7_Theorizing urban change: Complexity and Ethics

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Planning interventions change people's lives. Planning is not simply an intellectual concern, but has profound ethical implications, especially when the consequences impact the socially disadvantaged and politically powerless. Ongoing processes of technologically driven urban change add a further dimension to this, structurally influencing social change. Planners face calls to transition toward cities that are 'smart', 'resilient', 'open' and 'agile', and the list is getting longer. Conversely, we inhabit an era where technocratic and profit-driven rationales dominate spatial interventions, leading to concerns around freedom, honesty, dignity, and democracy. In the face of increasing complexity, do we have at our disposal appropriate tools and theories to address these?
We invite colleagues to reflect on the possibilities of territorializing ethical principles of urban citizenship. In doing so, we wish to emphasise the significance of social context, and the social nature of our lives, in structuring our moral perception. This highlights ethical dilemmas and threats which are overlooked or misunderstood if attention is too focussed on the individual. We especially welcome contributions addressing the following issues:

- What role can self-organization, based on shared ethics, play in transforming cities?
- How can interactions between complexity and ethics contribute to theory and practice?
- How, and at what scales, are ethical principles being co-opted into tools that influence urban change?
- Are there forgotten voices in planning history who might remind us how to insert ethics into contemporary planning systems?
- What is the planner's role in this?

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