can be operationalized by harnessing the resources required and orienting these in new directions. Numerous existing city initiatives implicitly aim to realize aspects of ethical cities. For instance, C40 and the Global Compact of Mayors are bringing cities together to tackle

climate change. The Rockefeller 100 Resilient Cities process is building resilience in communities, and the UN Global Compact, including the Cities Programme, is engaging across sectors in principled, socially-engaged action inspired by the ten UN Global Compact principles (Table 2) that are derived from several international declarations and focus on human rights, labour rights, the environment and anti-corruption. Numerous other urban networks and initiatives are contributing to rethinking urban development in ways that overtly highlight the importance of inequality, inclusion, justice, respect, care, resource allocation and accountability.

Table 2. Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact.

Human Rights
Principle 1: support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; Principle 2: not complicit in human rights abuses.
Labour
Principle 3: uphold freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; Principle 4: the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour; Principle 5: the effective abolition of child labour; Principle 6: the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.
Environment
Principle 7: support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges; Principle 8: undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; Principle 9: encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.
Anti-Corruption
Principle 10: work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

However, how might cities measure progress towards the ethical city? This is a major question requiring significant work, but initial points are as follows. Income equality and carbon intensity are logical key meta-indicators, although care is required in how measures are aggregated across populations and over time. Governance accountability is more complex but there are increasingly measures available to identify corrupt practices and many cities have ethics codes, and model codes have been advanced. Transparency International also promotes a strengthening local government integrity initiative [51]. Critically, across all three domains, we propose three principles in ethical city measurement:

- (1) Both ‘objective’ quantifiable measures and more qualitative measures involving engagement, judgement and discussion have their valuable places in measurement.
- (2) Qualitative measures should be accompanied by broad engagement across civil society, technical experts, policy makers and city stakeholders in assessing progress and priorities for the ethical city.
- (3) The ethical city is a principled concept. There is neither a single blueprint nor a useful league table of ethical cities. Measurement is necessary only as a longitudinal, progress-based exercise to test what is working in each given city. To state the obvious; every city is different and must create its own future.

In accordance with these principles, the UN Global Compact—Cities Programme encourages use of a city scan diagnostic tool for cities to self-analyze progress across the 10 principles and to set out targets for urban development, sustainability and governance. It is implicit within the tool that the measures that cities use to monitor ethical city progress are given due weight in resourcing, decision making and policy priority setting across the city. The results from these city scans point to a consistent set of problems across the cities (regardless of their location in the Global North or South) including poverty, housing availability and affordability, unemployment levels, dependency on fossil fuels and limited community understanding of climate change, as well as problems with the

accountability of local politicians and bureaucrats, transparency of decision-making, and limited local financial resources.

Processes to address gaps in ethical city progress are many and varied, but again have consistent characteristics. Namely, they involve cross-sectoral negotiations, accountable decision making and clear resourcing of actions that account for social, cultural, and environmental needs, as in the following four briefly described, examples.

In 2011, the governing coalition of Berlin committed to make the city climate-neutral by 2050. Subsequently, a feasibility study was undertaken in collaboration with the Potsdam Institute for Climate Research and a plan developed aiming to reduce the city's emissions by 85% by 2050. This would limit emissions to 4.4 million t CO₂ by that date (close to 2 metric tons per capita). Some progress has already been made. The energy-related CO₂ emissions for Berlin have declined from almost 30 m t in 1990 to 21.3 m t in 2010—a 27% reduction. When introducing the plan, the Berlin Senator for Urban Development and Environment, Michael Müller, called for the re-municipalizing of the local energy production and energy supply networks as a key step towards the attainment of carbon neutrality for the city [52].

Once dominated by drug cartels, the last ten years has seen Columbia's second largest city of Medellín embark on an extraordinary transformation. Transparency and accountability was central to the tenure of Mayor Aníbal Gaviria (2010–2015), enabling investment into new public infrastructure and food security programmes. Respectful engagement at the grassroots, with a vulnerable and shocked post-trauma populace is neither quick nor easy, but has proved essential in the transformation of the city into an increasingly safe and successful urban centre [53].

The City of Milwaukee (United States) draws its freshwater supply from Lake Michigan. The Milwaukee Water Works, part of the city government, is responsible for the provision of high-quality drinking water and for comprehensive water quality monitoring. The City of Milwaukee is seeking to become a model water city and in this context has set up an innovative programme called the Milwaukee Water Commons—cross-city network that fosters connection, collaboration and broad community leadership around water issues [54].

Porto Alegre (Brazil) has a long history of inclusive political participation and has pioneered participatory budgeting where open assemblies drawn from the local community debate and decide their priorities for the local government budget. With Porto Alegre's municipal democracy processes being adopted in New York, Chicago, Melbourne and Madrid, the need for city leaders to develop trust and respect, and to prioritize inclusion as a pre-requisite for deciding how the city's money is spent, provides a stark example of the gulf between tokenistic periodic elections and calculations, and a real, engaged, accountable, transparent and trusting engagement process [55].

6. Towards the Ethical City

We began this article with reference to the numerous models applied to cities—resilient, sustainable, healthy, and so on. We do not consider that the ethical city competes with these existing models but rather complements them. For instance, we suggest that there can be a just and ethical city. While the former seeks to determine what is fair, the latter requires that we consider what the right thing to do is. We therefore position the ethical city as a meta-concept or meta-framework.

In this article, we have sought to outline some key starting points for this principled concept. In this final section, we propose directions for debate and action towards the ethical city. We would expect that city managers or other civic leaders seeking to promote their city as an ethical city begin by integrating the three-way needs for climate action, good governance and action on inequality. This requires that ethical city managers and leaders pay attention to citizenship, engagement and enshrined rights to basic services including:

- Sustainable energy
- Sustainable water

- Clean air and environment
- Mobility for all
- Quality housing for all
- Childcare, health, education, open and green space
- Feeling safe to move around the city
- Decent work and pay and the means to provide for loved ones.

These represent a contemporary take on Henri Lefebvre's principle of "the right to the city" [56] and the goal of an ethical city is to ensure that everyone can exercise these rights. Since financial resources are invariably a key enabler, in one form or another, it follows that financial inclusion is a key measurable indicator of the ethical city, as are considerations of gender, race and minorities. This does not discount growing the social enterprise and sharing economy sectors, where trust rather than cash is the key currency.

Engaging and building the interest and capacity of urban citizens is central to the process of ethical city development. Equally, promoting ethical conversations, reflections, and expressions in arts and culture are important as ethical city practices shape, and are shaped by, ethical citizenry. Also, there is a need to focus on good conduct of city leaders and good processes of city governance.

Using tools of reflexive governance [57], city leadership and policy making must necessarily involve: multi-stakeholder, engaged processes of learning from current experiments, sharing the results of initiatives, and revising plans and actions to constantly re-adjust the course towards the ethical city. This process of shared dialogue and action learning underpinned the work of the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network in which up to fifty cities throughout South and South-east Asia have reformed their decision-making processes to build resilience [58].

While these approaches are not foolproof, and the future course of any city is neither fully steerable nor can be known, nevertheless, ethical city development indicates a need for openness and inclusion in the businesses of: governing; building cross-sectoral coalitions; monitoring progress and reflecting upon it; being open to changing tactics and experimenting along the way.

Cities should advance, test and publish 'successful' city engagement strategies, sharing knowledge on progressive private, public and NGO/civil society organizations to include in engagement, and techniques for engagement with communities. Cities should work with partners to evaluate city progress, assessment methodologies and tools; to develop recommendations and guidelines for direction; and to explore the implications of ethical city policies, programmes and models.

Cities should engage with local researchers to co-produce a range of scholarship and reflective conversations about resilient ethical city models and future implications for wider academic, policy and public discussion [59]. Furthermore, they should advance ideas about transitions to the ethical city, which includes the notion of 'inclusiveness' and respect for diversity as social goals.

Ethical cities practice open deliberative governance, transparency and accountability while weeding out corruption, conflicts of interest and the abuse of power. They promote measures designed to maintain public trust and fairness in local government action. They use their financial spending power and leadership to promote ethical practices within their boundaries so that the local economy including social enterprise can flourish. They recognize and engage in the role of the individual citizen and their civic duties and responsibilities.

They also seek to overtly build the capacity of urban professionals to conduct and manage the processes for ethical city development. In an era of unprecedented urbanization, there is a monumental opportunity to influence the fate of cities through well-designed, sustainable and co-managed infrastructure, housing and urban places. The city is in a position to advance ethical design, ethical planning and ethical developer communities through education, participation, good governance and accountability, often by simply using tools and resources that already exist [60].

In conclusion, the ethical cities agenda is designed to raise the profile and advance a principles-based and collaborative approach to urban development and city management for government actors, private

sector, civil society and citizens. Making space for each other, literally and figuratively, is a central concept for the ethical city. It follows then, that cities that pursue ethical policies to minimize inequality and propagate mutual respect and social justice offer more sustainable, resilient, safe and prosperous living environments. Those that focus, instead, on short term, utilitarian, partisan or private economic or political objectives are at risk of escalating social disaffection, poverty and corruption (within city governments and/or corporations). In other words, they risk spiraling social breakdown, rapidly declining liveability and an unsustainable future.

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